

THE

# GEORGE FORMBY

## Newsletter 104

Vol. 9

No. 8

Feb 2004



2004  
And things  
Are  
Warming  
Up

Specially Produced for George Formby Fans  
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# Welcome to Newsletter No. 104

## And a prosperous 2004 to all our readers.

We have now entered the year 2004, George's 100th Anniversary Year, when we will be celebrating the life of a great star, George Formby. George was born on May 26th in the year of 1904, and his address at the time was 3 Westminster Street, Wigan.

The Birth Certificate reads: Cert No. 869406

Wigan Registry Office

Name: George Hoy. When Registered: 7th July 1904

Name and surname of father: James Booth

Name, surname and maiden name of mother: Eliza Ann Booth  
formerly Hoy

Occupation of father: Small ware dealer (Master)

Signature of registrar: Robert Halliwell



Eliza Ann Booth

George's father, James Booth, married Eliza Ann Hoy on the 11th August 1899, and his marriage certificate reads: Occupation: Actor. He appears to have been unsettled with stage business because five years later he was registered as a Small ware dealer. So perhaps George wasn't born into a financially secure family, as many reports state. And the fact that they lived in a small terraced house in Wigan might confirm this. So, here we are in George's Anniversary Year and we are looking forward to some very happy events taking place.



George senior

**MEDIA PUBLICITY**—We will definitely struggle trying to persuade the media: TV, Press and Radio, to give us the same cover that they did 12 years ago, and most of the negativity is due to David Bret's adverse George Formby comments on radio to boost the sales of his book, "George Formby, A Troubled Genius."

Even the title of the book is grossly exaggerated because George wasn't troubled and he wasn't a genius. Genius at what! Einstein was a genius! George was a simple, practical, and uneducated man, who had the gift of knowing exactly what the public required after two world wars to boost their spirits.



Burdened but thrived on it.

And he certainly wasn't troubled! With Beryl's strength behind him he had no reason to be troubled. It's a joke to say that George was troubled! She shouldered the whole burden of his success, leaving him to get on with the job of entertaining the public which he did extremely well. Being troubled didn't get to George until the end of Beryl's life, when she was a sick woman and unable to carry the weight.

We have a lot to thank Beryl for. Her 100th Anniversary passed on 9th September 2001 without recognition. But Beryl wouldn't complain! She was an extreme martyr!

SO THREE CHEERS FOR BERYL DURING GEORGE'S ANNIVERSARY YEAR

# George's 100th—Wigan Pier have finally

sent the contract through for the hiring of the theatre on Sunday 23rd May 2004. This will be a day when we will give the town of Wigan an example of the size of legacy that George & Beryl left behind. Up to now they don't appear to have recognised how big a star George was.



Someone suggested that we should contact all the long lost Formby Friends and make it into a Re-union Day, - so why not? There are many Formby friends that spring to mind: Young Keiran Marshall, of Runcorn, was a delight on TV during the showing of The South Bank Show. In summing up, George Melly said that young Keiran was talented enough to present his own TV show.

And then there's Jack Skelland, of Warrington who left us about five years ago, He was a very keen Formby fan. Another wonderful character was George Childs of Blackpool. He performed a very funny version of "Sister Susie, Sewing In A Seaside Shop."

Then there's Alan Yates, who, along with my grandson Lyndon, and Peter Thomas (all aged around 9) set up a busking session on the Blackpool beach opposite the Imperial Hotel, where we were holding our meeting. A crowd gathered round and started throwing coins into their uke cases. After about 15 minutes they got scared of the huge crowd that was gathering so they quickly packed their ukers and did a runner back to the hotel. In 15 minutes they'd collected £11. Not bad hey? At £44 per hour they should have stayed and sung "I Could Make A Good Living At That."



We want to see these at youngsters at Wigan Pier

It would be interesting seeing these youngsters again to see how they've progressed in life, and if they are still interested in George.

**YOU MUST BE MAD!** - When I asked my grandson if he'd like to come to Wigan Pier for the day, he rather liked the idea.

But when I asked him to get a uke out (he retired at 10 years of age, after a very successful TV performance) and practise some GF songs he said, "You've got to be joking. If you think that I'm getting up on stage singing George Formby songs you must be mad! I'll sing some Jimi Hendrix!" So, if you know of any old friends from the past, please tell them about Wigan Pier 23rd May, or give me the details and I'll contact them.

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## Young Ben Halliwell—At the Blackpool meeting

young Ben was asked by Alan Randall if he would like to appear in a Variety Show on North Pier, Blackpool, starting 1st June, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, for six months. "No problem" replied Ben, "I'd love to do the show."

The show stars several favourites including, Jimmy Cricket, Alan Randall, Frank Carson. More news later.



## Milly, The Supremes, and Esther Rectomy

**Make Their Debut at Crewe**—Pleasant nights, warm atmosphere, dimmed lights and music together with loads of lovely people sums up year 2003 at Crewe. A stage show, a bit of fun, a cup of tea, meet new friends, what more could one wish for? From the artistes point of view it is wonderful to have such a great audience out front encouraging us to achieve better things.



The year brought much happiness but also sadness as we lost some very dear friends, our own Carl Basford, the tragic accident to bubbly Lesley Lee in Cyprus, and more recently dear Jean Nadin. They were all great supporters at Crewe we miss them very much.

In February last we had our 100<sup>th</sup> Meeting – quite a milestone. Ten years ago Steve Hassall, Tom Peddie, Wilf Salt, and I used to practise in my home but when the lady next door had a baby we were concerned about the noise so we booked the Memorial Hall. The decision was then made to form a local Formby Society. I recall in those early days Jonathan Baddeley agreeing to prepare a contingency Formby quiz or something, just in case only a dozen or so people turned up. Jonathan still has his Quiz, as it was never needed.

During the year we had a visit from Jonas Svensson from Gothenburg Sweden and his Dutch partner Janet Grootoink two great ukulele entertainers. Hopefully 2004 will be even better as we commemorate 100 years since the birth of George Formby and we have plenty of ideas for that event in May.



The December meeting was an enjoyable event when special guests were Phil Hatswell and Janet and Julie Townsend and her husband from Yorkshire. They thoroughly enjoyed their visit and their two nights stay in Crewe. Julie is a very versatile performer and she performed *Our Fanny's Gone All Yankee and Put another Nickel In* Esther Rectomy

to the delight of the audience. The night included a number of sketches including *Sisters* (a song with added comedy) with Alice, Margaret, Vera, Pam and Connie. The comedy was provided by Alan Newton and that greatest of sports, Cliff Royle. Alan Newton stretched out Jolson's "Mammy" much to the amusement of the audience. Derrick Jones and family along with Peter Gratton portrayed Diana Ross and the Supremes. Esther Rectomy came over from the States with her bones by popular request! Alison Nadin introduced us to Alf's Wife Milly and The Three Tenors made several changes of clothing and millinery (tin hats too) during the evening.

Other artistes performing in the show not already mentioned were Alan Chenery, Bill Turner, Gareth Sumner, Margaret Moran, Les Pearson, Arthur Newton, Brian Edge, Colin Wood, Cyril Palmer, Walter Kirkland, *The Pastits Well and Truly* aka Stan Evans, and Stan Watkinson, Des Redfern, Pamela Baddeley and Jonathan Baddeley. Jonathan was MC (he even got a laugh instead of a jeer which upset him) and Pamela was Concert Producer. Jack Bolton was Father Christmas.

*Thanks Brian, but I am disappointed. I thought it was the real Father Christmas.*

# Mammy—That's a great spot that Alan Newton does at Crewe. He walks on



to the stage, with a deformed shaped body, and the audience are laughing before he speaks a word. By the way he walks on stage they know that it is a comic spot but they are not sure of what it is. He starts to sing one of Al Jolson's favourites: "Mammy" and part way through he swings his arms around in Jolson style. Suddenly

we notice that his arms are growing longer and longer . . . and longer. Always goes down very well with the crowd.

# Classic Photo—A few months ago I promised to search out the photo

we took in Holland when we had the most disastrous (although extremely funny) coach trip. It was trip riddled with disasters from the outset, - everything went wrong with the coach to the extent that the back axle set on fire. It was a good job that we had a great sense of humour.

The electricians blew up so when we stopped for a break we had to keep the engine running. We had no lights to drive with, no radio, no cassette player, no toilet, oil poured out of the back axle through an half inch hole, which we jammed up with a piece of dowelling.



Every time we stopped we had to push start the coach. We were split into two hotels—six in one and rest in the other. On the last night the driver said, "First I'll pick up the six passengers at 7am, but they'll have to give the coach a push start. "No problem" the six boasted. The following morning the coach didn't turn up to collect the second lot so we all paraded across the town in search of the coach and the six passengers.

After a two mile trek across town we turned the corner and saw the funniest sight ever. The six, including Eve Stewart, Joan Littlewood, Chris Webster and Jim Mottram had been trying to push the coach for an hour and couldn't budge it. They called out the A.A. who informed them that, due to having no electricians, the brakes were jammed on. It was a coach trip of disasters but Five Starred in Laughter.

# The North Wales Branch send Hearty

Greetings for 2004 to all their many supporters and friends.

Our first meeting of the year started off well with a good number of performers, and although the audience numbers were a little down we were delighted to see about a dozen who attended for the first time. It was surprising to find many players had come from so far away to support us at this time of the year for they had journeyed from Morecambe, Fleetwood, and Blackpool (was there a cheap trip out from the Coast?), and Redditch in the Midlands. Great to have had them with us.



After the opening THRASH Alan Newton started off the evening in his usual jovial and flamboyant fashion with "Trailing around in a trailer" and "Jumbelya". It was a wonderful performance. (His own words!) He was followed by Jim Knight with "Little ukelele" and a Bones Medley "Does your chewing gum lose its flavour" accompanied Walter Kirkland, Alan Chenery, Eunice Evans, Alan Newton (performing with his castanets), and a new addition Charlie Penman on the Bodhran (Irish Drum).

Dan Lewis sang "Key Lago" and "Last night was made for love"; Brian Edge played "Wigan Pier" and "Nurse come over here and hold my hand" and when I come to look at my notes I find written on them by some unknown against this item "B\*\*\*\*\* Good". It of course was and we were glad to see that on this occasion Brian could take the strain of standing for two songs. Gerald Jones said he was somewhat disappointed at the number of his Formby Calendars which had been sold and offered some unsold ones at a reduced price. However in spite of his disappointment he was still able to present us with a cheque for £50 to go to our Charity Fund. Thanks Gerald and Julie for your efforts in this direction. Gerald then played "Goodnight little fellow goodnight", and that rather difficult and unusual piece "Under the blasted oak".

Alan Chenery gave us "Putting on the style" accompanied on the bones by Eunice Evans and Walter Kirkland (complete with Red Dickey), and then one of his favourite songs "Wigan Boat Express". There was then a complete change of style for Annette Jones from Wrexham played "I come from Alabama" and "Lamp Post", but not on a uke but on a Mandolin. She was great for using a plectrum she played individual notes on four sets of double strings, even reaching up to the seventh fret. It was fantastic. She was accompanied by Phill Hughes on the uke. In the audience she brought along a couple of friends; one of whom also plays the Mandolin and the other the Accordion. Perhaps we can get them to perform as a ladies' band in the future.



Carol Brassy and Annette Jones attempting to convert George's Song Book to the Mandolin. Sounded Great!

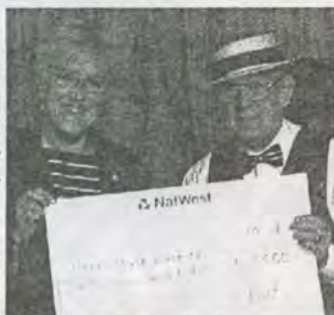
John Taylor, who this evening was accompanied by his Father, played the DIVORCE song to much merriment, this was followed by Lamp Post, and of course he closed the show at the end with Blackpool Rock. Yes it was great to have you with us John. Vera Jones, our crooner from Crewe, sang "You need hands to care for", and "Are you lonesome tonight. We think this was for husband Harry who was unable to be with her as he was unwell. Hope you soon recover Harry. And to close the first half we had that wonderful entertainer

Alison Nadin with her Puppets. Surely there will never be a shortage of eggs at Rhyl. Alison had a new assistant tonight; Jim Knight who did a great job of operating the "searchlight".

Following the interval Alan Evans from Redditch sang "Believe it or not" , and "I recall the gypsy woman". He always comes up with some new song and accompanies this with a joke or two. Apparently after dinner joking is but one of his talents, and everyone thinks he has a lovely singing voice. The next artiste also had a lovely voice for it was Alice Cronshaw who gave us "Making memories" and "If you were the only boy in the world" accompanied by jovial ribaldry from some Crewe members. The next contribution from Crewe was by Walter Kirkland ( nom de plume Hester Ectomy) who played a Medley of past songs, and followed it with a "bones " session accompanied by Jim, Eunice, Alan C. and Alan with his castanets. Jonathan Baddeley then brought us back to normal with "Ee but it's a grand and healthy life" and "Pleasure cruise, and was then accompanied by Wife Pamela to sing "Count your blessings and smile".

Stan Evans sang one of his tear jerking melodies "Daddy's Little Girl", and following a couple of borderline jokes all approved by Connie Edge (hope you are feeling a bit better by now Connie) he sang "The Spaniard That Blighted My Life". Unfortunately Stan Watkinson was unable to be present due to being unwell

The Three Tenors were down to two tonight, due to Frank having been tied up with a number of problems with drainage at his daughter's house, and his own heating being off following power cuts. Anyway Phill and Deg looked very smart in their new American Style Waistcoats and matching Bow Ties. They performed a medley of old time sing-a-longs, and followed it with "Blackpool Belle". Eventually, after the final THRASH, we came to the end of another rather late but very enjoyable night.



Thanks to Jack Bolton for this photo of Jim Knight handing a cheque for £2000 to the Children's Hospice, Leslie Lee Fund.

I'm running short of space so THANKS TO ALL WHO HELPED ON THE NIGHT—IN ANY WAY!!

PLEASE NOTE. PRACTICE nights will be held on the first Monday of each month for both raw beginners, and with some experience. They will be held at the British Legion in Penyffordd commencing at 7.30 P.M. and are free of charge. Ukcs will be available for practice at the these sessions.

*Thanks Cliff. Your reports are going longer, and longer and longer and lon . . . You are doing a Tom (can't get off stage) Meredith on me.*

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**Liverpool Anniversary**—Thanks to Tom Bailey, a grand spread was laid on at the December Meeting to Commemorate our 12th Anniversary. Tom has done a wonderful job of holding the meeting together for the last 12 years and we all appreciate this. Thanks Tom from all at Liverpool.

We were pleased to have Brian & Connie Edge with us for the night, which added very generously to a very pleasant atmosphere. Let us all hope that the year 2004 is a prosperous one for our meeting (born Friday 13th) which has gone through many trials, but still active.



Great Work Tom

**What A Contrast**—Stan & I (The Past Its - Well & Truly) were booked to do two concerts at the same old folks day centre on the Tuesday and Wednesday afternoons. This was to two different audiences.

On the Tuesday we turned up, full of bounce, walked into the centre, "Hullo everybody" - as they sat at their tables eating a meal - "We've come to entertain you." Nothing! - No response whatsoever came back from them. "Are you in the mood for a good singalong? Nothing! For the next two hours we sang songs, told little stories, a few jokes etc. Nothing, not even a clap. It was two hours of torture!

The following day, Wednesday, we were apprehensive about doing the show, however, we turned up, only to be greeted with smiles all round from a different audience. They laughed, joked, jumped up on stage to give a song or two, and joined in with everything we did. They were a great crowd who enjoyed fun.



Hula dancers

As we left the centre, they all joined in thanking us for a very pleasant afternoon's entertainment. They were delighted and very appreciative. "Come again," they shouted. But what a contrast between the two audiences. It was unbelievable the difference.



"No flashing here!"

I took the photo of the two happy ladies on the right and asked if the camera flashed? "Hey" one lady said, "We don't want any flashing here." They were a lovely

happy crowd and we are looking forward to meeting them again.

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**Des Drags His Feet!** Some years back, - in the days of audio tape backing music, Des Redfern mystified everybody at the meetings with a six inch box that he took out of his pocket. We all wondered what it was. After a short chat with the concert organiser: He took the box to the amp equipment, plugged it in, and after a few seconds his backing music was flowing. At the end of the song he pressed another button and another song backing came on. "Brilliant" we all thought! This is the way we must go. I asked Des what it was and he told me it was a Mini Disc Player, - Never heard of it! Since that night all the artists have gone Mini and every meeting has a Mini Player. So Des can be thanked for leading the way to progress.



Well, he's certainly dragged his feet in getting Computerised: - "Not got time to mess about with a computer." he said. However, he rang last week. "Stan, I've gone all computerised so you can Email me now. The address is: [desiuke@redfern2506](mailto:desiuke@redfern2506). [freeserve.co.uk](http://freeserve.co.uk) Send him an Email. He needs the practise.



# Kids Are Tough!!!

I got roped in to press the music backing ;

buttons for my Granddaughter at two of her school's choir Christmas events. The first one was at the Penketh Senior Citizen's Christmas Party when about 80 pensioners were entertained. I arrived an hour early to set up the equipment, and to be ready before the avalanche of 60 kids, plus teachers, plus parents, grandparents etc. turned up.



This was a clever move because I knew that once they'd arrived I would be surrounded by many helpers and advisors.

These kids, ranging from 5 to 8 years, were full of enthusiasm when they arrived through the door, and each one keen to put on a good show. They mounted the stage like little soldiers with the tallest at the back and the shorties at the front. So angelic!

They announced their first carol, - which was a signal to me to press the button - and from the stage came the most beautiful voices. They were excellent! Their spot was 8 carols and each child had learnt each word perfectly. They were a credit to the school.

After their performance I asked them if they had any requests, and their voices boomed out, "I Like Bananas," Which is becoming their signature tune.

**FROZEN CHURCH**—Their second performance was at St Mary's Church, in Warrington, where choirs from three different schools turned up. The church holds up to 300 and on the night every seat was taken. This church is a freeze box even when the weather is fair, but on the night it was extra cold and you could hear the ice gritters dashing back and to outside.

But these kids, - one choir was dressed in very skimpy clothing - braved the freezing cold for the full two hours and performed like dedicated professionals. It was so cold that many grown-ups had difficulty trying to talk without shivering, but these youngsters soldiered on and not one of about 150 complained of the cold. They were so delighted at being given the chance to perform before a large audience that they ignored the cold.

Now at our Formby meetings you will see quite often that some singers have to depend on reading off the sheets because they've not learnt the words or chords, but these kids, as young as five years old, sang every carol without sheets and never stumbled once. Wonderful stuff!

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**Disaster Des Strikes Again**— After the Blackpool meeting, Des discovered that he'd left his mini disc in Charles's mini disk player, which, by now, - turned midnight - is packed away at Charles & Eve's home. "Possibly they've gone to bed" he thought.

So, to prevent any disturbance he decided to stay the night in Blackpool and collect the disc the following morning. Very thoughtful of you Des.

# Andy Eastwood with a 7 piece band—Hello Stan,

Happy new year to you and Eva! I'm off on a cruise for a couple of weeks in Jan, sailing from Athens to Bombay, then flying home. There's a 7-piece band on the ship, so that will be nice to work with. Mostly down South in Feb, but here are a few dates of interest for the Northerners :- Email [www.andyeastwood.com](http://www.andyeastwood.com)

At the end of February I begin a show called 'We'll Meet Again' - as you would guess from the title it's a wartime show, and it will run throughout the 2004 summer season to commemorate the 60th anniversary of D-Day. And this being the year of the Formby Centenary, a section of the show will celebrate Our George. I'll have the pleasure of portraying GF on tour throughout the spring, followed by a summer season at the Wintergardens, Blackpool until the end of the Illuminations. However, I'll have to miss part of the tour in March and April for the Danny La Rue show - dates to follow in the next Newsletter!



February's dates are as follows: - 4th, 7th, 11th: Old Time Music Hall, South Downs Holiday Village, Nr Chichester, Sussex.  
18th: Guest cabaret, Lakeside Classic Resort, Hayling Island, Hants  
21st: The Good Old Days, SRA Social Club, Tolworth, Surrey.  
24th: We'll Meet Again (Opening) Civic Hall, Grays, Essex—2.30pm  
25th: We'll Meet Again, The Music Hall, Shrewsbury - 2.30pm  
26th: We'll Meet Again, Civic Theatre, Oswaldtwistle, Lancs—2.30pm  
28th: The Ken Dodd Happiness Show, St George's Hall, Bradford.

*Thanks Andy, we are all very pleased for you. Hope you can make Wigan Pier 23rd May.*

## What George Did in Norton (Yorkshire) Newspaper cutting

Film star George Formby waited for certain little ladies to come by in Norton, it was revealed last night. The cheeky ukulele player was a stable apprentice and Coun David Lloyd Williams told Norton Town Council that George frequented a spot near Ashburn Cottage, Langton Road.

"He used to sit on the bench there and carouse stable lasses and local girls" he said. Coun Lloyd said he would like the seat restored to the spot which would add a historic note. He asked for the seat and two others to be placed in the street for residents from the home of the elderly. "They were able to walk but not for great distances" he said. It was agreed the council leisure and recreation committee would consider providing the seat.

Coun Mrs Margaret Taylor said her father's landlady had been the same as Formby's. Mr William Suddaby was living in Norton Mill Street in 1940 when he stayed at the lodgings. George Formby is thought of as being Lancashire, but he certainly worked in Norton." she said.

*I wonder if the council installed a George Formby seat in Norton. Some time later they did name a Norton Mews "George Formby Mews." I wonder if the mews was a compromise instead of the seat? Perhaps they've done both? Maybe one of our Yorkshire readers will check it out? Twelve years ago the newly modernised two bedroom houses in the Norton Formby Mews were on offer at £43,000 and £44,000. They were complete with bathroom, modern fitted kitchen and secluded courtyard.*

WIGAN PIER THEATRE HOLDS 250 AND WE HOPE TO FILL EVERY SEAT

DAILY MIRROR Wed Feb 15th 1961

# "Good for you George"

The gossip's tongues, I guess, were busy yesterday - yakity-yaking away like mad about George Formby's engagement. Less than two months after his wife Beryl died, he has given a ring to a 36 year old schoolteacher named Pat Howson.

*says*  
**Marjorie Proops**



As everybody knows, George & Beryl were a show-business legend - the happiest married couple, everyone said - an example to all those who sneered that togetherness in show-business is just a myth. George & Beryl's togetherness had lasted 36 years they were married. As well as his wife, she was his manager, his secretary, his dresser. They were wonderful companions. They often boasted that they were never apart from each other for a single day. And when she died, the bleak despairing gap in his life must have meant unimaginable grief and emptiness for George.



When a man remarries swiftly after the death of a beloved wife, the gossips smack their nasty lips and mutter: "Very quick, isn't it?" "Looks like he's soon forgotten." "Men are all alike - very soon they find someone else."

Yesterday morning, just after I had read about George's engagement, I was shopping in the High street and I met a woman friend. She said bitterly: I dare say if I died today my old man, who claims he worships me, would start courting some girl in a matter of weeks."

"Good for him then," I said. For speaking as a

wife who's spouse appears to be pretty contented with his lot, it is my view that a man who was happily married pays his lost wife the greatest compliment in the world when he marries again. Even when he marries again a few short weeks of his loss. He needs someone to take her place.

But only the most selfish of women would want a man to mourn for ever. But men need to be taken care of. They need someone to come home to. There is no sight as miserable as an elderly widower grubbing around for himself, eating alone in cafes, washing his bits and pieces, mooching alone in streets and parks - despondent and lonely and longing for the companionship he has lost. That is why I condemn the gossips who, with their spiteful tongues, throw a shadow over the happiness of a widow who marries again.

Listen to what George himself had to say yesterday on the subject: "Perhaps a few eyebrows may be raised at the announcement of my engagement - but Pat's a lovely girl and a wonderful person and I need someone to look after me properly." "Beryl knew I'd never survive on my own. I'm such a helpless chap. I honestly believe that what I'm doing is a tribute to Beryl and all the happy years we spent together. And I know she would approve."

My ghost wouldn't be uneasy, jealous, narking or angry if my spouse had another go. My ghost would, I hope, hover benignly - pleased that my old man found his first marriage so agreeable that it was worth trying a second one.

# Fifty Fanatical Folk Face Frosty Freeze Up

By Alan Chenery

Hi Stan, Yet another good night at Blackpool even though it was 2.5 below freezing. About 50 attended and we had a dozen players with a lot of them playing without backing tapes. This made an easy night for Disk Jockey Charles, for a change.



And here's Alan Cuddling Margaret Royle

The artists taking part were Ben Halliwell, Alan Middleton, the Past its (Stan Evans & Stan Watkins). Rob Brissett. Steve Abbott, Phil Jones. Ged Collins His first time at Blackpool, Cyril Palmer, Des Redfern, Frank Bennett, Peter Brown & John

Mason they all did a brilliant most of them had a chance to do a second spot. I do try to put people on again who have travelled a long distance or are there for the first time. During the evening we thanked Charles, Eve and helpers for running a good show and making sure that we always have a buffet all for the price of £1. We do hope to see a lot more new faces as well as old in the new year.

Well that's it. From all at Blackpool, A VERY HAPPY NEW YEAR.

*Thanks Alan. Everything went perfect at the meeting—even the sound system sounded great. I was very impressed with the "You Can't Stop Me From Dreaming Backing Track, which, I understand was made by Jon Baddeley. It sounded great.*

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## Les Pearson reports that BBC Radio Presenter Mike Craig will possibly be attending the Sale Meeting in January.

Mike has written for, worked with and produced comedy shows for the very best. Over 1,200 comedy shows for TV and Radio in 28 years! He has written for Ken Dodd, Harry Worth, Roy Castle, Des O'Connor, Jimmy Tarbuck, Mike Yarwood, Morecambe and Wise and many more.



In 1977, he became a BBC Comedy Producer and has a string of successes to his name - from the award-winning Grumbleweeds Radio Show to Stilgoes Around; from Ken Dodd's Radio Shows to the memorable Al Read shows. He is now recognised as an authority on the Golden Age of Comedy and consequently in great demand as a very funny after dinner speaker, as well as a regular performer on the P and O Cruise ships.

He is a Lord's Taverner and a member of the Water Rats. In 1988, he was given a Tribute Lunch by the Variety Club of Great Britain to mark his 25 year contribution to comedy. Bob Monkhouse says in the Foreword to Volume One of Mike's two highly acclaimed books "Look Back With Laughter"... "How we've begged for, patiently awaited and gleefully anticipated these books. Nostalgia's better and funnier than ever when Mike Craig's about"

## **Born Before 1940? Published before but requested again**

You were born before Television, before polio shots, frozen foods, photocopiers, plastic lenses, videos and the PILL. Abortion was a crime. You were born before credit cards, laser beams and ball point pens, dishwashers, tumble dryers, air conditioners, supermarkets, test tube babies, microwave ovens, mobile phones, the internet, and before man walked on the moon. We thought fast food was what you ate during Lent, and a Big Mac was an oversized raincoat.

We existed before computer dating and disposable nappies. We never heard of muesli, stereos, cassettes, CDs, duvets, word processors, yoghurt, pizzas, virtual reality. Muggings was a simpleton, a chip was a piece of wood or a fried potato, hardware meant nuts and bolts, software was not even a word. Made in Japan meant it was junk, going all the way meant staying on the bus.

In our days, only debutantes 'came out'. Grass was a lawn, coke was kept in a bucket, a joint was a piece of meat, and pot was something you cooked in. Soaps were for washing, a gay person was the life and soul of a party, aides were helpers, we got married first and then lived together, and young men never wore earrings.

We who were born before 1940 must be hardy stock, when you think of how the world has changed, and all the adjustments we have made. By the Grace of God we have survived.

*But what about the changes that those born in the 1920s have gone through. They were born soon after the depressing years of the first world war, and later they were in the thick of the second world war. This modern world should be very strange to them.*

*I have great admiration for Charles Stewart (Ex—Naval Soc Secretary) who was born in the early 1920s. He tirelessly organises the Blackpool monthly meeting, carts all the heavy equipment, climbs ladders, drives his car like Stirling Moss, Has his own computer, is on the Internet, runs round Blackpool (never walks) doing his shopping, gets up on stage playing his ukulele, helps to demolish and rebuild houses, gets up at 5am and travels round trips of 150 miles. The man is a genius!! And then there's our bundle of dynamite, 81 year old Cliff Royle, and Frank Bennett, who is well into his eighties. They are Supermen!*



Charles Stewart

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**LETTER TO BLACKPOOL TOURISM**—I wish to complain in the strongest terms about your committee's decision to reject proposals for a George Formby memorial statue in Blackpool town centre. Councillors say this would ruin the resort's image, making people think of Blackpool as still stuck in the flat cap, pie and peas era. This an insult to all Formbyphiles.

Formby's main attraction was not as the working class lad who dazzled the toffs with his ukulele playing, but as a pioneer for Britain's many millions of Virtually Disgusting people.

Celebrities like Janet Street-Porter, Michael Fish and Prince Edward have taken up the cause in recent years, but George Formby was the prophet, the malformed Moses who led the aesthetically absurd out of the wilderness to their promised land. This organisation deplores your decision as prejudice against a much persecuted social group. We urge you to rethink.

*No doubt the writer of this letter has a serious problem which is motivated by jealousy of successful people.*

# Sale Report by Hilda & Vera - This was another fabulous

meeting, with approximately 65 people in attendance and everyone was in festive mood and some in festive dress. Cyril told us that Elaine (Paul Kenny's mother) had had a short spell in hospital and we all wished her well. We were all very sad to hear that Alice Hodkin, the beloved wife of Joe, from Sheffield, had passed away. Her funeral was held on Tuesday, 16<sup>th</sup> December and was extremely well attended. We had a host of talent and some speciality acts, but unfortunately not all the players had the opportunity to perform - we could have gone on all night! The two comperes for the evening were Les Pearson and Dick Eaves and, after the usual Thrash, Walter Kirkland opened the show with *Happy Go Lucky Me*, and we had a wonderful selection of seasonal songs sung by Margaret Moran, Cyril Palmer, Pam Baddeley and Stan (Elvis) Watkinson. The 'Three Tenors' from Wales performed (*Our Sergeant Major* and *The Old Kitchen Kettle*) Cliff Royle did (*Grandad's Flannellette Nightshirt*), Jonathan Baddeley (*Blackpool Rock*), Alan Newton (*Jambhalaya*) with Walter Kirkland playing the bones.



Vera Hilda

It was a pleasure to have Mark Walsh with us again (from Essex) playing *Sitting on the Top of Blackpool Tower* and *Auntie Maggie's Remedy*. Other performers were Judith Townsend (*Love is Everywhere* and *Grab Your Ukulele and Sing*), Mac McGee (*Some of These Days Medley*) with Mark Walsh's assistance, Jack Valentine (*Dinah* and *It's a Grand and Healthy Life*), Brian White (*Matchstalk Men* and *Blackpool Belle*), Andrew Little (*Fanlight Fanny* and *Out in the Middle East*), David Rhodes (*T.T. Races* and *The Bowler Hat song*, assisted by Brian White). We also had an accordionist, John Higham, playing and singing *Under the River Irwell* (a parody on *Under the Bridges of Paris*).



Young Mark Walsh performs like a star. Good stuff Mark.

The 'speciality' acts were performed by Al Diamond and the Sapphires (Alice, Sheila, Vera and Hilda) dancing and singing to *Second Hand Rose* with Jake the Plumber (Dick Eaves) even putting in an appearance! Walter Kirkland was hilarious when he appeared as Lance Boyle's sister, Hester Ectomy. Les and Margaret did a Flanagan and Allen duet and then *On Moonlight Bay* and Stan Evans did a 'tribute' to Josef Locke, singing *The Soldier's Dream* with two very gallant wounded soldiers (Stan Watkinson and Les Pearson) marching round the stage - very funny!

We had the usual raffle and everyone was given a ticket for a huge, second free raffle, which took place at the interval. Many thanks must go to Cyril, Sheila, Alice, Walter and all the other willing helpers for arranging this great evening's entertainment and wonderful buffet. *Thanks Ladies. Hee, you do remind me of Elsie and Doris, but you'll be too young to have heard of them.*

When I was over in Ireland I went into a restaurant and asked for a cup of coffee without milk.

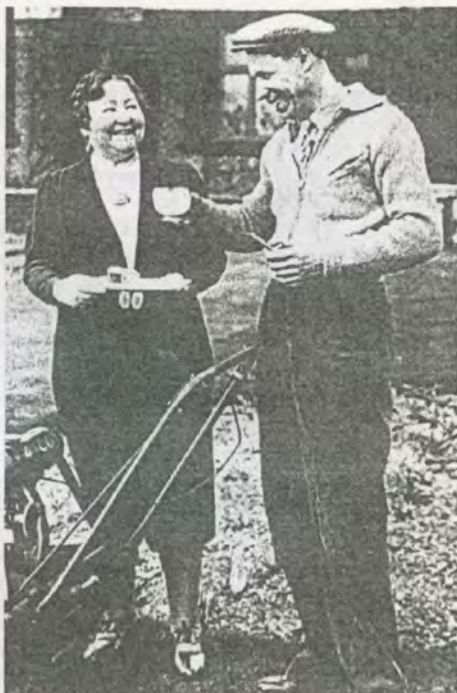
The waiter said, "Sorry sir, we have no milk, will you have it without cream."

HAVE YOU ANY JOKES FOR THE GEORGE FORMBY NEWSLETTER?

## Alan Southworth

has sent in a piece of poetry by  
Arthur Logan Petch  
GEORGE FORMBY 1904 - 1961

He played the uke, he sang his song  
His humour helped the world along.  
His wicked grin and smile so wide  
Bad news he simply just defied,  
Bringing a smile to our face  
When on the screen or other place;  
In the field or on shop floor,  
He was the lad we all adore,  
Strumming on his ukulele  
Singing songs he pleased us daily,  
Some were happy, some were sad,  
Songs that cheered and made us glad,  
Though he's gone we hear him still  
We always have, we always will.



It looks as if George was a favourite with Beryl's mother, who lived with them and helped to look after the house. Here she is taking a cuppa to George when he was mowing the lawn.

## Jon Baddeley Emails

As part of my campaign to promote the Centenary, I have written to three TV Companies. At least I have received replies although these were predictable in this day and age.

BBC-"I was interested to read about the George Formby Society and our an idea for a programme commemorating 100 years of George Formby. You will understand that each year the BBC receives tens of thousands of programme ideas, many of which are similar, and only a small proportion can be used. The suggestion will certainly be made available within the BBC and if a production department is interested in pursuing the idea someone will be in touch".

Channel 4-"There are no plans at present for a programme or a season of films with George Formby to celebrate of his birth.The suggestion has been logged and will be passed on to those responsible for scheduling programmes".

Channel 5-"Five does not make any of its own programmes. They are either commissioned from independent production companies or acquired ready made. We cannot accept ideas from the public. If a production company becomes interested, then they can approach Five themselves".

May I appeal to everyone to write to the BBC and Channel 4 at the following addresses:  
British Broadcasting Corporation, PO Box 1922, Glasgow G2 3WT

Channel 4, 124, Horseferry Road, London SW1P 2TX. Please, also contact your local commercial TV Company e.g. Granada as well as various local radio stations. *Thanks Jon, but we are flogging a dead horse. I received similar replies.*

## Jim & Joan Bramwell—Almost every



meeting I go to someone will ask how Jim & Joan are going on. Unfortunately they've been unable to attend any meetings for the past two years because Joan has extreme difficulty with walking. Up to then they were regulars at all the meetings in the area and enjoyed joining in the fun.



So, over Christmas, Eva & I popped along to see them at home in Newton—le—Willows. On the way there we were expecting them to be struggling a bit, coping with the housework etc. However, as we drove into the avenue we could hear music coming from the house. We thought it was the neighbours having a knees up.

We knocked at the door, - no reply. We knocked louder, and, through the fanlight window, we saw Jim dancing as he came to open the door. They had their Karaoke on full blast and they were merrily singing to it. It sounded great! "Come in, we are just enjoying a-singalong," shouts Jim, - you could hear him at the end of the avenue, - The house was filled with a happy atmosphere.

For the next two hours the songs poured out at top volume and Jim was full of the John Travoltas as he danced around the house. "Come and look at the new decorating" - which looked dead smart. Jim & Joan's new puppy dog was as merry as Jim as she performed her latest tricks. "Heel, stay, roll over, trust, - she does them all very well. Like Jim she's a true trooper.

Apart from difficulty with walking Joan looks in good health. They visit a pensioners gymnasium each week and recently Jim staged a one-man Christmas Show for them. "Went down a bomb" said Jim.

So, don't worry about Jim & Joan. They are doing OK. I've just shown him how to couple his mini disc player to his large Karaoke box, so next time we go it will be louder still. Can't wait!

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## George's Will Van Allen Uke Banjo

As reported earlier, The "Grin Up North" Exhibition which is currently running at Stanley St Museum, Preston, has had the loan of my Will Van Allen Uke and will be showing it until end April 2004. They have now written asking for an extension as the exhibition will be moving to Helmshore Mills Museum, which opens 20th May to 31st October, and to Lancaster City Museum for January to April 2005. So George is still getting plenty of publicity.

This particular uke was the very first Uke Banjo that George played in films: "Off The Dole" which was released July 1st 1935. George walked into a music shop and picked up a wooden ukulele to play. The shopkeeper said, "Try this one sir, it's a better uke" - - handing him the Van Allen. At the end of singing "If You Don't Want The Goods Don't Maul Em" George said, "It is a good ukulele." It was also used in the opening scene of "Let George Do It" when the uke player in the Mark Mendis band was shot.



# George's Family—Email from Joan Barrett.

Dear Editor, would you please settle an argument? My family, mother, father and husband claim that George Formby's parents had 12 children and I am saying that they only had 6 children. So who wins?

Louisa born Wigan 27/5/06

Ted born Hill Crest Warrington, 5/10/18

Ella born Walthey House 2/7/10



Mary born Walthey House, Wigan, 21/1/12

Frank born Hindley House 1/4/13

Ethel born Hindley House 13/3/15

Well, it has been claimed that there were 14 children but two miscarried leaving 12. Of these, 5 died leaving 7 children: George, Louisa, Ella, Mary, Frank, Ethel and Ted.

George, who, at 7 years of age, was sent away to the racing stables to train as a jockey, is missing from this photo. He pined for his home life and often ran away to

get back home. In later years he shows this when he cries "Oh mother" and sings songs like "Oh Dear Mother" - "Mother What'll I Do Now." - "I'm Going To Stick With My Mother." In later years he met Beryl, who, being 2 1/2 years older, was regarded as a mother figure. *So it looks as if you've lost your bet Joan. Thanks for your Email.*

## George's Catalogue—There are some that are not

aware that the late Brendan Ryan did an excellent job of compiling all George's work and publishing them in a catalogue. Some years back I bought the publishing rights off Brendan and sold them on the GFS. Anyone wishing to obtain a copy should contact the GFS shop on 01709 817199. It is full of very useful information.

It begins with (1) George's Films, (2) The Ealing Comedies, (3) Columbia Pictures, (4) Newsreels, (5) Television Shows, (6) Radio Broadcasts, (7) Documentaries, (8) Musical—Zip Goes A Million, (9) Stage Plays, (10) Noteworthy Dates, (11) Recording Sessions, (12) Songs on Record, (13) Medleys, (14) Sketches, (15) Long Play Albums, (16) 45rpm Records, (17) Compilation Records, (18) George's Writers & Composers, (19) Unrecorded Songs From The Films. The cost is around £5 but it's well worth the price.



JUST RECEIVED a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year message from our George Formby friend in Russia: Anatoly Uvarov did research in Russia in an attempt to find proof of George having received the Order Of Lenin. It turned out to be false. Anatoly is interested in the Wigan Pier Anniversary and would like a video of the event.

**CD Recording**—If you've got a voice worth recording why not contact David Green at Ameritz, 479a Smithdown Rd, Liverpool. Tel 0151 734 0645. He is giving a special offer on recordings. For a full day's recording—10am to 5pm the charge is £99, which includes 10 CDs. David says: Just bring your voice, and a photograph of yourself and we'll do the rest.

They are open 7 days per week. Normal rates are £10.50 per hour which includes one recorded CD. CD duplications are £2.50 per copy. Please mention the Newsletter.

**Cliff Royle Emails**—"Anyone interested in a Linguaphone Visa "Francais" training package consisting of a Programme Guide and six tapes? Appears in very good condition. In return would welcome a donation to this years North Wales Branch charity appeal for a Hospice for Sick Children. Contact Cliff Royle (01928) 731088".

*Thanks for your Email Cliff. Is there no limit to your ability? Now you are offering French Lessons. Where do you get the energy from?*

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### **Bob Walsh sends a few jokes**

Doctor: Why do you smoke a hundred cigarettes a day?  
Well apart from coughing it's the only exercise I get.  
*Yes, the dog is house trained. He only does it in the house.*  
I bet a fiver I could beat my drinks problem.  
Now I can't stop gambling.

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Don't worry about money.  
Borrow some off your friend and let him do the worrying.  
Or borrow from a pessimist. He won't expect to get it back.

### **A Cutting from the St Anne's Express 22/03/01**

**The Days Of Steam Trains**—I am now 81 years old. In 1943, I came to St Anne's, 7 months, to escape the bombs in Sheffield. We eventually settled in 1949, when my husband found a job on British Rail.

I used to work as a waitress in the Lytham picture house café. Mr Doody was the manager. After, I was at the St Anne's Palace where Mr Crompton was the manager.



**George Formby** was a frequent visitor to see the films. He would get a free ticket and a cup of coffee in the interval. I had free passes to see the shows in Blackpool. Although I can't travel now, we used to catch the steam train on Sundays—not a corridor train—which went straight from St Anne's, via Manchester, to the Midland Station in Sheffield, then on to Rotherham at 8 o'clock and back again, - all free for me. The trains were always on time and the porters were very helpful, especially when they saw my rail pass. Edna Hawkins, Don St, St Anne's.

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**'Tis God** who sends the roaring winds, to blow the skirts up high  
But God is just, and sends the dust to blind the bad man's eye

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

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.

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### Alan Harris

—Just received a Christmas card and an invitation from Alan.

The invite is to come along any Monday at 8pm to The Queens Arms, Harrogate Road,  
Leeds 7 for a night of non-stop entertainment.

Singers and entertainers are welcome to have a go, and they have keyboard, bass and PA  
accompaniment. If interested give Alan a ring on 0771 429 6138 or David Gloan 0781  
086 4510. Sounds interesting. Perhaps we can organise a coach trip.

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### Room 101

—What a grand ending to the Room 101

show on UK Gold Sky TV, Tuesday night 16th December,  
when they finished with a lively couple of verses of George's "A  
Grand And Healthy Life." Nick Hancock, who a few weeks  
ago condemned George Formby, and poked fun at him, pre-  
sented the show. It's strange that he hates George but accepts  
his type of music.

Once again the show was heavily backed up by artificial  
applause, something that George and Beryl would never have  
accepted. They were genuine artists.

Not sure if the fresh lyrics are theirs or George's but they  
sounded great: -

"I like to hike, that's what I like. Gee but it's a grand and I like to hike, that's what I like  
healthy life.

I hike a mile, and sit awhile, as I picnic on the grass, I watch the cars and lorries passing  
Down comes the rain, and I get wet through, I can't blow my nose because its already blue  
I catch a chill, I look so ill. Gee but it's a grand and healthy life."



# 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.

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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 817346 - 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:

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.stanevans.co.uk/formby](http://www.stanevans.co.uk/formby)

**E Mail:** [stan@stanevans.co.uk](mailto:stan@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.



**REMEMBER:** If ever you are at death's door the church will always pull you through!  
Behind every good man there's a woman! And behind her is the wife!  
If it wasn't for Venetian Blinds it would be curtains for all of us.