

THE

# GEORGE FORMBY

## Newsletter 100

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100th  
ISSUE

Crewe,  
Frodsham  
Llandudno  
Blackpool  
Fleetwood  
Wigan Pier  
Warrington  
Hee, let's make  
the year 2004 a  
big Year

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# Welcome To Newsletter No. 100

## Happy 100th by Brian Edge—Stan Beats George to his 100<sup>th</sup>!

Our congratulations must go to Stan Evans on the publication of the one-hundredth edition of the George Formby Newsletter. This 20-page magazine is always eagerly awaited by hundreds of readers each month. It has been an enormous boost for participating branches that are able to keep their members informed of past meetings future events, and at the same time earning generous commission on sales. The Crewe Society currently benefit to the extent of £100 a year, which is a welcome contribution to society funds.

Stan however has no magic formula for publishing his magazine as it all goes down to dedication and hard work. It is not unusual for Stan to be in his office at ten in the morning and still be there at midnight and often into the early hours. His newsletter has never failed to come out on time which is a great record considering all his commitments and the dodgy temperament of photocopying machines.



The late Wally Cronshaw who pestered the life out of me to start this Newsletter. Cheers, Wally.

So our thanks to Stan from all your readers for taking up the late Wally Cronshaw's suggestion, that we needed a branch newsletter and by so doing furthering our main objective in perpetuating the memory of that great entertainer and comedian George Formby. Long may the publication continue. *Many thanks Brian. Much appreciated, but I couldn't have kept the Newsletter going without the aid of people like yourself who constantly hunt around for newsy items and articles. It's grand to go to the concerts and see everybody reading their Newsletters. Thanks to all who contribute and to those who purchase and read the Newsletters.*

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**It's A Grand Idea!!!!** - In the last issue we asked your opinion on whether we should call 2004 George's Year to give everybody a chance to stage something special for George's 100th Anniversary, and the reply was YES!!! - Charles Stewart and Alan Chenery agreed as May is too soon for Blackpool and they wish to combine it with events in July in Blackpool and Fleetwood.

Liverpool agree because they wish to hold something special without overcrowding the May month. "We are getting too old to dash all round the N. West in one month."

N. Wales agreed because they have a heavy Llandudno programme early May 2004 and it will give them an opportunity to plan something special for George at a later date.

Alan Southworth (Westhoughton) agreed as he thinks it is impossible to cram all the events into one month. Jon Baddeley, "Yes, but emphasise on May as the main month"

Pat Ralston wishes to stage an event, on behalf of Jack Jones, but nearer to Jack's anniversary in June. So we are doing great on dates to give George a wonderful 100th Anniversary.



## Wigan Pier, Great News!

Some years back we had a wonderful rapport with Wigan Pier. They would invite us each year to play there and entertain the crowds and we took the opportunity to use it to raise funds for a special need child or Alder Hey Children's Hospital.

However, on the last occasion we arrived there to find that it was all fenced off with 6 foot high wire netting and the area where we normally played was closed to the public. Apparently this was the instructions of new management that had taken over and they definitely were not Formby fans. Fortunately we found a spot outside the George Orwell Pub so the day wasn't wasted.

I've just had a meeting with them re. a George Formby 100th Anniversary, and was happy to find that the old management is now back in control, - and they are delighted to help. The result is that the main hall is booked for Sunday 23rd May for a George Formby Special.

The programme will cover a short history of GF Senior with songs, his mother Sarah Jane Booth with songs, GF Junior with songs, followed by a George Formby concert.

DENNIS LEE—I mentioned it to Dennis and asked if he would consider coming over for the occasion (Well he is a Wigan lad) He said that he won't make any promises but he will give it some thought. We'd be very pleased to see him.

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**Chas & Dave**—CJ Hughes are selling a Chas & Dave (Live Show) tape/CD and it's one of the best tapes I've ever bought. Apart from their own brand of songs, such as "Rabbit" - "Gertcha" - "Snooker Loopy" - and "Ain't No Pleasing You" they have added a number of evergreens like: "Easter Parade" - "Always" - "April Showers" - "Who's Sorry Now" and many more. One lively medley they sang went on for about 15 minutes and I'm surprised they had the energy to keep going. It's a great tape and only £1.99. A bargain.

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**Max & Harry Nesbitt**—Harry, on the right, must have been one of the most dynamic uke players in the world. He was a very fast player, and the way he threw the uke around and twisted it, always keeping in time with the orchestra, was really brilliant.

Both were born in Cape Town: Max 1903—1966 and Harry 1905—1968, they came to the UK in 1927 and within 4 months they were playing at the London Vaudeville. They were quite successful songwriters with over 200 songs published. Two of their songs were "Georgia's Gotta Moon" and "I Kiss Your Little Hand Madame." Their act consisted of jokes and patter, finishing off with a song they had written. Brilliant act.



## Crewe Teed Up for August Show But Nearly Tead Off

The Crewe August show was the usual success but behind the scenes things were anything but usual. Whilst Jonathan and Pam were enjoying a second honeymoon in the Channel Islands, Stan Evans was complaining that he had arrived too early due to lack of holiday traffic and conversely Margaret Moran had to go back home due to a surfeit of traffic in her particular area. Chris Metcalf, suffering from a post-operative illness could not attend so his place had to be covered by Tom Raiswell. Connie went sick at the 6.15pm and to cap it all the electric supply to water boiler failed.



Steve Hassall takes a break from the drums while Angela, Ashley's mum, operates the sound system.

NO TEA? - At 7.20 Harry Jones advised me in no uncertain tones *"there will be hell to play if there is no tea!"* Harry was all ready to go out to find an alternative boiler when he and Alan Chenery had a final look at the hall's electrical equipment that resulted in Alan turning a switch that resolved the problem. A big round of applause is due to Alan and Harry, as they did not get one on the night. Mack and Millie McGee from Leeds arrived early - at 3.45pm in order to get a good seat! It was great to have them with us again. It was also good to see Jack Crimes with us again after his illness, and also music to the ears to hear very good reports from Gerald Beadle as to the improvement in his health since his big op. It was Cyril and Sheila's Golden Wedding on the day and they got their just applause. Other surprise guests were Derrick Jones & Simon, Peter Gratton, Wyn and Fred Stevenson, Pat

Chenery, Eve Stewart and her friend. It was good to see so many other new faces amongst the ninety-eight who turned up for the show. The M.C. was Stan Evans and the Concert Producer was Alan Newton.

The artistes taking part were as follows: - STEVE HASSALL (drums) *"It could have been a Great Deal Worse"* & *"You Can't Stop me from Dreaming."* ARTHUR NEWTON *"It's Turned Out Nice Again"* & *"Sitting on the Top of Blackpool Tower."* CLIFF ROYLE *"Swimmin With the Wimmin"* & *"Fifty percent of it's Mine."* VERA JONES *"Old Tyme Medley."* MAC MCGEE *"I Don't Like,"* *"Somebody's Wedding Day,"* *"Raining in My Heart"* & *"Down For get me not Lane."* WALTER KIRKLAND *"You Can't Keep a Growing Lad Down"* & *Bones Medley.* CYRIL PALMER *"What'll I do"* & *"Hula Heaven."* ALAN CHENERY *"In the Little Back Room Upstairs,"* *"The Wigan Boat Express,"* *"The Lancashire lad and his Uke"* and *"The Window Cleaner."* BRIAN EDGE *"I'm Giving Lessons on the Ukulele to the Girl Who Lives Next Door,"* & *"Mr Wu is a Traffic Warden Now."* ALAN NEWTON & STAN EVANS *"I Wish I Could Play the Ukulele."* JIM KNIGHT *"A Long Time Gone"* & *a bones medley.* PETER GRATTON (comedian), *"The Laughing Policeman."* DERRICK



Noel Murphy, by way of Derrick Jones Writes in to say why Paddy's not in work today.



JONES "Murphy's Sicknote," ALISON NADIN "Up to More Tricks" & "Painting the World Full of Rainbows." ALAN NEWTON "Auntie Maggie's Home Made Remedy" & "High Hopes." STAN EVANS "The Fields of Athenrye." ASHLEY CALDICOTT "See them Pass By" (March) with Stan Evans. Ashley's performance was excellent and it was great to see some new movements in his performance. Well done Ashley keep it up! And of course, well done Stan for his hard work with Ashley.

Thank you Brian. It was another grand night with a full house.

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The Crewe Society are looking for any ladies or gentlemen who want to learn to play the ukulele. If you are interested please have a word with Brian on 01270 569836.

## Congratulations to Ray & Karen

Ray Bernard rang to say that he and Karen had finally tied the knot on the 19th July at St. Mary's Church, Alsager, where Karen is a choir member. Wedding guests included GFS members: Fred & Wyn Stevenson, Bernard & Pauline Young, Ray, Linda and Graham Neal, Joyce & Gareth Sumner, John Croft, Andrew Little, John & Jill Walley, and Bert & Jean Walton.



Needless to say the uke was very prevalent at the reception, and the honeymoon was spent in Italy—their first visit to the country.

Thanks for the short report Ray. We all wish you and Karen the very best of luck. Happy melodies, good harmony, and both in the same key.

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## S.O.S. from Les Pearson.

He is appealing to all and anybody to write to The Programme Manager, S Taylor, GMR Radio, BBC, Oxford Rd, Manchester M60 1SJ asking them not to take the Mike Craig programmes off. Mike provides music and chat suitable for the older folk such as songs from Billy Uke Scott and Alan Randall, and he has a natural gift for impersonating the old stars such as: Al Read and Jimmy James with Ely Woods and Roy Castle—remember him? - "Have you been putting it round that I'm barmy?". Great stuff and ideal for older listeners. So please write in.

Jimmy James



Newspaper snippet from Les: "Holiday camp entertainer, Andy Ford, stopped a road rage incident between drivers in Banbury, Oxon, by whipping out his ukulele and singing them a song."

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Just done a little spot at a club and heard the most dreadful noise ever. During the Free & Easy singers got up to do a turn and they might as well not turned up at all. The organist simply did his own (very loud) thing and ignored them.

One man sang a song straight through in a different key to the organist. But it didn't matter because nobody could hear him. And nobody complained. The M/C, with a loud voice, had set the mike volume low to suit his own voice and he wasn't bothered about the others. It beats me how they can turn up every Saturday to listen to such a dreadful noise. Fortunately I took my own backing equipment and told the organist to rest.

## A NIGHT TO REMEMBER; But Not My Honeymoon

The Legion had a special Legion event that evening so we obliged by holding our meeting in the local Village Institute. Then we heard that a contingent were coming with the GFS President Dennis Taylor. But we knew we could cope.

As usual we had a full house with some new faces, a few that occasionally visit us, and Dennis with his friends. They were driven over by Phil Hatswell in a mini bus; but apparently had great difficulty in crossing the border as most of the Pennine routes were blocked by hold ups. Anyway they arrived in good time. Well done Phil.



We started off with a Thrash before Jim Knight took over as M.C. Walter Kirkland livened up the evening with a jovial song and followed this with a Bones session accompanied by a number of similar enthusiasts including lady player Eunice Evans, and Brian Edge followed with a tribute to George Formby. Alan Evans, our staunch supporter from Redditch, gave us "You Don't Need a Licence" and "50% of its mine". Isn't he doing well. Alan Chenery, often with something different, sang one of Frankie Wood's songs "Boogie Woogie Ukulele Man", and "Putting on the Style" which we always refer to as Peter Cain's song. Then followed the Three Tenors (D, P. and F.) with the "Old Kitchen Kettle" and "Sergeant Major"; they are always impeccably presented.

Suddenly we had a complete change of style with Daniel Smith and Sister Sophie (aged three) supported by Granddad Phil Hughes performing, with ukes, a mixture of songs including a medley of Formby songs. Seems we have some up and coming talent from that stable. Vera Jones put on her usual good performance with her type of pleasant song which takes us back to our younger days; and then Captain Birdseye, in appropriate regalia and complete with fish, gave us "Swimmin with the Women". The first half of the evening ended with our very own Alison Nadin and her fantastic Marionette performance.

And so to the interval, and another surprise. Wonderful refreshments; yes and all free of charge. These were all made and provided by our Lady Members and supporters, and what a wonderful spread they gave us. Many words of thanks and appreciation were voiced on this topic. So thanks ladies; your hard work was justly rewarded.

First on after the Interval were the "New Kids from the Block"; some seven members of our concert party who help raise money for charity. Dress:- Black "George Formby" Shirts, white ties, straw boaters, and black shoes. Ah yes we did have trousers on as well, and we played Lamp Post. Then under the guidance of an M.C. who shall be nameless followed some of our staunch supporters from Sale and Crewe; Alice Cronshaw with her lovely romantic songs, and Connie Edge with "Double Dare You" and "I like riding on a choo choo" accompanied by Station Master Brian.

Our President Dennis Taylor was unable to play the Uke as he was still recovering from an accident, but he made up for this incapacity by singing a very humorous song which seemed to indicate how busy the Queen was, and then very cleverly got Greg Simister to accompany him on the uke when he sang TT Races. This was a great duet. Greg took his turn next and played "Sitting on the top of Blackpool Tower" and "Out in the Middle East"; accompanied in the usual fashion by our dancers Alan Chenery and Jonathan Baddeley.

Dennis Lee's smiling look-a-like Mac Magee performed "Baby Baby" and a great medley of older type songs. Colin Reed gave us a real flavour of change when he performed a couple of lesser known songs "Because I'm Shy" and "Share and Share Alike". So what about this chap from Sheffield who said I can sing a bit but play a Uke very Badly? Yes it was Ian Walker who



did a good job with "Somebody's Wedding Day" which he played well and not badly. He was then joined by Dennis Taylor to do their famous



Penyffordd, a great Music Hall setting

Laurel and Hardy performance. Dennis said he was pleased that the evening did include a few variety type acts rather than just Formby Songs.

We did not know what to expect when Garry Mac came on. It turned out he was a professional entertainer, and this was obvious when he did a great job of playing "Blackpool Rock" on a borrowed Uke. He seemed to really enjoy playing. Time was slowly running out so Jim Knight cut down his session by playing just one song "Lads of the Village Get Cracking", and Cyril Palmer followed this on his Baritone Uke by playing "She's Funny That Way" and "Raining in my Heart". Unfortunately we did not get Delilah tonight. And last but by no means least Jonathan Baddeley, our superb backing track producer, sang about learning to play the Uke, and was delighted to find that even though he was at the end of the programme there was still one Formby song that had not been played; believe it or not "Cleaning Windows".

And so came the last Thrash and many fond farewells. It had been a grand evening. We had had a great evening's entertainment, very pleasant company, a superb buffet, and met a number of old friends. What more could we ask for. Oh! By the way thanks to Alan Evans for donating a couple of excellent coloured waistcoats, and Garry Mac for the two striped jackets he gave us to do as we wished; he also gave a small one to Daniel Smith. A nice thought Garry. I have taken one waistcoat, the other has gone to Sheffield, and one jacket has been reserved. Anyone interested in the other please let us know. Being put in a corner about disposal of these items can I suggest that any suitable small donation which is made to our Charity Fund would be appreciated.

Our thanks to all who took part in the entertainment, dealt with the refreshments and other duties such as Concert producers and sound engineers, furniture removers, or even just sat and enjoyed this unusual evening; a big thank you from the North Wales Branch. At what time did you get home? Very late or was it sometime the next day? Cliff Royle. *Thanks Cliff, on time as usual.*

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**Andy Eastwood Rang**—Stan, I'm due on Radio Lancashire, Blackburn, in a few minutes can you tape it for me? Andy did a super grand show in the studio and held his own with the presenter and top comedian Billy Pierce. They fired question at him and he answered them all brilliantly. His uke playing—Lamp Post, - Mr Wu — followed by a quick burst of "Swimmin With The Wimmin" was perfect, but the highlight was definitely his jazzed up classic on the violin.

Andy is actually a Lancashire lad. He was born in Blackburn and during his broadcast he received a call from Margaret Stinson who wanted to know if he was related to her husband's uncle: Bill Stinton? Andy was well chuffed at this because Bill was the uke playing grandfather who bought him his first uke and encouraged him to play.

**ANDY'S NOVEMBER BOOKINGS**—Touring for two weeks—Royal British Legion Veterans Variety Show. Also with Ken Dodd playing in the south. **SUNDAY 23rd November**—Manchester Opera House Ken Dodd Special Variety Bill.

## A Wonderful 100th for Alice Deakin

Jim and I arrived at the Warrington Blind Centre to entertain and help celebrate the 100th Birthday of local born Alice Deakin and what a great surprise we had. The place was packed solid and bulging at the seams with friends and relatives from all over the country. It was a surprise party for Alice so she didn't know what to make of it. She was overwhelmed but pleased with the number that had turned up to honour her great life. The age group ranged from about 4 to 100.

Jim looked worried as we walked in carrying the sound equipment. "Stan," he said, "What are we going to do to entertain all these. I can't tell any jokes with all these children here."

To get the children singing we started off with one of George Formby's, "I Like Bananas Because They Have No Bones" and not one child joined in. However fear of being asked to sing again kept them quiet for the rest of the show.



Alice Deakin 100 years old

At least a dozen photographers were taking snaps of Alice when Warrington's Mayor, Mrs Pauline Nelson turned up with her consort. As soon as she arrived I heard her say, "Hee I like George Formby, he's one of my favourites."

From then on the concert went with a swing with the Mayor joining in every song.

During a pause in the programme I whispered to the Mayor, "I'd like to write to you re. George Formby archives that have gone missing. OK?" "Yes," she said, "drop me



a line and I'll see what I can do."

The following day I handed in a letter to the Mayor's office stating that the council are claiming that they have destroyed up to £20,000s worth of George Formby memorabilia and nobody appears to know how, why, or where it was destroyed. And, in the event that they have not been destroyed, we wish to borrow some of the items for George's 100th Anniversary.

A couple of days later I received a reply from the Mayor stating that she had passed my letter on to the Education Dept. Will keep you up to date on any progress.

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**Famous Last Words**— It's fireproof — I'm making a citizens arrest — Which wire do I cut? - Pull the pin and count to what? - I wonder where Mother Bear is? - It's probably just a rash — I'll hold it while you light the fuse — I can do it with my eyes closed — What's that priest doing here — For God's sake don't strike that mat . .



## A TV Interview with Binkie Stuart who was the little girl who performed with George in "Keep Your Seats Please"

"I was three and a half when I appeared with George Formby and my recollections are very vivid. He was very simple and it was his simplicity that really appealed to me. He was himself and he didn't put on any airs and graces with anyone. It was through working with George that made me feel that film making is fun. That's how great he was!



I took to George very much and always felt very comfortable with him. But I never took to Gracie Fields. On one occasion I remember Gracie came on set to watch the filming. She was with Monty Banks, who was the Director. Monty placed me on Gracie's knee and said, 'this is my infant prodigy.' I didn't know what he meant but I had this intense feeling of dislike and wriggled off her knee.

I didn't take to everyone but I certainly took to Uncle George, as I called him. My dressing room was next to George & Beryl's and it was written in my contract that I must have an afternoon sleep. I wasn't able to sleep for the noise coming from their room. Beryl was insisting that George should practise his ukulele playing and Beryl was practising her dance routines.

I didn't mind the noise. I just pretended to be asleep, but on one occasion Florence Desmond came down to visit my mother and when she heard the noise she immediately went off in search of Monty Banks. She was complaining, 'How on earth can a child sleep with all that racket.' Because of that I was put in the Gracie Fields suite, which was luxurious and far better than our sparse little dressing room.

Beryl was very protective of George and possibly felt that if anyone should have the luxurious room it should be George. I was absolutely enchanted by George playing his ukulele. Mother and father were both musicians so I came from a musical background. But it was so serious. George's playing was so simple and it appealed to me tremendously. So easy going.

On one occasion mother was feeling ill and had to stay in her room. I felt so afraid with all the action going on that I broke down in tears and nobody could calm me. I remember George coming over to me playing his ukulele and singing, and everything started again.



On the occasion when Beryl wasn't around—she had flu—Uncle George was much more at ease and we had a great time playing together. He was much different, very relaxed. *The above is more confirmation that Beryl had to be the serious one with two feet firmly placed on the ground. George, however, was happy to have a ball of fun.*

## Greg Martin seeks OBE for Beryl

Att Mr Blair, 10 Downing Street, London.

Dear Mr Blair, I realize that much time is being spent on other matters at the moment, and you have my heartiest support for this.

But even in this busy time, I would like to bring to both yours, and the nation's attention, of the terrible injustice for Mrs Beryl Formby, the wife and Manager of the late and great George Formby, who was missed from the honours list after the Second World War. Next year is George Formby's 100<sup>th</sup> birthday, and it seems right to address this oversight.



It is an amazing fact, that Mrs Formby followed her husband to all the war fronts to entertain our troops, and although Montgomery had warned her of the dangers, she still went with George and Montgomery after the D Day landings to entertain and help out. In fact they were the very first entertainers to follow the troops into battle zones, most other entertainers preferring to wait until it was safe and secure to go.

Another interesting fact was that it would be commonplace for Beryl, while in these combat zones. To take messages from frontline soldiers and pass these messages back to their families, writing personally to their loved ones.

On one occasion, Mrs Formby, while in a danger zone in Burma, chartered a plane from her own funds, to fly to a remote jungle to take the picture of a soldiers grave, so as to pass this to his family at the requests, being poor and unable to get any information from the government of the day. This she did and succeeded in doing.

Her wartime efforts for food parcels and similar were extraordinary, because her skills at organization and management were so good. Ironically, her two helpers both received the OBE, yet Mrs Formby was snubbed.

After the war, and long before apartheid campaigns had begun and long before even the world states and churches recognized its evil, she spoke directly of its terrible consequences and its evil nature.

George and Beryl Formby visited South Africa, and were told not to entertain for black audiences, which had been arranged. Mrs Formby immediately reorganized concerts for all the black fans and made them free entry, with the Formby's covering the costs herself.

For this act, the South African government and Daniel Malan, head of the National Party, personally threatened both her and George's life. She was not disturbed or phased by this, and went on further to carry and cuddle a young black girl, who wanted to give George flowers. George and Beryl Formby accepted flowers from many of the fans and kisses from the children. For this act by Beryl Formby was deported with her husband from South Africa, were she vowed never to return before the cruel and archaic system was ousted.

I could not fit here, the total list of charities that Beryl Formby ensured were supported, and although they were in the name of George, it was Beryl that worked tirelessly on this.



Beryl Formby ensured that a balance was made against income they received, to services they gave to support good and needy causes.

It is a commonly known fact, that without Beryl, there would not have been a George Formby, she was the rock and the brains behind all that George did, very much as Alex Ferguson is to Manchester United. The difference being that Beryl was a woman and not expected to be successful in those times. It upset George Formby greatly that Britain had snubbed his wife, whom had worked tirelessly to ensure both the success of her husband, and the success of his work efforts.

She did more than most, yet while the women who had kept quiet and demure, got accolades, she was seen as nothing more than a mouthy northerner, suffering as much then, as those might today at the hands of the modern gutter press.

It was unfortunate for Mrs Formby that because of her great and strong management technique that the powers of the time did not honour her with the same accolade as her husband. They had expected her to be seen and not heard, because she was a woman in a then male dominated world of management and entertainment.

She was forthright and down to earth, and her humour was very northern, which did not help in a then north and south divided country. As was once said to ENSA in the war, when they ask George to stop playing on Sundays, "We will stop entertaining on Sundays, when our forces stop dieing on Sundays".

Next year is the 100<sup>th</sup> birthday of George Formby, and it seems fitting, and that no better present or honour could be given, than giving posthumously, the OBE to Mrs Beryl Formby she so deserved. In the age we live in, where selfishness is the key to both success and dedication to the UK is so poor. It is a good chance to honour a great northern women, whom was a selfless as she was hard working, and shows how a person can both succeed and give something back at the same time.

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## A Tribute to Jack Jones and George Formby in George's Anniversary Year

Pat Ralston is organising a special tribute to Jack & George at the same ROOSTERS Club where we held Jack's Memorial and the date is Friday 11th June 2004.



This will clash with Liverpool Night so we've decided to hold our Liverpool meeting at this Warrington venue for this special occasion.

Pat wishes to stage the concert because she feels that, as Jack was a life long Formby fan he would have wished her to do so for George's Anniversary. *Quite right!*



There will be a charge of £2 to cover part of the cost of the buffet. A raffle will also be held for which raffle prizes will be appreciated. Tickets will be available soon. Further details will be published later in the Newsletter.

## N. West Branches Shine at Warner's Holme Lacy Hotel by Brian Edge

Members of the Sale, Peniffordd, Crewe and Stratford Branches of the G.F.S. regularly get together for mid-week holidays at Warner's Stately Homes notably Nidd Hall near Harrogate, Thoresby Hall in Sherwood Forest, Bodelwyddan Castle in North Wales and Holme Lacy Hall near Hereford.

The standard of entertainment in Warner's entertainment Pavilions is first class and Entertainment Managers are loath to risk their reputations on amateur performers but having said that they usually agree to a mid-day spot and then give the event excellent publicity. However, on our latest trip to Holme Lacy the Entertainment Manager there gave us a prime spot 9.30 to 10pm and we were able to perform to an audience of 300 at peak period.

As we waited for our call in the dressing rooms, all smartly turned out in black trousers, white shirts, bow ties and coloured waistcoats, it was great to see amongst the photographs of the artistes who had previously performed there, a picture of Andy Eastwood, a great entertainer, who from a small boy learned the basics of his trade at the George Formby Society in Blackpool.

Our 30-minute show was a sensation and complimentary remarks never stopped flowing. On the last night the Entertainment Manager in his closing remarks said "I have had so many messages about George Formby over the past two days the Group will be pleased to hear that the contract is in the post! It was certainly a nice compliment. One thing was obvious and that was that Formby music is certainly loved by the vast majority who patronise Warner's holidays. The music is great fun for the audience, a delightful treat, steeped in nostalgia.

Those taking part in the show were: Cliff Royle, Alan Evans, Jim Knight, Connie and Brian Edge, Cyril Palmer and Walter Kirkland. Members of the concert party's supporters club was Dot and Val Wood, Sheila Palmer, Myra Knight, Margaret Royle, Alice Cronshaw and Eunice Evans. *Thanks Brian, sounds like another successful weekend.*

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**True Story from my Granddaughter**—A neighbour was very concerned because his dog had killed the next door neighbour's rabbit and brought it into his house.

His neighbours were out so he gave the dead rabbit a good washing, brushed, combed, blow waved, fluffed it up etc. and then jumped over the fence to place it in a hutch. The neighbour would naturally think that the rabbit had died.

The neighbour's wife and young daughter returned home and immediately gave out a loud scream. They thought that someone was playing a sick joke. Apparently the rabbit had died a few days earlier and they'd given it a ceremonial burial in the garden. The dog had dug up a dead rabbit, and the neighbours haven't spoken to each other since.

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EVERY YEAR, for the past three, a neighbour has knocked on my door, borrowed a uke, with backing tape and words to Lamp Post and Windows, used them at a local event and then returned them back to me. How strange, you'd think he'd buy a cheap uke.

EBAY AUCTIONS on computer:- Just bought a double CD of Lesley Garret. How much? 1 penny



## Hotel Getaway on TV

Well I finally managed to obtain a video copy of Hotel Getaway from Granada Studios, but what a disappointment. They've chopped it down to the extent that we are hardly on film at all. And little mention was made of the George Formby players, not even in the credits at the end of the show.

As reported in an earlier Newsletter, the programme is similar to Candid Camera and in this particular episode, titled "Love & Romance" three couples were given a free weekend at this dreadfully organised hotel. They suffered having to eat poor food, bad management, waiters offering black market goods (edible underwear) etc. The couple that stayed the course longest were the winners. In the actual filming Dennis Lee made a grand speech condemning the cheating waiters, but this was left out.

Brian Edge summed it up when he said that the problem was that these three couples were supposed to be having a most miserable weekend and the producers thought that by inviting a bunch of Formby players it would be just too much for them to bear. How wrong they were because instead of pouring on misery we actually brightened the guests up with our Formby songs. In fact we had them dancing. This also wasn't shown.

The video copy has been handed over to Jon Baddeley if anyone wants a copy please contact Jon on 01782 680587.

## It's About Time They Tidied Up The English Language

The European Commission has just announced an agreement whereby English will be the official language of the EU rather than Esperanto or German which for a long time has been a strong possibility. As part of the negotiations, Her Majesty's Government conceded that English spelling has long needed considerable modification if the plan is to go through smoothly. In an effort to achieve this the Government has accepted a five-year phase in plan for the language which will eventually be known as Euro-English.

In the first year, "s" will replace the soft "c." Certainly, this will make the sivil servants jump with joy. Also in the first year the hard "c" will be dropped in favour of the "k." This should klear up konfursion and keyboards kan have 1 less letter.

here will be growing publik enthusiasm in the second year when the troublesome "ph" will be replaced with "f". This will result in words like fotograf being 20% shorter.

In the 3<sup>rd</sup> year, publik akseptanse of the new spelling kan be ekspeketed to reach the stage where more komplikated changes kan be made. In this respect Governments will enkorage the removal of double letter, which have always been a deterrent to akurate speling. Also, al wil agre that the horrible mes of the silent "e" in the language is disgraceful, and they should go away.

By the fourth year, people wil be reseptiv to step such as replasing "th" with "z" and "w" with "v."

During ze fifz year, ze unesesary "0" kan be dropt from vords containing "ou" and similar changes vud of kors be aplid to ozer kombinations of letters.

After ziz fifz yer, ve vil hav a reli sensibl riten styl. Zer vil be no mor trubl or difikultis and evrivun vil find it ezi to understand ech ozer. Ze drem vil finali kum tru and zen ve wil tak over ze vorld! *If you want any more information on this ring Brian Edge.*

## Sale Report by Hilda & Vera

What a bumper meeting we had at Sale. There were some new faces who had come along to help Sheila and Cyril celebrate their forthcoming Golden Wedding Anniversary. Cyril thanked everyone for coming and for the cards, gifts and good wishes they received. They provided an excellent buffet and many thanks are due to all who helped to make the evening a success.

Cyril opened the show by welcoming Alice and Joe Hodkin and Gladys and Colin Reed, all from Yorkshire and Brian White's friend, Ken Riley, who had all come to their first meeting at Sale and Colin was celebrating his 76<sup>th</sup> birthday. He also mentioned that Anne and Ken Ratcliffe would be celebrating their Ruby Wedding Anniversary on 31st August. Anne and Ken ran the Sale Branch for many years and still give their valued support. We send our congratulations to them and also to Jonathan and Pam Baddeley who will celebrate their Silver Wedding Anniversary on 19th August. Our old friend George Cheetham has just reached 82 years of age and Les Pearson very kindly brought him and Bob Walsh to the meeting. Cyril also welcomed Val Wood who was just recovering from a spell in hospital.



50th Anniversary for Cyril & Sheila

The first item was the Thrash, with eighteen enthusiastic players and the first soloist of the evening was Eddie Bancroft with *Mr. Wu's a Window Cleaner* and *Blackpool Rock*. Next was Jonathan Baddeley with *Photo in the Press* and a beautiful rendition of *Memory* on the clarinet. Jim Knight gave us *When the Lads of the Village Get Cracking* and *Twelfth Street Rag* with Walter rattling his bones. It was great to see Joe Hodkin looking much better as he gave us *Pleasure Cruise* and *Strollin' Medley*. Our *Sergeant Major* was performed by Brian White and then *Blackpool Belle* with some amusing 'alternative' verses thrown in. Then it was the turn of our 'First Lady', Alice, who sang *A Little on the Lonely Side* and *I Wonder Who's Kissing Him Now*, - watch out Walter! *Swimmin' With The Wimmun'* and *Somboddy's Wedding Day* were performed by Captain (Royle) Birdseye, complete with naval cap, oilskins and a full beard - but no fish fingers!! Colin Reed then gave us two songs which we don't hear very often - *Why Can't I* and *Banjo Boy* - very enjoyable.



After a break to enjoy the splendid buffet and to draw the raffle, Les Pearson took over as M.C. and he introduced Jon and Pam who entertained us with *Dreamboat* and *Noughts and Crosses*. Then it was Alan Chenery's turn with *Little Back Room Upstairs* (with Jonathan on the Clarinet) and the Lonnie Donegan favourite *Putting on the Style*. Mac Magee played the ever popular *Matchstalk Men* and the lovely medley, *Some of These Days*, with Walter playing the bones ('Knicky-Knacks' as we called them in 'olden times') and Jon playing the clarinet. Then it was Connie's



turn with *Bless 'em All* and then, with husband *Brian, I Like Riding on a Choo Choo Choo*. Walter Kirkland, who performed *You Can't Keep a Growing Lad Down*, was joined by Jim Knight and Frank Humphries playing their bones and Alan Newton with his castanets, to Herb Alpert's *Tijuana Taxi* (no expense spared at Sale!), followed by Frank singing *Bring Me Sunshine* and *I Don't Know Why I Love You*. We had a change of mood from Phil Jones who did a *Beatle Medley*.

Alison Nadin amazed us with her magic act and then sang one of Frankie's songs *Spread a Little Sunshine*. Gladys Reed, followed that with *Have You Ever Been Lonely* and *Ukulele Lady*. Stan sang *You're the Only good Thing That Happened To Me* and, after a few jokes, did a parody on *My Way*. Alan Newton gave us *Oh You Have No Idea* and, especially for Cyril and Sheila, *When Your Old Wedding Ring Was New*. Then it was Margaret Moran's turn with *I Only Have Eyes For You* and *The Old Homing Waltz*. The evening was rounded off with Arthur Newton giving us *Nine o'Clock* and Ged Collins telling us that his *Grannie's Got a Gun in Her Handbag*, his own composition, complete with party poppers. What a great night! *Many thanks ladies for an excellent report. It was a great night and I thought that young Cliff was brilliant playing his uke solos.*

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**Uke Banjos For Sale**—"Down South" British Manufacture, ten tension hooks, good condition, with case (bit tatty). Price approx. £150.

"Slingerland", American, 1930's, Gibson Style, 16 tension hooks, Rare opportunity. Uke in excellent condition. Case in good condition. Price £370. Martin Fowell (01745) 854390.  
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**George's 100th** - Over the past couple of weeks we've seen several Laurel & Hardy films on TV and I understand that L & H fans are celebrating the 50th Anniversary of them joining together as a comedy team.

So, what L & H can do, we can probably do better. We'll have to contact a few TV companies for the same treatment. It's been at least 10 years since George's films have been on TV so there's a new generation of kids out there who haven't met George yet. There'll be a demand for cheap ukes.  
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Good old favourites Stan & Ollie

**John Livens Up Frodsham**—I rang John Shreeve, "Do you fancy coming to Blackpool tonight, - there's a couple of empty seats." - "Sorry Stan, I'm on holiday on a caravan site in Frodsham." - "Frodsham? That's where our superstar reporter, Cliff, lives. Must tell him." Within a few minutes Cliff was running round the camp sites looking for John, and shortly after they were having a session together at Cliff's home. While Margaret was brewing up and making sandwiches they were entertaining her with all the old Formby songs. But Cliff gave it a miss when John gave a lightning demonstration of *The William Tell Overture*. They had a great night!



John Shreeve

## Young Cliff's Report on Rhyl Festival

Last weekend we were asked to play for a Festival at Rhyl where our very own Frank Humphries is involved with the Rhyl Miniature Railway both on maintenance and other duties. Our regular Branch Members attended on the Saturday and Sunday and on Saturday we were supported by Alice Cronshaw and Walter Kirkland. Sunday also saw Martin Fowell joining in the festivities. Saturday was a very hot and sunny day; apparently too hot for Alice who was not too well the next day so was unable to attend. Others also suffered to a lesser extent with the effects of the sun. Then on Sunday a complete change; thunderstorms early on then dull and quite cool later.

The audiences were rather sparse, but as we were near the Miniature Railway Terminus we understand that there were large queues there who could hear us play and really enjoyed our music, especially when they passed us on the train. All was not lost however for we were treated to a free ride on the train which took us all round the lake being driven by our very own Frank Humphries. We played Formby songs as we rolled along, keeping all the other passengers happy, and were videod all the way round by the Guard. Understand the film is great. Frank never heard a thing! Lucky him.

Although our audiences were not great during the two days we were constantly being videod by members of the public so someone somewhere will enjoy some good singing at home. In addition we raised nearly £140 for charity which takes our total so far this year to about £2000.

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### Dave Clews Turns The Uke World Upside Down

Dave Clews from Stoke on Trent has joined the Crewe Society and he is determined to play the ukulele. Dave however is a little different from all our other players inasmuch as he is left-handed.

This means that he has to string his ukulele in the opposite fashion to the normal and in addition has to read all the ukulele chord symbols in mirror image. Special thanks to a gentleman in our society by the name of Bill Turner who has done a lot of spade work for Dave by fixing him up with a suitably modified ukulele and giving him a good start with his chords.

We are pleased to say that it is now paying off. Dave is practising hard and we are sure that he has the ability and the determination to make the grade. Finding new players these days is quite a job and we are delighted to help Dave all we can, after all Paul McCartney is left handed and he did fairly well for himself!

#### HOW TO PLAY RIGHT HANDED

A poem I wrote some years back for left handed Martin Thomas.

So let's spare a thought for young Martin  
At playing right hand he's a dud  
He's tried up-side down through a mirror  
But it doesn't sound terribly good

Whenever he goes up to Blackpool  
To purchase a uke on the stall  
He finds that it's tuned for the right hand  
So he can't play the damn thing at all

But I've noticed that clever dick Mason  
Who handles the uke quite so deft  
Picks out the chords with his right hand  
And strums up and down with his left

So take my advice Martin Thomas  
And watch what the young ones can do  
They'll teach you to play ambidextrous  
Then you can play right handed too.



## Surprise Turn Up

Eva & I were watching Paul Crone on Granada TV. He has been walking through Lancashire and Cheshire with his bucket collecting money for Air Rescue Service, and on this occasion he stopped in the Middleton area where he was met by hordes of locals who had collected funds for him.



It's a very noisy show with loads of people shouting Hip, Hip Hooray at the top of their voices. Sometimes it is so deafening we have to turn the volume down. But

then, suddenly we discovered who was making all the noise. It's no other than our own Margaret Moran, pictured on the front row, making sure that all Middleton can hear her. Les Pearson, by her side, doesn't know what to make of it. He can't believe that so much noise can come from such a small frame. Good for you Margaret, you looked as if you were enjoying it all.

**BUT WHAT'S ALL THIS** about running round Blackpool scavenging in the dust bins? The story I got was that you took your grandchildren to the Blackpool baths and you lost your glasses. Panic—panic—panic, looking everywhere for your lost specs, tipping bins over all down the prom, until your granddaughter suggested that they may be in the pool. A dash back to the baths and there they were, - at the bottom in the deep-end. Crowds applauded as your granddaughter plunged in and brought them to the surface.

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**Letter From Gordon Hill**—Dear Stan, just after the 2nd World War, around 1946, I attended a gymkhana (There's a word from the past) at Huyton (Liverpool) Cricket Club. Huyton in those days was a sleepy backwater, the centre of an agricultural community long before the large overspill estates were built, giving it it's present unenviable reputation.

Every year the gymkhana was opened by a well known personality, and in the year I'm referring to, that personality was no other than George Formby.

I remember he was much better looking than he was on the screen, with a Riviera tan, an immaculate styled suit and gleaming teeth. He was a very pleasant man who chatted and laughed with various people and tried his luck on the cyclists training rollers, with one or two shouts of "Oooh Mother" I can't remember how long he was there, but I do remember him driving away in his maroon Humber Pullman with Beryl beside him, looking as pretty as a picture. *What a nice little story. Thanks to Gordon.*

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**Des Does It Again!!!!** - We were all busy enjoying ourselves celebrating Cyril & Sheila Palmer's Golden Wedding Anniversary. The third Friday in the month is always the Sale night and on this occasion it was a special night.

The following morning Eva told me that she'd received a phone call from Des who was at Liverpool looking for all the members. It was ten past ten when he turned up so it was too late to travel to Sale. I wouldn't like a job as your manager Des. Nerves wouldn't stand it

**For George's 100th, Mike Wallace** is hoping to put the record straight on Beryl, and would appreciate any information you may have on her. I've supplied him with quite a lot of basic stuff but he requires more so that he can prove once and for all that Beryl was the power that shot George to stardom.

If you have any interesting articles on Beryl please send them in and I will Email them to Michael.

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**Email from Memphis, Tennessee** Hello Mr. Evans, I thought I would take the time to send you an Email from Memphis, Tennessee and let you know that you have a George Formby fan here. I have an Uncle who lives in Warrington and I am sure he is also a fan. Perhaps on my next visit to the United Kingdom we could meet. Sincerely, Neil A. Tischer  
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## How to play the Spoons.

You take two spoons and you go like this  
Tap your leg, you really can't miss.  
Now tap back and forth 'tween your leg and your hand

Soon you'll be in great demand!  
Now mix it up and play with style -  
Takes a little practice, but you'll get it in a while.  
Now, tap your shoulders, tap your feet -  
There's lots of places you can keep the beat.  
Now spread out your fingers and you get a roll -  
Just a little trick to put a smile on your soul.  
Now, put it all together and what do you hear -  
The spoons making rhythm so perfectly clear.

And once you've mastered the art of playing spoons or bones you can join Walter Kirkland's group.  
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## USED STAMPS

As was reported recently we have lost dear Ivy Lockerbie who, among other things, collected used stamps for various charities.

Well Ken Ratcliffe, Ivy's son-in-law, has now taken over the job and wishes to receive any used stamps you have. If you don't visit Sale, send them to me and I will pass them to Ken. It's a very worthy cause. Many thanks

**Bob Walsh** - Well it was grand when I walked into the Sale meeting and bumped into our old friend, Bob Walsh. It must be 11 years at least since we last saw him. He was a very keen member of the George Formby Society in those days.



Bob was also a keen member of a concert troupe that toured round the Bury area giving shows, charity shows etc.

Unfortunately, like us all, Bob is having difficulty with night driving so he is limited to the number of events he can visit. *Anyway Bob, it was a treat to see you.*  
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**PENYFFORDD CHRISTMAS PARTY**— Please do not forget to book your tickets for the Christmas Party/Buffer on Friday December 5th. Tickets (£5 for adults; half price for accompanied children) now available.



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

Until Sun 7th Sept 2003— In The Mood Exhibition at The Imperial War Museum Nth The Quays, Trafford Wharf Rd, Trafford Park, Manchester M17 1TZ

Until April 2004—"Grin Up North" Exhibition at Museum of Lancashire, Stanley St, Preston. Ends April 2004, will feature Northern comedians. Good show.

May 1st, 2nd and 3rd 2004—Llandudno Extravaganza. Ring Alison Nadin

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

May 2004—Date and venue not yet decided—Children's George Formby Concert in Wigan with the Brownies will sing George Formby songs, plus others.

Sun 23rd May—Grand show to be held at Wigan Pier - More details later.

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.

Fri 11th June 2004— Jack Jones and George Formby Tribute in George's Anniversary Year. To be held at ROOSTERS, Warrington.

Sat July 17th 2004—Blackpool Prom

Sun July 18th—Fleetwood Festival

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 notify the media: TV, Radio, Press. Let's make it an Anniversary to be remembered.

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**Alan Newton's** just phoned to say that Peter Sellers turned up on TV in his own life story, and during the show he is being interviewed by Michael Parkinson. During the conversation he brings out a uke banjo and plays Windows in Formby style. *Thanks Alan. Yes, Peter Sellers was a very keen Formby fan. He played the uke and he also made a record called "George Formby Competition at Wembley." Peter plays the part of a radio commentator broadcasting the event at Wembley, where a number of contestants (all played by Peter) compete for the title of best Formby sound-alike. If you've not heard it I'll pop you a copy in the post.*

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**Keep Fit**—Bank Holiday Monday and around 5pm we were watching "Britain's Strongest Man" on TV. What a nice surprise when, at the end of the show who should pop up but George singing "Keep Fit." Sounded great.

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**Alan Randall**—Just heard that Alan Randall is having problems with his health which is causing problems playing the uke and also the vibraphone. Let's hope it is not the end of the road for Alan who has helped to keep George's name alive over the past 40 years.

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**Can't Sing!** - Just caught the tail end of a music debate on Sky TV and one of the panel said: In the old days the likes of Bing Crosby, Perry Como and George Formby would have jumped up at the drop of a hat to give a song on radio. So why don't today's so called stars? "I'll tell you why" said a man from the audience, "They can't sing!"

# 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.

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

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**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.

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

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**Westhoughton** - The Red Lion Pub (Opp. Police Station) Ring Gerry Mawdsley on 01942 81734, - Every last Wednesday in the month. Uke Tuition.

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**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.

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## Wintergardens George Formby Society Meetings:

Sat & Sun 13th & 14th Sept 2003

Sat & Sun 15th & 16th Nov 2003

2004—6th and 7th March following Penyffordd

26th and 27th June following Crewe

11th and 12th September following Liverpool

13th and 14th November following Liverpool

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.

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**Web Site** —Two Lancashire Lads:

[www.theollies.u-net.com/formby](http://www.theollies.u-net.com/formby).

E Mail: [GeorgeFormby@stanevans.co.uk](mailto:GeorgeFormby@stanevans.co.uk)

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

Paddy died in his sleep. He doesn't know he's dead yet. If he wakes up and finds out, it will kill him.