

THE
GEORGE FORMBY
Newsletter 98

Vol. 9
No. 2
Aug 2003



Specially Produced for George Formby Fans
by Stan Evans, The Hollies, 19 Hall Nook, Penketh, Warrington,
Cheshire WA5 2HN

Tel or Fax 01925 727102

Welcome To Newsletter No. 98 and we certainly made a good start to George's COUNTDOWN YEAR with two Special George Formby Events. First the Middleton Cinema and secondly at the Alvis Car Show in the posh grounds of Houghton Tower. Read more about them inside . . .

Ivy Lockerbie—But first we have the sad news. We regret the loss of our dear friend **Ivy Lockerbie** who died on the 10th of June. For many years Ivy greeted members on the door when she served on the reception desk.

Ivy was born in Manchester in 1920 and worked in the catering industry. Most of her life she worked as a dinner lady and in 1939 married Bob Lockerbie who was a Formby member until his death in 1989.

For many years she collected used stamps to help the Blind Society in buying guide dogs. A very worthy cause.

Ivy loved singing and was a member of many clubs for many years. She thoroughly enjoyed having a good laugh in the company of her friends and enjoyed our Friday Night meetings.



ANN WRITES Ken and I would like to thank all mother's friends for their lovely cards, kind thoughts, and floral tributes. Thanks also to Sheila and Cyril Palmer, Margaret Moran, Les Pearson, Margerie Gerald, and Eddie Bancroft for attending Mum's funeral service. It was very much appreciated.

And thanks to you Stan for the lovely framed photo of mother. It brought more tears when Margerie brought it to us. It will always be treasured.

You are very welcome Ann. I thought a lot of Ivy. She was a dear soul who always greeted everybody with a broad smile. Ivy will be sadly missed at the Sale desk.

Cyprus Next Year?—Christine tells me that the Merry Dublin Trippers were so pleased that they are asking when the next trip is on. Dennis Emails to say that he will be pleased to greet an invasion of Uke Banjos, so are we off to CYPRUS?

But probably we could also have a Coach Trip somewhere more local, say Scotland or down south where we can meet up with the Formby fans down there.

So Christine is appealing to everyone for ideas. She will be pleased to hear from you. Give her a ring on 01270 663558.



DON'T FORGET TO ORGANISE AN EVENT FOR GEORGE'S 100th

Tanks For The Memory by Alan Haines—Oldham



Who said nostalgia isn't what it used to be or even a thing of the past? Just recently I've finally completed a trip down wartime memory lane. Then I was a small boy, with a handicapped brother, living in a typical northern 'two up and two down'. Obviously Mum couldn't go out to work. After much unemployment in the hungry thirties Dad, an A R P warden, was trying to establish his own Radio Electrical and Record business. Family treats were often scarce, but some Sunday afternoons were different. Then dad used his 'gimmick'. He carried an old hinged top piano stool, which housed the gramophone record player, from the shop to the house. Using a new

Songster gramophone needle, he played to us the records of that time. We met Vera Lynn, again and again. "I Love You Truly" played organist Jesse Crawford, and of course we had Dad's other favourite performer George Formby. At that age a real unpronounceable mouthful for me was Unconditional Surrender.

Increasingly, as we get older, we discover and reach for the nostalgia button. Some time ago I stumbled across Unconditional Surrender in one of Blackpool's markets, but at the same time stupidly passed up the chance to buy one other of George's tunes, well remembered, but totally unheard by me since those wartime Sunday afternoons. Many fruitless searches later, with desperation growing, directory enquiries gave me the Warrington number of an address on the back of the Formby Farewell video. Bingo! - perhaps that should be housey housey - thanks to Stan the man, I now have that missing piece of the Sunday afternoon jigsaw.

And that missing piece? George Formby's "Frank On His Tank" Perhaps this small thank you will take some of you back down memory lane. Alan Haines, Oldham.

And thanks to Alan for his article.

My boyhood memory of George is quite painful. It was during the early war years and my friend's mother had just arrived back home from town where she'd bought a new George Formby record—can't remember the name. He invited me over to listen to it.

She unpacked her shopping bag and, unknown to me, placed the new record on the armchair. I sat down and—guess what? There was this awful crackle and I discovered that I'd sat on George and crunched him into bits. Stan.

Some Years Ago, we were waiting for Chris Webster to turn up so that we could start our GFS Committee meeting. After about 20 minutes wait, Chris turned up carrying a huge plateful of salad. Chairman Trevor Brown was FUMING X X X X X.

On the way home I was inspired to write this verse:-

"Nay lad" shouts Trevor our chairman,
Tha carn't do that there here
I don't mind thee bringing in coffee
Or even the odd pint of beer
But to bring in a plate full of lettuce
With tomatoes topped up with baked beans
Well I've never seen anything like it
Ugliest thing I've ever seen

Poor Chris sat there wit mouth open
Should he make a quick bolt for the door?
Swallow the grub he was eating?
Or spit it all out on the floor?

But Trevor then felt sorry fot feller
"We don't mind thee suppin thee tea
Or even nibblin a sandwich
But save some for Dennis and me"

With that poor Chris was delighted
As he told all the lads to tuck in
"Now that's very thoughtful" said Trevor
"Come on lads, - let meetng begin."

Aaron Highjacks Crewe's International Showpiece

There was a pleasant buzz in the air at the Crewe Society's June meeting where a number of new faces graced the stage. Our cashier Chris Metcalf greeted one hundred and six on the night. I hope that we never reach the day when Chris has to place the dreaded notice outside "Sorry House Full!"

Stan Evans was our MC of the month and in his opening remarks he gave a warm welcome to Jonas Svensson from Gothenburg Sweden and his Dutch partner Janet Grootoek, Alan Evans from Redditch, Peter Deuce, Maureen and Dave from Stratford upon Avon, Ken and Sheena Sambrook representing the new Diabetic Centre at Leighton Hospital Crewe and John White, Chairman of the Wistaston Memorial Hall Management Committee and his wife Glenys. Stan also said how pleased we all were to have Gerald Beadle back with us so soon after a serious heart operation.

I found myself opening the show with an appropriate number "*Sing a Song About Formby*" performed for the first time on the Crewe stage. The song being the product of the late Stanley King popular Yorkshire entertainer. Jonathan Baddeley then gave us two Formby numbers in his usual clear style "*He Did What He Could With His Gasmask*" and "*Madam Moscovitch*" a song with an awful lot of words. Jonathan was then joined by Pamela who performed a duet with "*Baby*" a song from one of George's very early films "*Boots! Boots!*" which had its world premiere in a theatre in the potteries town of Burslem.

Next to perform was our Swedish Guest Jonas Svensson. Jonas is a very keen Formby fan and his first number was a song that George Formby put his name to but never recorded entitled "*I'm a Paratrooper*" which works around the theme of parachutes not opening and covers his exploits when he landed in a field and his parachute enveloped himself and a local milkmaid who fortuitously happened to be passing at the time. Something like that anyway! Jonas then sang a more popular "*They Can't Fool Me*" from the film "*Its in the Air.*" Jonas also sang in the second half "*Dan the Dairy Man*" and "*Don't let her Go*" (a Jug Band song). Janet Grootoek then took the stage and showed us all how to play the ukulele with the numbers "*Too Busy*" and "*The Loneliest Girl in Town.*" In her second spot Janet played and sang "*Lover come back to me.*"

Penyffordd's Jim Knight then gave us "*A Long Time Gone*" followed by a bones medley and Vera Jones sang us "*Who's Taking You Home Tonight*" and "*It had to be You.*" Alan Evans who improves every time we see him, performed "*I Gave a Little Blast on my Whistle*" and as a second number "*I'm Going Back To Himazaz*" (Him as has the pub next door!). Connie Edge was next to tread the boards with the Formby song "*Running Round the Fountains in Trafalgar Square*" followed by "*Enjoy Yourself*" when everyone joined in the choruses.

The next act was the "Past Its." Well and Truly - one is Well and the other Truly! (past it that is!) Why on earth they call themselves that I don't know as their act comes over so well. Their real names Stan Evans and Stan Watkinson. (The latter being the one with the Guitar-Banjo just in case you don't already know). They performed "*There'll never be another Fool Like Me*" medley and the ever popular "*If I Had My Life to Live Over.*" Stan Evans assured us that their professional sounding backing music was created by Stan Watkinson with one finger and Stan asked the audience to clap Stan's index finger. I couldn't believe it - as everyone did!

Our very own Walter Kirkland performed "*In my Little Tool Shed in the Garden*" fol-



lowed by a bones ensemble "The Grand Old Duke of York." Walter's lady friend Alice, who happens to be the Chairman of the Sale Branch, followed with "When You're Smiling" and "If I was the only Girl in the World." Alice always gets a laugh when she gets hold of the mike - have you noticed?

Aaron Barschak the comic who gate crashed Prince William's 21st paid us a surprise visit on stage much to the surprise of M.C. Stan Evans in fact it was a surprise to everybody. Before leaving the stage Aaron (the irrepressible Alan Newton) announced that his next port of call was Buckingham Palace! Arthur Newton then made a presentation to two organisations. He explained that our group had £200 charity money to distribute as a result of our concert at the Jazz Festival. It had been agreed by a group of our members that this money be distributed to The New Diabetic Centre at Leighton Hospital and to the Wistaston Memorial Hall towards the new Disabled Toilets which have to be provided. Mrs Sheena Sambrook received the cheque on behalf of the Daibetic Centre and Mr John White on behalf of the Wistaston Memorial Hall. They both expressed their sincere thanks for the donations.



He dropped in from the palace

Arthur then gave his spot with "Hindoo Man" and "Grandad's Flanellete Nightshirt" both real Formby Classics.

Next, for the first time on our stage we had the "Stratford upon Avon Quintet"- comprising Peter Deuce, Maureen, Dave and Alan on the uke and Eunice on the bones. They sang "Our Sergeant Major." We had hoped that they would have done individual numbers but perhaps there will be a next time? It was great to have them with us at Crewe.

Our friends from Penyffordd were next Deg and Frank who performed "Mr Wu's a Window Cleaner now" followed by the "Show me The Way to Go Home Medley." As usual they were immaculately turned out on stage. Bill Turner gave us a bit of Lonnie Donegan with "Have a Little Drink on Me" followed by "Mona Lisa." Ashley Caldicott had his usual spot with his friend Stan Evans on the mike. Ashley always has lots of fun on stage. Colin Wood was accompanied by Alan Newton in "Saving Up for Sally" a great number from the 1951 Hit Show "Zip Goes a Million."

Alan Newton sang "Grab Your Ukulele and Sing" one of Dickie Speake's best songs and he followed with a truly brilliant interpretation of "Come to the Cabaret" a number that Jazzy Alan with his expert timing could exploit to the full. It was so good that a member of the audience at the end of the show asked if Alan could open a show in the autumn with this very song. Great stuff Alan. The top of the bill was Des Redfern who had the audience rocking in the aisles with his version of "Divorce" and for his second number "A Penny Arcade."

It was a great night which ended in a thrash of "Leaning on a Lamppost." There was not a song that was repeated all through the show. Sincere apologies to one of our most faithful supporters Cliff Royle who had to go early, and due to unfortunate circumstances missed his go. So sorry Cliff.

The sound was excellent thanks to Colin and Angela. Thanks to Chris who takes the money on the door, to Steve our drummer, the ladies who help with the refreshments, thanks to the MC and Concert Producer, and to those who set up the show in the afternoon. Thanks those who contributed anything however great or small to help make the show such a big success. Also a very special "Thank You" to everyone who helped in any small way to clear up at the end of the evening, for without that support there could be no show.

Young Cliff reports on N.Wales -Our takings



at the door for entry fees and the raffle were at an all time high, so thanks to everyone for their support. Perhaps we may get more visitors in the future because the Staff at the British Legion are now providing light hot meals during the evening. This idea had a great response, and thanks were expressed to the cook and the young man who acted as a very efficient waiter during the evening.

We started off with Connie and Brian Edge singing "I've got that old fashioned love in my heart". Brian came back later on with another of his songs with a difference "I've got another fellow's job right now", and Connie with "Running round the fountain in Trafalgar Square" and "Lambeth Walk" in which she was accompanied by Alan Chenery. There was a return visit by Gerald Jones (Jones the Uke) who told us about his 2004 Calendar which he has produced to celebrate George's Centenary This is now on sale and profits will go to our Charity Fund. Thanks Gerald and co-producer Julie, his Wife. What a lot of work they have put into its production.

Walter Kirkland was greeted by "Geer off" by two very young ladies at the front, (no names but they helped with the draw) but he took no notice and after playing IOM got the bones section on Stage. The bones section came on later with Jim Knight when they added a new touch to their performance by playing backwards. Sort that one out! Jim gave us "Alexander's Rag Time Band", and Alison Nadin did her animal training act with a large vicious bird which still cannot do the rope trick in spite of years of training. Jonathan Baddeley played "Blue Moon" on his Clarinet and an unusual song "Why does everybody call me bighead?", then accompanied by Wife Pam they gave us Ashley's song "Banjo Boy". Two other Ladies sang their hearts out with some past hits; they were Alice Cronshaw and Vera Jones. Harry Jones closely followed Vera and everyone else with his camera. Seems he should now have the title "North West GFS Photographer of the Year". There are many like Harry who work away in the background with little recognition.

It is not often we get a new visitor to volunteer to perform, but we did tonight. Tony Elson brought along someone to whom he had been talking as he waited for the Coach to take him and Marge on the Trip to Ireland. The topic of conversation soon turned to George Formby and in turn this resulted in a first visit to us by Dan Lewis who was ushered on to the stage with a song sheet of "Puttin on the Style". Dan entered into the spirit of the evening and got a good applause. He seems to have a good voice.

So who else can I mention? Tom Meredith with "Mr. Wu's a Window Cleaner Now" and "Sitting on the top of Blackpool Tower"; The Three Tenors (Deg, Frank and Phil) who performed three songs the last one being a first for them in "Little Back Room Upstairs" for which I hope permission had been given by Alan Chenery; Alan of course came with his usual bevy of beauty { his three ladies from the Fylde) and having played Stan Evans's latest song, "I Wanna Play the Ukulele", followed it with an excellent backing done by Jonathan of the 1975 song "Mississippi" or was it Mrs.Sippi?? Greg Simister, still only eleven, stunned us all with his fast finger work with "Home Guard Blues and "Out in the Middle East". In this he even found the time to get us all doing the usual singing and waving participation. Having spent weeks learning "Fifty Percent of It's Mine" I gave it a go but it did not turn out well; seems something was wrong with the backing. Not my excuse.

All uke and bones players came on for a good bash at the War Time Medley, which always seems to go down well. There was then the final THRASH, and plenty of tidying up to do (helped by our Crewe friends) and then we were homeward bound. Another enjoyable night, although we did miss the Past-its but not the Pasties!!! *Thanks Cliff.*

Another Search for Formby Relatives

A LETTER SENT BY MICHAEL LONSDALE TO JEFFREY BOOTH'S ADDRESS— Dear Jeffrey, with reference to the Booth Family, I'm hoping that you or somebody within your family can help me help a possible relative of yours. Whilst researching my own family line I knocked on the door of what had been my grandmother's cottage in a village in Oxfordshire and was greeted by a lovely elderly couple who dug out copies of deeds etc to help in my research.

We sat talking for about an hour about the area and the cottage then he asked if I could help him. He had a picture of his Gt Grandfather who was a comedian and worked the halls in the late 1800's and it was family talk that said they were related to George Formby. He asked if this link could be verified and how would he go about doing it, so in return for the help he had given me I offered to help him.

His Gt. Grandfather was named William Booth born in the east end of London in 1851 the son of Samuel Booth. Having done a little research I find that George Formby's father George Formby Senior (your grandfather) was born on or about October 4th 1875, in Ashton-Under-Lyne, Lancashire. He was baptised James Lawler BOOTH. His mother was Sarah Jane Booth married Frank LAWLER a brick labourer in 1876. So can you help any further with any details about Sarah Jane Booth. Who was her father etc?

So is there anyone out there who can help Michael with his search? If so, contact him at: Michael Lonsdale, 29 Fletcher Ave, Tarleton, Lancs PR7 6DJ. Tel 01772 813187 - Email: michael.a.lonsdale@btopenworld.com

Paul Woodhead Has A Great Evening (Ticket Sell Out) with

the Wrekin Rotary at Shifnal Village Hall, Friday 4th July. The Proceeds go to publishing a book on a Long Distance Walk, known as "The Wrekin Millenium Way", and all the proceeds from Book Sales will be given to **Hope House Children's Respite Hospice.**



Ged Roberts-John (Snooker) Williams-Paul Woodhead

Ged Roberts (Tenerife fame) started his UK tour at Shifnal Village Hall on Friday 4th July. He was accompanied by Paul Woodhead (The Fella with the Ukulele).

Appearing with them was World known Professional Snooker Referee John Williams, who's contribution to the concert was wonderful.

Uke Banjo for Sale—Tony Thornton is selling a Maybell uke with case. It is

in very good condition and Tony is a reet reliable chap to deal with. It's a SNIP at £235 so give Tony a ring on 0113 2740111. Sounds like a bargain buy.

Customer in Barber's Shop: Give me a Beatles haircut. Barber: No problem sir.

Customer: You've shaved me bald, - that's not a Beatles haircut

Barber: It would be if they came in here.

It's Countdown to George's 100th and we had quite an unusual day out at Houghton Tower, Blackburn, where we entertained the Alvis Car enthusiasts on Sunday 22nd June.

And what a brilliant day it was with the hot sun driving down into our marquee, come booking office, come rest room, come studio, come prize giving centre.

It was unusual because most of the time we had an audience of ONE and here she is: young Megan, who faithfully stayed to support us the whole of the afternoon. Well almost.



Loyal supporter Megan

Alan Chenery did a brilliant job of setting up his equipment in our marquee so that the sound could be heard for half a mile around.

Well it's a good job he did because our main audience—some few hundred of them were busy parading around the 100 or so Alvis cars that were set up on display. Apparently Alvis car owners—and George was one of them—come from miles around to show off their prize possessions, and they take pride in allowing others to jump in the seat and fiddle with their gear sticks. Unlike my own, every car on display looked immaculate and truly a credit to the owners.

Entering the car park, to park up, was a bit confusing. I turned into a field full of red and white road cones with a view to parking up when I was confronted with one of the stewards who politely told me that I'd entered the competition field and Vauxhall Astra's didn't qualify. Silly me!

We had eight entertainers in total: Alan Chenery, John Shreeve, Des Redfern, Cyril Palmer, Alan Southworth, Paul Kenny, Margaret Moran and yours truly: Well Past It. Fortunately, for hefty applause, we brought along a few wives and friends in the way of: Sheila Palmer, Hilda Southworth, Les Pearson, Pat Chenery, Brian White, Paul Kenny's mum & dad, and young Jamie who had a keen interest in George's Alvis car which was neatly parked at the side of our marquee.

Each of our entertainers found the experience of singing to an audience of ONE quite strange. Some sweat a few buckets when they entertain half a room full but I can assure you that an audience of ONE really gets the nerves going.

And what about Alan Southworth? What a fine act he is, but his audience of ONE did a runner and he had to perform to an empty chair and a field of grass. However, it was a grand day and George would have been proud that we stayed the course the whole afternoon. After the show we were surprised when several came over to tell us that they could hear our performances all over the field and that they'd thoroughly enjoyed listening to us. Some commented that our singing added great atmosphere to the program.



Alan Southworth's audience of ONE has left us

The owner of George's Alvis car is Bernard Neil, who told me that he bought the car some years

back not realising that the original owner—George Hoy Booth—was actually the very famous George Formby. He was delighted when he discovered this. The original paperwork states that George bought the car, CNB 277, from Henlys of Manchester in March 1936. He claimed that George also owned two other Alvis cars: A 1934 Alvis Tourer, and an Alvis Speed 25 in 1937.



Alan Chenery poses with George's Alvis

At the side of George's Alvis stood an Alvis which once belonged to the Duke of Edinburgh. This drew quite a lot of attention from the car owners. However, our gang were delighted to be photographed with one of George's prized possessions.

Well it might have been a most unusual day's performance but it was thoroughly enjoyed by all. And it looks as if it might be a regular event.

Jeff Moore & Von Hoffman called at my home on the

way back from the Blackpool weekend and spent a couple of hours with Eva & I.

Von is a very keen George Formby Senior fan. He collects all and anything on him and performs all his songs. He has been a Formby member for some years. In his home he has a large collection of framed GF photos on the wall and he is always ready to talk to anyone on the subject of Formby.



Jeff with George's Will Van Allen uke and Von holding George's drinking mug.

Jeff, a landscape gardener by trade, is new to Formby although for some 12 years he tried to locate the society. He has now caught the bug of collecting GF memorabilia and is currently learning to play the uke.

Lively 80s—Stan & I (The Past Its—Well & Truly)



Lively birthday girl Popsy (81)

performed at a Seddon Court Retirement Home, St Helens last week and—although some of them were ready for meeting God—there were those who, although in their 80s, danced non-stop for over two hours.

The show was put on by a magician friend of mine, Terry de Maxin, who's mother was 81 on the day. Stan & I were on our knees after lugging all the equipment but these young 80 year olds were ready for a marathon.



Terry and Stan Past It.

It's turned out nice again for cinema

IT'S going to turn out nice again this weekend. At least it will if the George Formby Society has its way on its first ever visit to Middleton.

The Society will be holding a George Formby Day at the Northend Community Cinema in Cheapside on Sunday 15 June, the

by Dave Edwards

first of a series of special showcase events. Future ones will include a Laurel and Hardy Day involving the Sons of the Desert fan club.

The Formby event gets under way at the cinema at 1pm but before that there'll be

some pre-film musical entertainment. So be prepared to see some Formby look-alikes leaning against lampposts and strumming on ukuleles

Cinema manager George Brighty said: "We're delighted that the George Formby Society has chosen us for their Showcase

event. It follows hot on the heel of our special tribute dat for local screenwriter and playwright Jim Allen. Apart from the proposed Laurel and Hardy event, we're planning other specials including a Bollywood tribute including some spectacular Indian films."

Tickets for the event,

which will include a screening of George's most famous film 'Turned Out Nice Again'.

Tickets for the fun-packed event are £5 with concessions at £3.

GEORGE Formby - the society named after him has chosen the cinema for its festival



We're Still on Countdown to George's 100th



and thanks to Margaret Moran we had an excellent event at the Middleton Northend Community Cinema. Margaret tells the story:

It Turned Out Fantastic on Sunday afternoon 15th June and many

thanks who turned up to support the event. The owner of the cinema is George Brighty, who knew George & Beryl quite well having met them on several occasions when they lived in Darwin. He is quite a Formby fan himself.

Many thanks to Alan Chenery, Alan Williamson, Andrew Little, Cyril Palmer, Des Redfern, Ged Collins, John Shreeve, Mike Turner, Phil Jones, and to the happy crowd singing and clapping.

A buffet was provided for the players and then it was time for the GF film, "Turned Out Nice Again." Later came another thrash inside the cinema. It was MAGIC and the press came along to take photos. Councillors Peter Dawson and Alan Godson said they were bowled over by our performance and would like to see a Formby branch in Middleton.

My thanks also to Les Pearson for looking after the lads. It was another grand and glorious day and, most importantly, another event leading up to George's great 100th.

Thanks Margaret. And thanks for answering the call to organise a George Formby event. George and Beryl will be looking down on you with great pride.

Another 100th Grand Event from Phil Hatswell



Phil Hatswell

Phil has sent in details of a Special Oldies Dance which is being held to celebrate George's 100th Anniversary. It's called George's Smiles & Friendship Dance which will be conducted by Willy Wet Legs and his Alzheimer's Quartet.

A very special feature will be The Dribblers, a versatile and frustrated Formation Team. Betty Bunion will be displaying her wonderful collection of Varicose veins.

The Dance Programme will be: Senile Saunter, Wrinkly Swing, Rheumatics Rumba, Quivering Quickstep, The Arthritic Waltz, Toothless Tango, Stuttering Two-step, Zimmer along Blues, Incontinent Two-step, St Vitas Samba, Flatulence Fox Trot, Jaundice Jive, The Forgotten It Waltz, and a Special Number will be performed by Billy Blow Off and his Wind Instrument Trio.

No Zimmer Frames or Walking Aids will be allowed on the dance floor. During the interval Medical Staff will be on hand to change dressings etc. Ear Trumpets will be for hire at the bar.

Refreshments will be kindly prepared by Art, Bart and Fargo, from the famous Chewitforyou Restaurant. *Thanks Phil. Hope to see you there.*

Phil writes—Our group of six from Sheffield paid a visit to the Penyffordd Meeting, which, thanks to Geoff Shone, gave us a wonderful weekend. Geoff found us a hotel to stay and made us very welcome. Our friends, Joe, Alice, Gladys and Colin thoroughly enjoyed getting up on stage.

On the Saturday night Geoff & Dolwyn invited us to a dance for another great night. It was a wonderful weekend and we must return again sometime. Phil & Janet Hatswell.

Thanks Phil & Janet. There's always a "Welcome In The Hillside" from our Welsh friends. Keep writing in.

George Cheetham's Special Night -

Les Pearson has just phoned to report that SALE will be holding an 82nd Birthday Party for Founder Member George Cheetham at the August meeting.

George joined the Formby Society way back in 1961 when the society was first formed, so it is hoped that some of the original members will be with us on the night.



Over the years, George was well known for his short repertoire of popular singalongs which he performed at every meeting. He must have sung "Abie" no less than a thousand times over the years and still they always asked for "More". Unfortunately George no longer plays the uke due to stiffness in his fingers. Thanks to Walter Kirkland there are now several "Bones Players" at our Formby meetings, but a few years back George was the only player. George was known as "Mr Bones."

John Grey Banjo Company History

John Grey & Sons Ltd. was a subsidiary company of Barnett Samuel & Sons for the making and selling of banjos, guitars and drums. The banjos were designed and manufactured by Francis Beddard, an Englishman who went to work for S.S. Stewart in America and returned in 1901. It is not clear whether John Grey was an actual person or not apart from the historical figure.

The company started life in London in 1832 as a business which manufactured watches and steel pens and distributed musical instruments wholesale. It was run by Henry Solomon whose father Jacob had come to London from Exeter. Henry sold the musical instrument part of the business to Barnett Samuel in 1861 and Barnett's son Nelson joined the business in 1869. In 1872 his eldest son joined the company and the firm became a huge musical concern selling every kind of instrument including harmoniums and zithers. It became Barnett Samuel & Sons Ltd. in 1901, and sometime in the early 1900's they started making their own banjos after Francis Beddard joined them. By 1911 the subsidiary company "John Grey and Sons" had formed and used the name as a trademark on its instruments. Earlier instruments had Grey and Sons Ltd as the trademark.

In 1928 Barnett Samuel & Sons was bought by British Equity Investment Co. Ltd. but did not have the right to use the title so it was renamed as the Decca Gramophone Co. Ltd. The company became the Decca Record Co. Ltd. (Barnett Samuel & Sons patented and marketed the first portable gramophone in 1914 - trade name "Decca" and it was hugely successful. In 1903 they stocked 100,000 records and 60 different talking machines). The instrument part of the company was contained in just 8 shares of the John Grey & Sons Ltd and these were bought by Rose, Morris & Co. Ltd. who made banjos up to and after the second world war. The company was bought by Grampian Holdings Ltd in 1960 and continued to produce cheap banjos labelled "John Grey". From 1967, the company started selling it's own products and just use the trademark "R.M" from Rose Morris. Rose-Morris are today a large musical department store.

The Barnett Samuel & Sons company also spawned British Music Strings Ltd (1918) and Boyd Ltd, later to become part of Associated Piano Co. Ltd (1927).

There's a new book in the library on "Keeping Moths" - "Advice To Young Mothers."

If you are brave enough to crawl under a cow you'll get a pat on the back.

Fitting a New Vellum Skin—



I've had quite a number of calls recently from players wanting advice on fitting a new skin. One caller said: I put the uke to bed one night and the following morning I opened the case and found it with a broad grin across its face. There was a huge slash from one side of the drum to the other. Well that was caused through having a very tight skin during hot and cold weather. The skin would expand or contract during the weather change.

The following instruction on 'How to fit a skin' was given to me by Jack Abbott (Abbott uke maker) some years ago, however due to shortage of space I've condensed it down. Take your time fitting the skin because one slip with the knife and the skin is ruined. Good Luck.

1. Soak the skin in clean water for approx 35 seconds.
2. Lightly dampen a towel evenly and roll the skin—alternate layers of skin and towel
3. Stand for 1 hour and re-dampen again until evenly softened and pliable all over
4. Lay skin flesh side (unfinished) on towel. Place wire ring on skin with even margin
5. Turn the margin neatly over the ring and press down to stick to main skin area
6. Place the flat bezel ring on top of the folded edges and lift all on to the uke body
7. Fit long tension hooks equidistant to tighten down the bezel ring about 1/8th" over body
8. Remove pleats by pulling with fingers and thumb—use pliers but BE CAREFUL
9. Proceed to tighten hooks a further 1/8th" Remove all pleats as they appear
10. Trim off waste skin with razor blade or Stanley knife—BE EXTRA CAREFUL
11. Leave skin approx 8 or 10 hours
12. AT THIS STAGE Jack, a perfectionist, would remove the skin and treat the inner ring with candle wax to avoid rust creeping through, but I'm sure that others skip this part of the process.
13. If you have problems with skin slipping either use a thicker diameter inner ring or try wrapping tape around the ring.
14. JACK'S ADVICE—Don't use cheap skins which are often of unequal thickness.

HAVE A GO—Some ring asking for the name of someone who can fit the skin, but my advice is to attempt fitting it yourself. It isn't difficult and once you've mastered it you will feel confident in attempting it again. Good Luck.

Special George Formby Acts Wanted

The George Formby Society Secretary is looking for George Formby Speciality Acts for the Saturday Night Winter Gardens Meeting in June 2004. If interested please submit details of your act for consideration by the Executive Committee by September 2003. This is to help to obtain a balanced show for George's Centenary, when it is expected that the Mayor of Blackpool will be present.

Please write in to the GFS Secretary Sylvia Roe, 'South View' Hollinbury Lane, Howbrook, Sheffield S35 7EL.



The was a uke player named Day. Did a show on his own, without pay But it wasn't quite fair, there was only 10 there. And a coach come and took em away

YOU KEEP FORGETTING TO SEND ME AN ARTICLE

Beryl by DC Davies

Dear Stan, I have

pleasure sending you my wife's recollection of Beryl Formby Unfortunately Beryl's personal career terminated after her wedding and there is nothing of interest to write about which is not covered in your Exhibition Magazine.

George was not the easiest of persons with which to live but the fact that their marriage lasted through turbulent times speaks for itself.



FROM MRS DAVIS. My earliest recollections of "Beryl" go back to the early 1920s. I was about 8 years old and recall that Beryl's parents, Mr & Mrs Ingham, kept a public house in Darwen, Lancs. It was called "The Bull" but has long since been demolished. My parents and the "Inghams" were great friends and Beryl and her sister, May, taught me to tap dance. May and Beryl used to appear as teenagers in local music halls and were known as "The Two Violets". May, the older, dressed as a prince as in pantomime and Beryl dressed as Cinderella in a ball gown.

Darwin Theatre in those days was a social asset to the town. Wireless was in it's infancy and most family entertainment was provided by the local theatre. All towns had them. The Bull public house was adjacent to the theatre and was patronised by those associated with the stage. It was through these contacts that the Two Violets met George Formby. They also were on the same bill at theatres on the northern circuit.

Beryl was always the leading light and often quarrelled with May but they never let the audience have any inkling that they were at loggerheads. When the Inghams decided they wanted to leave the hotel business they moved to a house in Richmond Terrace, Darwen and it was there that the association between George and Beryl developed. Mrs Ingham was not happy about the relationship and did all in her power to put an end to it but to no avail. George and Beryl eloped one night and married. That was the end of the Two Violets.

Beryl was determined to push George to the limit and it was quite true that she was the "woman behind the man" as stated in the Exhibition album. She was, however, a very likable person and full of vitality. She was always well received and Beryl and George were often invited to great social occasions and privately to Buckingham Palace and Badminton.

To be the wife of a star of George's calibre takes a great deal of diplomacy, tact and forbearance. Beryl had all this but she was no "pushover" and drove very hard bargains with producers etc. to push her husband's career.

Her mother and father gave up their home at Darwen to live with Beryl and George in their various big houses. Mrs Ingham was an expert housekeeper and arranged the family home and saw that all the hospitality Beryl offered was given without any stint or difficulties. Beryl's father took over the outside functions of looking after the property and beautiful gardens.

Beryl always expressed her gratitude for these services. She regretted leaving her family and after her parents died she lost her "joie de vivre" and also became a victim of that dreaded disease. It is a pity she is maligned. There are two sides to every story. Estelle N. Davis.

She was maligned because she preferred it that way. She was a martyr with a cause, keeping George's image squeaky clean while pushing him to the top, and taking the flak herself.

Andy's A Very Busy Lad! Here's his bookings for September:



- 1st Mon—The Good Olde Days, Embassy Centre, Skegness
- 2nd Tue, 3rd Wed and 4th Thurs —Those Were The Days, Wintergardens Pavilion Theatre, Blackpool
- 6th Sat and 7th Sun—Beckenham Town Show, Kent
- 8th Mon -The Good Olde Days, Embassy Centre, Skegness
- 9th Tue, 10th Wed and 11th Thurs - Those Were The Days, Wintergardens Pavilion Theatre, Blackpool
- 15th Mon - The Good Olde Days, Embassy Centre, Skegness
- 16th Tue, 17th Wed and 18th Thurs - Those Were The Days, Wintergardens Pavilion Theatre, Blackpool
- 20th Sat - Private Function, Imperial Hotel, Blackpool
- 22nd Mon - The Good Olde Days, Embassy Centre, Skegness
- 24th Wed and 25th - Those Were The Days, Wintergardens Pavilion Theatre, Blackpool
- 26th Fri - The Ken Dodd Happiness Show, Corn Exchange Theatre, Bedford.

UKE BANJO For Sale—Chris Metcalfe, who operates on the door at the Crewe meeting, is selling a DALLAS Uke Banjo complete with case. All in very good condition with eight Tension Rods. You can ring Chris on 01270 662390. We've known Chris for many years. Whatever he sells will be very genuine.

Email from Arthur E—Hello Stan I contacted you some years back when we had a bet going in our office. You answered the question and I won £10. Well we've got another bet going so I hope to win another 10 quid.

Here's the question: I say that Alan Randle is related to Frank Randle. I'm sure I read it in a book. Are they father & son? Or something like that?
Well I'm sorry Arthur but you've lost your 10 quid. Alan's surname is spelt: RANDALL while Frank's is RANDLE. Alan is from the Coventry area and Frank is a Wigan lad.

Frank was a typical Wiganer: - "Baa... Ahve supped some ale toneet . . . Aye, thirsty work this hikin; Ech, Ahve walked through Europe, Irope, Syrup, Wallop an Jallop and me corns are givin me gyp. Ah'm 82 an a fit as a fiddle, an as lively as a cricket. Why, ah'll tak anybody on fer me age an weight, dead or alive, an ah'll run um, walk um, jump um, fight um. . . Aye an ah'll . . .play um dominoes. Just look at these for a pair o legs. Why I tossed a sparrer for these and lost. Keep sending em in Arthur.

IN THE MOOD—Another bit of publicity for George. There's a World War Two Entertainment Exhibition currently running at The Imperial War Museum North, Trafford Rd North, Trafford Park, Manchester, and on the 20th July and 24th August there is an ENSA VARIETY SHOW—Sing-along performances with GEORGE FORMBY, Max Miller, and Arthur Askey. Different shows are on each day:- G1 Jive, Swing Bands, Home Guard, Return To The 40s, War Time Dances, Usherettes The Glitz & Glamour of the Bygone Cinemas, The Fell Clarinet Quartet, Songs From The First World War, Gracie's War, The Blitz & Home Front, Spies, and more. For a leaflet ring 0161 836 4007.

Home Guard Cheats—From Sky TV.

Somewhere in the country there's a small town, or village, called Paddock Wood, and during the 2nd World War they had two home guard units. One was called "Paddock Wood Home Guard" and the other was "The Railway Home Guard."

On one occasion they arranged to have a Mock Battle and the aim was for the Railway Home Guard to guard the railway, and Paddock Wood was to attack the station and capture it. Just like George's film "Get Cracking", one of the Paddock Wood spies reported that the Railway Home Guard men were positioned all round the station and there was no way that they would be able to break through to capture the station.



But Paddock Wood came up with a brilliant idea. They borrowed a large van, piled into it, and travelled to the next railway station up the line. They boarded the train and jumped off at the next stop—inside the station that was being guarded on the outside.

The Railway Home Guard had a shock when they realised that the station had been captured without even one dummy bullet being fired. They complained to Head Office that Paddock Wood had cheated, but Head Office praised Paddock Wood for their initiative. George would have loved that story.

More From Miles, in Germany

Hello Stan, Since I haven't written for quite a while I thought I would drop you a line.

The Annual Erlangen Beer Festival has just finished. It lasts ten days and takes place on a big hill on the edge of the town. Brass bands play appropriate music all day to encourage people to drink. Not that they need any encouragement! And certainly not at temperatures of up to thirty degrees! The beer is served in heavy stone mugs that hold one litre, and the Bavarians swill it down as though it were water. Moreover, the beer is a special strong brew and, since you can drink a litre as quickly as you can drink a pint, you are pretty drunk before you know it.

Moreover there are lots of brass bands, trumpets, **banjos and ukuleles** playing to help you to swill the stuff down. To make matters worse, I can listen to this sort of music playing all day. And when the beer is flowing as well this can be very dangerous.

The waitresses are usually pretty hefty Bavarian lasses - not the types you would argue with - and can carry as many as five stone mugs in each hand. In my younger days I used to drink up to five whole mugs full in one afternoon, but I am more modest nowadays! Regards to all. Miles.

Keech Uke Banjo Wanted

- Jimmy Hill (No not the ex-footballer) recently borrowed a Keech Uke Banjo and he enjoyed playing it so much that he is now looking for one. If you have one to sell please ring Jimmy on 01942 742516. He'll be pleased to hear from you.

ARE YOU PLANNING ANY EVENT FOR GEORGE'S 100th ANNIVERSARY?

Northern Comedy—On Saturday 19th July Ken Dodd will be the guest at a Northern Comedians Exhibition at the Museum of Lancashire, Stanley Street, Preston. The exhibition is titled "Grin Up North". The Press Review is at 11am till 12 noon. George Formby will be featured along with Les Dawson, and Frank Randle.



I received a phone call asking if it is possible to borrow George's Will Van Allen uke for the exhibition, so I replied: "Why not? If it's for George I'll be pleased to loan it." The exhibition goes on until April 2004 which is a nice build up to George's Anniversary. For further enquiries ring: 01772 534061 Email: enquiries@mus.lancscc.gov.uk Web site: www.grinupnorth.net

Dear Ken Dodd: The man is a miracle.

S.O.S. from Jon Baddeley - Hello Stan, You may recall our appearance on **Hotel Getaway** for Granada Studios in 1999. The programme was not shown at the time but a friend of mine saw the episode in question at about 1.30 a.m. a couple of weeks ago. I was wondering if anyone else did and more importantly-did they video the programme. Regards, Jon

Thanks Jon. I remember the filming very well. I've had a couple of reports from different people who saw the show on TV. No mention was made of having videoed the programme. So is there anyone out there who recorded the show?

Email from Ernie—My name is Ernie, and I've been given a BANJO used by a serviceman during the 2nd world war while stationed in N Africa. The Banjo was signed by George Formby and members of a group that toured with him during the campaign. I was asked if there would be an interest in someone purchasing the banjo. Any information would be greatly appreciated. Regards, Ernie. It was made by George Houghton & Son No. 3025. The signatures are: VERONICA—S. FORESTER—KATHIE—CLARK—THELMA—DOPEY BROWN—MCGILL. I do not know if some of the names are correct, so please excuse spelling. Possibly the names are members of the cast.



The history about the BANJO is: During the 2nd world war, George Formby was entertaining troops in north Africa. A South African soldier had the banjo with him, and George used it to play on the day. The banjo was then taken apart and the party of entertainers, including George, signed the back of the skin. *Thanks Ernie*

Ernie sent a photo and it turned out to be an eight stringed Mandolele. If anyone is interested in the instrument, signed by George, let me know and I will Email Ernie for you. The signature is too faint to show up on the photo.

Two Uke Banjos For Sale—Mike Turner is selling two ukes: One is a **Ludwig copy** made by Fred Stevenson, 18 month old but as brand new with hard shaped case, £400. Very good sound.

Also a No Name Uke which is also in good condition, nice sound. Mike paid £250 for it but is willing to sell at £90. No Case. If interested please ring Mike on 01744 882752. Mike is reliable. He won't sell anything that is not up to standard.

At The Liverpool Meeting we had a visit from Mrs Wright, one of the locals in the Broadgreen area. She explained that her late husband was a very keen uke player and in 1933 he purchased an Ivory Queen uke banjo made by Reliance. As she no longer had any use for the uke she brought it along with a view to selling it or advertising it in our George Formby Newsletter.



The uke is covered all over, almost, with pearl. It has 6 tension hooks, good skin, the tightening pegs are original, and all over parts are in perfect condition except that it needs a new nut, - although it can be used with the existing nut.

The price Mrs Wright is asking is £250 or nearest offer. If interested please give her a ring on 0151 220 5357.

Liverpool Trio Chaos—It was like a scene from a Marks Brothers or a Laurel & Hardy film, and the tale is so confusing I'm not sure if I've got all the facts right.

Briefly it was like this! - Andy (lighthouse) Little (19 foot 3 tall) travelled about 70 miles by car to Mike Turner's house in St. Helens. They, along with John Shreeve, were planning to go to the Liverpool Meeting. Mike's wife was away for the day so they had a huge Lager Session in the garden while they were waiting for John.

John turned up and found Mike & Andy legless, so it was arranged that Andy should leave his car at Mike's house and they would pile into John's car to go to the Broadgreen meeting, which is only about 4 miles away. So far so good.

About three miles on, John's car sprung a puncture in one of the tyres. "No problem" said John, "I'll change the tyre." Opening the boot they found that the spare tyre had a huge gash in it. "Don't worry," said John, "I've got this Mighty Pump Up Wizard in the boot that plugs into the cigarette lighter and blows tyres up." But half an hour, and six lagers later, they were still waiting for the pump to put enough air in.

"Right" said John to Andy & Mike, - who were now on their tenth lager - "I'll take a walk down this road and look for a garage." Off went John, and set off in search. About an hour later John returned complaining that the "Squirt In Tyre" thing he'd bought had cost him £9— "Robbery" he said. It turned out a very expensive squirt because the thing didn't work and they—two drunks on the back seat—had to crawl back to Mike's house to change cars. Anyway, all was not lost. They fell into the meeting around 10pm, looking bleary eyed, but in good voice.

George Formby Complete (Music Book)—£156

There's been a few George Formby Complete Song Books (61 GF songs) on Ebay Auctions lately and they are bringing all sorts of prices. One went for £36 and another went for £156. There's another which appears to be lingering at £16 with 10 hours to go. And they are all classed as in good condition. Someone must be mad for paying over £20.

Dates For Your Diary—Building up to George's 100th

Until Sun 7th Sept 2003— In The Mood Exhibition at The Imperial War Museum North, The Quays, Trafford Wharf Rd, Trafford Park, Manchester M17 1TZ. Open 7 days a week and admission free.

Sat July 12th—Paul Woodhead House Warming Uke Party, Paul Woodhead—01952 598840

Sat July 19th—"Grin Up North" Exhibition at Museum of Lancashire, Stanley St, Preston.
The show, which will run until April 2004, will feature Northern comedians.

Sun July 20th—Fleetwood Tram Festival. 60,000 people expected. We will be entertaining from 12 noon to 5pm. Alan Chenery—01253 681439 or Mobile 07967 665069.

SUN 27th July—Alison, Jean and Frankie are holding a Garden Party at their home, 29 Marina Drive, Rhyl. 1pm. Ring 01745 330668.

Sat 15th May 2004—Grand Show at Frodsham Community Centre, Cliff Royle 01928 731088

Wed 26th May 2004— George's 100th Birthday—Wistaston Memorial Hall 7.45pm
Jonathan Baddeley presents the "GEORGE FORMBY STORY" possibly followed by a film show.

Fri 28th May 2004—Exhibition of George Formby Memorabilia in Wistaston Memorial Hall followed by A GEORGE FORMBY CONCERT.

IMPORTANT—Why not have a go at holding an event leading up to George's 100th Anniversary? If you do, please send details in. As soon as we have sufficient dates we will be notifying the media: TV, Radio, Press. Let's make it an Anniversary to be remembered.

A True Story

—YOUNG BOY GETS THE BIRD. Just heard a story of a young lady schoolteacher who teaches problem children. Before the school holidays she decided to give the kids a treat so she hired a coach and took them on a day trip to the zoo. The zoo is about 20 miles from the school. All went very well, like a dream in fact, lovely sunshine. Perfect!. She took them all round the zoo to see the animals and the birds etc. and couldn't believe how well the day had gone. In the café they all acted on their best behaviour.

At the end of the visit they boarded the coach like little angels. They sat down on their seats all nice and quiet, they'd really enjoyed their day out. Almost back at the school and there was a loud outburst at the back of the coach. The teacher ran to the back to find out what the uproar was and discovered that one of the young boys had smuggled a pelican into his bag and was showing it to all his mates.

The teacher went wild! "Stop the coach" she shouted. "There's a pelican on the coach." They turned the coach round and headed back to the zoo and the teacher had to explain to the zookeeper what had happened.

Who's A Happy Bones Player?

Thanks to Walter Kirkland, we have loads of Bones Players at our George Formby meetings but none can look happier than Eunice Evans who has gone one step further than most of the other players. She actually plays with a set of bones in each hand. How's that!

But what a happy soul she is. As soon as she waggles her bones her face lights up. Keep on waggling Eunice.

10 MONTHS TO GO BEFORE GEORGE'S 100th ANNIVERSARY



George Formby Meetings

North Wales Branch - British Legion, Penyffordd (10 miles from Chester) Every first Friday in the month. Tel Jim Knight 01978 358472 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 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



It was a terrible day! Even our breadman had a cob on.
And the postman left his wife holding the bag.