

THE

GEORGE FORMBY

Newsletter 108

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Beryl and I
have left a
Lancashire
Red Rose at
Wigan Pier for
you. Wear it
with pride and
think about
Beryl and me.

Specially Produced for George Formby Fans
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Welcome to Newsletter No. 108

FIRST THE SAD NEWS

Having produced the George Formby Newsletter for the past 9 years I have decided to produce another 12 copies and then call it a day. That will be 10 years in total making 5 bound volumes. So June 2005 will be the last issue. It's been thoroughly enjoyable producing the Newsletter but, time goes on and we are all getting older. It is also becoming increasingly more difficult to drive home from the meetings late at night and especially during the bad weather.

Youngsters today have great difficulty in buying houses, and setting up home, so Eva and I will be spending 12 months converting our home into flats for our grandchildren. You'll agree: Sand, Cement and Photocopiers don't mix.

But please keep sending your articles in for the next 12 months, and thanks to all who have contributed to this issue.

The Busiest Month of the Year

Well it's been a specially busy time during April/May and all the excitement has been revolving around the forthcoming George Formby shows at Llandudno, Frodsham, Wigan Pier and Crewe. The players at Llandudno had a very successful weekend.

BBC RADIO—On Friday 16th of April we had visits to my home from David Perry of Radio Four, and Russell Davies of Radio Two. Russell, who broadcasts every Sunday afternoon, will be giving out news on the above events each Sunday. When they rang they asked if I could arrange for a few players to add some atmosphere. "No problem" says I, with confidence. I invited Neil Forshaw, Anthony Mason, Greg Simister, John Shreeve and Stan Watkinson.

Well they say that the best laid plans often go astray, and they certainly did on this day. Radio Two and Four turned up two hours early and Greg couldn't make it because he was performing at a concert, - Stan Watkinson was down with a heavy cold, - Neil Forshaw was tied up finishing his decorating, - John Shreeve didn't finish work till 4.30pm, and Anthony Mason was on his way back from Essex. So none out of five turned up. How's that for an average?

However, we had a pleasant two hours talking about George Formby and the forthcoming events for his Anniversary Year. We first met Russell in 1991 when we held the Warrington Exhibition and he produced an excellent five page article for the Telegraph Magazine. I asked Russell, a Londoner, how he came to be interested in George, and he replied, "I stayed at Blackpool for a spell and was impressed by the different way of life there, and the twanging of the ukulele. "

DON'T FORGET TO SEND AN ARTICLE FOR THE NEWSLETTER

Ukes Wanted at Wigan Pier—Suddenly there's

a demand for ukes and at least 10 people are coming specially to WIGAN PIER in the hope that they can buy one. Mainly they are looking for beginners ukes to get them started, so if you've got any to spare, bring them along.



Chris Webster asks: Does anyone know what happened to George's Baby Gibson UB-3 uke which was last owned by the late Bill Logan? This uke was lot 454 in the 1961 auction (after George's death) and the first owner was Pat Howson. She sold it to Gerry Nicholas, who then donated it to Frank Formby (George's brother) who then ran short of money and sold it to Bill Logan.

RAY BERNARD TAKES UP THE STORY! The decorated Baby Gibson UB3 (1927) was withdrawn by Pat Howson and didn't appear in the auction list. Pat later gave it to Gerry Nicholas. Your list quotes it as Lot 454. In fact Lot 454 was a Dallas Formby uke.

So now the mystery grows deeper! Who has the Baby Gibson now and where is the Dallas uke that replaced the Gibson in the auction sale?

Jack Winstanley and Wigan Pier—Good News!

I've just been speaking to Jack Winstanley, ex editor of the Wigan Observer, who composed the song "Wigan Pier." He's also written another Formby type song called "Tootie Rootie" which was a Wigan name given to nosy parkers who hid behind the curtains watching everything that went on in the street. Jack is requesting that we find someone to sing it on the day.

He's not been too well lately but he's determined to be with us on Sunday May 23rd at the Pier. Jack is very Pro George Formby and, like Geoff Shryhanc, he's condemned the council on many occasions for ignoring George. He claims that their reason was because George spent very little time in Wigan. "But" I said, "He was an international star who promoted and praised the town of Wigan." Jack agreed wholeheartedly. "And," Jack said, "Why on earth did they name the pub 'The George Orwell?' It should have been named 'The George Formby.'"

My first meeting with Jack was in 1986 when he stood up in the Imperial Hotel, Blackpool, to speak to the Formby fans. He wasn't pleased when Warrington beat Wigan with the Formby exhibition in 1991 and more so when I told him that Warrington are now negotiating a Formby statue. "Oh dear" said Jack, "We must do something about that."

GIVE A WARM WELCOME TO DENNIS and his group from Cyprus when they arrive at Wigan Pier. He has kept his head up during the most difficult time of his life and at the same time used his organising skills to help his friends. Three cheers for Dennis

FRANKIE WOODS CELEBRATES HIS 82ND BIRTHDAY.

Apologies for absence were received from Cyril and Sheila Palmer, Colin Wood, Dave Clews, Steve Hassall and Stan Evans for the Crewe April show, but we had a number of new faces who were attending for the first time namely Lillian Bennion and her friend, Mary Simon, Sheila and John and Audrey, Susan and Margaret, three ladies who heard about us at the Jazz Festival. We hope that they all enjoyed their night out and we hope to see them all again at one of our future monthly variety shows.



It was St George's day and we proudly flew our country's flag. Our MC for the night was Arthur Newton ably assisted by his namesake Alan.

It was our Star member Frankie Woods' 82nd Birthday and Alison brought along cakes for everyone to celebrate. Happy birthday was also sung for Barbara Ray, Jack Crimes and George Osborne. We were delighted to have with us our dear friend Matthew Kelly. Matthew is, I am sure, the most senior ukulele artiste in the Society who at 91 years still treads the boards to entertain us. It was great to have you with us Matthew and special thanks to your daughter Dianne for bringing you along.



Matthew still performs at 91

Thanks again to Chris Metcalf on the door, Angela who did an excellent job on the sound and for the ladies who helped with the refreshments. Not forgetting those who came along to set the room up in the afternoon and everyone who worked magic at the end of the show clearing the room.

Those performing were: Ensemble - Thrash. Cliff Royle - "Granddad's Flannelette Nightshirt," "Mr Wu's a Window Cleaner Now" & "Wartime Medley." Jonathan Baddeley - "Our Sergeant Major," "Smile All the Time" & "Why Does Everybody Call me Bighead?" Connie Edge - "Bless em All." Brian Edge - "Talking to the Moon about You," & "Put Your Arms Around me Honey." Jonathan and Pamela Baddeley - "Baby." Alan Newton - "I've Got a Girl Friend," "Grab Your Ukulele and Sing" & "Living Doll." Our Jazz Band - "Doctor Jazz" and "Swing Low Sweet Chariot." Alison Nadin presented "Frankie Woods' International Puppet Show." Peter Gratton (comedian) & "The Laughing Policeman." Vera Jones "Who's Taking You Home Tonight" & "It Had To Be You." Phil Jones Medley "Changing Partners," "My Canary's Got Rings Under His Eyes," "Everything Stops for Tea" and "T.T. Races." Bryn Evans "Hitting the Highspots Now" & "Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea." Walter Kirkland "Fanlight Fanny," "Happy Go Lucky Me" & a Bones Bash. Des Redfern "Swing Mama" & "Didn't We Have a Horrible Day?" Jim Knight "We've Been a Long Time Gone," "Get Cracking" and Bones medley. Arthur Newton "The Barmaid at the Rose and Crown" "Alexander's Rag Time Band." Ensemble - Thrash. *Thanks Brian. Matthew is wonderful. Must be something in ukulele playing that keeps him going.*

LLANDUDNO VICTORIAN EXTRAVAGANZA—Cliff Royle

Having played at this event for some years we were again invited back to perform for the visitors, and what a week-end it was with a cool wind and strong sunshine everyone has gone home with a good tan. Although most of the performers were from the North Wales Branch we were well supported by Alan Chenery, Alan and Eunice Evans, Walter Kirkland, Alice Cronshaw, Jonathan Baddeley, Des Redfern, Vera Jones and Margaret Moran who incidentally won Second Prize with her attire in the Victorian Costume competition; she looked lovely!! We had our own helpers and supporters supplemented by friends from other Branches, and were delighted to welcome Pat Ralston in the audience. Pat of course was the carer for Jack Jones for many years. There were numerous enquiries about the Society.

For three days we played half an hour on and half an hour off from about 11am to 5 pm to audiences which ranged from a hundred or so to two hundred plus, and they really enjoyed the entertainment so much so that there were frequent calls for "More" sometimes generated by our very own supporters. Anyway in recognition of our efforts we raised over £1100 from which having deducted the basic costs of purchases of blank tapes and C.D's means Charities will receive over £900. Part of this will go to Nightingale House in Wrexham (our Charity for this year), and part to Local Llandudno Charities.

I have to say that we all take our hats off to Alison Nadin who loaded, unloaded, and set up most of our gear each day, loaded and took it home afterwards, organised the programmes, performed and looked after Frankie Woods. What a Lady!! There is one thing Alison; can we have a training session in putting up a Gazebo?

The Extravaganza is an excellent event with the usual Fairground style attractions including Steam Traction Engines, and music played on the Hobby Horse Roundabouts in the old traditional style. In addition there were dozens of vintage cars, tractors, lorries, trucks, a horse drawn carriage, and a Chitty Chitty Bang Bang Car. It was fantastic.

We must express our thanks to the Manager and Staff of Barnacles on Mostyn Street for providing the performers with free tea and coffee during the three days; for letting our ladies use their toilet facilities; and for their excellent fish and chips enjoyed by many of us. They are surely the "Best in Town". *Thanks Cliff.*

Revenge Is Sweet—George To The Rescue

Extracted from the Daily Telegraph 26th April—from Brian Edge.

Sir, My neighbour at University started every day with the caterwauling of Whitney Houston, underscored by his own tuneless bawling and screeching. After a few weeks, I retaliated in kind, by turning my speakers to face his house. I selected a George Formby CD from the cobwebbed depths of my own collection and put on "*When I'm Cleaning Windows*" (live version), selecting infinite repeat and turning the volume on too loud. I then went to the pub and spent an agreeable time checking the quality of the beer before rolling home. I never heard "*I Will Always Love You again*" - and the twanging of a ukulele still makes me smile. S.M. Howard. Woking Surrey.

PLEASE BRING A RAFFLE PRIZE TO WIGAN PIER

Frodsham's Superman reports on N. Wales

Tonight was special for one of our great and hard working supporters. Yes Alison Nadin's 40th Birthday on the 19th. May was to be celebrated. A beautiful Birthday Cake was presented by Dot and Val Wood; Flowers by Phil Hughes on behalf of the Branch, a Balloon by young Daniel Smith, and the singing of Happy Birthday. Alison accepted the greetings in her usual quiet style, but added a real touch of humour by using her "friend" Alf to sort us all out. As yet she does not know what is going on 9th May when a group of Formby Friends have invited her and Frankie for a surprise Lunch.



Happy Birthday Alison

Anyway the Concert started off well with the THRASH, in which we were pleased to see a number of our learners taking part; two mature adults and two youngsters. They are all making excellent progress. We always seek new recruits for which we hold a Practice night each month.

Alan Chenery started off the evening with "I Love to Play My Ukulele" followed by "Gilly Gilly Oson Pheffen Katzenellen Bogen by the Sea". He insists I quote in full. Then followed Tom Meredith (Lamp Post and Sergeant Major). Pleased to see Wife Nora with him for Tom has not been too well of late. Next came Gerald Jones (A George Formby Medley and Mr. Wu was a Laundry

Man); Pam Baddeley (I'm Looking Over a Four Leaf Clover and a Medley of Songs); Walter Kirkland (Happy Go Lucky Me and a Bones Medley accompanied by his Backing Group); Alan Newton (No Business Like Show Business and Oh Oh Oh Oh); Phil Hughes (Blackpool Belle, Old Kitchen Kettle accompanied by Jonathan on the Clarinet, and supporting Grandson Daniel Smith on Back on the Farm. Not often Phil plays on his own but he did very well as did Daniel who is really improving). Then we were in for a treat for Gladys Reed, visiting us from Derbyshire, sang her heart out with "If You Like A Ukulele Lady" and "Sailor Stop Your Roaming". She came back in the second half with "Let Him Go Let Him Tarry". You were great Gladys.

After the interval, during which the Birthday Cake was ravenously consumed, Jonathan Baddeley did (Pleasure Cruise and Smile All the Time); Vera Jones sang (It Had to be You and Who's Taking You Home Tonight); Brian Edge (Give Me a Chance To be Twenty Again); Connie Edge (Double Dare You and Trafalgar Square but no comment about Brian's song); Colin Reed, another guest from Derbyshire (Why Can't I, Cause I'm Shy and a War Medley); Alice Cronshaw sang (Making Memories and Too Young to Know?); Self (Fifty Percent of It's Mine and Little Back Room Upstairs: and Jim Knight (Blackpool Rock and 12th Street Rag as a Bones Medley with his support group). We closed with a THRASH in which Eric Morris's Grandsons took part.

There were a number of visitors including Jonathan Baddeley's Mother and Phil and Janette Hatswell from Yorkshire. We were also pleased to welcome back Eve Stewart from Blackpool, and were glad to hear she was slowly recovering from her illness.

My apologies for nearly omitting your act from the Concert Alice. It was my fault. My only excuse is that Jim and I had a lot to do that evening and things can get hectic at times. *Thanks Cliff. Always on time.*



Eve's Looking Better

We learn every day! I'll bet you didn't know that the name Knotty Ash came from a gnarled ash tree.



Comic Genius, Ken Dodd, the Squire of Knotty Ash deserves a statue in every town in the country.

Ken Dodd tells some of the Diddymen the good news

ONE of Liverpool's most famous areas is to be protected forever.

Knotty Ash village, immortalised by squire Ken Dodd, will be designated as a conservation area on Friday.

The village satisfies the criteria laid down by English Heritage – although it is the village character and historic architecture rather than its mythical jam butty mines and broken biscuit works, which have earned it the special status.

Doddy today welcomed the “wonderful news”.

“Knotty Ash has always had a wonderful village feeling and a great community spirit.”

Ken will be special guest at a celebration on June 5 at Knotty Ash school, which will also raise money for the school and an appeal to restore St John's church tower.

Knotty Ash will also return to Liverpool's political map in June when it becomes a new ward after a Boundary Commission review.

Knotty Ash as a place name dates back to 1768. It is said that a gnarled ash tree grew there and provided a landmark along the Liverpool to Prescot turnpike.

Picture: STEPHEN SHAKESHAFT

Support still swelling for town to get statue of music hall star

Happy memories of cheeky chap George

By JENNI CARROLL

GEORGE Formby fever is sweeping the town, with more and more people backing the campaign to see a statue erected in honour of the ukulele-playing music hall star.

The smiling Lancashire lad still seems to be capturing the hearts of Warrington *Guardian* readers.

It seems that while George was living in the town, he touched a lot of people's lives.

Blackpool Prom

Charles Stewart writes:- You will be aware that the Blackpool Branch are performing on Saturday July 17th at the Lifeboat Station on the promenade.

We will be pleased by all who attend if they will join us after the performance at 41 Macauley Avenue, which is situated off Hawes Side Lane, off Waterloo Rd.

We shall provide food and drinks and provision for more music for as long as you can stand it. Please indicate numbers to help the caterer. Charles.

Stan Evans, editor of the George Formby newsletter, said: "George was a local lad who mixed with the other boys in Stockton Heath.

"His favourite sport was motorcycle racing against the other lads in the village. I even have a video of Percy Hughes telling the story of when he raced bikes with George. He said George never liked losing a race. George also played snooker and billiards in the local snooker hall."

And when Burtonwood resident Nadia Lawless read about the current wave of George Formby mania, she rang the Warrington *Guardian* to tell us of her mum Sheila Smith's starring role on stage alongside George.

Performer

Sheila was a regular performer on stages across the north west with her twin sister, Jean. The duo sang some of the best-known songs of the time and entertained people during the war years.

Nadia said: "When I saw all the George Formby stuff in the paper I thought I should get in touch and tell about my mum's experience.

"She used to sing on stage with her sister - they sang in Liverpool and Blackpool mostly. And it was while singing with her sister that she met George, and she sang on stage with him."

Sheila died two years ago, and Nadia still treasures a



STAR TURN: Sheila Smith appeared on stage with George Formby

photograph of her mum with George.

Stan Evans has told the readers of his newsletter about the Warrington *Guardian's* campaign to honour the cheeky chappie, and he has asked them if they would be willing to help raise the £35,000 needed to pay for a statue.

A Raffle prize for Wigan Pier will be appreciated

I remember George ...

By JENNI CARROLL

FORMBY fever continues unabated this week with Warrington *Guardian* readers eager to tell their tales of when they met George.

Warrington's oldest resident, 103-year-old Albert Longmore, was a teenage friend of George Formby.

Albert lived at The Limes on Grappenhall Road, Stockton Heath, while George and his family were living on London Road.

Albert, who now lives in Booths Hill Nursing Home in Lymm, and George used to travel to Earlestown together to watch George Formby Senior on stage.

Albert's daughter, 77-year-old Pat Fogg, told the *Guardian*: "There used to be six of them who would go about in a gang together and chase the girls.

"They used to go to the Liberal Club on Bewsey Road and they'd go up to Earlestown to watch George's dad on stage, and later to watch George himself."

George Formby made his stage debut at Harrison's Little Theatre in Earlestown. The theatre was in fact a cinema that held short stage acts during the interval.

Albert, who celebrated his 103rd birthday in March, also went to George Formby Senior's funeral after the entertainer collapsed on stage in 1921.

Albert and George Formby lost touch when George moved



FRIEND: Albert Longmore



ONE OF THE GANG: George Formby was Albert's pal

to Blackpool, where his career took off.

Despite his show business lifestyle George always retained affection for Warrington. During the Second World War Warrington Museum closed and was used as offices by the Ministry, it was reopened after the war by George Formby.

WARRINGTON GUARDIAN - Nothing in the latest issue regarding the statue. Hope it wasn't a Flash In The Pan, but you never know with newspapers. Normandy Landing June 6th is soon so we need a good article on George & Beryl.

JENNI CARROLL gauges the passion for comedy star in his centenary year

Formby fan club in talks over George statue bid



GRAVE CONCERN: The Formby family grave in Warrington Cemetery
DTB190404

BLOCK HEADS: The Laurel and Hardy blueprint for a statue destined for Ulverston



THE campaign to get a statue erected in George Formby's honour in Warrington went up a gear this week as the comedy star's fan club debated the issue.

Tony Thornton, editor of the George Formby Society magazine, *The Vellum*, contacted the Warrington *Guardian* to say the society would be discussing the statue at its next meeting.

To have a statue erected at the Wilderspool Causeway roundabout would cost around £35,000.

Sculptor Graham Ibbeson has already said he would be interested in producing a sculpture of the popular comedian.

His business partner, Peter Beverley, believes he has come up with a way of raising some money to pay for the statue.

He said: "What we usually do is make a maquette of the statue before we start work on it so peo-



● George Formby

ple can see what it will look like.

"That's what we did with the Laurel and Hardy statue (earmarked for Stan Laurel's birthplace of Ulverston in Cumbria). We can also make copies of the maquette to be sold and that money can go towards the cost of the statue."

Steven Broomhead, chief executive of Northwest Development Agency, has also stepped into the frame. He said: "We would be happy to consider proposals for funding the statue and the council could also get involved."

He added: "The agency has already helped to fund statues elsewhere in the region."

GEORGE Formby will be honoured like a king when Haydock Race Park dedicates a race day in his name.

George's journey through the sport of kings wasn't exactly illustrious, ending prematurely when he grew too tall for the sport. But his short-lived career as a jockey has gone down in history.

He trained to be a jockey from the age of seven in England and Ireland, but he regularly ran away from the Irish stables.

Archivist for the George Formby Society, Neil Forshaw, of Newton le Willows,

Jockeying to honour comedian at races

takes the credit for the planned race day. He said: "I wrote to the general manager at Haydock Park saying George used to be a jockey and would he consider naming a race after him in his centenary year."

"He said he would be delighted to and it all went from there."

Neil is the proud owner of George's silks that he wore

when he raced his father's horses. He has traced George's racing history and discovered that luck didn't always ride with him.

"He never rode a winner," said Neil.

"He rode seven seconds and two thirds, but he never managed a first place."

But despite not always enjoying life in the saddle, the comedian wasn't too proud to get back on the horse.

He put his equestrian skills to good use in his 1939 film *Come on George*.

The George Formby race at Haydock Park is on Friday, May 21.



RACING COLOURS: Neil Forshaw, archivist for the George Formby Society, shows off the memorabilia he has gathered
DTA190404

Isle Of Man George Formby Stamp

Daily Express—To Commemorate the 100th Anniversary of George Formby's birth on May 26th, stamps featuring the ukulele strumming, Wigan born warbler are being issued in the Isle of Man. The six stamps show George famous for *Cleaning Windows* and *Leaning On A Lamp*—on a motor bike. George loved motor bikes but it's also a nod to his 1935 film "No Limit" when he competed in the I.O.M TT Races on a Shuttleworth Snap, says our man stuffing envelopes. George, who died in 1961, never forgot his working class roots, his favourite lunch was fish and chips—eaten in his Rolls Royce.



How comic enjoyed fruits of success



BEARING FRUIT: From left, George, George's valet, George's mother-in-law, wife Beryl, and market traders Jessie and Fred Bailey

Picture courtesy of STAN EVANS

FORMER Warrington market traders Fred and Jessie Bailey played a key part in George Formby's life.

The couple, who have since died, had a fruit and vegetable stall on Warrington market when it stood in Market Gate.

George and his wife Beryl regularly travelled by train to George's performances. When the train

stopped at Bank Quay station, Fred and Jessie Bailey would hand George and Beryl a basket of fruit and vegetables for their journey.

Stan Evans, editor of the George Formby newsletter, said: "Fred and Jessie were very well known in Warrington. I understand they won trophies for their displays."

Meanwhile, fans can pay tribute at a special event at Wigan Pier on

May 23. The concert and exhibition of memorabilia will also be a reunion of old Formby friends.

Tickets are £2 and are available from Alan Chenery on 07967 665069 or Pat Ralston on 01925 655215.

● Do you remember George or the Baileys? Share your memories with reporter Jenni Carroll on 434112.

A DEFENDING Attorney was cross examining a coroner. "Did you take the man's pulse before you signed the death certificate?" "No," said the coroner.

"Did you listen for a heart beat?" "No" said the coroner.

"Did you check for breathing?" "No" said the coroner.

"So when you signed the certificate you hadn't taken any steps to check that the man was dead, had you?"

"Well" said the coroner, "Let me put it this way. The man's brain was sitting in a jar on my desk, so for all I know he could have been out there practising law somewhere."

Grandmother Played for George Formby - WARRINGTON GUARDIAN

Reading with interest over the past weeks of George Formby, I am in agreement with the statue of him being erected in the town. Being almost 60 years of age, and having done family research, I learned that my grandmother, who was an exceptional pianist, played alongside George Formby. Sheila Vallet was her stage name and apparently she made a record early in her career. She was in London when she played with George and she also played here in Warrington during the Second World War. My grandmother brought me up until I was five years of age, only to be adopted. She played at the Woolston British Legion, with my mother playing the banjo or ukulele. In the 1930s she was offered work in America but my grandfather refused to let her go. I remember as a child her playing for dance classes at the Bell Hall, Orford Lane. Are there people around who remember her?

Maurice recalls the day when he met his hero

'Move, George, I want my lunch!'

By JENNI CARROLL

IT seems that George Formby's magic is still touching the hearts and minds of Warrington residents.

Last week, the Warrington *Guardian* ran a feature on George's contribution to the town, and this week we have been contacted by more readers.

Many just called to thank us for bringing back a lot of happy memories. But one reader rang to tell us of his experiences working as a driver for the Baileys.

Maurice Davies, aged 60, who lives in Newton, said: "I used to work for Fred and Jessie Bailey and reading the Warrington *Guardian*



HERO: But Maurice Davies didn't realise that it was George Formby leaning on his wagon!

last week brought something back to mind of when I met George Formby.

"I was a really big fan of George. One day I was unloading the wagon and there was someone leaning on the wagon. I turned to the man and told him to move so I could get my lunch."

The man was George Formby. "The next thing I knew, Fred called me into the office," continued Maurice. "He asked me if I wanted to meet my hero, George Formby.

"It was my best day of working there. Fred used to say George Formby was his best mate but I never really believed him until that day."

The Warrington *Guardian* is still pushing to get a statue erected in George's honour on Brian Bevan Island.

Getting planning permission to put the statue on the island would not cause too many problems, as there has already been a statue there.

Uke Wanted

Hi Stan,

We got quite a bit of interest at the Llandudno Extravaganza last weekend and hope that you could put a para in the newsletter so that we can perhaps help a very nice mature gentleman who would like to buy and play a uke; from more or less scratch.

"Mature Gentleman in Rochdale wishes to learn to play the Uke and possibly buy one suitable for a learner. Does not have his own transport, but will travel a reasonable distance by convenient public transport. Would be grateful if anyone can help. If so ring Mr. Frank Barker 01706 649041. He approached us at the Llandudno Extravaganza. Cliff Royle. North Wales

ON SUNDAY 30th May the Cyprus group are holding a Wedding Anniversary Marquee Party and all are invited (Bring Your Uke) at the home of John & Pauline Benson, Colliers Tenement Farm, Hand Lane, Leigh Tel 01942 607321. Take the M6 - Jump off at Exit 22 - Turn towards Leigh and keep following the LEIGH SIGNS - Cross the A580 and into Beech Walk on the right - pass cricket club - go straight ahead onto country lane - with car park to right - turn onto cinder path K9 Hydro - go to end - farm on left.

The Sale Meeting by Hilda & Vera

The meeting opened with Cyril making announcements about committee changes and forthcoming events and news. Jean Brannan had unfortunately been unable to accept the position of Chairperson and Marjorie Travis is now in the Chair and Gerald Lowe is the new Treasurer. Cyril and Marjorie paid tribute to Alice Cronshaw and thanked her for her seven years of hard work for the



Vera

Hilda

Sale branch. She was given a bouquet of flowers and a beautiful bracelet. It was good to have Mac and Millie McGee with us again all the way from Leeds, especially as they have just celebrated their Golden Wedding anniversary. Cyril reminded us of the forthcoming celebrations of George's 100th birthday – at Crewe, Frodsham and Wigan Pier. A special meeting of the Sheffield Branch is to be held at Wortley Hall and the date is now Sunday, 25th July. We were sorry to hear that Ray Bernard has had a heart attack and pleased to hear that Eve and Charles Stewart were feeling much better after their illnesses. Ken Ratcliffe has been to visit our former 'bones' player and Honorary President of the Sale Branch, George Cheetham, who is not very well and sends his regards.

Although the numbers attending were considerably fewer than usual, probably due to the fact that it was the Easter holiday week, the evening was very entertaining, with many competent players.

After the initial enthusiastic thrash, Dick Eaves was the M.C. for the first part of the evening and he introduced Eddie Bancroft, always our number one performer, who gave us *Licence* and *Leaning on a Lampost*. Walter Kirkland followed with *You Can't Keep a Growing Lad Down* and *Railroad Bum* with Frank Humphries, Alan Chenery and Jim Knight all playing the 'bones'. Our first lady player was Connie Edge with a rousing *Bless 'em All*, followed by David Rhodes with *Windows* and *Hindoo Man*. Jack Valentine was next with *I'm Nobody's Sweetheart Now* and *T.T.Races*, then Alan Southworth played *I Wonder Whose Under Her Balcony Now* and *I'd Like a Dream Like That*. The last act before the interval was the ever popular Alison Nadin with her wonderful puppets, *Henrietta, the Swinging Chick* and *Mr. Bones* – wonderful !

Ann Ratcliffe did a great job providing tea and biscuits for everyone during the break. Then the raffle was drawn. (We don't know Dick Eaves' secret, but he usually manages to make sure all the ladies on the front row get a prize !)

The next half of the evening was introduced by Les Pearson and Jim Knight was the first to *Get Cracking* and then, with the bones trio and Alan Newton with castanets, *Has Anybody Seen My Girl*. Margaret Moran sang the ever popular *Paper Roses* and *Crazy* followed by Brian Edge who was in good form with *I'm Nobody's Baby* and *Put Your Arms Around Me Honey*. Phil Jones changed the mood with a tribute to Al Boley, *Bathing in the Sunshine* and *Lucky Lucky Lucky Here Comes Cookie*. Alan Newton sang two beautiful ballads *Springtime's Here Again* and *Blue Moon*, then a duet with Margaret *If You're Irish Come Into the Parlour*. Alan Chenery was in his *Little Back Room Upstairs*, then *Side By Side* with Margaret and *Happy Days and Lonely Nights*. Mac McGee did *Raining in my Heart* and *Some of These Days* accompanied

by Walter on the 'bones'. Cyril rounded off the splendid evening with *She's Funny That Way* and *Barefoot Days*. We would like to thank Cyril for organising and setting up a new sound system, which was a great improvement. Hilda and Vera.

(Stan, we hope you have recovered from the 400 mile round trip to the Ukulele Society of Great Britain in Hertfordshire. Your 'Fields of Athenrye' was missed by everybody.) *I don't believe you. Your better half hates the song! Thanks for your report. Hee, you do remind me of the Andrews Sisters.*

John Mason replies to the request for the song

MY CANARY HAS GOT CIRCLES UNDER HIS EYES

Since making whoopee became all the rage. It's even got to the old bird cage.

And my canary has got circles under his eyes.

I thought he'd never do anything wrong. Now he does snake hips the whole day long

And my canary has got circles under his eyes.

His only pals are the yellow lark and just a tiny sparrow.

But I'm afraid when he's in the park, he leaves the straight and narrow.

I've raised this bird in a manner so strict, but I've a feeling I'm being tricked.

Cause my canary has got circles under his eyes.

Thanks John.

Daily Mail:- My father was the manager of the Capitol Cinema in Sheffield for 25 years. During the war years he organised Sunday concerts, giving all the proceeds to charity. Of all the concerts he arranged, only one star gave his services completely free—George Formby. For his generosity, my dad presented him with a penknife. Robin Brown.



Star attraction: Cinema boss Henry Telford Brown presenting George Formby and wife Beryl with a penknife at a concert in Sheffield, 1942

George Is On The Ball! - George Formby has been popping up a lot lately and what could be more surprising than during Sky TVs "Boots An All" programme, - which features all the latest news on Rugby League. Eddie Hemmins, the presenter, expressed his concern that St Helens had fielded a very weakened team against Bradford. In fact they rested 11 top players and replaced them with youngsters who had never played first class rugby before. The St Helens fans, about 5,000 of them, who had travelled to Yorkshire, were fuming!

"Yes" said Eddie, "They paid to watch George Foreman and out came GEORGE FORMBY." So, 43 years after his death he is still remembered!

An Old man, a Boy and a Donkey from Brian Edge

An old man, a boy and a donkey were going to town. The boy rode on the donkey and the old man walked. As they went along they passed some people who remarked it was a shame the old man was walking and the boy was riding.

The man and boy thought maybe the critics were right, so they changed positions. Later, they passed some people who remarked "What a shame, he makes that little boy walk." They then decided they both would walk! Soon they passed some more people who said that they thought they were really stupid to walk when they had a decent donkey to ride. So, they both rode the donkey. Now they passed some people that shamed them by saying how awful to put such a load on a poor donkey.

The boy and man said they were probably right, so they decided to carry the donkey. As they crossed a bridge, they lost their grip on the animal and he fell into the river and drowned.

The moral of the story? If you try to please everyone, you might as well Kiss your ass good-bye.

Email from Beryl Eissens, Australia Radio —

Hi Stan, is there any chance you can send me a copy via email so I can burn it, of George's " Sandy is in a Nudist Camp.. " (not sure if correct title) a listener rang up today to ask me to play it for her Mum's birthday tomorrow. Here's hoping, Cheers, Beryl

2nd EMAIL—I spoke to that lady again who now says it may have been Sandy Powell, Max Miller? She is convinced the title is Sandy joins the Nudist Camp and has a line which goes "nowhere to hang my medal" etc any idea's? - great work with the statue. Cheers, Beryl



REPLY— Hello Beryl. I've never heard of Sandy in any of George's songs. Maybe it was released in Australia? I'd appreciate hearing it. Or do you mean George's "Granddad's Flannelette Nightshirt"? Which goes: "The other day I got an invitation—To go and join a nudist colony—and as the life is healthy and in the open air—I trotted off as happy can be—in my granddad's flannelette night-shirt . . . "

3rd EMAIL—Don't worry Stan. I've found it and it was recorded by Sandy Powell.

E Mail from Arthur T—

Stan, there seems to be some debate on whether certain songs are George Formby's or not. For example "Bless Em All." Was that one of George's, and what about songs like "Sweet Georgia Brown". Was that George's?

Thanks Arthur. Difficult question to answer. Most certainly "Bless Em All" is one of George's and we have video copy of George introducing it to the country, in the air raid shelter during the war.



However he sang and recorded many songs that were not his own, and Sweet Georgia Brown was one of them. In the American Medley and British Isles Medley recordings he sang songs that were written in the mid 1800s—songs like Old Kentucky Home—Camptown Races—Old Folks At Home—Oh Susannah—Auld Lang Syne—and Come Landlord Fill the Flowing Bowl etc. These most certainly are not George's.

He sang "Like The Big Pots Do" which was recorded years after Gracie Fields had made a recording of it. He also sang Alexander's Ragtime Band - La Donna Mobile—She'll Be Coming Round The Mountain, and many more. He also recorded Remember Me with Tommy Farr, the British heavyweight boxing champ. None of these were George's. Some of his songs like, John Willey's Jazz Band and John Willey's Ragtime Band were his father's.

And what about: Tiger Rag—Hard Hearted Hannah—Some Of These Days—Sweet Sue—Dinah—It Ain't Nobody's Business What I Do—I Like Bananas— and Goody Goody etc.

So George sang quite a number that were not classed as his songs. But it will be interesting to count just how many non-Formby's he sang.

Uke Banjo Wanted—Phil Knight on 07748 502121 has had his uke banjo stolen so he's looking for a replacement up to around £250. 00. If you have one for sale give Phil a ring and please mention the Newsletter.

Another Uke Wanted—Ukulele Banjo in reasonable condition, preferably with case, in region of £75 to £100. Tel. Rev. Roland Crook 01928 722151"

8th Nantwich Jazz & Blues Festival Sun 11th April

The Crewe Branch took part in their 8th Nantwich Jazz, Blues and Music Festival on Sunday 11th April. About 300 fans from all around the country joined our own very special band of faithful supporters who thoroughly enjoyed a great show which raised £219 for charity. Those taking part were Jonathan and Pam Baddeley, Alan Newton, Arthur Newton, Dave Clews, Jim Knight, Cliff Royle, Don Chalkley, Brian Edge, Walter Kirkland, Steve Hassall, Alan Chenery, Ron Whiston, Angela Caldicott and Colin Wood (sound) and Chris Metcalf (Usher and Publicity).

Slow Start at Liverpool by Bob Muirhead

Hi Stan, Sorry to hear you were not too good on Thursday hope you are making a good recovery. Your fellow "Past it" young Stanley did us all proud and although it started off slowly it ended an excellent night. 2/3rds of " Dicky Hart and the Pace-makers" didn't show so I had to do a medley with Dave & Alan.

Phil Jones from Sale gave his usual immaculate performance, the little resumes of his songs background are always interesting, George Morgan was a surprise arrival and did "Drunken Mouse" & "Give me a ride on your Bike", to name just two, I wish George would come more often. Chris a new player from Widnes did a couple of numbers on a Wooden Uke including one of my favourites: Jesse Fullers "San Francisco Bay" and Jed (from the same village) did us proud with a couple of medleys in his inimitable easy going style.

What can one say about John Shreeve? as usual he brought the house down, I always feel like taking a hammer to my uke when I get home, Stan (well past it) strummed his Banjo to good effect and I joined him in "Liverpool Blues" which considering we'd not tried it before wasn't too bad.

As I say Stan a great night but please get back soon. You were saying a "Closer Walk with Thee" backing is available on the net, could you give me the site address? Phil Jones said if we do Digswell in October to put himself, Jed, and Bryn down for three seats, (Shudder to think what Jed will do to the Digswell calm) Bob.

Thanks for the report Bob. Sorry I didn't make it but I was absolutely full of a rotten cold. Grandchildren are great, and we always look forward to seeing them, but on this occasion Lyndon came to stay a couple of nights and for the whole 48 hours he sneezed all over us.

Barbershop George

—Just had a visit from Mike Hughes who is one of the organisers of the Liverpool Barbershop Choir. He came for a copy of George's "Imagine Me On The Maginot Line" for the choir to learn. What he told me was interesting.

"I've been playing the ukulele banjo since 1960, from the age of 10, and I own a 1929 Duceito uke. About 5 years ago the skin split and I had it restored at Darwins Music shop in St Helens, which was the only place I could find in the north of England that could still do it.

The beauty of George Formby songs is that, Barbershop rules are very strict on arrangement and composition. You've got to have a minimum of 40% sevenths in any song for barbershop. Now nearly all George Formby's music is sevenths. It works perfectly! So for barbershoppers George Formby music is magic. They know the chords, and they know how they progress, so what I am arranging for the choir is a short medley of "Imagine Me On The Maginot Line, finishing off with "Who Do You Think You Are Kidding Mr Hitler."

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

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

Fri 21st May 2004—It's Back to the 40s Night at Sale. Bring your Tin Hat, along rope and a twenty foot ladder. Ring Alice on 0161 727 9829

Sun 23rd May 2004—Grand show to be held at WIGAN PIER - All are invited to George's home town to celebrate George's 100th. Doors open at 1pm and tickets are £2 each (£2.50 on the door) from Stan Evans 01925 727102.

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—A Tribute to Jack Jones in George's Anniversary Year.
To be held at ROOSTERS, Warrington. Ring Pat Ralston on 01925 655215

Sat July 17th 2004—Blackpool Prom—Ring Charles Stewart on 01253 768097

Sun July 18th—Fleetwood Festival—Tram Sunday, Alan Chenery on 07967 665069

Anatoly Uvarov sends his best wishes from Russia.

Dear friends ! - I send to all of you my best wishes of wellbeing and happiness on this Easter days. Yours very sincerely, Anatoly.

Anatoly is a very keen George Formby fan who enjoys listening to George's tapes and learning the English words. Quite often he will Email me for the words of a particular song.

He also put in several votes for the Formby statue to be erected in Warrington and the Guardian picked up on this. They couldn't believe that someone in Russia could be interested in George and in Warrington. As I told em, "George is a bigger star than people are aware of."

The Frank Skinner Show—Just been watching The Frank

Skinner Show on Sky TV and one of his guest's was Tracy Shaw of Coronation Street. Suddenly Frank pulled a uke out from the back of his chair and attempted to accompany himself singing, in Formby style, "Oh if women like them like women like those why don't women like me," from George's film "Boots Boots." Great Stuff!!!

BEFORE THE GULF WAR a female journalist did a story on the women's roles in Kuwait and had noted that the women would walk a few feet behind their husbands. But when she returned recently she found that the roles had been reversed and now the men were walking behind their wives. "This is wonderful," the journalist said to an Arab woman. "What enabled the women to achieve this reversal of roles, had the men at last seen the light?" "No!" she said, "It was the land mines."

A MAN WENT into a Chemist shop and asked for something to cure hiccups. The chemist slapped his face and said, "There, that's cured your hiccups." "But" said the man, "I haven't got hiccups. It's for the wife."

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:

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.



Ten fingers and ten toes. Was God preparing for decimalisation?

If smoking is harmful, why does it cure kippers?

Never hire a plumber wearing wellingtons, or an electrician with scorched eyebrows

ARTICLES ARE VERY WELCOME