

## LINES FROM LANCS: By James Hartley

LITTLE ALBERT—I imagine he may well live with Kenny Baker for the title of Smallest Man in Showland—is enjoying a whole of a time playing "Dick Whittington" at Salford. "I've never been so petted and pampered in all my life," he confided. "At this rate I could play cat parts for the rest of my days." And it's true. The entire cast—with the possible exception of Mike King (King Rat) who he eliminates in a realistic fight to the death in the Sultan's Palace scene—seems to favour him.

Since he joined up as one of Burton Lester's Wonder Midgets 15 years ago, the world has been Albert's oyster. Oh, well, he's young yet—born 1938 in Burnley—there's plenty of time! Just now he's waiting to hear from Nat Jackley for whom he will probably be stooping again in the forthcoming summer season.

**SHOWBIZWIZE** the Blackpool Tower Lounge (it stretches from the promenade to Bank Hey Street) is a sight for sore eyes now days—weekends especially. Someone had the bright idea of introducing Friday-Saturday-Sunday "Old Time Music Hall" and it's caught on like nobody's business. A special room for the artists has been built at the prom-end of the 2,000-seater rendezvous, they've switched the organ, hung some pot-painted for period pieces, and, Bob's yer uncle!—that's it.

There are different artists and a change of chairman every week, the only fixtures being Ernie Broadbent (that wonderfully versatile organist) and his drummer, Jack Kelly. Tower spokesmen, Fred Brown, sounded well satisfied over the way things are going. "The directors are as pleased as they are surprised at the success of what began as an experiment and could possibly grow into a standard out-of-season attraction. The public's response has been remarkable, and from the artists' point of view, they're going gold—as attentive and appreciative as any of our theatre audiences," he told me.

Bookings are arranged through Nelson Firth, of Manchester, in association with Tower entertainments chief, Mr. Crabtree. Last weekend Chick Robini as chairman topped the bill, with tenor Walter Dinoff, popster Julie Michaels, and banjoist Steve Batt; Harry Marsh rules the roost this weekend and he will be introducing some new acts, Jessie Collinwood, and Marie Ford.

WHILE the wives are away the hubbies may play—but Jackson Earle and Bert Loman are not exactly enjoying their privileges. Bert once confessed he couldn't boil water—and I don't know that Jack's much better qualified in domestic chores. The situation is—Mrs. Earle (Peggy Naylor) and Mrs. Loman (Mavis Whyte) are principal boy and principal girl respectively in pantomime—at Salford, which is too far to travel back home (to Cheshire) after each show.

How did she persuade Jack to let her take on the job, I asked Peggy. "Oh I just fell on my knees and begged—he can't say no," explained Mrs. Earle, Mavis admitted, "I'm still stage-sick and Bert understands—that's it." Mavis and Peg (both reside in Wirral) are teamed together again next summer—in the latest edition of "Melody Inn" at New Brighton. Which should prove a bit easier for Bert and Jack anyway.

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## CLUB CORNER

"I KNOW I've no need to be doing this any more Mrs. Woman," Harry Bailey kidded the nearest customer at Preston Royale, and went on to amplify the remark for all and sundry. "So many new boys are doing my act for me—in fact, one who did it recently was paid off first night!"

Albeit, the Limerick lad is consistently engaged 11 months of the year: they may pinch his patter and copy his kilt, but his racy style, puckish humour, and spot-on timing must ever remain exclusively his own. Then, of course, there's that extraordinary fiddle of his which looks for all the world like an elongated cigar-box ("The standard violin's too sexy-looking for my liking") and sounds like a Strad, and the shining alto saxophone that positively purrs "Smoke Gets Into Your Eyes."

Harry is no ordinary musician and I have often wished that one day I might hear him go through one of his instrumental solos without interruption—without breaking to reminisce over Murphy, his fabulous countryman. Last Thursday night I timed him—he took 17 minutes to play "Tears" and it was laughs all the way. His full act plus encores lasted three minutes short of an hour, and he left the stage to a clamour of "more," "more," "more."

Incidentally, the Blarney Bhoy is newly-returned from enjoying a family reunion (and collecting a load for fresh material) in Dublin. Married daughter Pat was home, all the way from Georgia, U.S.A., and the rest of the flock—Olive from Lissimouth, Harry Jr. from London, Alan from college, and Brian on leave from Teletis Firearm. Next summer Harry returns for the second successive season to North Wales—this time Butlins, Pwllheli, for Johnny Riscoe.



Borra—The suave pickpocket

**COMEDY-IMPRESSIONIST Dave Thomas**, all-Britain conqueror in the most recent Butlins-People £1,000 talent competition, has pantomimed at Salford, which is too far to travel back home (to Cheshire) after each show.

How did she persuade Jack to let her take on the job, I asked Peggy. "Oh I just fell on my knees and begged—he can't say no," explained Mrs. Earle, Mavis admitted, "I'm still stage-sick and Bert understands—that's it." Mavis and Peg (both reside in Wirral) are teamed together again next summer—in the latest edition of "Melody Inn" at New Brighton. Which should prove a bit easier for Bert and Jack anyway.

Nothing has been finalised yet but J.F. is seriously considering offers.

THE clubs boom is very encouraging to owners and managers almost throughout the North-West, but there's a snag. Not all the visiting acts find it easy to trace suitable accommodation. Apparently there are not enough hotels and boarding-houses prepared to put up with the irregular (unavoidably so) comings and goings of the artists—at fair prices. I have previously mentioned a number of northern addresses where artists may rely on adequate service at reasonable cost, and to these should be added: At August, 9 Lanchester Road, Fallowfield, Manchester, 14. Phone RUSS 9273. At (compere-vocalist at Wigan King of Clubs) confided, "Too many artists are paying too high a proportion of their fees out in digs and taxis—the wife and I agreed to take a hand." Mrs. Al is Joan Peters, a popular Manchester-based songstress. The Augusts' place has been strongly recommended to me by several artists who have stayed there—and not only on account of low charges. "It's like home," one artist told me.

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## THE NEW FACES



ONE of the most successful vocal presentations in recent months has been The New Faces, yet, apt though their name is, it's also a little misleading. Yes, that's true, but the fact of the matter is that Marie Gordon, Experienced Faces? Yes, indeed, for it's their experience that has put them head and shoulders above many a similar act. Marie was formerly with the H-F's while Charles McKay and Barry Greenway were original Scots boys. Their combined talents have been winning warm approval in clubs and cabaret in the North while a big summer season is in the offing for them.

WORKSHIRE RELISH  
by James Towler

I REMEMBER when I first saw Don Crockett, some three or more years ago, he impressed me as being a real winner with a flair for originality who had the makings of a good comic. A second viewing the other week confirmed my earlier opinions. Although the native Middlesbrough is still there, his style and delivery now have a decided Transatlantic slant. In addition, an inventive line of comedy he is an expert impressionist, particularly in the sphere of vintage T.V. films. Bogart, Edward G. Robinson and the gang of a Walter Brennan are all there. So, too, is a very life like Malcolm Muggeridge.

Unfortunately, the vast hall in which I saw him was far from full, for Don is, as a colleague aptly put it, a "full house" comedian. Even so I believe he has undoubtedly potential, possibly in television too.

I DON'T actually know if easy on the eye Yvonne Mayol is French though I rather doubt it. I am certain to have happy memories of an evening spent at the Paris revue theatre that bears her name. However, be that as it may, I have no hesitation in commending Miss Mayol as one of the best 'exotics' seen in Leeds for some time.

SUMMER and Richard Stone are synonymous, and it was a very bronzed and fit looking Richard who was in Leeds the other week, auditioning artists for over a dozen Summer Shows.

Although his cast lists are not yet complete I can tell you that he has a real winner in placing both the name of Harry, Agie stood out from the Leeds Grand Panto, and Norman Collier at Bridlington. A guarantee that the House Full boards will be in regular use at the Grand Pavilion this year.

CLAIRYOXANTS are not my cup of tea as a rule. Yet I give top marks to Za Raeda who makes this science (?) not only interesting, but also gives it first class entertainment value as well. A fine showman by any standards, he is well backed by Johnny St. George, as backed a singer to have on any bill.

DONCASTER to Monk Bretton in less than half an hour isn't bad on ice cold roads. Unfortunately it is a real winner in placing both the name of Harry, Agie stood out from the Leeds Grand Panto, and Norman Collier at Bridlington. A guarantee that the House Full boards will be in regular use at the Grand Pavilion this year.

And, while the name Birkett is fresh in my mind, let me tell you of another of that genial fraternity by the name of Harry. He stood out as one of Borra's volunteers and although he managed to keep his trousers and wallet he came away minus his act and all of praise for the master trickster.

RICKY RICH, resident entertainer at Harrogate's Montpelier Club presents his own "Guest Night" every Sunday... Reg & John Hammond to stage a talent contest at the Lyceum, Bradford during February 13 week. Reg artists will include Allan Davies, Margaret McMillen and Lou Grant. Peter Dalry will be at the finals on the 21st... I hear good report on singer Lynn Marlow.

Doncaster's M.P. Harold Davies and Race Horse owner-Licencee Alastair Davies leading a campaign against increased charges by the Performing Rights Society... Owen Hammond of the name of Variety Agency booking groups and acts into the Continent via Mickey Hayes of the Heinz O. Schneider Agency in Germany... Currently at Buckstone Hall that outstanding performer Mike Preston.

KENT COBS  
BY

JIMMY HODGE JNR

IT looks as though I might have something moving in my area in the "shop window" sphere; something like this has been required, in demand, by both clubs and artists—for a long time.

You'll recall that I was to visit the Beckett Club, at Gillingham, last week? Well, this I did and met Jim Walker who has a club with a thriving membership but little in the way of live entertainment.

"We have the 'canned' (Juke box) variety," Jim admitted, "but it gets a bit - well, you know..."

I know! Anyway, the upshot of our matter has led to preparations for staging 'shop window' shows at the club. Other club com. secs. will be invited along so that artists attending can be sure of not only a large and appreciative audience but also the chance of bookings "on the spot" for other local clubs.

First, however, at my request, certain work will help enhance an act to be put in hand at the club and I will give details as soon as possible about opening dates.

SUNDAY night saw a new up-and-comer, vocal trio The Lamplighters making their first appearance at the Veteran's Club, Gillingham. We shall see more of these lads, I'm sure.

I'm still getting complaints from a number of artists concerning the fact that a number of Kent clubs still don't have the courtesy to answer letters or return pictures. Fire-eating comic Jerry Richards has the same complaint although he admits that those Kent clubs he has worked - Rosecroft, Gravesend Comrades, and the Odeon, Ashford, have been great.

Keep knocking at the door, Jerry lad—or better still, use your flame-thrower! Hope you have a happy time as entertainments manager at the Jersey Holiday Camp this summer. Also hope your visit to the Aylesham WMC last Sunday went well.

LAUGHTERMAKER Ken Plesed was at Greenways Hotel, Maidling, with Horace Mashford's Old Time Music Hall. Greenways is fast becoming a live spot in Kent and Ken is full of enthusiasm, for the place and the audience.

I was amazed by the new extended concert hall, stage and dressing rooms," he writes. Ken is booked this summer with Bunny Baron for the "Those were the Days" touring show, which will be at Clacton, Weston-super-Mare, Folkestone, etc., the gang in this outfit expect to travel 1,000 miles a week for 16 weeks!

Happy motoring!

THE Coniston Hotel was the venue last week for cabaret by Billie Burns, Bob Wade, Betty Shilling, Chris Smith and Kay Royston.

And that's all from 58 High Street, Chatham, Kent. Adios!

## HOT FROM SCOTLAND: by Gordon Irving

COMEDIANS, producers, singers, theatre managers... they came to a Scots country church in the town of Strathaven, Lanarkshire, last weekend, to pay their last tributes to a good and genuine friend in variety. Miss Greta Lauder, nice and constant companion on the world tours of the late, great Sir Harry, who died at Lauder Ha' mansion after an illness of 18 months, patiently borne and cheered by hundreds of messages from friends in the variety business, at home and overseas.

Greta lived for show-business and variety, and kept the memory of her famous uncle ever-green. To Lauder Ha' she welcomed all the greats in show-business. It was an honour to be invited to high tea at Lauder Ha' and to hear the wonderful stories of a great Scot who took the world by storm with his simple melodies.

Variety was probably the most-favoured of the good causes supported by Greta, who did sterling work for artists' charities, and never failed to encourage a struggling young performer, or to pop round and wish good luck to a comedian after an opening-night.

Lauder Ha' houses many of the treasured souvenirs brought back from world travels by Sir Harry. I hope, sincerely, they will be preserved for the nation, and that people in the future will be able to see these precious mementoes that tell the story of a great music-hall comedian and singer whose songs still echo round the world.

**CLEM DANE** of the Daly and Dame comedy-and-music duo (recently in panto in Belfast), tells me he has agreed amicably to go out on his own, and will now try to be as busy as "The Great Dane". Already, he's tried himself out successfully in clubs, and he's hoping for a summer season. Clem is a former house-painter and aged 27, from Belfast, with much experience in working men's clubs.

Pianist Anne Cowie, who accompanies so many acts, tells me a good new date is Lockerbie House Hotel, in Dumfries, where Cavan O'Connor, the strolling vagabond, Foster Hart and Irene Campbell and girls, will be the attraction last week-end. This is fast becoming a popular date for cabaret acts. I hear leading English acts are set for the future.

(GORDON IRVING is at Lochend, Bardowie Loch, by Milngavie, via Glasgow. Tel.: Balmore 293).

## GREETINGS FROM GLASGOW



By The 3 Monarchs

WE'RE enjoying our season here at the Alhambra in 'Goldilocks and the Three Bears' with that great Scottish comedian Andy Stewart. Do you know, it's the first time we've been in Glasgow for ten years when we were here in variety with Dickie Valentine.

We had heard a great deal about the standard of Howard and Wyndham pantomimes and now we've seen for ourselves the care and craftsmanship which go into their productions. What a pity that there aren't more H & W shows all over the country!

While we're in Scotland we hope to increase our collection of mementoes belonging to famous people. We already have a pair of Sir Alec Douglas-Home's glasses, now we're waiting for a fly-switch from Jomo Kenyatta and a diet chart from the President of the USA. We would like to get something which belonged to Sir Harry Lauder and we're hoping to talk to Andy Stewart into giving us one of his kilts.

As you probably know, Les now has his pilot's certificate and has joined the ranks of show comedians as Stan Stennett, Jimmy Edwards, Hughie Green, Dick Emery and Jimmy Logan. Actually, some weeks ago Les got lost in the air over Sheffield, but made a perfect landing in a field near Chesterfield, where his house is built on land owned by the late A. E. Matthews and is known as the Four Tubs Estate.

## MIDDLE-EAST MOMENTS

Recorded by  
Kenny Cantor

Br—Just about getting acclimatised to near freezing after a wonderful time out in the Middle East, where the temperature was always between 65 and 90 and the sun shone all day. We were all walking round in swimming trunks and shorts, and this is what they call winter out here.

I was out until January 14 with a combined British and Easterner's show called "Airs and Graces", which met with a terrific reception from the boys.

In the know, we had a very sweet young lady from Ireland called Teresa Duffy, who really got them rocking from away day to Forty Shades of Green. She has cut a few records on the Decca Irish Label, and from what she tells me they are selling very well in the Old Country.

Then we had a very exceptional magic and mystery contribution from the master of witchcraft wizardry, assisted by his wife Honor, a lovely young lady who used to be a Windmill girl, and now flies through the air with the greatest ease. He, too, broomstick levitated by Bernard in his finale.

We had Ena Preston on piano, and Bill Allen on drums, and they just couldn't possibly be better. They were with us even if we changed mid-stream, as I managed to do quite often, as the boys always liked to be vociferous, and usually managed to shout something while they were always complimentary.

One of our last visits was just behind the Yemen border, where the whole situation was hanging in tents, and there isn't a stone building in sight. We did the show on the backs of two large lorries and the boys really enjoyed it. What a reception they gave us!

We had to be out before dark, however, as the shelling usually started then so we were away by the time the shrapnel got patterning.

We had an armed guard with us wherever we went, and when we used to Aden we had to have armed escorts in front and behind, and with us as well.



Kenny Cantor

I'm glad to be home, of course, but weather-wise, sorry to leave the Middle East. So to one and all, Salam A Lakum! or, to put it plainly, if belatedly, a Happy New Year!

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