

THE

GEORGE FORMBY

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Newsletter 103



100th Anniversary Soon

A Very Merry
Christmas To
All and
A Prosperous
New Year.

Specially Produced for George Formby Fans
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Welcome to Newsletter No. 103—

We are now in the festive season of the year so a Merry Christmas to all and a Prosperous New Year. 2003 has been a good year for our concerts, and we have seen a lot of progress in the quality of our performances, so let us hope that George's 100th Anniversary Year, 2004, is at least, equally as progressive.

The year 2004 may be the last major opportunity we will have of publicising George and his songs so it is important that we make every effort to attend any of the functions we have for George's 100th. Hope you enjoy Newsletter No. 103 and many thanks to all who contributed in any way. Please read on: -

But First The Sad News—What a shock when I received a

letter from Beryl Drinkwater saying that Bob, 79, had passed on November 2nd. Bob, of Stourbridge, was dedicated to George Formby and playing the uke. My most vivid memory of Bob was at the Warrington George Formby Exhibition when, in response to my appeal for cheap ukes, he walked in carrying a huge bundle of them to sell to the many beginners who were uke hunting.



Bob with George at the Warrington Exhibition

Bob taught himself to play after his parents bought him a uke for £2 when he was quite young. He played a George Formby record over and over again until it was perfect, and today Beryl still owns the same uke. Over the years Bob, who was quite an expert at playing melodies on a wooden uke, had many pupils at his home. Beryl hopes that they get as much pleasure playing as Bob did

John Myerscough—we

regret also the loss of John Myerscough, 83, of Newton le Willows, near Warrington.

John & Doris were hooked on George when they also attended the Warrington Exhibition in 1991. For a number of years they attended the meetings at Sale, Liverpool, Blackpool and Warrington and thoroughly enjoyed singing along to the players. Although John bought two ukes he never quite got the hang of playing the first three basic chords. John told a tale of when he fancied learning to play the bones.



John and his late wife, Doris

He went in to Dawsons, the Warrington Music Shop and asked the young girl behind the counter if she sold bones. She looked at him as if he was strange and answered: You'll get bones from the butchers shop. John was a lovely quiet man who will be missed.

Jaap Hofman—Just received a phone call from Jaap, a regular reader of our Newsletter. He is looking for a George Formby player to go over to Holland to entertain, - expenses paid. So if you are interested in a holiday over there and playing for your supper, give Jaap a call on 0031 488 451 389 and he'll be pleased to hear from you. Jaap is a keen Formby fan so he is looking for mainly Formby.



Over in Holland they have great admiration for George and always take great care of any Formby visitors. *Thanks for your phone call Jaap. (He receives a Newsletter each month.)*

Martin Thomas—Way back in 1998 Martin sent in an article from the Birkenhead News newspaper, dated 1952. Tracing back through the old copies, I don't recall having used the cutting so here it is: -



"GEORGE FORMBY SHOULD HAVE STARTED at the BIRKENHEAD ARGYLE THEATRE." Forty eight year old George Formby, who announced this week that he is leaving the stage for a year because of ill-health, made his second ever appearance on a music hall bill at the Argyle Theatre, Birkenhead - the date was April 18th 1921, and his name was George Hoy. It would have been his first appearance if his mother, Mrs George Formby, had had more confidence in his ability.

Alderman D J Clarke, of the Argyle, and Mr and Mrs Formby senior, were old friends, and Mr Clarke arranged with Mrs Formby (her husband had died) that young George, too heavy to follow the career as a jockey he had planned and turning for a new career to the stage, should make his debut at the Argyle.

At the last minute the arrangement was changed. The famous Argyle was one of the variety's principal shop windows, and Mrs Formby feared the test might be too great for young George Hoy, as he called himself.

His first week was switched to the small hall in Earlestown, Lancashire, and his 1921 appearance at the Argyle was his second in public. It was a big success, and the "News" critic said of George: "George Hoy, the new comedian (son of the late George Formby) will make a big name for himself in the music hall world. He has an unusual style, and the quaint mannerisms and articulation of his father, which should help him to go far. He keeps his hearers laughing during the whole time he patters in the Lancashire dialect and makes a big hit with songs "Gee Up" and "We're All Waiting For a Nice Young Girl."

From 1924 onward he was always top of the bill, and his records have sold in millions. During the war he paid £300,000 come tax. George came to the Argyle as top of the bill until 1930—afterwards his earnings were beyond the capacity of the theatre to pay.
Thanks Martin and my apologies for the delay in using it.

APPEAL FROM THE EDITOR - I am always in need of ONE—LINERS to fill spaces like this one. Short news items etc. Send Em All In.

Cock-eyed M.C. Creates Havoc at Crewe Show

Eighty two attended Crewe's November meeting where a strange whistling noise created early problems for the organisers. "It's in the hall thermostat" declared one of the early guests. "No, its in the disabled toilet" said another. "Its somebody's mobile phone" said another. "It really was a bit of a pantomime I can tell you, and in the end they were all wrong. It turned out to be the stopcock in the gents toilet!



Tom Meredith who is feeling much better after a protracted illness really showed that he was back to his old self by miming a couple of Frank Sinatra's songs, one of them being "Making Whoopee." It was a really good performance by Tom.

Comedian Peter Gratton really put the Official Crewe Censor under great pressure with his "Sh....aving Crème" performance. At one time Connie had eighty one pairs of eyes on her." Her immediate thoughts were " Hey, you can't do that there 'ere!" However, before she could take any action against the culprit, our Master of Ceremonies Stan Evans jumped in, and under the ruse of the story being of a "clinical nature," proceeded to tell the audience about a dear old lady who was virtually blind but had her eyesight completely restored when he gave her a quick "brown overcoat" flash. Well I for one don't believe that story, as the old lady would have needed the entire resources of Joddral Bank Radio Telescope to have seen that. Does anyone want the Censor's job? There's a vacancy!

The performing artistes were as follows:

STEVE HASSALL "I've been a long time Gone" and "Hitting the High Spots Now." DON CHALKLEY "I went all Hot and Cold" and "Pleasure Cruise," CONNIE EDGE "Lambeth Walk" and "Enjoy Yourself its Later than you Think." ALAN NEWTON "Trailing Around in a Trailer," and "There's No Business Like Show Business." WALTER KIRKLAND "You Can't Keep a Growing Lad Down" and a Bones Medley. BRIAN EDGE "When I come up on the Football Pools" and " A Daring Young Man." ALICE CRONSHAW "You made me Love You" and "I've Got a Boy Friend" (vocals). GREG SIMITER "Smile All the Time/ Anchor's Away Medley" and "Leaning on a Lamppost" accompanied by ROB SIMISTER on the cornet. CLIFF ROYLE "The Window Cleaner" and "Little Back Room Up Stairs." JONATHAN BADDELEY "The Old Cane Bottom Chair" and "Emperor of Lancashire." ALISON NADIN "Aif talks about his charming Wife" (vent). TOM MEREDITH two Frank Sinatra numbers including "Making Whoopee." THE THREE TENORS (PHIL, DEG AND FRANK) "The Wartime Medley" and "Sergeant Major." ARTHUR NEWTON "Mr Wu's a Window Cleaner Now" and "I Wish I was Back on the Farm." JIM KNIGHT "The Chattanooga Shoeshine Boy" and a Christmas Bones Medley. CYRIL PALMER "Singing the Blues" and "What more can I Say." PETER GRATTON "Sh....aving Cream." Des Redfern "Sing along." STAN EVANS AND STAN WATKINSON "If I had my life to live over" and "Ain't No Pleasing You" with guest BRIAN. Finally ASHLEY CALDICOTT AND THE STAN'S "Playing it on my uke-banjo."



Ashley a great mover

CONTINUED—It was a good night and enjoyed by all. Special thanks to all who help to clear up after the show. *Thanks Brian, but the one who impressed me the most was Ashley Caldicott. Every month he is improving his performance but at this meeting he swung his body and tambourine about like a natural. And did you see him run to the stage when his name was called out? Good for you Ashley. You're doing GREAT!!!!*

Bob Muirhead Emails

According to today's regulators and bureaucrats, those of us who were kids in the 40's, 50's, 60's, 70's probably shouldn't have survived.

Our baby cribs were covered with bright coloured lead-based paint. We had no childproof lids on medicine bottles, doors or cabinets, and when we rode our bikes, we had no helmets. (Not to mention the risks we took hitchhiking.)



As children, we would ride in cars with no seat belts or air bags. Riding in the back of a pickup truck on a warm day was always a special treat. We drank water from the garden hose and not from a bottle. Horrors! We shared one soft drink with four friends, from one bottle, and no one actually died from this.

We ate cupcakes, bread and butter, and drank soda pop with sugar in it, but we were never overweight because we were always outside playing. We would leave home in the morning and play all day, as long as we were back when the streetlights came on. No one was able to reach us all day. No cell phones. Unthinkable.

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We would spend hours building our go-carts out of scraps and then rode down the hill, only to find out we forgot the brakes. After running into the bushes a few time, we learned to solve the problem. We did not have Play Stations, Nintendo 64, X-Boxes, no video games at all, no 99 channels on cable, videotape movies, surround sound, personal cell phones, personal computers, or Internet chat rooms.

We had friends! We went outside and found them. We fell out of trees, got cut and broke bones and teeth, and there were no lawsuits from these accidents. We made up games with sticks and tennis balls. We rode bikes or walked to a friend's home and knocked on the door, or rang the bell or just walked in and talked to them.

The best players were picked and the others had to learn to deal with disappointment. The idea of a parent bailing us out if we broke a law was unheard of. They actually sided with the law. Imagine that!

This generation has produced some of the best risk-takers and problem solvers and inventors, ever. The past 50 years have been an explosion of innovation and new ideas. We had freedom, failure, success and responsibility, and we learned how to Deal with it all. And you're one of them! Congratulations.

Hey Bob! What about those born in the 20s and 30? We were born during the aftermath of the first world war, and survived through the second world war. We didn't get fat because there was very little to eat. I remember taking raw carrots to school to eat because we had no sweet coupons, and eating candles for chewing gum. Tasted terrible! No clothing coupons so we had one pair of shoes with the toes kicked out. Socks with holes in both heels. Everybody wore mother's home knitted jumpers—some didn't fit! But we survived

N. Wales Report by Young Cliff—

Another outstanding evening with a record attendance of just under one hundred. Superb entertainment, excellent buffet, free diary, crackers, and Santa Claus. Unfortunately he could not get his reindeers in. Now where could you get all that for a fiver?



The programme started off with a THRASH, followed by our Star Opener Alan Newton with Broadway Melody, followed by Crewe or ex Crewe members Brian Edge (He was such a daring young man); Connie Edge (I double dare you; Alan Chenery (Little back room upstairs); and Pamela Baddeley (A Christmas Song); and the Three Tenors accompanied by Jonathan Baddeley on the Clarinet (The old kitchen kettle keeps singing a song). Phil Hughes stayed on the stage to accompany young Daniel who played and sang Chinese Laundry Blues and Lamp Post, and did he do well! No not Phil but Daniel. Dan Lewis sang "Let me try again"; and Tom Meredith played and sang "Our Sergeant Major".

So it came to our first Presentation session for over the last twelve months or so we have been raising money for a Memorial to our Founder Member Lesley Lee who unfortunately died in tragic accident after retiring to Cyprus with husband Dennis only a few months previously. Lesley was always interested in children, and it was decided that any monies raised would go to providing a memorial to her at the Hope House Hospice for Sick Children which is currently being built in North Wales. A Cheque for £2000 was presented to their representative Margaret Eaves who in her thank you speech gave a brief description of the current state of progress with the new building, and its estimated running costs. As yet the form of the Memorial is still to be decided.

In his presentation speech Jim Knight said that a substantial proportion of the money had been raised by the efforts of Alison Nadin and her Mother Jean (sadly now departed) as a result of Garden Parties held at their home. Other sources of revenue were by donations made by the public, and from various concerts performed by Branch Members.

We were expecting three photographers to come from the Press. How many turned up? None!

There was a re-start with Gerald Jones doing some Christmas numbers; Derek Seely sang "Until the 12th of Never), and our very own Greg Simister rattled off "Smile all the time". He always comes up with a different song each time. We do not know how he does it. Many of us take twelve months to even learn one. Well done Greg.

And so came the interval with the Buffet, Santa Clause (Tony Elsdon assisted by his Fairies who handed out goodies to the children and free diaries to all the adults). Boxes of chocolates were presented to the Legion Staff by our two Lady Bouncers who looked delightful in their Christmas attire. We are of course deeply indebted to the Legion for their support; in particular to Mark and his Staff.

The second half started in secret for the heat had been raised by announcing that a top group were due to entertain us. The curtains opened to show the Penyffordd Plonkers all dressed in black, with white ties, bowler hats, dark glasses and moustaches; well all except one. Each had a different instrument which they played individually to the tune of "Dark Town Strutters Ball". Cliff (Keyboard); Alison (String Bass); Frank (Guitar); Deg (Saxophone); Phil (Banjo) and Jim (Washing board, bells, car horn and you name it; anything that would make a noise). This was followed by a comedy act by Jim Knight and Frank Humphries miming " You always hurt the one you love" with half grapefruit skins as mouths. The fast second half of the song was accompanied by Jim making a lot of noise on his washing board etc, petals dropping everywhere, horns going and small

and large Party Poppers being let off all over the place. It was terrific. Of course the merriment was not finished for we had Hester Ectomy on to play the bones. She came from America as a substitute for our old friend Lance Boil who played the bones for us some time ago. She was dressed in black tights, and wore a blonde wig; she did have a hat and dress on as well as dark glasses. Hester gave an excellent demonstration in various positions as to how the bones should be played and made it look so sexy. It is rumoured she was seen heading for Broughton chased by half the male audience.

So let's be serious. Jonathan Baddeley played a lovely Christmas medley in rumba style on his Clarinet; Arthur Newton sang "Barmaid at the Rose and Crown"; Jim Knight aided by four other bones players, and a gentleman with castanets, showed us how to play a Christmas medley; and Alice Cronshaw sang "I want a boy friend"; apparently she had heard that her current one was already being chased towards Broughton. And our very own star Alison Nadin put on a new ventriloquist act featuring Alf and Nellie; an apparently very unhappy married couple duly brought out in the song "I remember it well".. There is no end to Alison's talent Apparently she made Nellie's clothes. Dressmaker too? I asked to be left to the end in case time ran out, but I was called in as a reserve as Des never arrived. It was an opportunity to play "The fields of Athenry" for as I didn't know the words I just did "50% of its mine". Frank Humphries followed with his melodious voice to sing "Bring me sunshine bring me love" and then we had the final THRASH. followed by "Should Old Acquaintance be Forgotten and Never Brought to Mind".

We had one sad thought. Regrettably Vera Jones has not been well for quite some time so she and Harry were unable to attend. Get better soon Vera. May I say a personal thank you to all those who helped make the evening such a great success, and from our Committee wish all our readers a Merry Christmas, and a Happy New Year. Cliff.
P.S. Practise Nights for learners and others are starting January 5th 7.30, at the Penyfordd Legion. Ukas are available at the practice sessions. *Thanks Cliff, sorry The Past Its couldn't make it, We were busy with Christmas concerts.*

Alan Newton writes—Stan, I always look forward to reading your Newsletter but rarely can find any items for you to print. I have always lived in South Cheshire and my interest in music was started for me by my mother insisting I went for piano lessons as a schoolboy. Later I turned to the trombone and when I joined a local brass band they taught me how to push and pull the slide in and out. At 18 I joined the R.A.F. for two years National Service and after this period worked in the Housing Dept of Crewe and Northwich Council. I continued there until taking early retirement at the age of 56 years in 1993.



My musical interests have continued especially with my trombone in all kinds of Brass Bands and Dance Orchestras, serious music and work in the pit. But my long term commitment has been with The Salt City Jazz Men and we play every Thursday night at the Barbridge Inn, near Nantwich. My interest in the ukulele began in 1997 and after speaking to Brian Edge started attending the local meetings, but nowadays can be found at the meetings in Sale and Penyfordd. I enjoy meeting the good and friendly people at the ukulele concerts, and although I perform solo, I also enjoy the duet songs with such as Brian Edge, Dennis Lee, Walter Kirkland and Colin Wood. I have recently started playing the Castanets, - Just a thought but if anyone is interested in playing the castanets we could form a group.

Odd Signs from Jack (Bones) & Ann Bolton

Spotted in a toilet of a London office: "Toilet Out Of Order, Please Use Floor Below.

In a Laundromat: Automatic Washing Machines: Please Remove Your Clothes When The Light Goes Out.

In a London department store: Bargain Basement Upstairs.

In an office: Would The Person Who Took The Step Ladder Please Bring It Back Or Further Steps Will Be Taken

Office notice: After The Tea Break Staff Should Empty The Teapot And Stand Upside Down On The Draining Board.

Outside a second-hand shop: We Exchange Anything - Bicycles. Washing Machines, Etc. Why Not Bring Your Wife Along And Get A Wonderful Bargain?

Notice in health food shop window: Closed Due To Illness.

Notice in a safari park: Elephants Please Stay In Your Car.

Seen during a conference: For Anyone Who Has Children And Doesn't Know It, There Is A Day Care On The 1st Floor.

Notice in a farmer's field: The Farmer Allows Walkers To Cross The Field Free, But The Bull Charges.

Message on a leaflet: If You Cannot Read, This Leaflet Will Tell You How To Get Lessons.

On a repair shop door: We Can Repair Anything (Please Knock Hard On Door—The Bell Is Not Working).



PLUS A FEW ONE—LINERS

- 1) My wife will live forever. she has nothing but dresses she wouldn't be seen dead in.
- 2) Sign on a clothing store Come inside and have a fit.
- 3) Countries are making nuclear weapons like there is no tomorrow.
- 4) Always remember that you are unique - just like everyone else.
- 5) Why do terns always fly together, Because one good tern deserves another.
- 6) Child to Vicar, " If man was made from dust why don't I get muddy when it rains"

Jack, - what a great sport — he did a grand job when he helped "The Past Its" with The Soldier's Dream routine at the Bickerton Village Hall Motorcycle Anniversary Party on Thursday night 4th December. He is a natural at dressing up in Ken Dodd style and performing to the public. He also joined Walter Kirkland with his bones session. Good work Jack. Keep it up.

Letter from George to Beryl's Friend, Hilda

of 8 Shepherd Cross St, Chorley Old Road, Bolton Lancs. Dated 10th Jan 1961, (soon after Beryl's death). From The GRAND HOTEL, Bristol.

Dear Hilda, Thank you very much indeed for your kind letter. You were one of the people that Beryl always remembered, and I must say, liked of course. She had been ill for a long time, and I knew it had to come, but you could not tell her, or anybody else.

It will feel very strange having to start again on my own, but I shall just have to put up with it. You know how it feels as well as I do now. Anyway, I shall have to keep smiling like you did the last time I saw you. Once again, very many thanks and kind regards. Yours Sincerely, George.

Young Walter Kirkland—Clackety Clack



Tom Bailey's just received an enquiry from Ricky Tomlinson, of The Royle Family. He wants a couple of Formby players to entertain at a charity show for an ex-boxer who is now recovering from brain damage. Tom put two names forward: John Shreeve and 11 year old Greg Simister. Both are capable of putting on a good show. More news on this later.



 DON'T FORGET THIS ANAGRAM:- WERNTSELET

Daily Mirror March 7th 1961 (The day after George's death)

GEORGE WAS GREAT by DONALD ZEC.

He was an old fashioned, corny comic with a well-worn routine of japes, larks, and homely jests—rounded off with funny songs and a ukulele.

But you just couldn't help laughing at George Formby. The face was strictly gormless with its well brushed and highly polished head and that gigantic, toothy grin—like a couple of rows of white milestones.

He was a warm, good natured clown of the "Eeeeh, bah-goom!" era before the discovery of the echo chamber" and Elvis Presley. Compared with the stars of today's craze for the slick disc, Formby was "a real square" and even the real Formby admitted ruefully: "I don't think I'm with it." But though he was fifty—

six, his greying hair thinning, and his audiences diminishing, George strummed on.



While the Presley style entertainers boomed out their frenzied love lyrics, Formby hit back with "Oh Mr Wu" - "When I'm Cleaning Windows" and "Leaning On A Lamp Post."

Never heard of them? Then I must tell you that they were in "Top Ten" for years before your time. It wasn't the songs so much—it was the way Formby sang them. Millions found themselves whistling the tunes, and not a few wore the same sheepish, gormless grin on their faces. He was a movie star, panto king, and as great as any of the giants of music hall.

In terms of money—and he made plenty of it—Formby was once one of the highest paid stars in Britain. Long before Presley, Formby had shaken hands with royalty and sung his way round the world. He owned a dozen houses, a cabin cruiser on the Norfolk Broads, a motor launch, a Rolls Royce GF1 and a Bentley GF2.

The cats can say what they like about Mr Wu—he was certainly good to George Formby. Born in Wigan, unable to read or write when he left school, Formby grinned his way to the top—and was still grinning when "Rock & Roll" left him standing. It was a sad finale for him, his tragic fiancée. . . And for the millions who remember him.

Letter From George & Beryl to Songwriters

Gifford & Cliffe—dated July 12th 1936.

GEORGE FORMBY Tel 24 Brock, Preston. Telegrams "Joker" Preston
P.A. "Beryldene" Lancaster Road, Barton, Preston.

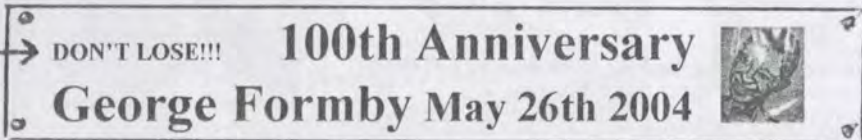
To Gifford & Cliff, 10 Brancaster Rd, Streatham, LONDON.

Dear lads, Very many thanks for your song but I am very sorry to have to send it back as it is really too blue. You are getting too much on the sex stuff. Try and clean it up a bit and send it along again. Also you will have to clean up "With My Little Stick Of Black-pool Rock" for I can't work it in the state it is in. The records have refused to do it as it is, so you had better get busy making them cleaner, you couple of mucky buggers.

All the best wishes, Yours Faithfully, George Formby.

What a Bloomer!!! My old time friend is a professional Signwriter who served his trade some 50 to 60 years ago. He does a brilliant job and you will have seen some of his work at the meetings: Penyffordd has one of his banners on stage.

Some months ago I asked him to make a large banner for George's 100th at Wigan Pier—or at any other shows, and I gave him full instructions on a sheet of paper. A month later he called to say that he's lost the instructions and could I type them out again—which I did, but at the top I printed in bold letters "DO NOT LOSE" which was to remind him not to lose the instructions again. Guess What? Below is the result.



Who Created Wigan Pier? -

The argument continues. Did George Formby senior or George Orwell put Wigan Pier on the road to fame? The story is that it was Formby who created the joke for a cheap laugh. But without doubt, Orwell made it famous all over the world.

There are some who say that the Pier legend has made Wigan a laughing stock while others maintain that but for the Wigan Pier joke Wigan would have been as anonymous as Bolton, Warrington or St Helens. In fact, there never was a Wigan Pier . . . Just a coal tipper.



George Formby Senior, the Wigan Sprinter displaying his trophies.

In his book, *The Road To Wigan Pier*, George Orwell doesn't mention his search for the pier. That came later in a radio broadcast when he told millions of listeners that he had come to Wigan, looked for the pier but failed to find it. Decades ago, the canal was at the centre of Wigan's industrial life but the warehouses fell into disuse and famous Wigan Pier quite literally began to rot away. In the 1970s the Pier was derelict and Wigan council was within a whisper of demolishing it. In fact the rumour has always circulated that a local councillor said the best way of dealing with Wigan Pier was to put a match to it and build houses on the site. Thankfully other councillors were more far sighted.

Wigan Pier began as a joke but that joke achieved national fame. Why not trade on it? And so Wigan Pier was turned into a giant leisure and entertainment complex and is now visited by people from all over the world.

In the song: JOHN WILLIE'S JAZZ BAND (Date ?) George Formby Senior sings: "Hear us when we play on Wigan Pier, mill girls flock around and give a cheer. And colliers shout By Gum, here here, mine's a beer, mine's a beer." - which was later recorded by young George in May 1926.

A tale of Illwalla

ONE further little story about Illwalla. I know nothing about the Home Guard, except they were always training on Sunday mornings, on the River Wyre banks near the Old Bone Mill where the River House and the yacht club are now.

There were small coppices and woods and they had a fine time towards the river from Illwalla.

They appeared to train on the cricket field, and they liked to be ignored! However one Sunday morning, news was carried around the houses, child to child, and soon the children were gathering on every corner.

Pennington's corner (a bus stop), Hornby's corner, Raikes Road and Woodhouse Road. It must be something important! Well it was, older men waited in their gardens, ladies behind twitching curtains and suddenly they appeared.

A large (ish) contingent of Home Guards.

Singleton, Poulton and Thornton, with a very famous person, George Formby, actually crawling along Woodhouse Road. He was then living at Beryldene, Mains Lane, Singleton, and he appeared

Home Guard George



to be enjoying every minute of his safari.

By the way he wore "plus fours" – a bit posh for the task he was doing! He got lots of cheers and the cheekier children were singing his songs as they ran after the troops.

MARY PARKINSON
Burrows Lane
Staynall



Anthony Mason and the Café Society Jazz

Band have produced an excellent CD with loads of variety from George Formby to Pasadena Roof Orchestra to Noel Coward. It really is worth buying. Some of the tracks are:

Putting on the Ritz, - My Blue Heaven, - Love is The Sweetest Thing, - I Wonder Where My Baby is Tonight, - Narcissus, Crazy Rhythm, - Someday I'll Find You, - GEORGE FORMBY MEDLEY, - Pasadena, and many more (20 in total). There's no doubt about it but this is excellent quality stuff. Very professional. The price is £6 inc. postage and you can ring Anthony on 07780 707013—or Email georgecoward@yahoo.co.uk. Or you can ring Willy Entwistle on 01942 243384.

DON'T FORGET AN ARTICLE FOR GEORGE'S NEWSLETTER

Blackpool Night - They don't write songs like this anymore.

Alan Middleton stole the show with a good old song called "Lancashire Is Beautiful" and how could he go wrong with words like 'ferret down yer trousers,' and Snotty Annie who works in the local chip shop dishing out more than salt and vinegar on yer chips. Great stuff!! If only Cliff Richard had performed songs like this he'd have made a fortune. Another star of the night was John Mason who, without music backing, gave us "The Pub With No Beer" and "Forty Shades of Green" with perfect timing. He's come on very well.



John Mason



Alan with a ferret down his trousers and a cheeky grin

M/C, Alan Chenery Emails: We all had a good night on Monday even though we were short of players but it turned out well in the end. The artists for the evening were Charles Stewart, The Past its (the two Stans), Ben Halliwell, Steve Abbott, John Mason, Frank Bennett, Alan Middleton, Des Redfern, Paul Kenny & Myself. Everybody was up to their top performance. We did have four new visitors who said they had a good night and they will be back next month, Eve & Thelma with their charming smiles did a splendid job on the door and organised the buffet.

I would like to Wish everybody a Happy Christmas And a Prosperous New Year From All At Blackpool. Alan. *Thanks Alan. I thought it was a great night of mixed entertainment.*

George Forrest writes: The Great Yarmouth Potteries are now taking orders for the George Formby Commemorative Tankard which will be available in early 2004. The tankard, which is still at the rough clay stage of production, has the front of the two-faced handle inspired by "Cleaning Windows" with a uke banjo leaning against the window. George and a Lamp Post are on the front and side. The back features a roll of movie film and musical notation.

For more details ring them on 01493 850585 or Email: childsgyp@hotmail.com
The web site is: www.greatyarmouthpotteries.co.uk *Thanks George.*

Billy Pierce Another Ken Dodd

What a treat when Billy Pierce popped up on the Des & Mel Show on TV. His quick fire delivery of jokes had the audience in stitches and none of it canned laughter.



"I was at this club and it was that rough they had a pig on the bar as an air freshener. One of the piano legs had a bandage. I was half way through my act and this chap got hit on the head with a bottle. He said, 'hit me again I can still hear him.'"

"We went on honeymoon to Spain. First week we were half board, - second week we cheered up. The food was rubbish, it was self catering. Great stuff.

The November Sale Report by Hilda & Vera

Once more a good time was had by all at the Sale meeting on 21st November. Cyril was pleased to welcome Billy 'Uke' Scott, who made a rare visit, and Dickie Speake and Dennis Mitchell all the way from Yorkshire. Also attending was David Taylor (son of Bob Taylor, a founder member).



Vera

Hilda

Brian White was the 'new' compere for the first part of the evening and looked totally at ease. After the enthusiastic Thrash, he introduced the first artist, Eddie Bancroft who performed *Licence* and *Lampost*, followed by Walter Kirkland with *Isle of Man* and Walter then did a bones medley with Jim Knight, Frank Humphries and Alan Chenery. Alan Southworth then played a lesser known song *Left Hand Side of Egypt* and one of Billy 'Uke' Scott's songs *Give Me the Chance to be Twenty Again*. Next, the highlight of the evening, was Billy who delighted us with his own amusing compositions *I Heard it on the B.R.C.*, *Bingo*, and the lovely song *I Love to Play my Ukulele* on the little Martin. Then we had a young man who was brave enough to follow Billy, Greg Simister with *Smile All The Time* and *Photo in the Press*. David Rhodes made his second appearance on the stage with *Wigan Boat Express* and *Window Cleaner* – a good confident performance, followed by Jack Valentine (suffering with a cold) who made a brave attempt at Charlie Chester's *Down Forget Me Not Lane* and then *Side by Side*. Alan Chenery took us back to the 1970s with *Mississippi* and after that, founder member Walter Langshaw's *The Lancashire Lad and His Uke*.

We then had the interval, with light refreshments, and Dick and Jean drew the raffle in their usual competent way. This operation took quite a while because there were so many wonderful prizes, thanks to the generosity of the members.

Les Pearson took over as M.C. for the second part of the evening and introduced Tom Meredith who went all American with a lovely *Broadway Medley* and *When the Midnight Choo Choo Leaves for Alabam*, followed by Frank Bennett who belied his 80+ years and did a 60s Medley. Cliff Royle, a regular visitor from Crewe, sang a Dickie Speake number *The Formby Fans are Meeting Tonight* and *Matchstalk Men*. Next was a speciality act by Alison Nadin from north Wales with her Granddad puppet – there is no truth in the rumour that the puppet is related to Cliff! Then we had Paul Kenny with a superb performance of *Daring Young Man* and *Under the Blasted Oak*. Dennis Mitchell also delighted us with *Fanlight Fanny* and a lesser known war-time song *Be Like a Kettle and Sing*.

Jim Knight, also from north Wales, sang *You Can't Stop Me From Dreaming* and then, with Walter Kirkland, Frank Humphries, Alan Chenery and Dickie Speake all rattling their bones, *Twelfth Street Rag*. Dickie followed that with Billy's *Ragtime Mandarin* and a marvellous solo *Leibestraum*. How can you top that? Well he called Billy up from the audience and the pair did a wonderful medley of solo pieces on the wooden ukuleles. The Past-its (Stan Evans and Stan Wilkinson) did *You'll Never Find Another Fool Like Me* medley and *The Fields of Athenry*. Margaret Moran's *Paper Roses* and Lilli Marlene delighted us all and Des Redfern rounded off the evening with *Swing Mama* and *Guarding the Home of the Home Guard*. At 11.30 there were still enough 'plonkers' to bring the evening to a close with another Thrash before we all happily made our way home.

Thanks Ladies, you are doing a fine job.

DON'T FORGET THE NEWSLETTER

Cliff Lost His Head! - Nobody spotted it but in last month's Newsletter, Cliff's Heading in his monthly report disappeared and I don't know where it went to. It was on my computer screen but by the time it had gone through to the printer it had disappeared. Do computers have a black holes like when they lose ships and planes?

Mr S Thomas in the desert during World War Two, - an airfield shared by the RAF and the American Air Force.

One day we had a few Yanks around, they were fascinated by our biplanes and we began to feel like museum attendants as we answered their many questions.

We were interrupted in our education tour when one of our lads popped in, "Guess who's giving a show in the NAAFI?" It was none other than GEORGE FORMBY. We knew he was in N. Africa, bumping across the desert, stopping at every tiny unit and doing his act in a gruelling routine of a dozen or more shows a days in the heat and dust which were not only punishing for him, but which didn't do his uke or strings much good either. I looked down at the two Yanks who were still had in the audience.

"You're in luck" I said, "Come with us and you will see our greatest comedian." They trotted along and stood beside us at the back of the NAAFI which was the only space left by then. Not that it mattered. When George walked on the stage with his baggy with his baggy shirt and even baggier shorts, beamed his toothy smile and shouted, "Turned Out Nice Again, hasn't it?" a roar went up that could be heard in Cairo.

As the great man strummed his way through songs like "Mr Wu" and "Leaning On A Lamp Post" and cracked simple home spun jokes, we roared with laughter and now and again glanced at our American guests. They had a look of shock on their faces and as we stumbled out of the exits, still laughing, they said, "He is your greatest comedian?"

It did not occur to us that they would not understand a single word of George's songs or gags, but when they said, "If that is your greatest comedian you should have seen Jack Benny over with us a couple of weeks ago." I couldn't resist saying, "Jack who?"

Bob Walsh Writes—Dear Stan, Thanks for the wonderful Newsletter, I really enjoy reading it. And thanks for advertising my ukes. I will attend Sale again when the lighter nights come round. In the meantime here's a few jokes.

Customer: Is your meat tender?

How's your headache, Dave?

Butcher: As tender as your wife's heart sir.

She's out playing Bingo.

Customer: Well give me a pound of sausage.

A fellow walked into a pub carrying a "Long Vehicle" sign. Asked where he got it, he said it fell off the back of a lorry.

What do you reckon I should get for my wife this Christmas? Dunno, - a fiver?

Man in pub: "We're having separate holidays this year. I'm papering the upstairs bedroom and she's painting the kitchen."

Pills habit forming? Rubbish! I've been taking them every night for the past 20 years.

My wife gets my shirts really white, even when they are blue. Thanks Bob.

Martin Thomas Emails a "B" Model Uke Banjo being offered by auction on Ebay.

This is a genuine George Formby Ukulele Banjo in excellent original condition with it's original fitted case. I'm afraid I don't know the age of the instrument, but the headstock is stamped with the serial number B/1733. The case has been used, but not abused - one or two light scuffs at the edges - all the catches are in perfect working order. The ukulele plays and tunes very nicely and the skin is in pristine condition.



A little coincidence - my grandfather worked as a builder for George Formby, constructing a conservatory for his house on the Norfolk Broads in the 1940's, however, a dispute arose concerning planning regulations and the conservatory was eventually removed and fitted to my parents house in Norwich, where it was used and enjoyed for many decades! The instrument can be sent anywhere in the UK either by Parcel-force or a similar carrier (at cost price), ordinary parcel post (insured if requested) or I can deliver if very local. Of course, the winner is welcome to pick up the instrument personally (it's kept at my studio in Norwich, Norfolk). Please see my other auctions for more interesting items. Happy bidding and good luck!

Barrie Cordingley writes - Dear Stan, Having just read your article on the TV programme "Room 101" regarding the rubbishing of George by so called comics, Jo Brand, Nick Hancock and Peter Cook, I would like to say that I agree with every word. I am so disgusted with the way these talent-less, highly paid, unfunny people get their laughs, that I decided to write a poem extolling the greatness of the old comedians that we used to listen to.



WHEN COMEDY WAS KING—Barrie Cordingley

As I sit here in my easy chair, my mind begins to stray,
To those golden days of yester-year, that seem like yesterday,
And I think about the comedy, that filled my heart with joy,
In the cinemas, and on the radio, when I was just a boy,
And as the names come back to me, of those very funny men,
I begin to laugh uproariously, as I used to, way back then,
I picture Laurel and Hardy, large as life upon the screen,
Some may say, the funniest men, the world has ever seen,
Then I think of Charlie Chaplin, before films began to talk,
With his cane and bowler hat, and his funny little walk,
Buster Keaton, Harold Lloyd, Mack Sennet's keystone cops,
Ben Turpin and James Finlayson, the list just never stops,
In cinemas around the world, you could hear the laughter ring,
In those happy days, so long ago, when comedy was king. .

I would listen to the radio, on most Sunday afternoons,
Much Binding In The Marsh, Billy Cotton and the Goons,
There was Happidrome with Enoch, Ramsbottom and Me,

SPEAKERS

For Sale

Jon Baddeley on 01782 680587 is selling two SPEAKERS. These were bought for £200 two years ago and rarely used. The price is £100.

They are ideal for medium to large halls.

Have you anything to sell? If so send it in to the

NEWSLETTER

And cheerful Charlie Chester, and The Navy Lark at sea,
 Al Read would tell us stories, that were always true to life,
 And how his, was made a misery, by the nagging of his wife,
 The day that war broke out, was Rob Wilton's favourite line,
 Him and Chalkie in the home guard, things would all be fine,
 Mollie Sugden, Danny Ross, and the brilliant Clithero Kid,
 Ted Ray in Rays A Laugh, that was a thing, he always did.
 Round The Home with Kenneth, and his famous comedy team,
 Tommy Handley, It's That Man Again, he really was a scream,
 Then came Tony Hancock, half an hour of fun he'd bring,
 Yes, my life was filled with happiness, when comedy was king.

Now those golden days are over, and my life seems sadder for it,
 Those funny men are gone, and how I miss their ready wit,
 They brought a ray of sunshine, throughout the war, and after,
 And helped to ease my problems, with their gaiety and laughter,
 With their naivety and innocence, and their good clean family fun,
 Harmless humour, fit for any ear, and their stories, all home spun,
 I had no way of knowing, that with the passing of the years,
 How laughter would depart my life, and leave me only tears,
 In the cinema and on radio, and on the television screen, -
 Comedians, now get their laughs, being uncouth and obscene,
 Once again my mind slips back, and once again I have to smile,
 As faces from the past appear, to entertain me for awhile,
 In a world that's starved of laughter, how hard I try to cling,
 To those memories of long gone by, when comedy was king.
Great stuff Barrie and well written. As good as any professional!

Billy Uke Scott—It was nice to see Billy at the Sale meeting and what a pleasant chap he is. Although now well into his 80s, he still looks young, smart and active. During the meeting someone asked if we had a list of songs that Billy had written. Well here's a few:

"The Guest House" - "Down By The Old Turnstile" - "When Columbus Sailed To America" - "Learning To Play The Piano" - "Ginger" - "The Village Pantomime" - "I Heard It On The BBC" - and "B I N G O."
 Any more? Send em in.



May Jones Emails—Thanks Stan for keeping us informed on George's 100th Anniversary. Will there be a series of Formby films on television? I remember some years back when there was a whole pile of them shown on Channel 4. What are the chances again? I used to be a GFS member: What about staging a reunion for drop outs? Perhaps I should re-phrase that.

Thanks May. The series of 10 films on Channel 4 followed our 1991 Warrington Exhibition. I have sent letters to them asking for repeats and included newspaper articles on 10 year old Ashley Lynch and how watching George on Ch4 gave him a few extra months to live. They haven't even had the decency to reply. We are now writing to other studios.

Invitations will be going out to all present and past Formby Fans to turn up at Wigan Pier on Sunday 23rd February. Look forward to seeing you there.

Amp For Sale

Alan Southworth is selling a PEAVEY MP4 MK III 4 CHANNEL 100w AMPLIFIER, New Condition and the price is £85. If interested please ring Alan on 01772 720090.

No need to worry about buying from Alan. He is very reliable and any sales he makes are genuine and very reasonably priced.

HAVE YOU ANYTHING TO SELL?

Newspaper Cutting from Trevor Hughes

When two girls, Anne Harris and Sydney Marescar met, they discovered a mutual love of the Ukulele, and started to compose tunes, including Gay Boyfriend, which has now been picked up by song producer, Mike Stock, of "Stock, Aiken and Waterman," and turned into one of those annoying catchy dance tunes he's famous for.

When asked if the ukulele is a new rock and roll instrument, she said, "I don't know about that, but, yes, it is the coolest instrument ever. It's easy to play. Anyone can pick it up and start playing their favourite tunes. It's a cool instrument because Marilyn Monroe plays one in 'Some Like It Hot' and she's a role model."

Thanks for the cutting Trevor.

John Higgins and The Two Ronnies

At the Sale meeting John gave me a tape which he'd recorded from "The Two Ronnies". "You'll enjoy this Stan" he said. On arriving home I immediately put the tape in the player and, what a nice surprise. It was a recording of Ronnie Corbett & Ronnie Barker singing a medley of Formby songs—adding their own words of course.

First came "Lamp Post" - then "Windows" - "Blackpool Rock" - "Mr Wu" - "Nightshirt" and back to "Wu" again, finishing with "Turned out nice again. All with uke accompaniment. Great stuff!



Also, did you know that Norman Wisdom made a recording of "Leaning On A Lamp Post"? Well he did! The album is called "The Wisdom Of A Fool."

Laurel & Hardy Chuckler

Mrs MT of Leicester writes: Papers, television and radio have been so full of gloomy news lately, I end up feeling quite depressed every time I read or listen to a news report.

It's at times like this that I reach for one of my Laurel & Hardy videos, as their antics never fail to have me laughing before long. It might be quite some time since they were around but their particular brand of mirth soon has the sun shining for me, however down I'm feeling. I really can't think of any of today's comedians who have the same effect, and I'm sure that most will be forgotten anyway. *Thanks to The Weekly News for the article.*



Countdown to George's Anniversary Year

We are inviting all George Formby Fans to share a day with us at WIGAN PIER on Sunday 23rd May 2004. Times to be negotiated.

This is a special day when old, past and new friends will join together to celebrate the life of George Formby and give an example to Wigan folk of the legacy of great songs and music that George left behind.



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
- 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—Tram Sunday

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.

Anniversary Shock At Liverpool—We

were expecting a quiet night as some of our regulars were attending the Blackpool GFS
Meeting, and, just like 12 years ago on Friday November 13th 1991, the stormy rain was
bucketing down. I arrived at 6.30pm, to set up the equipment and at 8pm only about a
dozen people had turned up for the night. Stan Watkinson and I, - The Past Its, Well &
Truly - didn't mind because it gave us an opportunity to practise some new songs.

We were just about to make a start with our seven performers, - Greg Simister, Tom
Meredith, Rowland Lee, Jed Gennet, John Shreeve, and The Past Its, when suddenly
there was an invasion. A surprise coach load came in shouting "Surprise" and soon we
were running round for more chairs. And what a grand night it was. You can always
rely on Liverpool to pull something out of the bag.

Old Songs

—There was a news item on TV recently when they were appealing to
the public to write songs to be sung from the terraces to boost our country's football
team's performances on the field.

Some had already offered songs and they performed snatches of them on the programme.
But I noticed that all of them were lyric changes only. They'd altered the words to the
old established songs of yesterday—songs like "Knees Up Mother Brown" and "When
The Saints." Even groups of youngsters were on screen belting out the old tunes.

So our old songs are not finished yet. For rousing stuff to boost the nation's spirit they
don't want Kylie Monologue or Spice Girls. They want songs from George's era like
Lamp Post, Windows and Auntie Maggie's Remedy. Great Stuff.

George Formby Meetings

North Wales Branch - British Legion, Penyffordd (10 miles from Chester) Every 1st Friday in the month. Tel Jim Knight 01978 358472 Adm 50p.

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:

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.

Web Site —Two Lancashire Lads:

www.stanevans.co.uk/formby

E Mail: stan@stanevans.co.uk

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.



There are two things that are more difficult than making an after dinner speech: Climbing a wall that is leaning towards you, and kissing a girl who is leaning away from you.

“He Looked As Nervous As A Long Tailed Cat In A Room Full Of Rocking Chairs.”