

Bowler Dessert

Autumn 2002 Number 60





Friday 2nd till Monday 5th May, 2003

The Laughing Gravy Tent is proud to be hosting the 24th UK Convention. Whether you were here in Birmingham in 1998 or this will be your first visit to us, we offer you a warm welcome. As this will also be our tenth birthday, there will be plenty to celebrate. Fun, friendship and the special Sons of the Desert atmosphere awaits. So go on, come and join us.

One of the many attractions at the convention will be an evening at a greyhound stadium. The tent has booked the whole suite of function rooms! These overlook the racetrack and the finishing line. One of the races is to be run in honour of our presence and the trophy for the winning owner of this race will be presented by one of the Sons. It could be you! During the evening an inclusive buffet will be available. Should you wish to lay a bet you do not have to leave the suite. So you will be able to feast, drink and maybe see your chosen dog win!

Our day out will start with a visit to the Bridgnorth Railway Station. After a guided tour of the station we board a steam train to take us through the scenic Severn Valley to Bewdley.

Bewdley is one of the most attractive towns in England and the station is the jewel in the crown of the Severn Valley Railway.

The town is just a few minutes' walk from the station. You will have free time, when you may choose to walk along the river, go shopping, or partake of your particular "refreshment"!

The convention costs £174.00. The first payment of £50.00 is due now. Cheques are payable to L&H Birmingham Convention and should be sent to Steve Smith, 80 Old Penkridge Road, Cannock, Staffordshire, WS11 1HY.

Enquiries: write to the above or e-mail 24ukconv@sandl.org.uk.

John Ullah

Chris will step down

In his latest tent bulletin Chris Coffey tells us that he will soon step down as Grand Sheik of the Bacon Grabbers Tent, but remain involved in tent activities.

Good luck, Chris, in all your future endeavours and thanks for your enormous contributions to the Sons of the Desert so far. And do, please, keep writing for *Bowler Dessert*!

A first?

Is this a first for the Saps at Sea Tent? Paul Brown lives in Southend and is a very keen Laurel and Hardy fan. Although not a member of the Saps, he contacted Roger Robinson and asked if he could help him with his stag night as he was to be married on 13th July. He wanted an evening with the Boys for him and all his pals. Roger says, "Of course the Saps were delighted to assist Paul and, for his last Saturday night as a single man we arranged a Laurel and Hardy film evening based on 'Love and Marriage' at the Railway Hotel. I think that Stan and Ollie proved that you don't need someone to take off clothes at a stag night in order for everyone to enjoy oneself. Hopefully some of the boys will want to return to the Railway for more evenings in the company of the Saps and Stan and Ollie."

What a Christmas present!

In the Men o' War Tent's Christmas raffle was a special star prize – original Stan Laurel and Oliver Hardy autographs, complete with a letter of authentication! Paul Harding says, "Thanks to Tony for his immense generosity in donating such a rare item. I'm sure we'll never match it."

Landmark

Think of a number. Think of a milestone. How about sixty, which usually produces some resonance? This sixtieth issue of *Bowler Dessert* happily provides the opportunity to give a tip of the bowler in the direction of all those loyal contributors and readers whose continuing support makes the magazine possible.

This issue includes a full listing of all UK tents, contacts, meeting places etc. It is the first time that such a comprehensive list has been available anywhere in the world and will be a feature in each issue of our magazine in the future.

Bowler Dessert just gets better all the time!



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Two special issues are also available at 80p (€1.00, \$1.00) each: *Sons of the Desert – a souvenir of the movie* and *Bowler Dessert: the early years*.

◇ All prices include postage and package. Cheques etc should be made payable to Sons of the Desert.

Bowler Dessert Online:

<http://freespace.virgin.net/bowler.dessert>.

Tent trivia

Did you know that there was once a fraternal organisation called Knights of the Maccabees (KOTM)? It originated in Canada in 1878 and, in 1896, had nearly 210,000 members in Canada and the USA. What is interesting about this group is that chapters were known as "tents" and tent numbers were assigned, apparently in the order of formation. And I thought the Sons originated the "tent" nomenclature.

Dwain Smith

Conventions book

Savannah Furman has published a book on the International Conventions. The first conclave was held in 1978 and the thirteenth has only just taken place. So twelve International Conventions are recalled in great detail in 328 lavishly illustrated pages (274 x 250mm), with much humour throughout. The book is in paperback and the ISBN is 0-9719085-0-8.

Sons of the Desert: the Conventions costs \$20 (US) plus \$5 for shipping to the UK. Send a money order to The Furmans, PO Box 260141, St Louis, MO 63126, USA. E-mail: sfurman@mindspring.com.

There will be a review in your next *Bowler Dessert*.





Barrie Finney

Barrie Finney suffered a massive heart attack and passed away on 18th May. John Ullah says, “Barrie loved our organisation and always referred to the Sons as part of his family. He was the kindest man I have ever met. We were with Barrie on 16th, planning for next year’s convention. He was so looking forward to it and as usual had some great ideas. He loved *Bowler Dessert* and was very proud to have his work associated with it.”

Willie McIntyre proclaims, “I always admired Barrie’s exceptional talent and valued our long friendship. He helped so many so much, forever in a quiet manner, that he was very much part of the spine of the Sons. His artwork and fond memories of him will live on, but how I wish that Barrie could have stayed with us for longer. In future when I see his drawings I will remember three great men – Stan, Ollie and Barrie.”

Tony Bagley adds, “Barrie was a lovely man and a kindred spirit, who loved art and loved Laurel and Hardy. I had some memorable conversations with him on both subjects. A superbly talented artist and a smashing bloke. He will be sadly missed.”

Roger Robinson testifies, “Barrie epitomised the Sons of the Desert with his friendliness, helpfulness and sense of humour.”

Eric Woods recounts, “There was a very full church for the funeral. About fifty Sons were present and some even wore fezzes. There was also a large deputation from the Boys Brigade, the organisation which had occupied much of Barrie’s time in former years.

“Pat had asked me to say a few words during the service. I managed to hold it together for the bulk of the time and ended by inviting all Sons present to come forward and gather around Barrie’s coffin, link arms and sing *We Are the Sons of the Desert*. Pat’s idea, it was a lovely moment – lots of laughter and tears. Barrie had a great send-off.”

John and Mandy tell us, “It was a lovely service. The church was absolutely packed. At the crematorium we entered to the sound of *Trail of the Lonesome Pine* and said our last

goodbyes with the *Ku-Ku* song. It would have made Barrie smile. We had a small display of photos and e-mail messages after the service.

“We will all miss Barrie very much. But it helps to know that we have the support of good friends.”

Mark Harris writes, “Like many other Sons, I was saddened at the death of Barrie Finney. I found him a very charming man. My thoughts go to Pat, Mandy, John and the rest of the Laughing Gravy Tent members.”

Grahame Morris says, “Although Anni and I didn’t know Barrie very well on a day-to-day basis, we felt we knew him as a close friend – the *Sons’ Effect*. A great tribute to Barrie is the fact that you immediately warmed to him, his sense of fun and enthusiasm for the Sons. Our last memory of Barrie is of him driving off into the sunset (well, to Southend) singing *Give My Regards to Broadway* – a weekend-long standing joke.

“With many others we attended his funeral to show our respect and love for a man who typified the spirit of the Sons of the Desert, and there wasn’t a dry eye in the church.

“The Laughing Gravy Tent in particular, and the wider Sons of the Desert, have lost someone who contributed significantly to the organisation. He will always be remembered with affection and our thoughts are with Pat, Mandy and Mark.”

Instead of sending flowers in memory of Barrie, the family suggested that donations might be made to the Laurel and Hardy Statue Fund.

◇ This issue of *Bowler Dessert* is dedicated to Barrie. We have more about him on pages 13 and 14.



One of *Bowler Dessert*’s favourite drawings by Barrie

10th Laurel and HarDay

1pm till 8pm, Saturday 7th September, 2002,
at the Beer Engine, Poolstock, Wigan

Admission to this year's Laurel and HarDay is back to £5.00, at the door, on the day. Chris Coffey says, "How could we follow last year's Ronnie Hazlehurst and his Orchestra?" He has booked the Avalon Boys! They will be performing songs from their CD (reviewed on page 55). Chris adds, "We will have a review of the best and worst of the last nine events, the Kneesie-Earsie-Nosey World Championship, some classic Laurel and Hardy shorts, the customary attractions, and the usual hot food and choice of beers. David Wyatt will be bringing along some items he showed at the UK Convention and Roger Robinson will bring some footage shot at the Convention."



Why not stay over at the Oak Hotel, a Quality Inn, just a mile up the B5238 road (and a past UK Convention venue)? For just £85.00 they offer b&b for two people for two nights. Telephone 01942 826888 and have your credit card ready. Quote "Laurel and HarDay" when booking.

Queries? Visit <http://www.bacongrabbers.co.uk> or ring Chris on 01744 817130.

◇ Chris thinks it would be a fitting tribute to have an exhibition of Barrie Finney's artwork on display at the Laurel and HarDay. Will any Sons who have copies of Barrie's work please e-mail them to neilevans@blueyonder.co.uk or post them to Chris for enlarging and display?

Bull Inn day

As we went to press, Dave Scothern and his Beau Hunks Tent were about to stage what has now become their annual Laurel and Hardy day at the Bull Inn in Bottesford on 27th July.



Flashback to March 1947, when Stan Laurel visited his sister Olga, who kept the pub in Bottesford. Left to right are Oliver Hardy, Olga Healey, Ida Laurel and Stan, and Bill Healey

Internet auctions

Auctions in aid of the Statue Appeal have been held on the Jitterbugs Tent website, with some great Laurel and Hardy memorabilia donated by collectors. Hans Ligtenberg tells us that the first set of auctions alone yielded no less than \$500.00. One of the most popular items was a Chinese video-CD with Laurel and Hardy films, donated by *Blotto Online*. It went for \$40!

Teaser

Somewhere in this issue is an oblique homage to a Laurel and Hardy silent film. Can you spot it? Here is a crossword style clue: sedentary, sartorial equine. The answer is on page 61.

Ray Bradbury on Walk of Fame

Ray Bradbury, 81, received the 2,193rd star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame on 1st April this year. Bradbury, the author of such stories as *The Illustrated Man* and *A Sound of Thunder*, was enthusiastic at the unveiling ceremony. "I received so much inspiration from the city that it is a wonderful feeling to be a permanent part of my hometown."

On 6th October last year, at the annual banquet of California's Way Out West Tent, Mr Bradbury was presented with a Lifetime Achievement Award for his efforts to keep the memories of Laurel and Hardy alive through references in his short stories and novels. At the banquet Mr Bradbury related how lucky he had been to see Stan and Ollie live on stage in Dublin when he was a boy.

Dean Shewring

Be Bigger

Bob Hickson tells us that the Be Big Tent has had an influx of new members, "some of whom show an interest in conventions and are prepared to go to Wigan as a 'taster'." Bob says, "Membership numbers are fine, but it's about time we had some new blood."



6th European Convention

Ten years after organising the first Euro-convention, the Perfect Day Tent of Amsterdam will host the 6th European Convention from 6th till 9th June, 2003.

The Hotel Avifauna is in Alphen aan den Rijn, a small town twenty miles from Amsterdam and equidistant from Rotterdam, the Hague and Utrecht. The hotel is situated in a

bird-park! It has ninety-four rooms and the Sons expect to fill them all during the convention.

Bram Reijnhoudt informs us that attractions will include *A Night in Honolulu*, with the Van Dijk Band & Babes, an old time cinema show in the historic Tuschinski Theatre (with the Max Tak Orchestra), an open-air film show, if weather permits, and the presentation of a new and extended edition of Jean Darling's *Peek at the Past*.

Prices for early birds (before 1st November, 2002) are, per person: 1 person 1 room £227, 2 persons 1 room £178, 3 persons 1 room £171, 4 persons 1 room £164, children under 13 £139. Included are hotel accommodation for three nights, all meals except lunch on Saturday and all convention activities, except optional events in Amsterdam on Saturday afternoon.

Roger Robinson (whose address is on page 63) has agreed to collect fees for UK readers, with cheques payable to Saps at Sea Fund. Other readers should contact Bram Reijnhoudt, Postbus 870, 1200 A W Hilversum, Nederlands. E-mail: bram@blotto.nl.

Cover note

Tantalising, quirky Stan and Ollie gag shots are given prominence in this issue. Front and back covers connect to show Roach comedienne Marion Byron (dressed as she appears in the 1928 film *A Pair of Tights*) talking to a dog on the phone. That's levity! Both pictures come from Bob Spiller's collection. Bob points out the same stucco wall in both shots.

Mirroring our front page is this intimate picture, from Siep Bousma's collection, of Stan Laurel and his daughter Lois



Laughing twenties

In newsletter number 203 (wow!) the Laughing Gravy Tent of Tingley announced its twentieth birthday, which was celebrated at the meeting on 12th November. Grand Sheik Graham McKenna has been the Grand Sheik throughout the tent's existence, no small achievement. Congratulations and best wishes for the future go to the Yorkshire tent and all its supporters.



Bonnie Scots Robbie Coltrane and Robert Carlyle

Robbie and Robert

The *Daily Record* (04.02.02.) reported, "When top Scots actors Robbie Coltrane and Robert Carlyle met for a drink, the pair got themselves into another fine mess. For the boozy duo came up with the idea of starring together in a film about comedy greats Laurel and Hardy. The project, by Slate Films, has been kicking about for a while – but this is the first time either of the Robbies has admitted it could happen."

Robbie has already had one shot at playing Hardy in a radio version of Tom McGrath's play.

Robbie was also quoted as saying, "Funnily enough, it turns out that Stan once lived next door to me. Laurel's father owned several variety theatres in Glasgow and the family lived in a big house in Rutherglen. By the time I was growing up there, Stan's home had been turned into an old folks' home – but maybe it's fate trying to tell me something."

A few days earlier, however, on 29th January, Coltrane had denied the film plans: "There's no truth in that story. It was a funny notion we had one night at a party – we were kind of mucking around. There's nothing set for that. You'd have to have a good reason for it – it's not enough to do impersonations, there would have to be a good storyline."

Deference and wonder on Channel 4

Try to summarise, in less than nine minutes, what the *Sons of the Desert* is all about and you might, to your credit, end up with something like Andy Kimpton-Nye's very first edition of *Film Fever* (Channel 4, 14.02.02.). Andy seized the opportunity of the Laughing Gravy Tent's visit to the Saps at Sea oasis last spring to record most of this fine blend of social interchange and appreciation of the Boys' films. Paul Allen talked about his collection of Laurel and Hardy treasures, Roger Robinson spoke earnestly of his admiration for Stan and Ollie, John Ullah revealed how he came to own a pair of Stan Laurel's socks and Mandy Finney enthused about the innumerable friendships which have come about through the *Sons of the Desert*. The fish and chips looked great too!

Thelma's jinx?

Dean Carroll saw in the book *Fact and Fantasy* by Nick Constable and Karen Farrington (ISBN 1 85605 199 4) a chapter about theatrical superstitions. It reveals that *I Dreamt That I Dwelt in Marble Halls* from *The Bohemian Girl* is supposed to indicate an impending death.

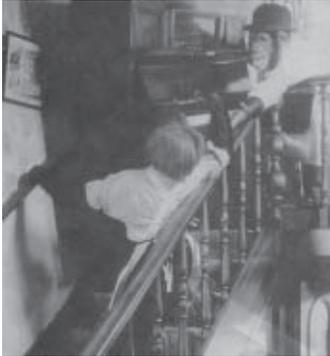
Observes Dean, "If only Thelma Todd had known about the jinx, perhaps she would still have been alive today."



In 1843 a theatre in Drury Lane boldly decided to produce *The Bohemian Girl*, which was notoriously unlucky

The party's over

An era ended in January when PG Tips ceased using adverts with chimps. The ads had been on television and in cinemas since 1956 and there was no mistaking the significance of bowler-hatted "workers" in many of the classics.



The other monkeys?

Roosting Grand Sheik

Mike Duckles decided to step down as Grand Sheik of the Chickens Come Home Tent. He tells us, "The very first person to come along when Dave Wilkinson and myself kicked things off, and who has never missed a meeting since, is Bill Bailey (who is a huge Laurel and Hardy fan) so we decided to make Bill our new Grand Sheik, with Cameron Seddon promoted to Vice Sheik."

The tent meets at the Gregson in Lancaster for huge (10' x 8') screen film shows. Mike says, "We've got some new faces and we've consistently got attendances into double figures at last!" A few of them took a tent trip to Ulverston.

Chris's videos

Chris Coffey says, "All my planned video projects, bar one, have been postponed until I can get digital equipment to store, edit and compile the master on a computer. The 'bar one' is the collection of photos of Brum '98, which I hope to complete by the spring of next year. Apologies to the waiting contributors."

Model T contest

Antony Waite spied an item in *The Ford Magazine* (Spring 2002):

Ford is to sponsor a competition for enthusiasts to restore at least 10 Ford Model Ts for the company's 100th anniversary next year. Neil Tuckett of Tuckett Brothers, North Marston, Buckinghamshire, will supply basic unrestored vehicles to entrants for a cost not exceeding £3,000. Neil has been collecting, restoring and selling Model Ts on his farm since 1984. "Anyone with basic mechanical skills, a few tools and a bit of enthusiasm should easily be able to restore a car from our stock of genuine Model Ts," said Neil.

The best restoration will win a cheque for £5,000, with a further £5,000 being divided among all finalists.

Early to Bed Tent news

Julian Tighe has died suddenly after a brain haemorrhage, aged only 39. Julian was a long-standing and knowledgeable member of the Early to Bed Tent and, although he couldn't make every meeting, he always paid his annual membership dues because he knew it helped the tent in its efforts to keep alive the spirit and memory of Laurel and Hardy. He died on the day of our meeting on 16th June.

We were unaware of this tragic news when we celebrated Stan's and the tent's birthday with a programme of shorts, *Liberty*, *Berth Marks*, *The Laurel-Hardy Murder Case* and *The Chimp*. Glenn Gibbons won the quiz based on *Berth Marks* and *Liberty* so took home the trophy and a crab (well, a tin of it).

Grahame Morris



Pressed for cash

The spate of gratuitous Laurel and Hardy photographs in the press continues unabated with the shot above in *The Times* (18.05.02.), in an article headed "reprieve for 'illegal' Isas".



Tinges of Oz

The Thornton Hough Scarecrow Festival was a week-long celebration in Wirral, culminating on 6th July with a fête. Laurel and Hardy featured with Andrew Rogers (above), aged three, in *The Chronicle* (28.06.02.) and with Hazel Ridge (below) in *Liverpool Echo* (29.06.02.).



Our customary array of press cuttings starts on page 36

Lookalikes axed

Gary Meiseles, Grand Sheik of the Babes in Toyland Tent, reports that the Universal Studios theme park in Orlando, Florida, has dispensed with the Laurel and Hardy characters who had been superbly portrayed for twelve years by Jamie McKenna and Mike MacArthur, who are members of his tent. In their place are newly created characters, who are described as “much livelier”. The changes come as Universal Studios struggles to reinvent itself and attract a wider audience.

The employees were notified that Universal would no longer use the characters because they are not well known! Gary says, “We have lost an avenue to introduce more people to the Boys. Please take a few minutes and send a letter expressing your concern to Skip Sherman, Vice President of Entertainment, 1000 Universal Studios Plaza, Trailer 65, Orlando, FL 32819, USA, or telephone him at (407) 363-8795. For those who attended Sea-Tac 2000, I’m talking about the wonderful performers who cut the ribbon and entertained us with *A Night with Laurel and Hardy*. After that show I had the opportunity to ask Gordon ‘Porky’ Lee what he thought of ‘our’ Boys and he told me that when he watches most Laurel and Hardy impersonators, even the good ones, he’s aware that they are impersonating the Boys. But with our guys, he said, it was like watching the real thing. Amazing praise from someone who knew them!”

Skip Sherman says, “The Entertainment Department of Universal Orlando must stay current with all the cutting edge changes within the industry and we constantly seek new ways to thrill our guests. The characters that propelled Universal into the forefront of the film business have been, and will forever be, a part of our entertainment programme. We will continue to utilise these celebrities to bring the Hollywood experience to our customers through special events and other avenues that take advantage of the talents these performers have.”

Smile with Tony



“Say, Ollie – these clubs of yours are perfect for cleaning the drains.”

Seventy years ago

Laurel and Hardy, Hollywood’s laughter-making inseparables, are to broadcast tonight – for the first time in their lives! They will be on the air from all BBC stations from 10.35pm to 10.40pm.

Seven stalwart policemen were needed to keep back the crowds from Laurel and Hardy last night when they left the Empire, Leicester Square, where they are appearing on the stage as well as on the screen. But it was a mournful Laurel that I spoke to (writes a *Daily Herald* representative).

“Looks great but kind of wasteful,” he said dismally, as we gazed at his name in letters of fire that dominated Leicester Square. “But you should see the lighthouse in the graveyard at Ulverston, in Lancashire, where I was born,” he added brightly.

“They put it up when I was a kid – a tombstone with a light on top. It was the Eighth Wonder of the World to me. Ever since then it’s been my ambition,” said Laurel, “to have a tombstone like that!”

Yes, that’s what Stan Laurel, the laughter-maker, dreams of when he’s off duty.

Daily Herald (26.07.32.)

Big Business Tent has closed

For several years Alan Ellsworth ran a tent with a refreshing difference at his place of work in Bishopton. The Big Business Tent had monthly meetings during lunch breaks. Because of a change of his work pattern, Alan regrets having had to close his tent.

Georgia museum opened

Harlem, Georgia is the birthplace of Oliver Hardy. For the past thirteen years, the city has celebrated his legacy with a yearly festival, attended by tens of thousands. Harlem has placed a historical marker (the first to salute a comedian) in front of the Police Department, honouring the birthplace. And now Harlem has a special museum, which had a Grand Opening on 15th July, 2002. Celebrity guests among the memorabilia exhibits made the day very special. It is the first Laurel and Hardy museum in the United States.

Linda Caldwell says, "The name for our museum right now is Museum of Harlem, Georgia. Larry Harmon's legal department still has not given us the OK to use the logo 'Laurel and Hardy' so what we are going to do till we get permission is use 'Museum of Harlem, Georgia' with two derby hats underneath the name and go from there."

It is in an impressive, stand-alone, brick building on the main street. The City of Harlem acquired the building about three years ago from the US Postal Service, where a post office had been located for a number of years. Betty and Laurie Sargent got the ball rolling by contacting Eugene Clary, a well-known, former resident of Harlem, who is their cousin and who was kind enough to donate \$25,000 towards the renovations.

One thing the museum could use is more Laurel and Hardy collectibles for display. Officials are receiving donated memorabilia from many people locally, throughout the USA and around the world. This is something in which all Sons of the Desert can help. Please send any items you can to the Museum of Harlem, Georgia, PO Box 99, Harlem, GA 30814, USA. We all need to pitch in to help make this museum a success.

The museum is very roomy, with displays of Laurel and Hardy memorabilia in the main room (in display cases and bookcases) and a wonderful movie room in the rear, showing Laurel and Hardy films. The museum will have a permanent curator, and it is anticipated that it will always have "work in progress" in order to keep adding features, collectibles, etc, for the benefit of visitors. The museum is owned and maintained by the City of Harlem.

Robin Root, chairwoman of the Oliver Hardy Festival, has worked nine years with the festival and has seen people come from all over the world to pay homage to the star. She tells us that one couple travelled from Germany to be married during the festival. She hopes the museum and the festival will inspire a new generation of fans. "When kids see a black and white movie, it is often very unreal for them. They think history was in black and white. I want to see that change."

◇ Thanks go to Gino Dercola, Robin Root and Linda Caldwell for briefing us with this news.



Ollie honoured

Jacquie Lyn

Jacque (Lyn) Woll, born in 1928, passed away on 20th March. She will always have a special place in our hearts as "Eddie's baby" in *Pack Up Your Troubles*. You can read about Jacquie on pages 28 and 32.

Kirch crisis

The gloom of KirchGruppe deepened at the end of January when it faced a demand from Axel Springer, a rival German media company, for £467 million. Kirch had amassed debts of more than £3.5 billion. KirchGruppe filed for insolvency on 8th April. The financial grief of KirchMedia (which has the rights in the eastern hemisphere to most of the Hal Roach Laurel and Hardy films) led to a petition for insolvency.

Wolfgang van Betteray said, "Negotiations between banks and shareholders failed. Consequently, the move towards insolvency was inevitable. Our petition for self-administration was approved."

◇ A fuller account is on *Bowler Dessert Online*.



Top gents?

Dutch top

The Dutch TV station RTL4's *Top Ten of the Most Remarkable Duos of All Time* placed Laurel and Hardy in second position! In the top slot were Carlo and Irene from *Telekids*.

Roger reports

(or as they say in India... *Rajah reports*)

Now that we have celebrated, at the 23rd UK Convention, the Golden Jubilee of Laurel and Hardy appearing in Southend, the Saps at Sea are planning for the hundredth anniversary. If my maths is correct, then that will coincide with the 73rd UK Convention. I bet Willie McIntyre will still be the only ever-present UK Conventioneer.



Some of us may be showing our age in fifty years time

So the year will be 2052 and I will be 103 years young. The estimated price of a pint of beer – just in case there are some Sons that are imbibers – will be about £59. I presume it is possible that the imperial pint will then be no longer and beer will be consumed by the litre. That suits me fine as the glass will BE BIGger. It is also possible that the pound sterling will then belong to history and the euro (bless its little cotton socks) will be our currency. What else can governments do to affect the traditional pub trade? I don't suppose there is any chance that the "happy hour" could go metric and we end up with one hundred minutes to the hour during which we could buy cheaper beer?

There may be a problem with hotel accommodation in fifty years time. Looking at my crystal ball (well everyone is entitled to a hobby or two) I envisage that the Essex County Hotel will be gone and in its place will be the twentieth Southend branch of McDonalds, offering the local speciality of the McEel, McPie and McMash breakfast – a real snip at just £39.99. If the Saps can't book the Essex County Hotel for the 73rd Convention, then we can always try the hotel

where Stan and Ollie stayed in Southend, the Palace Hotel. It was a splendid hotel in 1952 and the place to stay if you were anybody. Stan and Ollie certainly qualified on that front. However, it is now a little past its sell-by date. Who knows what it will be like in 2052, but as we will all be a little past our sell-by dates by then, will it matter?

The advantage with the Palace Hotel is that it overlooks the famous Southend Pier, the longest in the world. Now this is a title that I am sure is in great jeopardy as I can see America latching onto this record and building a pier to end all piers. Perhaps it will be in Florida, say twenty-five miles long and with a high speed capsule that runs on a glide track and takes 7.5 seconds to reach the end, where you can purchase genuine (pronounced as to rhyme with "fine") good old fish and chips. It won't matter, though, even if this accolade is "Yanked" from us in Southend. We will still have the pier with the blue plaque commemorating Laurel and Hardy's visit to our town in 1952 and all those happy memories of the 23rd UK Convention weekend, when it was unveiled fifty years afterwards.

It was a thrill and delight for the Saps at Sea to have been honoured with the special guests during that weekend. When I say "special guests", I don't mean Sir John Mills, John Inman, Bella Emberg, Vicky Michelle and Jack Douglas – although, of course, it was wonderful to see all of these celebrities. No, the special guests were the Sons of the Desert.

Roger Robinson



*A moment to savour at the UK Convention.
Sir John Mills and Nancy Wardell unveil the blue plaque*

Postbag

Well done!

I would have to say that *Bowler Dessert* is the finest of all Laurel and Hardy publications being produced today. And, although some of the other publications are fine works, I don't think any of them comes close to *Bowler Dessert* in the quality, quantity, etc of news and format. Congratulations on such a fine product. It is such interesting reading, with so many facts/articles/photos etc. I think I should know a good Laurel and Hardy publication when I see it: I may have mentioned previously that I collect old and new Laurel and Hardy publications. I have about 1,600 editions in my collection now, made up of about 105 different tent newsletters/magazines (*Bowler Dessert* is just one of the 105). Please keep up the good work.

Gino Dercola



Toto

I can help with your request for information on Toto (*Bowler Dessert* 59, page 63). I go to Italy quite often for my summer holidays. Three years ago I was in Sorrento and there were postcards and busts etc of Stan (I thought at first). I even went into a shop to buy a bust of Stan, but it had "Toto" on the base. My wife and I eventually asked an Italian gentleman, "Who is Toto?" He was a famous Italian music hall and film comedian. He died in 1967 and, as the Italian gentleman said, "All Italy cried when he passed away." I asked if he knew Laurel and Hardy and he had never heard of them! When I asked about Stanlio and Ollio, he replied, "Oh yes, of course, wonderful – taking piano up steps."

An old Leslie Halliwell book said:

Toto (1897-1967) (Antonio Furst de Curtis-Gagliardi). Italian comedian, from music hall and revue.

Colin Greenwell

Doh from Mars!

Have you seen the latest Mars ad campaign? There are various simple billboard adverts and one of them just says, "Doh!" A reference to Fin, perhaps? Maybe Fin was partial to a Mars bar or two!

Gary Winstanley

Colour fades

On page 36 of *Bowler Dessert* 59 you write about the colour version of *Beau Hunks* with fades for commercial breaks as it was for the American television *Laurel and Hardy Show*. I have the colour version of *Laughing Gravy*. In part 3 there is also a very nasty fade when Laurel and Hardy are talking to each other. Is that also because of a commercial break for that show? The black and white version doesn't have that fade.

Theo Huizenga

Ed: I think you can see fades like that, for commercial breaks, in all the colourised versions.

Jimmy Murphy exhibition

On the week after the Laurel and HarDay, St Helens is having a heritage weekend. We are going to put on an exhibition in Newton-le-Willows, a nearby town, where Stan's valet, Jimmy Murphy, was born. So Chris thought we could make him the focus of our exhibition. Could I ask people to e-mail pictures, stories etc to me? Thanks in advance.

neilevans@blueyonder.co.uk

Tootin' impossible

Can anyone explain how the Boys in *You're Darn Tootin'* can step into an open manhole and finish head downwards?

Gordon Davie



You're Darn Tootin'

Pleased to belong

I am now getting news about Laurel and Hardy from three different tents. I send *Laurel and Hardy News* and the newsletters I get from the Laughing Gravy Tent to a fellow fan out in the wilds of Co Limerick, who, like me, is a member of the Jitterbugs Tent, and he is very glad to get them.

I have been a Laurel and Hardy fan all my life (and I am sixty-five) but I knew very little about them. Since I joined the tents I have learned a lot. Because of the Sons of the Desert, I and many more have learned things we would never have known otherwise.

John Osborne

Re Bowler Dessert 59



A few comments on the last *Bowler Dessert*, if I may. . . .

Page 13: Glenn Mitchell's *Encyclopedia* gives details of censorship of Laurel and Hardy films. I myself am a hard line opponent of censorship on principle.

Page 36: Laurel and Hardy meet *Dr Who* – there's a thought! Anybody remember Stan turning up as a character in *Red Dwarf*?

Page 45: Possible caption: "Dumb animals – and the dogs weren't that bright, either!" Exactly what kind were they? I especially like Stan's dog.

Lastly, a suggestion I made in my tent's newsletter. The film they should have made: *Laurel and Hardy's Christmas Carol*, with Stan and Ollie as a joint Bob Cratchit, Fin as Scrooge and Arthur Housman as the Ghost of Christmas Present. Let's face it – was James Finlayson not born to play that role?

Mark Toha

Formby et al

I have been enjoying a boxed set of George Formby videos. Does anyone know what Stan Laurel made of George Formby and Will Hay?

Nick Rich

Dudley Moore

When Dudley Moore died on 27th March, I watched *Derek and Clive Get the Horn* (1979) on video. The following dialogue came up. . . .

Pete (Clive): You married a film didn't you?

Dud (Derek): I married a film, reel two of an old Laurel and Hardy movie.

Pete: Was, er, was reel two good as a companion?

Dud: No, they weren't in that reel.

Isn't it amazing where Laurel and Hardy crop up?

Stephen Barlow

Did you see? – Bowler Dessert 59

The letter from Nick Rich aroused my interest:

On *Weakest Link* . . . (BBC2, 20.03.01.) a question asked was, "Who said, 'That's another fine mess'?" The contestant got it right.

Another *fine* mess? Did the inquisitor ask the wrong question, but get the desired "right" answer? If so, the contestant got through the quiz round by a detour, as defined by Ollie: "The wrong way to the right place."

The editorial comment mentions another quiz in which a contestant was asked, "Who said [the phrase used by Laurel and Hardy] to whom?" The contestant "lost a life" by replying, "Laurel to Hardy." It seems that the contestant was unfairly treated. If the quoted phrase was "Another *fine* mess" [Ed: it was!] then the question was about a non-event and so "null and void". If the phrase "Another *nice* mess" was said or intended, then the contestant's answer "Laurel to Hardy" was correct, because, in two films, Stan did say that phrase to Ollie.

Quiz

A. Name two Laurel and Hardy films in which the words "Another fine mess" are spoken and by whom?

B. Name two Laurel and Hardy films in which the phrase about "Another nice mess" is said by Stan to Ollie.

M Finn

◇ The answers are on page 26.

Unlucky dog

There is a shot in *The Lucky Dog* in which Stan Laurel picks up a dog by its tail. It is just when Stan meets the dog belonging to the leading lady, Florence Gillet. Such cruelty can hardly be considered funny! Or can it?

Norman Wright

Barrie Finney

I would like to say "thank you" on behalf of Pat and Mandy for all the wonderful support and messages you have sent us. The total amount raised from donations to the Statue Appeal on Barrie's behalf is £1,042.08. He would be very pleased. The amount includes money from Barrie's family and friends etc, as well as Sons.

John Ullah

Len's treks



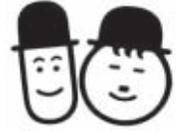
Len Trodd shares with us some photographs taken during his travels. Above are some heads spied in a souvenir shop in Malaga, southern Spain. Below are statuettes seen in a tourist shop in Playa de Las Americas, Tenerife, and a shop which opened in Gloucester in 1999 in a blaze of publicity and closed mysteriously a month later. Len is shown in the photograph.



Barrie's favourite drawings

"What have been your favourite Laurel and Hardy ideas?" Barrie Finney was asked.

"That is easy to answer" he replied. "In third place I would put the tent letterhead I did for Charlie Lewis of the Blockheads Tent of Edinburgh, in second place our Laughing Gravy Tent logo and in first place the logo for *Bowler Dessert*. It was a few years ago that Willie asked me if I would come up with an idea for him. I ended up with five pages of rough ideas (which I still have).



I sent him a short list and am quite pleased with the final choice he made. It is Stan and Ollie's heads in a simplistic form, yet so recognisable."

Barrie continued, "I love doing Fin, but you have to get that eye and moustache just right. When I have time, I don't mind doing little bits for other people, for love, not money. I admire other people's work and I love the freedom of Tony Bagley's drawings, and all the textures he uses."



Fire

Dean Shewring tells us that a building in Hollywood, once owned by Charlie Chaplin, suffered heavy fire damage on 1st January. The historic four-storey Hillview Apartments on Hollywood Boulevard were built by Jesse L Lasky in 1917 and were used as an actors' hostel during the early part of the past century. It was reported that two of the famous people who once lived there were Mae West and Oliver Hardy!

Birds of a feather

Bob Spiller spotted a report by Lewis Smith in *The Times* (06.03.02.):

The cuckoo, herald of spring, is fast disappearing from the British countryside.

Numbers have slumped by 30 per cent over the past 30 years, and in its woodland strongholds by as much as 60 per cent.

Your editor can report, however, that Cuckoos are thriving.

Stan's partner in Glasgow

I was assigned a school project on Stan Laurel. While conducting research I found out that, apparently, my great-grandfather was one of his first partners in Glasgow. They did little shows at their church together. My mum dug out old photos, a newspaper clipping of them, and a photo signed by him. It's also rumoured that the old top hat handed down to us was his.

Ali Whalen

The way they were

Antony Waite sent us a copy of *The Way We Were* (March, 2002), a publication which started out as a supplement to his local newspaper, eventually becoming a monthly magazine. . . .



Laurel and Hardy were already Hollywood legends when they paid their only visit to the Potteries at the end of March, 1952. The veterans of 200 screen comedies appeared twice nightly for a week at the Theatre Royal, Hanley, as the stars of a variety show. By that time, they were old men, but the long-lasting partnership had lost none of its magic.

At the time, Stan Laurel, the British half of the duo, said provincial theatre audiences were the best in the world and described their act as “old-fashioned knockabout stuff, really pantomime out of season.”

Stan’s American partner Oliver Hardy said: “We are completely different characters and seldom meet except when we’re working together, so we’ve never tired of each other. When Stan is rehearsing a new act, he still seems so funny to me that I often burst out laughing.”

Before their interview with the *Sentinel*, the celebrities were photographed in their dressing-room by the newspaper’s now-retired picture editor, Huston Spratt.



“They stood together, but were the wrong way round from my point of view,” Huston recalls. “I wanted Stan on the left and Ollie on the right so that the

caption would read ‘Laurel and Hardy’ and they agreed to change places. They were both getting on in years by then and looked rather tired. But I asked them to smile and Ollie put his hand on Stan’s shoulder.”

Retired illusionist Fred Van Buren, who still has the Theatre Royal programme of the 1952 show, says the ventriloquist Albert Saveen and his doll Daisy May were on the same bill. Fred also remembers that Laurel and Hardy signed the Theatre Royal’s large tablecloth on which the signatures of stars were later embroidered.

About three years ago, Laurel and Hardy’s complete 20-minute act of 1952 was performed again at the Royal by impersonators Pete Lindop and Steve King.

A North Staffordshire “tent” of the Laurel and Hardy fan club was formed at a Wolstanton pub more than 20 years ago and given the code name *Another Fine Mess**, the title of one of the most celebrated films. The group still meet on the first Tuesday of the month at the Wheatsheaf pub in Shelton.

* Ed: now *Midnight Patrol*.

Museum muses

Bob Spiller noticed that the *Laurel and Hardy Museum in Ulverston* was the “*Museum of the Week*” in *The Times* (16.02.02.). Part of the feature, by Michael Strutt, read as follows. . . .

Hollywood’s funniest comedy duo star at this family-run museum, in the market town where Stan Laurel was born in 1890. Its collection of film stills, posters, magazine cuttings and other memorabilia – started by the late Bill Cubin, a fan – offers hours of interesting browsing.

They formed a perfect team, with Laurel masterminding both the scriptwriting and cutting-room editing. Their glamorous leading ladies, among them Della Lind and Rosina Lawrence, are also given their due. And a poster map of Culver City, Los Angeles, pinpoints the locations used in many of the films.

Photographs include Laurel as a child, then as a wistful young man. As a star he was unassuming: he sent chatty replies to his fans for many years, writing or typing 25 letters a day. The examples you can read here give an insight into his everyday life. One of his trademark bowler hats and his cigarette case are on display. More photos show Laurel and Hardy, who were great friends and both several-times married, at every stage of their 30-year career, including a music hall tour in the 1940s, when they visited Ulverston.

A final room provides a fine treat: a 30-seat cinema with 1920s-style seating from which you can watch a documentary about their lives, as well as many clips from their films.



In business

Austin Stigwood sent us the photo below of a barber's shop in Manchester.



Laurel blade and Station Hotel

Tony Bagley read in the past about a razor blade named after Stan



Laurel so he was pleased to see a photograph (left) of one in the *Black Country Bugle* (08.11.01.), together with some information on the blade, but no mention of Stan!

Elsewhere in the paper was a photograph (below) of the Station Hotel in Dudley as it was

before Laurel and Hardy stayed there. It is opposite the Opera House, where Stan played as a juvenile, so he might have stayed there in his youth.



That's his wife

Harry Hoppe, Grand Sheik of the That's My Wife Tent of Düsseldorf, married Sandra on 20th June. As some of the Sons in attendance were quick to observe, Harry can indeed now say, "That's My Wife".

Congratulations go their way from *Bowler Dessert*.

Great Scott

The Boston Brats is one of the oldest and most active tents. Since 1967 the Brats have held monthly film screenings of Laurel and Hardy and other vintage comedy stars. For tent information e-mail bostonbrats@earthlink.net or write to PO Box 2102, Natick, MA 01760, USA.

Daniel M Kimmel wrote in the *Boston Herald* (08.09.98):

For more than twenty years Scott MacGillivray has been the head of the local chapter of the Sons of the Desert. In that capacity he's done a movie program every month, where he has made a point of showing every Laurel and Hardy film that exists, including those made after 1940, when the team no longer had creative control over their movies.

"The whole marketplace had changed. Everyone was trying to clone Abbott and Costello," MacGillivray said. "Twentieth Century-Fox and MGM, where Laurel and Hardy did their '40s films, considered them old-fashioned slapstick comics and stuck Stan and Ollie in a series of B-movies. Most authors just dismiss them without further ado. There's more to the story."

Indeed, MacGillivray reported that Hardy considered the 1943 *Jitterbugs* to be one of his all-time best performances. He also found that the final Fox films, especially 1945's *The Bullfighters*, were so lightly supervised by the studio that Laurel was actually able to regain some of the control he had lost, directing some of the comic sequences himself.

Gang departures

Eugene “Pineapple” Jackson passed away on 26th October, 2001. Eugene featured in many of Hal Roach’s Our Gang shorts. He died of a heart attack at his home in Compton, California, survived by Sue, his wife of fifty-five years, and three children.

On 15th May this year, Darwood K Smith, known in Our Gang as Waldo, died at the age of 72 years, after being struck by an automobile.

Joe Cobb of the Gang died of natural causes on 21st May, aged 85 years. He appeared in *45 Minutes from Hollywood* and some of the “solo” films of Laurel and Hardy.

Jeffrey’s project

Perry Smith has spoken to Jeffrey Holland. Says Perry, “He told me that he is working on a show about Stan Laurel, which he hopes will materialise in the not too distant future. He said that I was the first of the Sons of the Desert to be told and said to let everyone know.”

Looking for Booth

Nick Rich has a set of the *Planet of the Apes* trading cards. One of the cards is of Booth Coleman. Booth was a pal of Stan Laurel’s and Nick asks, “Does anyone have any information on him? I know he was in *Lost in Space*. He spoke about his comradeship with Stan in the 1991 documentary *The Last Laugh*.”

Did you know?

The *Radio Times* (24-30.11.01.) explained, “When Stan Laurel lifts his trouser leg to hitch a ride on the stagecoach [in *Way Out West*], it is a direct reference to Frank Capra’s *It Happened One Night*.”

Root treatment

Excerpts from two press reviews of Simon Louvish’s book Stan and Ollie: The Roots of Comedy

Between them they made more than 440 films and became as inseparable in the public mind as Morecambe and Wise, yet Hollywood never valued Laurel and Hardy equally. Each was manoeuvred into signing his own individual contract and advantage was taken of Hardy’s relative lack of education. Even as late as 1935, he was conned into accepting a fee of \$85,000, against Stan Laurel’s \$156,000.

Laurel was the brains of the outfit, the inventor of gags, sometimes effectively the director, so perhaps he deserved more. But neither was as funny in the rare movies each made alone. They were a team, but over the years Ollie was royally screwed in Tinseltown. That’s the message that emerges from this engrossing dual biography by Simon Louvish, who has already done similar service for W C Fields and the Marx Brothers.

His problem, never entirely solved, is how to describe comedy without killing it dead on the page. As each film, feature or short is related in detail, the attention begins to wander. Far more successful are the dialogue exchanges, which capture the real, undiluted Laurel and Hardy flavour.

Alan Stanbrook in The Sunday Telegraph (04.11.01.)

Many of Laurel and Hardy’s films can be viewed as social documentaries. Their characters drifted across dustbowl America like Depression-era hoboes. Ollie, forever clinging to whatever shred of bourgeois dignity he could muster, wore the aggrieved countenance of the 1929 bankruptee. Cheated out of prosperity – in one film a guy cons them into buying the Brooklyn Bridge – all they have is each other. They tussle, they argue, they make up. They exasperate and console each other. Often it seems they can’t go on, but somehow they do. At one point, Louvish invokes *Waiting For Godot*. Rightly so: Beckett admired the talents of Max Wall and Buster Keaton and might easily have had Stan and Ollie lurking in the back of his mind when he came up with the characters of Vladimir and Estragon.

To locate Laurel and Hardy in the context of 1930s America is to tell only half the story. They were internationally popular. They shot foreign-language versions of many of their movies. The pair toured Britain for much of the 1940s and 1950s in order to pay off tax bills which, like alimony fees and weight problems, dogged them all their lives.

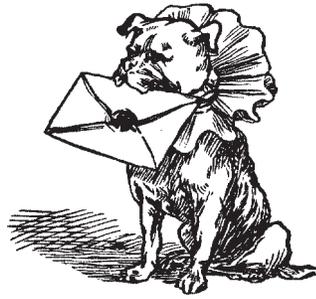
Yet it’s not litanies of private sorrow that left me feeling chastened upon finishing Louvish’s excellent biography. It’s the thought of how few good mainstream comedies are being made these days. Glibness and grossout are the besetting sins. Screenwriters would do well to study Laurel and Hardy’s best work and learn to cherish pathos, not punchlines.

Sukhdev Sandhu in The Daily Telegraph (10.11.01.)

✧ *Bowler Dessert* has its own review on page 56.



From the editor's desk



Swiss myth

Something on the Laurel and Hardy Official Website gave me cerebral whiplash. Andy Wood wrote:

The character played by Ollie in *The Lucky Dog* is, as you know, an aggressive mugger. It's the first time the Boys appear together on film. After their initial meeting, the mugger disappears for a while, but he reappears for the whole of the finale in the house, where he's disguised as a wealthy guest, and causes major problems for Stan, who manages to fight him off and win the girl (and doggie!).

However, although supposedly the same mugger who had the run-in with Stan earlier in the film, this is *not* Ollie, but another actor (the same one who played the gardener in Stan's short *Hustling for Health*, I think). So what happened to Ollie? Anyone know? It certainly doesn't look like him. He seems taller. His body language is very different too, whereas in the robbery scene it's very obviously Ollie. The hair seems a little thick for Ollie – I know it was 1921, but surely he didn't lose all that hair in such a short time? It's a shame, as his presence here could have made the film a whole lot funnier.

Whilst the gangster (Ollie) near the beginning of the film seems to me to be the same person we see later, and indeed the plot shows Stan to recognise him as such, I began to look for tell-tale differences, but reminded myself that Ollie was "disguised" as a Swiss count. Early literature on Laurel and Hardy agrees with Andy but recent books do not. I referred to *The Laurel & Hardy Encyclopedia* for clarification:

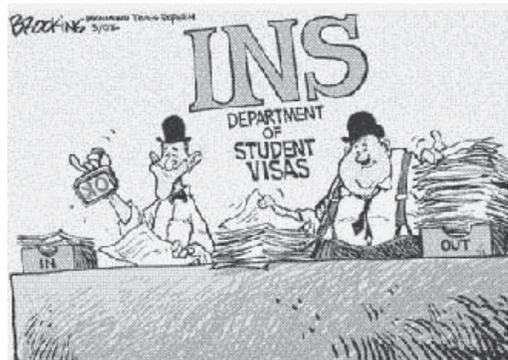
Mythology insists that Babe's contribution is restricted to the moment where he first encounters Stan, probably the result of this being the only sequence used by Robert Youngson in his 1964 compilation *Thirty Years of Fun*. Until Youngson's discovery of a print, *The Lucky Dog* was known to have been made, but could not be located.

So, another myth has been demolished and I'm content now that Ollie does appear as the villain throughout *The Lucky Dog*.

Graphics



I found some current safety posters on the Internet. I also found a recent press cartoon, though it's not clear where and when it was published.



Continuity lapse

Near the beginning of the maze sequence in *A Chump at Oxford*, Stan thinks Ollie has asked him to put a grip on the trunk which Ollie is positioning on his back. Watch the label on the side of the grip. It changes from an oval to a circular one. The grip has been turned through a hundred and eighty degrees between shots.

Twenty-five years ago

When I came across the photograph below the other day my mind drifted back, as it often does, to 1977 and my first visit to Ulverston. Bill Cubin had organised a special day of celebrations at which Dwain Smith and his wife Elaine, long-standing New York stalwarts of the Sons of the Desert, were guests of honour. The UK Sons as a society was still in its infancy and adventure was in the air. Happy days!



On the steps of the house, at 3 Argyle Street, where Arthur Stanley Jefferson was born, are, left to right, Bill Hatfield, Dwain Smith and Barry Knowles (Vice Sheik of the local Berth Marks Tent)

Magique

On a trip to Paris this summer I went to the Disney Studios. The highlight of the day was a film called *Cinemagique*, which cleverly inter-cut scenes from dozens of classic films. Included was a clip from *The Battle of the Century*. The next day I went to see *Amélie*, the highly acclaimed French film. Near the beginning I noticed a spot of “finger-wiggle” à la Stan.

Recruiting



Cheap Thrills in New York produced this cute postcard some years back

Worst poet ever?

Bowler Dessert emerges from Ayrshire, so I consider it fitting that Rabbin Burns has his song *Auld Lang Syne* featured in the film *Sons of the Desert*.

With the taste of the McGonagall supper at last year’s convention still in my mouth, I note that 29th September this year marks the hundredth anniversary of the death of another Scots poet, William McGonagall, who was described in *The Times* (14.03.02.) as “having a wooden ear for metre, a genius for anticlimax and an inability to grasp the limits of his own talent”. His verses may well have influenced Stan’s verse in *The Fixer-Uppers*. Consider:

Alas! Lord and Lady Dalhousie are dead and
buried at last
Which causes many people to feel a little
downcast.

Bowler Dessert has its own troop of poets who at times beat classical scholars. You think I’m kidding? Then ponder these words from no less than William Wordsworth in *The Thorn*:

You see a little muddy pond
Of water, never dry,
I’ve measured it from side to side:
’Tis three feet long, and two feet wide.

Good show in Elland

Nancy Wardell says, "The showing of Laurel and Hardy films *Men o' War*, *Helpmates*, *Thicker Than Water* and *Sons of the Desert* at the Rex cinema in Elland (near Halifax) on 27th October last year was a very great success. The theatre was overflowing, extra seats had to be put at the back of the theatre and people still queuing outside had to be turned away."

Nancy continues, "Arnold Loxam played the organ before the start of the programme and during the interval. The County Hospital Tent of Bradford and One Good Turn Tent of Huddersfield conducted a raffle for the Laurel and Hardy Charity Fund, which showed the appreciation of the Sons of the Desert and the audience, raising £111. There was a request by a lady in the audience for more Laurel and Hardy films."

Daphne Thorp adds, "It was good to hear over two hundred people laughing at the antics of the Boys. Ages ranged from toddlers to the elderly. The two Davids (Oyston and Barker) sold the raffle tickets. I hope it's not long before there is another Laurel and Hardy night. Good job we don't get two hundred at our tent meetings, though a few more would be nice."



Hollywood meeting

1st April saw the Way Out West Tent at the Silent Movie Theater in Hollywood for the very first time. Our Gang's Margaret Kerry was in attendance, as was Laurel and Hardy costumer Jay Dare.

Jim Wiley says, "The fun of seeing films on the big screen was enhanced by the piano and organ accompaniment of the very talented Bob Mitchell, who has been delighting audiences since the 1920s."



Tent logos: no 1

In a new regular section we spotlight tent logos, commencing with Craig Lightowler's fine artwork for the County Hospital Tent.

Comics in Liverpool



British comics Billy Norton (left) and Dougie Wakefield (right) made some two-reelers for Roach in the early thirties. They are pictured here at the Empire Theatre or the Adelphi Hotel in Liverpool in 1952 or 1954. Photo kindly donated by Bob Spiller.

Auctions

An original linen-backed three-sheet cinema poster was up for auction last November on e-Bay for \$3,500, but there were no bids. It featured *Swiss Miss* and was described as "very rare (very few known to exist) with some brilliant and stunning artwork".

However, an original theatrical poster (22 x 28 inches) for *Sons of the Desert* sold this year for a stunning \$5,200.

Mr Laurel says

Both realise that while they are going like a million now, they will in time cease to be in vogue. "We'll be washed up some day," says Laurel.

"When that time comes we expect to go on the road with a feature-length comedy for the stage. Vaudeville offers galore have come, but have been refused. We did put on a clothes-ripping sketch in San Francisco some months ago, but that has been our only public appearance, and we do not expect to repeat it. Vaudeville, with its three or four shows a day, does not appeal to us in the least."

Magazine, title unknown, quote from the 1930s

Austin's fascination

The *Oldham Chronicle* (27.12.01.) had an article on Austin Stigwood (right), claiming that the *Chronicle* "could be blamed for getting Austin into another fine mess." It explained:



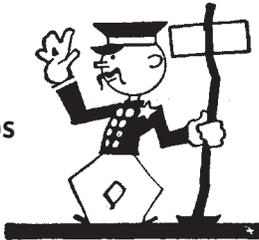
That's because the paper sparked a 23-year fascination with arguably the most famous comedy duo of the silver screen. Austin, of Ripponden Road, Moorside, decided to go along to the Ashton branch of the Laurel and Hardy Society after reading about it in the *Chronicle*.

Austin said, "I was at a bit of a loose end and I thought I would go along – I don't think I have missed above one or two meetings since." He attends the Be Big Tent, so called because its founder's wife was pregnant at the time, which meets at Ashton's Greyhound Hotel.

Austin continued, "It is one of the oldest tents in England and has about 40 or 50 members. The films are all shown on a big screen. It is like a big, happy family. However, once the meeting is over people disappear into the night and you don't know where they come from, or what they do for a living."

He rates *Way Out West* as his favourite film by the double act and added: "You know what is going to happen in the films. If there is a plank, someone is going to get hit. They are predictable but they are unique."

Saved by Saps



Eric Ramsden of the Brats Tent, who is also a member of the Handsworth Historical Society, came across an article in an old local newspaper whilst undertaking some research. The article was written during World War II at the time of the Sheffield Blitz:

Laurel and Hardy save the lives of husband and wife

Sarah Baldock and her husband always went on Thursday afternoons to the Regent cinema. After they came out they always went to the Marples Hotel. But on the Thursday of the Blitz, December 12th, 1940, the picture at the Regent was a Laurel and Hardy film and for once Sarah didn't fancy the picture. So they gave their weekly outing a miss. She says, "I am sure it was fate that we did not go that day to the Marples. Our friends and family hugged and kissed us when we came out of the shelter, relieved to see we were still alive. I would not be here today had we decided to see that film."

Eric adds, "She would probably have shared the fate of many of the other customers if she had been there at 11.44pm. The film in question was *Saps at Sea*."

Ironically, on a visit to Sheffield in the 1950s, the Boys actually stayed at the newly rebuilt Marples Hotel in the city centre.

Lasting orders

Block-Heads anticipated real-life events by more than a third of a century. In 1974 a Japanese soldier who didn't know that World War II had ended was rescued from a Pacific island which he had been ordered to defend. It is not recorded whether his friends mistakenly thought he had lost a leg when they went to visit him!"

Gordon Davie



Legless?

This news story was in the free newspaper *Metro* in March this year:

A shepherd spent nearly 6 years hiding in the mountains of Bosnia because he was convinced the war was still raging. Illija Panincic, a 52 year old Bosnian Serb, had almost forgotten how to speak when British soldiers found him. He was wearing the same clothes he had on in 1996. . . . Mr Panincic lived in an abandoned house, gathering berries and nuts for food.

What, no beans?

David Wyatt



German museum afloat

Wolfgang Günther says, “Our Laurel and Hardy Museum closed on 30th September last year. We had a lot of response and almost every newspaper in Germany covered the news. Even British press agencies called. There were radio and TV broadcasts from the museum and John Ullah and Mandy Finney were our guests during a TV shooting.” During the final weekend about a hundred and fifty people visited the museum.

Wolfgang and Vera will reopen the museum in new, bigger premises in the Walder Kotten, a former cutlery-grinding mill, on the corner of Rembrandt Street and Locher Street in Solingen. One of the three rooms available will be used for screening films.

ITJ – direct from the USA

After more than twelve years distributing the *Intra-Tent Journal* across Europe, Eric Woods has handed all subscriptions over to Roger Gordon in the USA. All worldwide subscriptions and distribution will now be handled exclusively by Roger from his home in Pennsylvania. Subsequent *ITJ* correspondence relating to subscriptions should now be directed to him. Eric says, “There should be no disruption to existing subscriptions as all pertinent details have been sent to Roger. I will maintain my *OK, I’ll Come Clean* column in the journal and will continue to welcome items of news and interest for inclusion.”

Chris Coffey adds, “I have taken over the existing UK stock of back issues of the *ITJ*. I have issues 70 to 102 and they are available at £1.00 each, including postage and packing. Cheques should be made payable to Bacon Grabbers. Issues 73 and 98 are sold out.”

◇ Contacts: Roger Gordon, 2230 Country Club Drive, Huntingdon Valley, PA 19006, USA; Eric Woods, Laurel House, 102 Hough Green Road, Widnes, Cheshire, WA8 4PF; Chris Coffey, 64 Dale Crescent, Sutton Leach, St Helens, Merseyside, WA9 4YE.

Book of the Week

Simon Louvish’s book *Stan and Ollie – the Roots of Comedy* was the Radio 4 choice as *Book of the Week*, featured daily from 7th till 11th January. Michael Fenton-Stevens read from the book in a very well constructed set of fifteen-minute broadcasts.



Dennis Moriarty and Dale Walter

13th Oliver Hardy Festival

The celebrations started on the Friday evening, 5th October, when the city held a social reception for visiting Sons, who had a sneak preview of the new museum.

The festival on Saturday was packed with activities. Gino Dercola says, “I would guess that about 25,000 people attended throughout the day. Vendors set up early in the morning – about 320 of them! One stage activity was the Oliver Hardy lookalike contest. Gary Evans, from Marietta, Georgia, won the adult award. The Grand Marshals were Laurel and Hardy lookalikes (and my good friends) Dennis Moriarty and Dale Walter from Canton, Ohio. They performed Laurel and Hardy skits, and walked around the streets all day, entertaining people. Laurel and Hardy movies were shown in Babe’s Bijou.”

This year’s festival, the 14th, will be held on Saturday, 5th October, starting at 9.00am. For details call Harlem on 706 556 3448.

Adverts



◇ Goodies with Barrie Finney's *Bowler Dessert* logo: baseball cap (white) £4.00; bonded leather coaster (maroon) £1.00; bonded leather bookmark (blue) £1.00; address book (red) £1.00. Add £1.00 per order towards p&p. Order from your editor, with cheque payable to Sons of the Desert.

◇ John Robertson has a 9.5mm film for sale, entitled *Cheeseheads*, which he believes to be from *Swiss Miss*. Contact John at 13 Jessfield Place, Bo'ness, West Lothian, EH51 9HU. E-mail: sw011b3130@blueyonder.co.uk.

112 years of Stan

The Jitterbugs Tent had a party in Bergen op Zoom in the Netherlands on 15th June. It was not only the first film show in the tent's brand new cinema, with a big screen and real cinema chairs, but also they were celebrating Stan Laurel's 112th birthday! All the movies were on DVD. Prizes in the raffie were original Italian lobby card of *Sons of the Desert* and a DVD. In the auction for the Statue Appeal was an original Italian film poster, books, photos and more.

Shooting script

In *Call of the Cuckoos* (1927) Laurel and Hardy were allocated a short scene of their own in which they performed a "William Tell" routine. There was a similar happening later that year in *Do Detectives Think?* when Ollie attempted to use a gun to shoot an apple off Stan's head.



In brief

◇ On 8th May Stan Laurel's great-granddaughter Cassidy gave birth to twins, Thomas Anthony and Lucy Rose.

◇ Alan Barbour died on 12th February. He had been an active member of the Founding Tent in New York since 1965 and was Grand Sheik for six years during the '70s and '80s.

◇ Spike Milligan, who died on 27th February, expressed admiration for Laurel and Hardy thus: "As soon as they walked out on the screen I knew they were my friends."

◇ Centenary to note: *In the Good Old Summertime* was first a hit in 1902.

◇ In his local newspaper, *Edenbridge Chronicle* (January), Nick Rich saw an item about two black carriage horses named Laurel and Hardy, which are used for displays and funerals all over the country.

◇ John Burton reports that the Pathology Department at Sheffield Children's Hospital has named its two pathology analysers Laurel and Hardy with a portrait of each comedian on the respective machines.

◇ Bronson Pinchot, who played Laurel in *For Love or Mummy*, appeared this year in the show *Stones in his Pockets* at the Duke of York's Theatre in London.

◇ The Busy Bodies Tent enjoyed a DVD presentation at its meeting in February, which Tony Bagley described as "something new, which worked very well." Any of the available films will be shown at meetings if requested. "All you need to do is ask," urges Tony.

◇ The Glasgow Film Theatre showed *Sons of the Desert* and *Helpmates* on 1st February.

◇ The Perfect Day Tent meeting at the Filmmuseum in Amsterdam on 23rd March was "sold out" well in advance. All two hundred seats had been taken.

◇ Colourised Laurel and Hardy sound shorts were recently shown on the Canvas television channel in Belgium.

◇ Reporter Sam Bartlett wrote an article on Glasgow's Britannia Panopticon Music Hall for the *Big Issue* magazine.

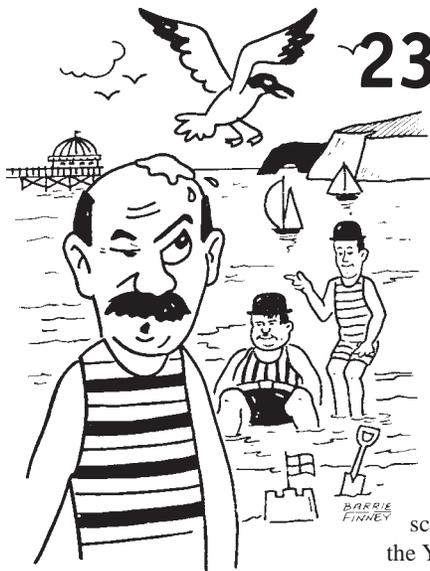
◇ The Brats Tent had another curry night at the Lajawab Restaurant on 20th May. They took a contingent to the Ulverston Carnival on 6th July, with no less than three John Burtons (granddad, dad and son)!

◇ Thelma Todd's Pacific Palisades home is for sale. It looks over the ocean and was her last domicile. The price being asked is \$4.7 million.

◇ Thought for the day: "desserts" spelled backwards is "stressed".

Toasting the Boys

Dave Scothern was on an aeroplane, returning from the USA, when he noted on the TV screen the message, "Impress the cabin crew with your knowledge of rhyming slang for drinks and cocktails." First on the list was "Laurel and Hardy – Bacardi".



23rd UK Convention

3rd till 6th May, 2002,

based at the Essex County Hotel, Southend-on-Sea
and hosted by the Saps at Sea Tent

Roger Robinson's prediction that "the warmth of friendship will be stronger than ever" was absolutely correct. Beaming faces testified to that!

Welcoming goodies bags on Friday had many surprises, including a CD of various radio broadcasts and music. There was also a very detailed souvenir programme.

The day started for some with a visit to a Vulcan bomber at Southend airfield, with Dave Dearle providing vintage transport, while others visited the memorabilia room or relaxed in the bar, where film rarities were being screened. Dave was back on duty again that evening, leading the You're Darn Tootin' Band through some Laurel and Hardy music.

Amongst the food, cocktails and toasts were a few light-hearted speeches. Steve and Bud Hodgson rendered the soft-shoe shuffle from *Way Out West*. In the raffle Charlie Lewis won a framed autograph of Stan Laurel.

The next morning, Sons paraded like never before through Old Leigh, after which Steve and Bud had to recreate part of *The Music Box*. They were presented with a replica piano crate, made by Paul Allen, and began to heave the hefty woodwork up the steps on Leigh cliffs. Reporter Tom King observed, "As the puffing pair finally reached the top, George Cook, a burly delegate from San Francisco, was chortling. 'You know,' he said, 'I heard the prop man, who made the piano case for the film, talking about how he did it. It was balsa wood. The nails were painted on. These guys have had to carry a pine wood case all the way.'"

On the busses a quiz and art contest was underway before Sons arrived at Hythe. A narrow-gauge train ride to New Romney led to a re-enactment of Laurel and Hardy reopening the line in 1947 and another train ride, to Dungeness, where coaches awaited to return the throng to base.

A charity auction, with Laurie Young in charge, dinner and some amazing Laurel and Hardy filmed rarities from David Wyatt led to Mad Paul's Karaoke with excitement such as Graham Bishop and Mark Harris delivering *Nellie the Elephant*.

◇ Being amongst the Sons was just the tonic I needed. I enjoyed every minute. I was amazed at the talents displayed by some of the Sons – they were better than the television! Wasn't that robot fantastic?

Meeting Sir John Mills was a thrill, especially to know that he requested to unveil the plaque because of his admiration for Laurel and Hardy – which is a great honour. He said to me, "Weren't they wonderful?" He met them and thought they were two lovely people.

Thank you, Roger and Paul and the Saps at Sea, for a superb weekend – and to all those who donated to our Charity Fund and organised the auction. I received the grand sum of £600.00, for which I am very grateful on behalf of our future recipients. I brought along copies of all the letters of thanks we have received from all the charities and if you had a chance to read them you would realise how much your help has been appreciated.

Love to all and God Bless.
Nancy Wardell



Anne and Martin
Hawkes looked
after the host
tent's banner,
heading the
parade



Steve and Bud Hodgson greeted conventioners as they arrived, carried a replica Music Box up a hundred and thirty-five steps (four more than in the film!) and reprised the reopening of the Romney, Hythe and Dymchurch Railway, with Roger and Paul "helping". Even John Inman wanted to be "served" by "Stan and Ollie"!



by staff reporters

Pee Wee and the Bucket and Spade game provided Sunday morning exercise. Then it was off to Southend Pier.

The Saps had persuaded the Comic Heritage Trust to place a blue plaque on the entrance to the pier to commemorate Laurel and Hardy's visit in 1952. Sir John Mills (aged 95) unveiled the plaque. He said, "These days I have to choose my outings a bit more carefully, but for Laurel and Hardy I had to come."

The next destination was the end of the pier on the world's longest pier railway, for good old fish and chips.

Back at the hotel, the Stan Hooton Memorial Quiz yielded a very close finish, with the trophy going to the London tent.

The top fancy dress winner was a hilarious sheet and lampshade from Manchester, as in *The Laurel-Hardy Murder Case*. Amid more levity, another raffle raised money for charity and the Ulverston statue. Paul Allen shook the room with his Elvis performances. There was also a masked man, then a very funny Jimmy James sketch with Eric Woods, Grahame Morris and Norman Leigh – the lion-in-the-shoe-box routine.

Another resounding success had been thoroughly enjoyed by the Sons of the Desert, thanks to Roger and his crew. The Grand Sheiks' Meeting the next morning ensured that Sons will be convening again next year at the same time, in Birmingham.

*Number of conventioners: 106 for the whole convention, plus approximately another 50 for various events.
Number of tents represented: 28*

Prize winners

Pee wee: 1st: Russell Clay; 2nd:

Harry Hoppe; 3rd: Jim Hutchinson / Dougie Brown

Bucket and Spade game: 1st plaice (that's what it said on the seaside certificate): Iain Wilson; 1st plaice lady: Rita Dempsey

Jeanie Weenie award (farthest travelled): George Cook

Most Peas in a Pod award (tent with most attendees): Perfect Day Tent, from Holland, with 13 members

Stan Hooton quiz: Glenn Mitchell and Mark Harris (Live Ghost Tent)

Glenn Mitchell quiz: Willie McIntyre

Stan and Ollie at the Seaside art competition: Mark Harris

Fancy dress: 1st: Paul Brodie (lampshade and sheet); 2nd Robert Radevan (Charley Chase); 3rd Paul Allen / Roger Robinson (the Boys sharing one pair of trousers, from *You're Darn Tootin'*)

Laughing Gravy Games

You'd have to admit that, if you're a Son of the Desert and you spotted a sign that said "Laughing Gravy Games", curiosity would make you stop and find out more about it. Of course, *Laughing Gravy* is a popular two-reel film starring Stan Laurel and Oliver Hardy, released in 1931, and features a dog named Laughing Gravy. Well, at a recent street fair in Maryland, I spotted such a sign in front of a booth. And it turned out that the name of the company in that booth was indeed Laughing Gravy Games. This company produces very modern and unique table games of competition for playing by adults, what they have termed "face-to-face gaming". The games appeared to be of very high quality, a little on the expensive side.

Anyway, I had a chance to communicate with one of the owners of Laughing Gravy Games. The company is located in Maryland, where I live. I asked him if he was a fan of Laurel and Hardy? Was he aware of the film *Laughing Gravy* with a dog of that name? And, finally, I asked him if he had named his company after the film or dog? He told me that they had considered many names for their gaming business. They went through brainstorming sessions, going through lists of various possible names for their new business. During the brainstorming, the name Laughing Gravy did come up, based on the Laurel and Hardy film name – one of the owners had seen that film. In the end, they chose the name Laughing Gravy for their company, not because of the connection with Laurel and Hardy characters, but they felt the words "Laughing Gravy" not only represented the way they felt about face-to-face gaming, but felt it had high recognition as well. They felt "Laughing" represented the good spirit felt by all in a particular gaming session, and "Gravy" represented the good lifestyle which includes the "getting-together-with-your-buddies" sensation of gaming. The owner did say that, although he is not a die-hard Laurel and Hardy fan, he did like their films, saying it was "classic comedy at its finest".

Laughing Gravy Games has a website, <http://www.laughinggravygames.com>.

Gino Dercola



Call me a cab

The 1922 yellow cab used in numerous Roach films, including *Double Whoopee* and *Me and My Pal*, has been restored and has been on display at auto shows in the USA.

New mag

Grand Sheik Antony Waite says, in his new magazine, *Slapstick*, "Our aim is to produce two of these a year, alternating with our *Whoopee!* newsletter. *Whoopee!* is pure Laurel and Hardy, whereas *Slapstick* is a mixture of old film comedy, the Boys and other items relating to the 1920s, '30s, '40s and '50s."

Langdon's influence

In *Another Fine Dress*, Jonathan Sanders acknowledges, "Both Laurel and Hardy (but especially Laurel) owed a debt to Harry Langdon – a much greater one, in my estimation, than is acknowledged by most commentators. Langdon was the baby-faced comedian, whose humour was largely based on an infant-like innocence and bewilderment in the sophisticated atmosphere of 1920s America."

Vic quote

Our work is rooted in old-fashioned comedy, which uses innuendo and banging people over the head. A lot of it is Laurel and Hardy stuff.

Vic Reeves in the *Radio Times*
(19-25th January, 2002)

Answers

The answers to the questions set by M Finn on page 13:

- A. 1. Film: *Another Fine Mess*. Two girls, announcing the film, say, "Laurel and Hardy in their latest comedy entitled *Another Fine Mess*."
 - A. 2. Film: *On the Wrong Trek*. Bonita Weber, as Charley Chase's mother-in-law, says to him, "Another fine mess you've gotten us into."
 - B. 1. Film: *Chickens Come Home*. Ollie: "Well. . . ." Stan: "Here's another nice mess I got you into."
 - B. 2. Film: *Thicker Than Water*. Stan and Ollie exchange characters and Stan says to Ollie, "Here's another nice mess you've gotten me into."
-

TV Comic



Robert Cheadle found some mid-seventies issues of TV Comic, which he describes as "not my favourite retelling of the Laurel and Hardy creation." He adds, "If anyone who collects the strips is missing some, I can run off photocopies." The example above was dated 26th October, 1974.



Grand Sheik Stan Patterson and Jeffrey Holland with cut-outs

Hi-Di-Hi star trails his comic hero

On 22nd November last year former *Hi-Di-Hi* star Jeffrey Holland traced the steps of his hero Stan Laurel around the streets of Bishop Auckland, where members of the Hog Wild Tent have created "The Stan Laurel Trail".

Jeffrey visited Bishop Auckland Town Hall to meet members of the tent and they moved on to the two houses in Waldron Street and Princes Street where Stan and his sister Beatrice lived with their parents Arthur and Madge Jefferson. They visited St Peter's Church, where Stan was baptised and where a plaque commemorates this momentous occasion. They then walked past the site of the Eden Theatre, which Stan's father managed from 1896 till 1898 and again from 1922 till 1925. The theatre was the home of Arthur's touring melodrama companies who performed plays written by him and which were thought to have been used as plots for his son's early films.

The trail ended at the former King James Grammar School, where Stan was a boarder and where he gave his first performances to the staff.

Jeffrey revealed that he borrows some movements and gestures from Stan and Ollie to use in his own comic performances. He said, "Laurel and Hardy were an inspiration to some of our greatest comedians. Bob Monkhouse is a huge fan and Morecambe and Wise based their original act on them."

In 1983 Jeffrey opened the Laurel and Hardy Museum in Ulverston.

The Hog Wild Tent celebrated Jeffrey's visit by making him an honorary member.

Gillian Wales

"Unknown" show went well

David Wyatt's *Unknown Laurel and Hardy* show at the National Film Theatre last October went well. The theatre was nearly full and in the audience of about three hundred was Paul Merton, who is a big fan.

Jacquie Lyn

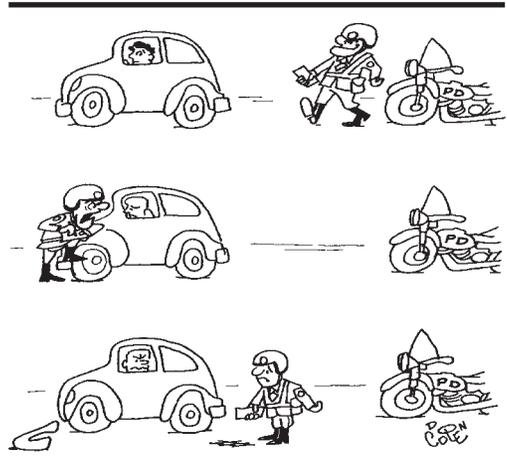
Some years ago, when Video Treasures issued a number of Laurel and Hardy films to the Americas, Lois Laurel Hawes made home movies available to the company and these preceded each film presentation, along with a promo for the Sons of the Desert. One of the films issued was *Pack Up Your Troubles* and, by way of introduction, Lois provided home movies of Jacquie Lyn visiting the Laurel home and playing with Lois. At the end of the home movie Lois made an appeal aimed at locating the present whereabouts of little Jacquie. Lois said that, believing the child had gone to England, enquiries had been made to Scotland Yard, but without success. She asked anyone with information about Jacquie Lyn to contact the Sons of the Desert.

Some months after *Pack Up Your Troubles* was released I received a letter from California from a lady who said that her children had given her the videotape for Christmas because they knew that she had been in the film. She said that she was Jacquie Lyn, but couldn't understand why anyone would want to find her.

I contacted the lady, Mrs Jacqueline Woll, and told her about the Sons of the Desert and the reason for their interest in her. I realize now that this must have taken place sometime prior to 1992 because it was arranged with convention host Sharry Han to invite Mrs Woll and her husband, Martin, to the Las Vegas gathering. They also attended the New York Convention in 1994 and it was there that Jacquie recreated the bedtime story scene from *Pack Up Your Troubles*, with the help of Laurel and Hardy lookalikes Dennis Moriarty and Dale Walter.

It was ironic that, while Lois was trying to find Jacquie, the object of her search was living only a few miles away from Lois's Tarzana, CA, home.

Dwain Smith



Prolonged fun

Our heroes were featured in the centre pages of *Film Fun* in 1930 and promoted to the front and back pages a few years later, where they rightly remained for twenty years or more.



Interestingly, the Boys made their comic debut as a team in a long forgotten publication called *The Realm of Fun and Fiction*,

in 1929. So if we consider the fact that they were still up to their tricks in the pages of *Film Fun Annual* right up until 1959, three years before *Film Fun* weekly last went to press, it can be said that their partnership in comics lasted longer than their partnership on the silver screen!

From Hard Boiled Eggs and Nuts, the newsletter of the County Hospital Tent

Sons of the Desert country music

Grand Sheik Dave Barker was surfing the Internet and found the site of the country group from Texas called the Sons of the Desert. An interesting account of the group's music and background can be found at <http://www.countrystars.com/artists/sons.html>.

See also page 55 for the Avalon Boys' CD.

Gravy shop

Kevin Hepplestone discovered in *Metro* a restaurant called Laughing Gravy after the owner's favourite Laurel and Hardy film. It is in the basement of Hebden Bridge's Birchcliffe Centre in Yorkshire and was considered by the newspaper to be one of the top five restaurants in Yorkshire.

Ars gratia artis

This tapestry was shown in *Yours* magazine in spring, 2001.

Mrs Stella Richards of Braintree, Essex, wrote, "It has more than 50,000 stitches and took me 166.25 hours. My



colleague painted the canvas for me. She is a genius. I stitched like mad to get it done in time for an arts competition for the over 60s but was then told the organisers did not think it was art and if they entered it in the competition they would have nothing to compare it with. I was devastated to think how hard I had worked on it."

The Rogue Song



Before the advent of safety film it was common for prints to decompose, be damaged or simply wear out. No complete print of *The Rogue Song* is known to exist.

In 1974 MGM still held reel four of the nitrate negative, but no copies were made and this material has decomposed.

However, five parts of *The Rogue Song* have been uncovered. . . .

Dialogue, music and effects do exist for MGM discovered, in its own vaults, the original, complete soundtrack on disc, which is now deposited in the UCLA Film and Television Archive in Los Angeles. Some time back Pelican Records issued an album containing audio highlights.

In 1981, Professor Lawrence Benaquist of Keene State College in New Hampshire discovered a two and a half minute extract at a bookstore in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Explains Richard Bann, "A theatre projectionist had excised this clip for reasons unknown and saved it! Defying all odds, the footage found depicted a Laurel and Hardy scene, although, unfortunately, it was a scene where Stan and Ollie are hardly visible. It was the storm-and-cave-refuge sequence, with Laurel and Hardy in the dark, unable to see they are sharing company with a bear."

In 1994 the Czech Film Archive in Prague revealed that they had a silent nitrate reel containing bits from *The Rogue Song*, but with no Laurel and Hardy scenes. A 35mm print of this was screened at the Sons convention in Rolduc in 1995.

In 1998 about five minutes' worth were found by Northeast Historic Film in Maine in the USA. But there were no Laurel and Hardy scenes. This was passed to UCLA for preservation.

The trailer for *The Rogue Song* has been restored from a silent print and stills. It lasts three minutes and includes a Laurel and Hardy routine with cheese and a bee.

Saps in USA

I think that, despite my not being able to go to the International Convention, the Saps at Sea Tent was in contention for the tent with the most attendees from the UK. We had Seven Saps (one for each Sea) in Nashville. I hope that the Grand Ole Opry and Graceland staff could cope with Canvey's reincarnated version of Elvis, known to us as Paul Allen.

Roger Robinson

One good turn

My wife and I attended an illustrated talk on the history of the village where we live, North Anston, some twelve miles from Sheffield. We were told that the first schools, one for boys, the other for girls, a hundred and twenty years ago, were built and paid for by a local benefactor named Mary Roberts! That gal sure does get around!

Harlan Senior

Amos and Andy

In *Pardon Us* Stan mistook two black prison inmates for Amos and Andy. Stan didn't see Amos and Andy at all. If he had, he would have been surprised to find that they weren't African-American, but Caucasian – a couple of white guys playing a couple of black guys. Freeman Gosden and Charles Correll were the voices of Amos and Andy on radio from 19th March, 1928 to 25th November, 1960.

Laughing Gas (July - Sept, 2002)

Cuckoo

Tony Bagley saw a press report on cuckoo clock fanatic Roman Piekarski, who was having a busy spell, taking about twelve hours changing all his 561 clocks to British Summer Time at the Cuckooland Museum in Tabley, Cheshire, which houses the largest collection of cuckoo clocks in the world.

Tom McGrath's *Laurel and Hardy*

The Coliseum Theatre in Oldham featured Tom McGrath's *Laurel and Hardy* from 7th till 30th March. The play features Stan and Ollie looking back over all their years in the business and re-enacting some of their most popular routines.

On 19th March, there was a talk from the director of the piece, Kevin Shaw, and actors Eric Potts and Lewis Phillips, who spoke about how the show was put together and what research they undertook.

Perils with organ

Derek Petro of the Another Fine Mess Tent of Windsor, Ontario, reports that Detroit's Redford Theatre had Laurel and Hardy presentations during the weekend of 22nd and 23rd March. This single-screen, restored, neighbourhood cinema, which opened in 1928, has recently had extensive repairs.

Derek says, "Much of the fun is the organ overture which precedes every show." Along with Dave Salusny, Derek attended one of the shows, which featured *The Further Perils of Laurel and Hardy*, followed by *The Music Box*, with what appeared to be almost a full house.

Little acorns

Following the lead of Messrs Laurel and Hardy, I have recently "founded" my own business, in this case my law firm, specialising in non-contentious law. If any Sons want to telephone or e-mail me concerning conveyancing, preparing a will, fresh fish, or legal advice in general, I will be pleased to help – and will give a donation to the Laurel and Hardy Charity. I am based in Merseyside but can act on behalf of clients anywhere in England or Wales.

*Guy Wigmore, Solicitor,
Roselands, 3 Cross Green,
Formby, Merseyside, L37 4BH.
Tel: 01704 387777. E-mail:
caveat.emptor@lineone.net*

Einstein or Bierstein?



Jean Poulain from Avrillé in France sent us his portrayal of Laurel and Hardy's contribution to Einstein's theory

Tipton

The Tipton Slasher from *Do Detectives Think?* had his hometown brought into prominence recently. The small town in the West Midlands was where a group of up to fourteen Islamic extremists discussed their plans after the 11th September attacks on America.

Christmas and Nicolini

The ninety-third meeting of the Leave 'Em Laughing Tent was held on 8th December at Nicolini's Restaurant in Peterborough, Canada. Grand Sheik Jeannie Lindsay and her tent enjoyed the special Italian cuisine as an ingredient of their Christmas party. Video presentations included a documentary clip showing the history of the Thelma Todd Sidewalk Café, various extracts from Laurel and Hardy films, plus a clip from *Antiques Roadshow*, set near Stan's birthplace.

Potteries showing DVDs

Antony Waite's Midnight Patrol Tent of Staffordshire is now showing Laurel and Hardy films on DVD, on a four-foot screen. The programmes on the new format have included *Their Purple Moment*, accompanied by the Beau Hunks Orchestra at the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, plus *Way Out West* from the Kinowelt disc. The tent has recently celebrated fifty years since the Boys played live at the Royal in Hanley.

Stop press from Nashville convention

The Perfect Day Tent of Columbus, Ohio will host the 2004 International Convention, there being no other bids. . . . The Trivia Contest winners were Tracy Tolzmann (Blockheads Tent), Bill Cassara (Midnight Patrol Tent) and Brad Farrell (A-Haunting We Will Go Tent). . . . Five distinguished guests (Jay R Smith, Jean Darling, Lois Roberts, Dorothy de Borba and Jerry Tucker) held a Questions and Answers forum. . . . It was agreed that Del Kempster will join the current editors of the *Intra-Tent Journal*, who are Alison and Dave Stevenson, the vote being unanimous. . . . Dwain Smith read a letter from (absent) John McCabe, proclaiming that McCabe is disbanding the Advisory Committee and assuming again his role of Exhausted Ruler.

Calibre

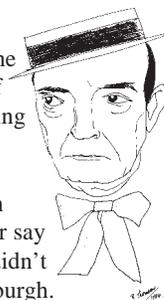
I think Buster Keaton's era was – like Chaplin's – the silent days of movies and it is interesting to think of Stan and Ollie starting with silent pictures and making the transition to sound, without any loss of success.

I remember when Mrs Oliver Hardy came to the R&W Forsyth department store, where I worked, on Princes Street in Edinburgh. It was 1952. I heard her say to one of the salesmen in our department that they didn't like Glasgow very much – but that they loved Edinburgh.

The Boys and their wives were staying at the Caledonian Hotel at the west end of Princes Street. It's still there today! That was during their second post-war visit to Edinburgh, when Laurel and Hardy appeared at the Empire Theatre – now known as the Festival Theatre.

During my 1975 visit to the USA I was introduced to a man who had worked for Stan Laurel and he said that Stan loved parties. By all accounts he was a very sociable person. I don't think any other major stars were as good to their fans as Laurel and Hardy. And I think it was to the credit of Stan Laurel (and Charlie Chaplin) that they remained British citizens although they spent most of their lives in America.

Ronald Thomson



In the summer of 1975 Ronald poses outside the Laurels' last home, the Oceana Apartment Hotel in Santa Monica, which faced onto the Pacific Ocean



Search for composers

In 1984, when the International Convention met in Ulverston, an original play written by Ron Day and P Nicholas Paule was performed, entitled *Stan and Ollie*. Savannah Furman wanted to include all or part of the script in the appendix of her book about conventions (see page 3), but was unable to contact the composers. Although it is now too late to include the information, Savannah would still love to hear from Ron or Nicholas.



Sparkie's salute

Dennis "Sparkie" Moriarty (left as Stan with Dale "Pogo" Walter Snr) read The Laurel & Hardy Digest carefully and shares with us some welcome additions and observations

Chapter 1

Norvell (Babe) Hardy's father was Oliver Hardy and is buried in the city cemetery in Harlem, Georgia, next to his first wife. I have photos of the graves. Norvell's mother's (Miss Emmie's) family are buried in nearby Grovetown, Georgia.

Norvell's mother did not approve of his tattoo and you will notice that his arms are normally covered, to hide the tattoo.

Chapter 3

Madge went to her parents' home to have her baby, Stan. Norvell's mother went to her home town to have her baby.

Stan's eulogy was given by Dick Van Dyke.

The Oconee River flows north to south in Milledgeville, Georgia. Norvell attempted to save his half-brother, Sam Tant, from drowning in it.

Chapter 4

Norvell worked at the Electric Theatre, later called the Palace Theatre, located on South Wayne Street, across from the Baldwin Hotel, which his mother operated.

Chapter 5

Jacque Lyn was four years old when she appeared in *Pack Up Your Troubles* (1932). As Laurel and Hardy lookalikes, Dale "Pogo" Walter Snr and I did a scene with her, from the film, at the 1994 Sons of the Desert International Convention. We kept in touch with her several times a year by post.

The children in *Babes in Toyland* were some of the Our Gang kids, including Jerry "Tucker" Schatz. We have established a friendship with Myra and Jerry and last saw them at Ocean City, New Jersey in April 2000. They attended the Sons of the Desert Convention in Nashville in July, 2002.

Chapter 6

I have a first day issue of both the British 1990 "smiles" stamp and the US Postal Service 1991 "comedians", plus the British reissue of "smiles" from Earls Court, London at the Stamp Show, 22-28th May, 2000.

After appearing on *This is Your Life*, Stan and Ollie were each given a 16mm Bell & Howell movie projector and a film of the show. Our coaches, Larry and Bonnie Reed-Bell of Canton, Ohio, now own Stan's projector.

In Milledgeville, Georgia, located above the pool hall (former Columbia Theatre) and built after Ollie left town, is the Oliver Hardy pub. The wallpaper contains photos of movie stars, including the Boys.



Jacque Lyn with Stan and Ollie in Pack Up Your Troubles

Chapter 7

The Oliver Hardy Festival is held annually in



Harlem on the first Saturday of October, with a Sons of the Desert reception at the City Hall on the Friday evening.

Chapter 12

Remember that some of the early stories were studio press releases and contain "not true information".

Chapter 13

I have three of the set of five Studio 56 soundtrack Phonograph records (33rpm, double-sided).

Contact Grand Sheik Steve Brown in Nashville, for an update on the country music group called Sons of the Desert.

Chapter 16

The steps that appear in *Hats Off* also appear in *The Music Box*. The Sons of the Desert have placed a metal marker at the steps.



Chapter 18

I have three Spanish speaking Laurel and Hardy video tapes. The deletions and additions are indeed noticeable.

Chapter 19

Zenobia has Masonic/Shrine references. I have photocopies of Ollie's Masonic Record from the Grand Lodge of Florida.

Chapter 23

The Tree in a Test Tube is available on VHS tape in the UK and the USA.

Chapter 24

In one of the Hanna-Barbera children's cartoons Scooby-Doo meets Laurel and Hardy. This is seen on the Cartoon Network.

Chapter 29

John Wayne was an honored Mason in America, as were many stars.

Oliver Hardy was a lifelong member of Solomon Lodge #20 at Jacksonville, Florida. He is buried in the Masonic section of a cemetery in Hollywood.

In *Helpmates* the last suit that Ollie is wearing is a Knights Templar Uniform including Shapo (hat) and sword. Knights Templar/Commandery is a Christian Masonic body.

Fin and others were known members of the

Masonic fraternity. Words and phrases from Masonic degree work are often heard in the classic movies, but only Masonic Lodge members would recognise them.

Chapter 31

The CBS TV show *Hogan's Heroes* made reference to the Boys. I have three such shows on tape.

Even today Dick Van Dyke often mentions or shows pictures of the Boys in his current TV show *Diagnosis Murder*.

One of the Robert Wagner TV shows *Heart to Heart* references the Boys.

Chapter 33

The City Hall in Harlem, Georgia has many donations and items on loan which they display. They try to change the display from



year to year at the Oliver Hardy Festival. The Boys' museum has now opened in Harlem.

Chapter 37

We met Edmond Tester of New York, a friend of Stan, at the Sons of the Desert International Convention in 1994 and have kept in touch by post. He has shared with me photocopies of some of his letters and postcards from Stan. Edmond also was Clarabell Clown of the *Hoody Doody* television show from 1951 till 1956.

Richard Linder, Grand Sheik of the Columbus, Ohio tent, tells the story from the *Columbus Dispatch* newspaper about the Boys playing Columbus and bringing a monkey to the Columbus Zoo from St Louis. Also that Stan became ill and needed the services of a doctor, but he never paid the doctor.

Chapter 38

We have performed the water bottle routine in our tribute stage show.



The Laurel & Hardy Digest is available from your editor for £12.99, plus £1.51 for UK p&p (elsewhere £2.01 for p&p)

Tip for projectionists

A friend passed on a tip about projectors to Chris Coffey. Chris tells us, "He advised me to let them run for five minutes before switching on the lamp. This allows the transformer to reach operating temperature and thus creates much less wear and tear on the lamp caused by current surges. This applies to super 8 as well as 16mm."

Site gone

We are sorry to see the Laurel and Hardy Official website fall by the wayside.

Dedicated to Pete

The Helpmates' meeting on 2nd June at the Holiday Inn, Chatham, was dedicated to the memory of Peter Elkins and all Sons who are sadly no longer with us.

Highlights for me were seeing *Cuckoo*, which I had never seen before, *Wild Poses*, the Laurel and Hardy cameo in *Hollywood Revue of 1929*, the *Below Zero* Spanish phonetic version and *The Flying Deuces* colourised, plus *Perfect Day* and *Towed in a Hole*, which were Peter Elkins's favourite Laurel and Hardy films.

Then came the raffle, in which I won a prize, and the usual toasts, with an extra toast to all departed Sons. The Avalon Boys entertained us with some songs from their first class CD.

Nick Rich

Phoney Laurel

In the late 1950s comedian Joe Laurel was touring the world as a comedian, claiming to be Stan Laurel's brother. Graeme Bell's 1988 memoir *Australian Jazzman* tells of the impostor arriving in Australia.



Golden days in print

The following is part of a protracted article in *The Sunday Times* (28.10.01.) on Stan Laurel and the Panopticon Theatre. . . .

It was a run-of-the-mill night at the Britannia Panopticon Music Hall in Glasgow's busy Trongate. A large crowd of the city's unwashed had swept into the elaborate Italianate building, seeking an escape from their dreary single ends.

As always, they had come prepared to give the newcomers a traditional Glasgow reception, the shipyard workers with rivets and the children with manure. In the wings, a terrified teenager stood waiting to make his entrance. Dressed in his father's best frock coat and silk hat, clutching a joke he had bought at the Saltmarket for a penny, he stepped out onto the stage.

The gag – about a butterfly that didn't go to the dance because it was a mothball – bombed. Soon the audience was baying for blood. As the manager gestured frantically for him to get off, the teenager went to end his act with a bow. But as he stepped forward, his foot got caught in his hat. He leaned forward to fix it and split his trousers. The audience split their sides. With this moment of classic slapstick – defined as "another fine mess" in his movies – Stan Laurel won over the toughest audience in the country.

The year was 1906. Laurel, then known as Stanley Jefferson, was born in Cumbria, but moved to Glasgow when his father, a theatre manager, expanded his burgeoning empire by taking over the city's Metropole Theatre.

The *Evening Times* (12.12.01.) had a full-page article on the Panopticon. . . .

The Britannia Panopticon Music Hall was where Stan Laurel told his first gag and a young Cary Grant wowed the ladies from the Springburn Locomotive Works Christmas outing with his suave good looks. Harry Lauder danced thousands of Highland jigs on its wooden stage while Jack Buchanan preferred a graceful glide.

But while these and other stars, including Princess Ida the Human Trunk, went on to greater things, the Britannia's career went into a slow decline. Since it closed in 1938, Scotland's last surviving music hall has earned its keep with bit parts, doubling as a storage room or home to pigeons. Now an ambitious plan has been launched which would see the Britannia making a comeback. It is led by Judith Bowers, founder of the Trust set up to save the forgotten theatre which she stumbled across by chance.

Every day thousands of shoppers pass the 138-year-old pale blue building, the ground floor of which is now an amusement arcade, never giving it a second glance. But Judith has been buoyed by a new £4 million feasibility study which reckons the Britannia, regarded as the most important example of an early music hall in the country, could have a secure future.

***With Love and Hisses* unreel one**

Jeannie Lindsay, Grand Sheik of the Leave 'Em Laughing Tent in Ontario, and Vice Sheik Rick Bestard were “scrounging around a flea market” when they came across a super 8 film of *With Love and Hisses*. They realised that it was only one reel of the two-reeler, but made the purchase. The tent watched this reel at a meeting and members were asked to write their versions of the missing first reel. A short time later, a member purchased a video of the film and so, after all the stories were collected, they watched the whole story.

Bowler Dessert has selected one of the dissertations for your amusement, written by Rick himself. . . .

Ollie: Well, here we are up against it again.

Stan: Up against what?

Ollie: Don't you understand? We're in a conundrum. Our clothes are so worn they're practically in shreds. We owe two weeks back room and board, and we haven't eaten for three days.

Stan: Ya, yesterday, today and tomorrow.

Ollie: This is no time for levity.

Stan: What's levity?

Ollie: Never mind, we can discuss that some other time.

Stan: I've got an idea, Ollie. We could join the army. I saw a poster with a soldier on it and he was pointing at me, and it said, “I want you.”

Ollie: How could that possibly solve our problem?

Stan: Well, the poster also said that they would put us in a brand new uniform, and we would get free room and board and three square meals a day. Oh ya, and we could travel all over the world, and they would pay us twenty-five cents a day.

Ollie: You know, you might just have something there. Tell me that again.

Stan: Well, if we joined the army then our clothes wouldn't have to be worn anymore and if we got bored in our room we could travel all over the world, and get a square meal every three days for just twenty-five cents.

Ollie: That's all right, Stan. I know just what you mean. First thing in the morning we'll go down to the recruiting office and sign up. Room and board, three square meals a day, all of our clothes supplied, and we even get paid. Well, what do you think?

Stan: What's a conundrum?

Ollie: Well a conundrum is cinnamon and. . . . What do you mean, “What's a conundrum?” We haven't got time for that now. We've got to get down to that recruiting office before they decide to cancel the war.

Buck shot

Bill Roth spotted a reference in *The Filming of the West*, a book by Jon Tuska, in the chapter *Buck Jones at Columbia*. . . .

In common with Hoot Gibson, Buck continued to inject humor into his sound Westerns. One hilarious scene in *Men Without Law* takes place when Buck is locked up in jail with Fred Kelsey, who worked with Laurel and Hardy, as his keeper. Buck gives Kelsey a Chinese puzzle to solve. Kelsey takes it away with him, Buck whistling the *Cuckoo Song*, which was the Laurel and Hardy theme, Kelsey marching in time to the beat until he pulls himself up short, irked by his own behavior.



ROM delight

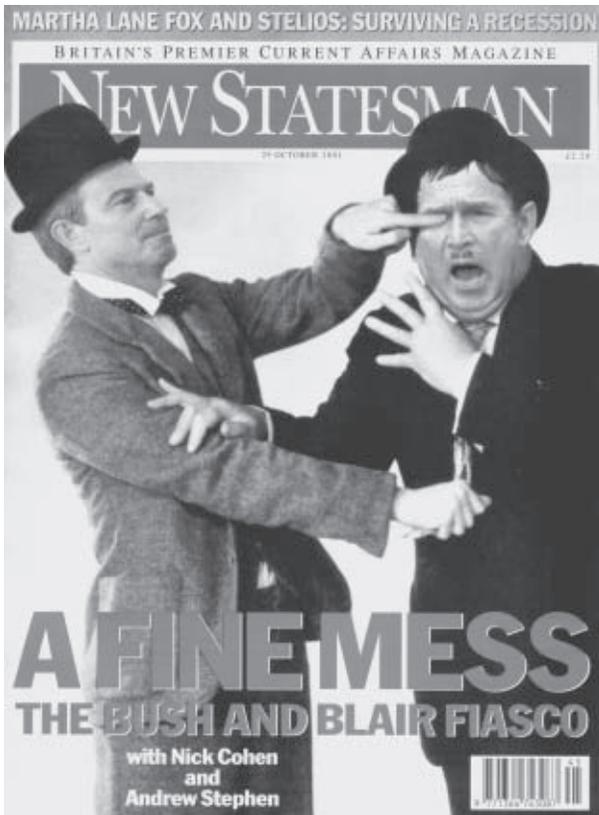
The Jitterbugs Tent in the Netherlands has issued its fourth *Megazine*, still the only interactive Laurel and Hardy magazine. It includes *The Reincarnation Song* (announced in *Bowler Dessert* 59, on page 10), the written script for *The Battle of the Century*, an audio track of Laurel and Hardy in Copenhagen, a detailed look at Thelma Todd, with some rare photographs, and lavish footage of a Jitterbugs Tent meeting. To buy two issues of this CD ROM send € 15 to Hans Ligtenberg, Stichting Jitterbugs Tent, Bredasestraat 42, 4611 CH Bergen op Zoom, Holland.



Thelma Todd

In the news

Press items spotted by Tony Bagley, Stephen Barlow, John Burton, Bill Crouch, Janice Hawton, Nick Higgins, Lyn Jarvis, David Oyston, Nick Rich, Dave Shephard, Bob Spiller and Len Trodd



New Statesman (29.10.01.) had a novel way of illustrating an article on Tony Blair's foreign policy

◇ The *Mirror* (25.10.01.) had the headline, "Ole saves Reds from another fine mess" which was about Ole Gunnar Solskjaer of Manchester United scoring against Olympiakos.

◇ Celtic defender Johan Mjallby rarely has occasion to slate his midfielders for getting him "into another fine mess". But, arriving at a restaurant last night for some *Tuesday Night Fever*, the big Swede looked every part the clown, decked out in 70s John Travolta get-up. And the man behind the Stan Laurel mask is none other than the team captain Paul Lambert at the Celtic Christmas fancy dress bash.

Evening Times (05.12.01.)



◇ Eric Sykes said, in *Radio Times* (15-21.12.01.), "What joy they [Laurel and Hardy] gave, and still do. Life is a bit 'iffy' for us at the moment, and a good laugh is so therapeutic, worth six months on the National Health. They were my inspiration of how to live."

◇ In an article in the *Culture* section of the *Sunday Times* (16.12.01.) David Jason said, about television's Trotter brothers, "It's what they used to say about Laurel and Hardy. One is a knowing fool and the other is an unknowing fool. But they don't mean any harm."

◇ Peter Reid felt like Stan Laurel during Sunderland's 5-0 slaughter at Ipswich. Black Cats chief Reid was left fuming as his side landed him in another fine mess last Saturday.

"I felt a bit like Stan Laurel out there. I put my hands on my head and started scratching it. And, by the way, Stan Laurel would have got a game for us – it was laughable if not so serious."

The Sun (01.01.02.)

◇ *The Times* (16.01.02.) had a review of the book *Niagara Falls All Over Again* by Elizabeth McCracken. The reviewer, Erica Wagner, volunteered the opinion that "comedy is notoriously difficult to convey on the page; even Ollie and Stan's routines, reproduced in Simon Louvish's fond biography, come across as strangely flat." A large illustration (see top of page 37) of Laurel and Hardy was thrown in for good measure. The novel suggests some Laurel and Hardy influence.



Arriving in New York in 1952

◇ Norman Harper, novelist and journalist, wrote in the *Press and Journal* (23.01.02.) a long article praising Laurel and Hardy. Part follows:

I came upon an old, old VHS cassette in the loft the other day. It was a home-made blank-tape job bearing a label that looked like the manufacturer might have gone defunct 20 years ago.

I hadn't had the foresight to label the recording, so I descended from the humid blackness bearing a tape which contained I knew not what.

I can tell you only that I spent the next three hours transfixed, rolling and laughing

until the tears were streaming down my face.

It was a tape I had made when BBC2 had broadcast a series of Laurel and Hardy shorts every weekday morning for a fortnight, probably in 1983 or so. For me, it was a find beyond price. It had been so long since I had watched that tape that I had come to believe that I had lost it or lent it or even taped over it.

I have watched it twice straight through since finding it again and I doubt that I'll tire of it. The comedy is ageless, the characterisation pitched to perfection and the timing bang on. Laurel and Hardy were, and

still are, the boys as far as I am concerned.

You can keep Chaplin. I never found him funny and still don't; far too impressed with himself. Buster Keaton was clever and inventive, but replayed the same character in every movie. Harry Langdon, Harold Lloyd, Chester Conklin, Ben Turpin *et al* raise an occasional smile, but their careers vanished with the advent of talkies.

Only Stan and Ollie managed the transition to sound and actually prospered. They were and are comic genius on celluloid.

◇ The *Financial Mail on Sunday* (03.02.02.) had a feature on collecting film props, entitled *That's Another Fine Memento*. It said:

The value of film props depends on their rarity, provenance and significance in the film. Hats always seem to do well and can offer surprises. When Sotheby's in London offered Stan Laurel's bowler from Laurel and Hardy's 1952 UK tour, it was quickly snapped up for £2,000. The buyer? Bradford & Bingley Building Society, widely known for the image of two bowler hats in its logo.



Peter Brodie

◇ Fans of vintage comedy duo Laurel and Hardy are invited to get into "another fine mess" with like-minded film buffs.

Headed by Ashton resident Peter Brodie, the "Blotto" group meets once a month in Stalybridge railway station's buffet bar to watch and discuss the movies. Named after the

Stan and Ollie film of the same name, the group also travels to

conventions. Peter says: "The club's name doesn't mean we sit around getting plastered all the time! We like to travel to conventions, and also go to Stan Laurel's birthplace in Cumbria once a year." The meetings take place on the second Wednesday of every month at 8pm. Membership is free, but a £1 entrance fee is charged at each meeting, to cover costs.

The Advertiser (31.01.02.)



The *Sunday Telegraph* (03.03.02.) used this still from *The Finishing Touch* to illustrate an article on house purchase and repairs

Stan Laurel mystery solved

A Shrewsbury man may have solved the mystery of a comedian's visit to Longden Coleham 50 years ago. Stan Laurel and Oliver Hardy visited the town to perform at The Granada as part of a nationwide tour in April, 1952. Oliver and his wife stayed at the Raven Hotel, but it was rumoured that Stan visited a distant relative in Longden Coleham.

Douglas Green, of Sutton Grove, recalls Stan staying at the home of Wallace and Martha Riley, who lived in Moreton Crescent, Longden Coleham. "I can say that nobody knew Laurel was a guest until he had left the town," he said. "I'm sure Mr Riley told nobody about his guest, so there was no taxi, so I can only think Riley and Laurel walked from The Granada every day and night."

Mr Riley's daughter, Joan Bowen, also recalls Stan Laurel's visit to her parents' house. Her father, who was a chiroprapist, has written a book called *I Have Lived* which includes a record of the comedian's visit to the house for treatment to his feet.

It reads: "I had the pleasure of having Stan Laurel, the famous film star of Laurel and Hardy, and his



Stan Laurel, Pauline Elliott, Jimmie Elliott Jnr, Jimmie Elliott Snr and Oliver Hardy

wife down for treatment during their stay in Shrewsbury. This was on April 22, 1952. I had quite a chat about old times and I have had several letters from him since."

Meanwhile, Jimmie Elliott, of Belle Vue Gardens, revealed that his father toured with Laurel and Hardy as an animal mimic.

His father, Jimmie Elliott Senior, toured nationwide with the comedy duo, including performances at The Granada from April 21, 1952.

Stan Rogers of Meole Brace

also recalls the duo's performances at The Granada because he worked backstage at the theatre. He recalls that Mrs Hardy had her jewellery stolen while the duo were staying at the Raven Hotel. "It was the first time I had worked on a show and I remember the detectives coming down and questioning all of the stagehands about the robbery," he added.

Shrewsbury Chronicle (07.03.02.)

◇ Dudley's Hippodrome is no longer doing what it was made for. But it's no exaggeration to say that that old building has played host to many of the biggest names in show business.

Bearwood reader Veronica Walker, a former Dudley girl, has been kind enough to share with us an old album which proves it. Her brother Bert Walker left Dudley's Foxglove Road fifty years ago to start a new life in Canada, but, for a few years before he left, he worked at the theatre. Between 1945 and 1949 Bert was employed as an electrician and "on the limes" in the spot box – following the artists around the stage with his beam of light and ensuring they remained, quite literally, in the

limelight. He found himself meeting legends of stage and screen on a weekly basis.

Last year he paid a visit to his home town and brought a rare old tome [of photos and autographs] with him. His sister Veronica quite rightly thought that we at the *Bugle* would be interested to see what it contained.

It's hard to imagine Hollywood's biggest names taking the time to perform in the middle of the Black Country these days, and of course very few of them would today, but back then things were different. One of the first photographs in Bert's album is of Laurel and Hardy, signed by both men.

The Bugle (02.05.02.)



◇ *The Times* (07.05.02.) had a two-page spread entitled *Your ABC of where to study*. On this occasion the caption to the illustration (above) can be described as spot-on: "How not to be a chump: universities might be in flux but our guide will help you though the maze".

◇ Back in November Ron Brown wrote in his column in *The News* of Portsmouth:

I mentioned the *Hollywood Doubles* show which played the Empire in Edinburgh Road in the 1950s, and particularly the duo who “did” Laurel and Hardy. Edward J Laker of Southsea says the show came several times, and he does not know who played Laurel, but Hardy was played by Dump Harris.

At the turn of the year Ron wrote:

Did anyone catch the excellent Laurel and Hardy season on BBC TV over Christmas? I managed to record four hours worth on video. Certainly they screened Stan and Ollie’s worst movie – *Pardon Us* – but all the others were comedy classics, including the wonderful *Way Out West*.

A few days later came:

Edward J Laker, of Southsea, thinks that the worst film the pair made was *Atoll K*. It was their last movie and poor old Stan looked very fragile and hardly recognisable.

Shortly afterwards came this note from Edward:

Famous names who have graced the Kings Theatre [include] the marvellous team of Laurel and Hardy. They were on stage way back in 1947; a simple sketch, song and dance routine – Stan performed a solo *Lonely Little Petunia in an Onion Patch* – and it was over. But the magic remained and has endured.

The News had a spread on a local Fatty Arbuckle diner and said:

Those loveable comics Laurel and Hardy stare down from the walls, alongside that vamp actress Louise Brooks, while Marilyn Monroe at her most beguiling adds glamour and colour on an opposite wall along with a framed hero baseball player.”

In *The News* in December Ron wrote:

As the Kings Theatre at Southsea fights back from closure threats, an intriguing question arises: did Stan Laurel perform there as one of the Eight Lancashire Lads? Edward Laker came across an *Evening News* of August 13, 1909, when a bill of fare for the Kings featured the group. He also found a reference to Stan, who made his stage debut in 1906, being a member at one time. They were apparently clog dancers, not always particular about being from Lancashire. Can anyone confirm whether Laurel was there in August 1909?

In the same column in January was a follow-up:

From Len Trodd comes the answer: “I doubt it.” Mr Trodd, a member of the Laurel and Hardy Appreciation Society since 1989, writes that by 1909 Stan was appearing in various halls “up north” – and in December of that year he joined Fred Karno’s company. “He also appeared in *Mumming Birds* at the Hippodrome and Floral Garden, Hulme, Manchester, on December 6, 1909, under his real name of Stan Jefferson.” Mr Trodd, of Havant, says this information is recorded in A J Marriot’s book, *Laurel and Hardy – the British Tours*. Another book, *Stan* by Fred Lawrence Guiles, refers to the Lancashire Lads as a family of “cloggers” known as the Jacksons, who from time to time had guest performers appearing. It is stated that they shared a stage with Charlie Chaplin, but there is no reference to Stan Laurel or Jefferson.

Lookalike



In *Private Eye* (17-30.05.02.) Trevor Marshall noted a similarity between David Beckham, with a new hair-do, and Stan Laurel

◇ A still from *The Finishing Touch* was in the *Sunday Times* supplement *Culture* (26.05.02.) in an article about DIY website creating.

◇ The *Daily Star* (04.06.02.) reported on the readers’ survey for *Total Film* magazine, a poll on “the best film double acts ever”. Laurel and Hardy made it to the third position, behind Mel Gibson and Danny Glover as Riggs and Murtaugh from *Lethal Weapon* (at number one) and Paul Newman and Robert Redford, alias *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*.

◇ This depicting of the Tipton Slasher (mentioned in *Do Detectives Think?*) appeared in the Black Country newspaper during the summer. There was also this reference to Harlem:



Oliver Hardy’s name lives on in his home town of Harlem, Georgia – on water towers, fire hydrants and at a local festival in honour of the 1930s cinema funny man.

Pardon me, my ear is full of milk



*One Son has adopted Ollie's one-liner from Going Bye Bye! as his own catch phrase.
He is quite justified to do so for millions know Michael Leader as the milkman from EastEnders.
Roger Robinson pays tribute to a true Son of the Desert*

I first met Michael Leader many years ago at a Helpmates Tent meeting in Kent. I was the new kid in town, relishing watching rare footage, buying super memorabilia but most of all being in the company of other Laurel and Hardy fans. What a wonderfully friendly bunch they all were. Grand Sheik Rob Lewis and his team (Pete Elkins, Malcolm Stuart Fellows, Jack Stevenson, Joan Robertson – to name but four) had created such a family occasion that it was easy to fit into and enjoy the fun. I remember chatting to Michael and was immediately taken with his genuine admiration for Stan and Ollie and his desire to continue to honour them in the most appropriate way. I think I knew then what being a Son of the Desert was all about.

When the Live Ghost Tent was formed, Michael was again hugely supportive and fondly named the Londoners as “the friendly tent”, a title Grand Sheik Del Kempster and his bunch well deserve. I suppose it should not have come as a surprise that when I took the plunge and launched the Saps at Sea Tent, Michael would be in attendance from the first meeting in October 1998.

Brick Lane to Park Lane

Michael was born in the East End of London and proudly shares his birthday of 12th September with Billy Gilbert and Arthur Jefferson. Michael's father, Harry Leader, was a musician, songwriter and band leader. Formed in the 1930s, the Harry Leader Band/Orchestra gave many concerts and was regularly broadcast on the radio right through until the 1980s. Indeed, Harry performed on the first and last broadcasts of *Music While You Work*. The most famous of the many songs written by Harry was *Tonight's the Night*. Michael's mother, Hetty Taub, was also a songwriter and a vocalist, initially with the Harry Leader Band. The musical talent in the family goes back a generation, as Michael's grandfather was a Professor of Music at St Petersburg. Although Michael learned to play about six different musical instruments, he decided to embark upon a different career.

Michael wanted to become an actor. He enrolled with a London acting workshop and was soon appearing on stage in repertory theatre. But rep was having a lean time in the face of competition from the latest form of public entertainment, television. Michael had the foresight to see where there could be regular work and appeared in a whole host of television programmes. Amongst the many series he appeared in were *Dixon of Dock Green*, *Dr Who*, *Ivanhoe*, *Grange Hill* and *Minder* and he even made several appearances in *Chips*, filmed in America.

The blossoming talents of Michael were not restricted to TV, however, as film opportunities came his way.



From “Pinewood to Hollywood”, as Michael puts it, he has appeared in about two hundred films in Europe and America, including the James Bond films, all the *Superman* films,

Star Wars and *Murphy's War*.

He has worked alongside some of cinema's legendary actors and actresses, Clint Eastwood, Paul Newman, Elizabeth Taylor, Rock Hudson, Shirley MacLaine, Robert Mitchum and Bette Davis. As for directors, Michael has worked for some of the giants of the industry such as Don Siegel, Michael Winner and Orson Welles.

And back again

Perhaps it was destiny, but Michael, the London East Ender, was to find long-term employment in his birth roots. Television had given him plenty of opportunity to play different roles, but in *Hi-De-Hi* Michael was cast as the bandleader in the series, which lasted for nine years. In 1985, a new soap opera appeared on the BBC. Michael Leader was cast as the milkman in *EastEnders*. He is still

in that role, one of the original cast. The programme seems to have grown stronger and stronger and has seen several famous actors and actresses in the cast over the years, including Barbara Windsor, Mike Reid and Wendy Richards. In addition, many actors and actresses have found Albert Square as the launch pad to their own careers. I wonder how many of the cast in its seventeen year history can have or are ever likely to have a CV to rival that of their faithful milkman?

The fickle finger of fate

The fact that Michael has been seen and continues to be seen by so many film and television viewers hasn't changed him one iota. He is a modest, generous and genuine person. When I suggested to Michael that I write an article about him, I had to prise out details of his career. He said it was the "fickle finger of fate" that gave him so many opportunities. I think he is wrong. It is talent, coupled with extraordinary friendliness, that has been responsible for his continuing to work. Undoubtedly Michael thoroughly enjoys acting and cares passionately about the profession. In his "spare" time you will find him supporting others in the entertainment business. He loves to put as much back as he can into the show business world. His ongoing charity work is many-fold (Water Rats, Retired Actors' Home, Laurel and Hardy Charity Fund, Statue Appeal etc). Michael may be reluctant to talk about himself, but turn the conversation around to Sons of the Desert and you will hear him talk with pride. Turn the conversation around to Laurel and Hardy and you will hear him talk with passion.

Pride and passion

"As a child I watched and enjoyed Laurel and Hardy films and still do. I can just about remember seeing them live on their tour and also watching lookalikes Dump Harris and Stan. By coincidence the late Joe Baker was on the same



Michael Leader with Bud and Steve Hodgson at the UK Convention this year

bill. I joined the Helpmates Tent at its inception in the late seventies and used to run the raffle at those early meetings. In the eighties I met Lois Laurel and Lucille Hardy at the Hollywood convention. I was also a trailblazer to Ollie's birthplace, Harlem, Georgia, where I met his surviving cousin, who was the mayor at that time and just happened to be called Rob Lewis!

"Through the years I have become personal friends of a number of Sons including the late and great Bill Cubin, Malcolm Stuart Fellows and Tony Hawes. I will always remember them. When Tony was at the BBC he gave me work in *The Generation Game* and *Blankety Blank*. I keep in touch with Lois and we still phone one another. From *Hi-De-Hi* Paul Shane and Jeffrey Holland did a great impression of the Boys and from *EastEnders*, where many of the cast are great Laurel and Hardy fans, Dean Gaffney and Sean Williamson were also excellent impersonators. Of all the sets I have ever worked on, I think that the *EastEnders* one is the most realistic. During a break in filming, I can sit and eat my sandwiches in Albert Square and it is really like being back in the East End of my childhood."

Babes in Toyroom

In May, in *Celestial Toyroom*, the magazine of the *Doctor Who* appreciation society, Simon Baker observed how easy it is to twin *Doctor Who* story titles with those of Laurel and Hardy films, giving the following examples:

The Gunfighters – Way Out West
The Ice Warriors – Below Zero
The Highlanders – Bonnie Scotland
Fury from the Deep – Thicker Than Water
The Sea Devils – Sailors Beware
The Two Doctors – Me and My Pal

Nick Rich added a few more for *Bowler Dessert* readers:

Carnival of Monsters – The Chimp
The Three Doctors – Twice Two
Horror of Fang Rock – The Live Ghost
The Five Doctors – Our Relations
Remembrance of the Daleks – Tit for Tat
Destiny of the Daleks – The Fixer-Uppers
1,000,000 BC – Flying Elephants
Tomb of the Cybermen – Habeas Corpus
Pyramids of Mars – For Love or Mummy
The Invasion of Time – Babes in Toyland



Marc's travels

The above picture was taken by Marc de Coninck when on holiday on the Greek island of Kos. Explains Marc, "In the neighbourhood of my hotel was a racetrack for go-carts. On the billboard was a nice drawing of the Boys, indicating that even the Greeks know about the driving skills of Laurel and Hardy."



The second picture was taken last year in Malta. During a walk in the capital city of Valetta, Marc came across this road sign. He says, "I had no knowledge of Laurel and Hardy ever visiting Malta. So, very intrigued of course, I decided to follow the signs and I ended up in a small British pub. To my surprise, the pub had nothing to do with Oliver Hardy, but everything with Oliver Reed. As it happens, the film *Gladiator* was shot on Malta and Oliver Reed died during the shooting. This pub was his favourite bar and was the last place he visited before his death. The pub is situated in Archbishop's Street in Valetta."

Desert work

Laurel and Hardy lookalikes Gary Slade and Jim McClure were booked for four weeks' work in Bahrain in August. Before leaving they said, "If we don't get lost in the desert, we will try and sneak a camel for you."

More Glasgow recollections

In the local newspaper *Extra* (22.11.01.), a Glasgow Southsider appealed to readers to fill in details about the visit of Laurel and Hardy to Eastwood. The man, who asked not to be named, lives in the house where Stan and Ollie stayed when they returned to Scotland in 1947. They were escorted around the Southside by the then resident of the house in Atholl Drive in Giffnock, Alexander Gibson, who was a manager for MGM during the 1930s and 1940s. He played host to Laurel and Hardy at his home when they performed in Glasgow.

The current owner of the famous house said, "I have been in the area for about twenty-five years and elderly folk nearby passed on the information about it. They said that children used to hang around the gates waiting to see them." This was when the pair also appeared at Eastwood Park to open a gymkhana.

Former secretary of the gymkhana committee, Margot Barrie from Clarkston, contacted *Extra*. 82-year-old Miss Barrie said, "I was quite young at the time and was a secretary in one of the tents at the gymkhana. My brother and I also competed. The organisers always tried to get whoever was at the Empire to open the annual event.

"Laurel and Hardy got a tremendous reception and stood upon a platform. I remember Stan saying, 'What are we here for?' and Ollie replying, 'We are here to open the gymkhana event.'

"Then Stan said, 'How can I open it? I haven't got any openers!'"

According to Miss Barrie, they entered into the spirit of the event. "They said they were glad to be there and wore tartan Balmorals."

Audrey Couper, from Giffnock, was a pupil at Queen's Park Senior Secondary in 1947. She fondly remembers when Stan Laurel took part in a sports day. Mrs Couper, née Downes, was only fifteen years old and remembers, "Sweets were rationed at the time and Stan Laurel threw out sweets from a glass jar to the children. The sun was shining and there was a lot of cheering."

Regular news bulletins

Laurel and Hardy News is issued monthly, free of charge to anyone who wants it. Just send twelve second class stamps to cover postage to Willie McIntyre for the next twelve issues.

Readers in Europe can send a €5.00 note. USA readers can send \$6.00 in bills.



In Stan's footsteps

As the Saps at Sea Tent celebrated the Golden Anniversary of Laurel and Hardy's visit to Southend, Roger Robinson said in *The Perry Winkle* that he is still meeting people who have their own memories of Stan and Ollie's stay there in 1952. Dave Dearle and Roger made contact with Harry Day, an accomplished musician, whom Stan Laurel befriended during his stay at the Palace Hotel in 1952. Harry had invited Stan to visit him at home in Fairfax Drive to see his new baby and Stan had accepted. So, when Dave and Roger were invited to visit Harry in that very same house, they felt they were following in Stan's footsteps! Says Roger, "It was a great pleasure and delight for us to meet Harry and Rose, his wife, and, if my instincts are right, I bet Stan Laurel said exactly the same thing fifty years ago."



The original Perrywinklers

Roach book

Friends are always asking, "When are you going to finish your book on Hal Roach?" That invariably sets off the pain receptors in my brain. If they knew the depth of as yet un-filed documents, correspondence, advertising accessories, etc, that I have to deal with and try to manage, on the history of this studio, and if they could see the mountain of recorded interviews with people on that payroll lasting nearly a century – which have never even been transcribed – then they might better understand what is involved in this daunting task. I am writing essays now on all the Laurel and Hardy films for the website. Virtually every one of these will have to be expanded and updated later as I work my way through relevant interviews (some of which, again, go back to the late 1960s), as well as other written documentation relating to the production and distribution histories of these films. There is plenty yet to do, I am afraid.

Richard Bann on the Official Laurel and Hardy Website

Focus on Tauno



Tauno Sinkkonen of the Below Zero Tent of Finland was interviewed in the local newspaper of his hometown Turku. The article was titled *The Pal of Stan and Ollie*. In it Tauno said that he has two pals – one is Stan and the other one is Ollie. He told about the Sons of the Desert and that he is a keen collector. He has a lot of Laurel and Hardy material and one hundred and two of their films. Together with his son Ari, Tauno won in 1998 an international quiz, which was conducted on the Internet by the Sons of California. From this he has a fine diploma on his wall. Tauno said that the best thing in this hobby is that it is fun! He is mainly charmed by these fellows' childishness. "Even in their saddest moments there is something funny."

Tauno also said that collectors are regarded as more childish than other people, and that they live longer.

Besides collecting Laurel and Hardy items his other hobby is collecting old telephone directories. In his home he has two rooms and his garage full of Laurel and Hardy things and telephone books. His collection of telephone directories is larger than that of any telephone company in Finland.

In the article Tauno predicts, "This is no nonsense. Much cultural and historic research will be made around Laurel and Hardy in the future."

Grand Sheik Henry Grahn comments, "When I first visited Tauno in Turku, I didn't know about the telephone books. I was really astonished when I saw that every closet and bookshelf was full of them. He has a lot of fine Laurel and Hardy things too and I was able to copy from him many films that I didn't have. Of his two hobbies I fully understand one, but where the fun is in the other one, goes beyond my imagination."

Blockheads on the telly

In the *Blockheads Bulletin* we learn that Diane Dootson, in the past a prominent member of the Blockheads Tent, was on *Countdown* (C4, 11 & 12.10.01.). Other members of the tent who have been on television game shows are Tony Reynolds (on *Telly Addicts*) and Dennis Anderson (on *Fifteen to One*).

Did you see?

◇ *Morecambe and Wise* (BBC1, 02.10.01.) had a character called Miss Flanagan who was called Miss Flanagan and Allen all through the sketch, except once, when she was called Miss Laurel and Hardy.

On *Victoria Wood's Sketch Show Story* (BBC1, 25.10.01.) the Boys were mentioned, during the Morecambe and Wise section, as the only other team who could share a bed so innocently.

The Unforgettable Eric Morecambe (ITV1, 02.11.01.) made several references to Laurel and Hardy in a short period.

The *Radio Times* review of *That's Your Funeral* (BBC1, 09.11.01.) said, "The plot was dead on its feet when Laurel and Hardy used it in 1942's *A-Haunting We Will Go*."

During *Never Mind the Buzzcocks* (BBC2, 25.02.02.) the *Next Lines* round featured *Trail of the Lonesome Pine*, which led into some Germanic impressions of Laurel and Hardy!

On the regional news programme *Northwest Tonight* (BBC1, 07.03.02.) there was a piece about the Laurel and Hardy statue, including interviews with the maker and the people of Ulverston. Very nice!

On *Wipeout* (BBC1, 12.03.02.) was a question on films related to college. Included was *A Chump at Oxford*. The following programme on BBC1 was *Call My Bluff*, during which Sandi Toksvig referred to herself and Alan Coren as Laurel and Hardy.

The play *Laurel and Hardy*, presented at the Coliseum theatre in Oldham during most of March, was featured in the *What's On* guide on *Northwest Tonight* (BBC1, 14.03.02.).

Stephen Barlow

◇ *Weakest Link* (BBC2, 12.10.01.) asked, "Which comedy duo starred in the 1940 film *Saps at Sea*?" The contestant got it wrong.

Nick Rich

◇ The *Blue Peter* night (BBC2, 17.11.01.) went back through all the old presenters. As they profiled John Noakes and Peter Purvis, John Noakes remarked that, at the time, they were like a Laurel and Hardy act!

Liam Muldowney

David Wyatt observes, "I don't think they were quite another Laurel and Hardy – more another Leslie Crowther and Peter Glaze."

◇ *Way Out West* made it to position 92 on *The 100 Greatest Films* (C4, 24.11.01.), voted in the UK by the public and a panel of film makers and critics.

On *The Greatest TV Cops of all Time* (C5, 15.12.01.), Frank Windsor said that the public thought of him and Stratford Johns as the Laurel and Hardy of *Z Cars*.

David Wright



Out of hiding were The Flying Deuces

◇ I was happy to see *The Flying Deuces* on BBC2 (27.12.01.), which I don't recall the BBC having shown before, as far as my interest in Laurel and Hardy goes back (only to the late eighties, I am afraid). My copy came via the ITV screening, which had four minutes cut out – all the man-eating shark segments were cut, which looked odd as there was that chewed-up boat oar on the riverbank. Good too was *Blotto* (BBC2, 29.12.01.) with an extra seven minutes over the eighteen minutes version I had.

Robert Cheadle

Ed: Also on BBC2 were *Below Zero* (22.12.01.), *Our Wife* (23.12.01.) and *A Chump at Oxford* (23.01.02.).

◇ Two 1969 episodes of *Dad's Army* which had been considered lost were found in a garden shed. They were lovingly restored and shown on BBC2 (28.12.01.), rekindling hope that missing Laurel and Hardy films may one day be found. Was it portentous that, in one of the restored *Dad's Army* episodes, Pike said that he saw something in a Laurel and Hardy film?

Reporting Scotland (BBC1, 07.01.02.) had an item on the renovation proposals for the Britannia Panopticon Music Hall in Glasgow, with some fine shots of the inside of the theatre. Stan Laurel was mentioned.

In *Last of the Summer Wine* (BBC1, 20.01.02.) Ronnie Hazlehurst managed to slip in a few notes from *Ku-Ku*.

During *Another Audience with Ken Dodd* (ITV1, 08.02.02.) Ken likened himself and his Diddy Man dummy to Laurel and Hardy.

On *Richard and Judy* (C4, 15.02.02.) John Voight was talking live to Joe Pasquale and said Joe was like Stan Laurel.

In the modern police drama *NCS Manhunt* (BBC1, 05.03.02.) an antagonist was being interrogated by two police officers and likened them to Laurel and Hardy by whistling *Ku-Ku*.

Introducing an item on *Channel 4 News* (13.03.02.), Jon Snow referred to it as "another fine mess"!

In *The Curious Case of Inspector Clouseau* (C4, 26.06.02.) Peter Sellers said he and Blake Edwards were like Laurel and Hardy.

Willie McIntyre

Cleaning work?



Radio Times listing for BBC1 (13.03.02.)

◇ I watched the 1966 film *Follow Me Boys* (BBC2, 03.06.02.) with Fred MacMurray. I know it's sad, but I'm a sucker for those films. What a surprise when a gang of scouts serenaded Fred and his wife with *Let Me Call You Sweetheart* while standing under their bedroom window. Now where have I heard that before?

In a recent episode of *Coronation Street* (ITV1), after the fight of the Roundheads and Cavaliers, a children's kazoo band marched onto the ground – playing *Ku-Ku*.

During an episode of *Dad's Army* (BBC1), Jones and Walker were heard singing *I Dreamt That I Dwelt in Marble Halls*.

Bob Hickson

◇ On 5th June, on the satellite channel Live TV, there was a programme called *Memories of Laurel and Hardy*. It was made in 1982 and contained *This is Your Life*, *Hollywood Party*, *Hollywood Revue of 1929*, *Pick a Star*, Stan with his Oscar, newsreels of visits to Tyneside and Edinburgh and the last cine film made of Stan and Ollie with Ollie looking much thinner and barely recognisable. The picture quality overall, I thought, was very good.

Mark Harris



Laurel and Hardy Charity Fund

Nancy Wardell writes, "A big thank you to all the tents who have supported me and raised money for worthwhile causes. We have done really well as we have recently donated to Cystic Fibrosis (£500 second donation – in support of Matthew Light, a young Son who suffers from this illness), National Asthma Campaign (£500), Stephen Kirby Skin Bank (£250), Stroke Association (£250), Mencap (£250), Gurkhas Welfare Trust (£250) and Breast Cancer Care (£100). I have received kind letters and telephone calls saying what a nice way to remember Laurel and Hardy. I hope you are all as proud of this as I am. Thank you and God Bless!"

Your support is much appreciated and this contribution will be used to fund vital research and support programmes for Cystic Fibrosis patients.

Sue Ryan

Thank you, Sons of the Desert, for raising £500.

National Asthma Campaign

Where possible, we try to use each donation to purchase a specific piece of equipment. Your money will be put towards the purchase of new HEPA filters, which are a part of our (very sophisticated) air conditioning system.

Sam Whyatt, Stephen Kirby Skin Bank

Your kind gift will help us to continue to provide Community Services to stroke patients, their families and carers. We depend overwhelmingly on voluntary donations to sustain our work and so greatly appreciate your generosity.

Steve Holdsworth, Stroke Association

Thank you, Sons of the Desert and the shades of Stan and Ollie, for the most generous donation to Mencap. We are delighted, especially with the generosity of the gift, but – above all – for the pleasure which Stan and Ollie still give to us all, particularly members of Mencap.

Brian Rix

The Gurkha Welfare Trust is now looking after over 11,400 Gurkha ex-servicemen and widows in Nepal. The Sons of the Desert money will enable us to provide a welfare pension for a needy Gurka ex-serviceman for at least the next twelve months.

James Tomsett

◇ The total so far donated comes to £17,262 and there is nearly £1,000 cash in hand.

Laurel and Hardy in Dublin

by Liam Muldowney

On Sunday, 25th May, 1952, Stan Laurel and Oliver Hardy took the overnight ferry from Liverpool to Dublin. The next morning, a reporter from the *Irish Daily Mail* noted that they both had missed breakfast and didn't appear until noon. The venue was the Gresham, a large five star hotel on Europe's widest street, O'Connell Street. This street had witnessed many events in Ireland's history, and now here was another, the first visit of Laurel and Hardy to Ireland. The newspaper reported:

Stan Laurel was first on the scene, looking every inch like that silly little man who was guaranteed to get his partner into every conceivable mess. Then came Oliver Hardy, looking even larger in life than he does on the screen, and still sporting his tiny moustache.

The party was quite tired, as they were exactly halfway through an eight-month tour of Britain and Ireland. It therefore must have come as a blessing that the opening night's performance had to be cancelled due to the fact that the scenery didn't make it over in time.

Opening night began on Tuesday, 27th May and the *Dublin Times* reported:

What Laurel and Hardy have to say to each other doesn't matter. They merely have to appear on stage and the house rocks, shrieks and hoots with laughter. Much of the laughter came from children, but their parents were spellbound too.



The *Irish Press* of Wednesday, 28th May noted: Mr O'Laurel and Mr O'Hardy were the latest distinguished visitors to Dublin. In private life they don't make you laugh ha-ha, but they do make you smile. "I have always believed," Oliver Hardy said to me yesterday, "I know more about pictures than Stan does, because I am bigger. If I listened to him I wouldn't fall over as many cliffs or things like that, but I'm sure I know more about pictures."

Reporter Mac Alla was in their hotel room when the phone rang. It was somebody saying that he had been told to contact Laurel and Hardy and he got onto Stan. The context wasn't clear, but they were to get in touch with somebody. The somebody couldn't get in touch with them, because the somebody hadn't turned up. Chaos all around. "You should have hung up before he did," said Oliver sitting majestically in his chair. "I didn't know he hung up," said Stan. "I wasn't listening."

Stan's hobby is deep-sea fishing and he boasted about the tuna he caught weighing 258 pounds, which he landed in forty-four minutes. Oliver had won before the war 172 cups for golf. He played off a seven handicap. Bob Hope, Bing Crosby and John McCormack were among his frequent opponents. "I liked John best, he couldn't go too fast" said Oliver. "He played a nice slow game. So did I." Oliver has now taken up gardening, starting with a three-acre garden.

Mac Alla then asked them if they were going to meet anybody important while they were in Dublin. "Everybody is important to us" was the joint answer. Mrs Hardy went on to describe her husband as a great handyman around the house; just give him a paintbrush and he is happy.

Mac Alla finished his article by saying, "Give him a paintbrush anytime and the audience is happy."

Also in the room was an *Irish Independent* reporter and he asked Ollie if Laurel and Hardy were to make any more pictures. "Only if we can make them as we want them," was his reply. The reporter went on to tell Stan about the perch in

The photographs have not been published before, apart from on their original outings in the press in May 1952, so we decided to share them with readers in spite of the images' shortcomings.



Stan, Ida and Babe with Illsley and McCabe, who promoted their Dublin show

Poulaphouca Lake in Co Wicklow and apparently there was a twinkle in Mr Laurel's eye.

Stan and Ollie stayed two weeks in Dublin and worked very hard. They performed twice nightly, plus matinees. An *Evening Herald* reporter noted:

Personally I found them much more entertaining in person than in celluloid. In two short scenes they managed to convey their genius for the trade that has kept them in the forefront for so long.

Their visit to Dublin also coincided with the British and Irish release of *Atoll K*, known as *Robinson Crusoe*land. This was playing nightly in cinemas. Dublin, it seemed, was not only the Irish capital but also the Laurel and Hardy capital for those two weeks.

Laurel and Hardy took the train to Belfast in time to open on 9th June.

While in Belfast, Stan was taken ill and was laid up for a couple of weeks in the Musgrave Clinic. Oliver and Lucille Hardy returned to Dublin for a short holiday while Stan recovered. Whilst in Dublin, Ollie was thrilled to hear that his friend of many years G H Elliot, the great music hall star (known as the Chocolate Coloured Coon), was playing in the Olympia Theatre where the Boys had just performed. Mr Elliot was amazed and pleased to see Oliver and Lucille Hardy in the audience one night. After a relaxing holiday the Hardys returned to Belfast, where Stan had recovered and they continued with the tour.



On 9th September, 1953, Stan and Ollie arrived back on Irish soil.

We all know of that most famous welcome that they received in Cobh, Co Cork. The party took the train to Dublin and they disembarked at Amiens Street station and then they continued on to Dun Laoghaire, where they were staying in the Royal Marine Hotel. This was an old hotel with amazing sea views. There have been one or two alterations but to this day it is still Dun Laoghaire's premier hotel. A young hotel porter,

ILLSLEY-McCABE
 present, by arrangement with Bernard
 Delfont,
STAN LAUREL and OLIVER HARDY
 — IN —
 " A SPOT OF TROUBLE "
 A Comedy Sketch in Two Scenes.
 LOCALE : *A Small Town in the U.S. A.*
 Scene 1. Waiting Room at the Railway
 Station.
 Scene 2. The Chief of Police's Living-room.
 CAST :
 Officer (A Small town cop with a mind
 smaller than the town) **Leslie Spurling**
 Chief of Police **Kenneth Henry**
 Two Gentlemen En Route **STAN LAUREL**
 and **OLIVER HARDY**

NATIONAL ANTHEM.

STAGE MANAGER	For the Olympia Theatre Limited	HERBERT CARROLL ROBERT BOLTON FRED BEASLEY
MUSICAL DIRECTOR		
CHIEF ELECTRICIAN		

This Theatre is Disinfected throughout with
 Jeyes' Fluid

*From the programme for the Olympia Theatre,
 Dublin, for two weeks commencing 27th May, 1952*



Tony Drummond, remembers the amazing sight of Laurel and Hardy walking through the foyer and “two gentlemen” is how he describes them. Tony is still working there (although nearing retirement) and is now the Head Hall Porter.

The Irish Times wrote on 10th September:

US comedians will write show in Dublin.

The two comedians arrived in Dublin virtually unnoticed. On the previous night at the Royal Marine Hotel, a reporter found Stan Laurel and his wife at dinner. “Ollie is resting,” said Stan, “We had a terrific heatwave in New York before we left and it was just too much for him.”

The reporter went on to say Stan and Oliver would rest until Monday morning, when they would be joined by a scriptwriter from London. For the following fortnight they would think up scripts for their show. “We are thinking of calling it *Birds of a Feather* but we may change that title,” said Stan.

Their show will go on a 12-month tour of British theatres. “We will be appearing in Belfast but I do not know about Dublin yet,” Stan added. The cast which will take part in the show will arrive in Dublin in a fortnight’s time and will rehearse in the Olympia Theatre, where the two comedians appeared last year during their first visit to Ireland. The scenery for the show is being made in Belfast and will be brought to Dublin for the rehearsals. Laurel and Hardy would have rehearsed in England but for some labour restrictions, which prevent them from going there until October. “From what I have seen of Dun Laoghaire,” said Stan Laurel, “It seems to be a beautiful spot.”

The reporter noted that he had some trouble with the pronunciation. The labour restrictions which the reporter spoke of were the fact that Oliver Hardy could not get a working visa for the UK until October – though Southern Ireland was all right.

Whilst staying in Dublin, Oliver Hardy took the opportunity of visiting one of Ireland’s best tailors, Louis Copeland. He had a tweed suit made to his large specifications and whilst the fittings were taking place he and Stan were asked if their names could be used as part of an advertisement for the tailor. They agreed, but instead of taking a fee they agreed to a cheque being donated to a well known Dublin charity. A couple of days later they presented the cheque, in person, to Little Willie of the Little Willie Polio Fund. Louis Copeland is still Dublin’s top Master Tailor and his son now runs the business.

While all the rehearsals were taking place in the Olympia Theatre, a young barmaid who worked there got to see a lot of Laurel and Hardy. She remembers a lot of acts and performers, but fondly reminisces about Stan and Ollie and just how much of an impression they made on her. Today if you go into Maureen’s Bar in the Olympia Theatre you will still find her there and she is famous for being Dublin’s longest serving barmaid. Ask her about Stan and Ollie – she loves to talk.

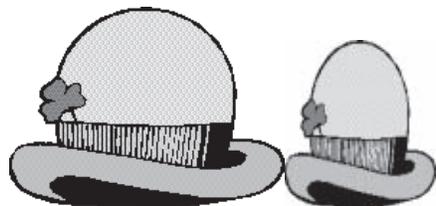
Just before Laurel and Hardy sailed to England, they performed *Birds of a Feather* for the first time in front of an audience. On Sunday, 11th October, the Boys’ generous nature saw them performing in a charity show in the same Olympia Theatre.

The Evening Herald said:

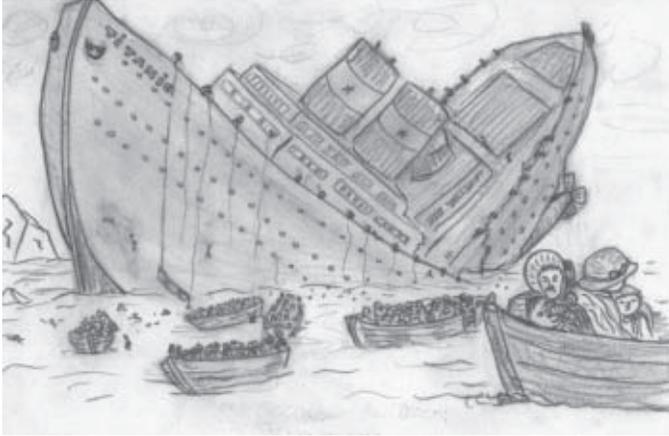
It [*Birds of a Feather*] provides straight-forward knock-about fun and the two comedians worked with their usual earnestness and to the great delight of the audience.

Also part of the showcase were famous Irish acts Paddie Crosbie, Eddie Lambert, Freddie Doyle and the Capitol Theatre Dancers, amongst others.

On Tuesday, 13th October, they sailed across the sea to England and away from Dublin for the last time.



Les rescapées du Titanic



Jean Poulain shares with us his portrayal of the Titanic survivors (ship-hiking?)

Silents in Nottingham

At the Broadway cinema in Nottingham, on 6th April, was a presentation on the influence of Dan Leno and Fred Karno on the film comedy of Stan Laurel. “The event wasn’t very well attended although the programme looked excellent,” says Grahame Morris. “Apart from five Sons I would say there were about thirty delegates. The presentation began with Frank Scheide speaking about the life of Dan Leno and his influence on Stan. Due to the event running late, the next part, about Fred Karno, was heavily condensed, much to my disappointment. There were some interesting stills and film clips, including the one of Little Tich, and a recently restored clip of Dan Leno and his wife opening some champagne. There was also an attempt to explain pantomime. David Wyatt then introduced *The Bailiffs* (a remake of a Fred Kitchen sketch) with Flanagan and Allen, followed by *Bacon Grabbers*, with an excellent piano accompaniment by Stephen Horne.”

Dave Scothern says, “It was quite amazing how Stan resembled Dan Leno, with his raised eyebrow expression. I was also at the showing of four Laurel and Hardy shorts, presented by David Wyatt on 23rd March – with not a seat to spare, I might add.”

Duck Soup censored

Blotto Online had some interesting news. . . .

A censored scene from *Duck Soup* has been discovered in the Library of Congress in Washington. It is part of a reel called “Unidentified Nichol #22: Silent Comedy Censorship Clips”. Stan is dressed as Agnes. He is called by Lady Tarbotham (Madeline Hurlock), who is in the bathroom. He peers through the keyhole and sees her naked shoulders. There follows a title card: “My Gawd! She’s raw!”

In a second censored shot Stan enters the boudoir only to faint when he sees the lady in her lingerie.

Although these scenes are missing from video releases (which are from censored prints originating in Belgium), they have reportedly been included in some released film versions.

Bowler gift

For the Men o’ War Tent’s fifteenth anniversary meeting, Roger Robinson and the Saps at Sea Tent gifted a miniature hatbox in the shape of Stan and Ollie, opening to reveal a tiny bowler. The kind thought was much appreciated by Paul Harding and his tent.

Don’t mention the Deuces!

I knew that 28th June, 1940 was a bad day. Unaware that the Channel Islands had been demilitarised, low flying German bombers attacked the harbour at St Peter Port, Guernsey, causing damage and civilian casualties. What I did not know until I came across the issue of *Kinematograph Weekly* (21.06.45.) was that the Regal cinema in the town was that day showing *The Flying Deuces*. The irony of the connection struck me forcefully.

Bob Spiller

Stamps from Angola

Ted Pasley shares with us some Angolan postage stamps.



The Laurel and Hardy home cinema

Reviews by Willie McIntyre

DVD reviews

All the DVDs reviewed are region 2 (suitable for playing in Europe, including the UK) or region-free (likewise suitable).

Classic Comedy Shorts vol 1. b/w. Price varies – see below. Distributed by Stonevision Entertainment.

There are no actual “Laurel and Hardy” films in this selection, just shorts from their “solo” early years. . . .

The Home Wrecker [aka *Smithy*] (1924)

15 minutes

Set on a building site, this stars Stan Laurel and James Finlayson.

The Four-Wheeled Terror [aka *Kid Speed*] (1924)

18 minutes

Larry Semon stars with Oliver Hardy as motor car racers.

Roughest Africa (1923) 30 minutes

Finlayson and Laurel film wildlife on safari.

Crazy to Act (1927) 12 minutes

Rich man Hardy pursues a young female film star.

The Paperhanger's Helper [aka *Stick Around*]

(1925) 23 minutes

Hardy and Bobby Ray try to decorate a sanitarium.

The Saw Mill (1922) 21 minutes

This stars Larry Semon and, contrary to the sleeve notes, has Hardy as a foreman at a logging camp.

The piano and xylophone accompaniment is poorly matched to the visuals, with no sound effects. And the titles and intertitles are badly framed so that the left of the wording is often obscured.

This selection, without *The Saw Mill*, is also available on a VHS (PAL) video cassette, reviewed in *Bowler Dessert 56*.

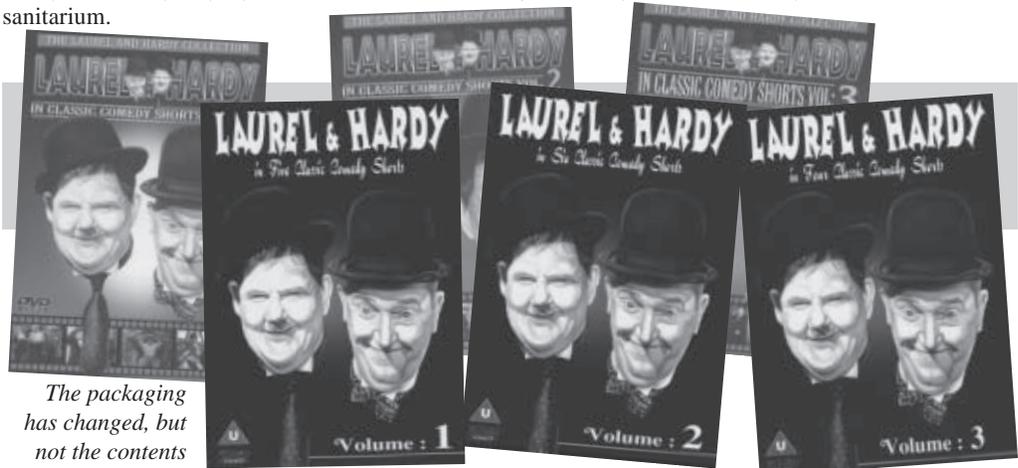
Classic Comedy Shorts vol 2. b/w. Price varies – see below. Distributed by Stonevision Entertainment.



The Lucky Dog

The Lucky Dog (1921) 17 minutes

This is the only film on this volume which contains both Laurel and Hardy. Technically it's a Stan Laurel comedy in which Oliver Hardy happens to appear. The supporting cast is headed by a dog which attaches itself to Stan. Along the way Laurel meets robber Hardy, in their first-ever encounter on screen. He also meets a girl with a dog and the girl takes him home, where her jealous boyfriend uses Hardy to menace Stan.



The packaging has changed, but not the contents

Oranges and Lemons (1923) 17 minutes
Laurel is part of a team of fruit packers. There is no story – just a succession of gags, some of which are clever, but others are a trifle tedious.

Yes, Yes, Nanette (1925) 9 minutes
Much of the action centres around James Finlayson and his wig. He comes home with his new bride to meet his in-laws. We are seven minutes into the film before Hardy (a former sweetheart) appears. Some titles are particularly badly exposed and are impossible to read. Directed by Stan Laurel, this film is strangely fascinating.

West of Hot Dog (1924) 30 minutes
In this western Stan travels to attend the reading of his late uncle's will, in which he is a beneficiary. But if he dies there are two other, villainous, beneficiaries. Stan is a resilient wimp in this tale of "cowboys and idiots".

Enough to Do [aka *Wandering Papas*] (1925) 9 minutes
Clyde Cook goes fishing and rabbit hunting to catch lunch for a bunch of ruffians. Hardy is in the film for only a few seconds. There are some fine gags and a skunk provides much of the comedy.

Hop to It, Bell Hop (1925) 20 minutes
The original title was simply *Hop to It!* Bobby Ray and Oliver Hardy are hotel porters, in a film which has them cast very similarly to the later Laurel and Hardy characters. Slapstick fun is the keynote, with props such as spilled ink. The plot, if one can call it that, concerns stealing a bag containing a large sum of money.

Classic Comedy Shorts vol 3. b/w. Price varies – see below. Distributed by Stonevision Entertainment.

This selection of silent "solo" shorts has a fuller and more carefully matched musical accompaniment than in the other two volumes. Again, however, the subtitles are often partly out of frame.

Along Came Auntie (1926) 22 minutes
Bitterly opposed to divorce, Auntie has stipulated that Vivien Oakland will receive \$100,000, providing that she is still married to her first husband (Oliver Hardy) from whom she is actually divorced. With Vivien, Auntie and

"Just how good a friend is that
catwalloper downstairs?"

"Oh, the Kid's all right – Just a few loose shingles –"

Along Came Auntie (1926)

◇ The *Classic Comedy Shorts* are in stores, priced £18.99. *March of the Wooden Soldiers* (page 53) is similarly priced. Willie McIntyre has these DVDs in stock at only £10.00 each, including VAT and p&p.

husbands past and present under one roof, it is a difficult deception to pretend that Hardy is still her spouse. Glenn Tryon, the second husband, is billed as the main star.

On the Front Page (1926) 23 minutes
So that a newspaper can have a juicy story, Countess Polasky (Lillian Rich) is set up for a compromising encounter – with butler Stan Laurel. Stan has characteristics very similar to his later familiar "team" roles. Amazingly sharp and with high definition, this is the best print in the series, but the entertainment value is only average.

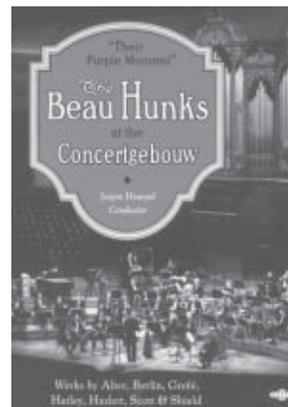
Bromo and Juliet (1926) 22 minutes
This Charley Chase two-reeler is great if you like Charley as much as I do. The action centres around a Shakespearian stage presentation and some bootleg whisky. Hardy plays a cab driver in a minor role.

This is Your Life (1954) 25 minutes
Broadcast live by NBC, this film is both a disappointment for missed opportunities and a valuable snapshot of the Boys towards the end of their careers. The show is already available to collectors in many formats and was even on satellite television recently. The Hazel Bishop adverts have been removed in a heavy-handed manner.

◇ ◇ ◇ ◇ ◇

The Beau Hunks at the Concertgebouw (recorded in February, 2000, released in 2001). Colour and b/w. Price and availability: see below. 91 minutes. Distributed by Basta Audio Visuals.

There is no question that the Beau Hunks Orchestra has become an icon for reproducing the music from the Laurel and Hardy films. Their 2000 concert was expertly recorded in sound and vision on this powerful DVD. Less than half of the concert is actually of Laurel and Hardy music, the balance



being of similar, contemporary compositions, but the effect is a cohesive delight.

A highlight is the orchestra accompanying the movie *Their Purple Moment*. You might think (as I did) that this is difficult to convey on screen, but you will be pleasantly surprised!

There are bonuses of biographies of the composers, samples from the orchestra's CDs and other attractions.

This is a region-free PAL DVD. It is also available on VHS video, in both NTSC and PAL versions. For further details see the Basta website <http://www.BastaMusic.com>.

Bram Reijnhoudt, Postbus 870, 200 AW Hilversum, Netherlands has copies of the DVD for sale for €23 for euro countries, p&p included, and £16 for UK readers, p&p included.



VVL have no plans for new DVD releases in the UK until next year, but Kinowelt has released sixteen Laurel and Hardy DVDs in Germany. Priced around €24.99 each, they are available on the Internet from amazon.de and in stores throughout Germany. Three of the best are reviewed here. All the sound films are presented in dubbed German and in English language versions, with optional subtitles in German. They are very good prints, particularly *Any Old Port* and *Towed in a Hole*, which are very sharp.

Another interesting release has *Their Purple Moment*, *County Hospital* and *One Good Turn*.

And on a further DVD are *Beau Hunks*, *Me and My Pal* and *Twice Two* as the main titles, with, as bonuses, the silent *Sugar Daddies* and the 1926 Ollie silent *Crazy Like a Fox* with Charley Chase.

Even though KirchGruppe is in trouble (see page 10), Kinowelt DVD releases continue, the latest being *Pardon Us*, which, in addition to the familiar version, includes the "extended" version,

available on video for some years now. Also included is the Spanish phonetic version and a German phonetic trailer for the film.

Extras on the DVDs include photo galleries, production notes and potted biographies of Laurel and Hardy, in the German language. The menus are also in German, but are easily understood, even if you don't speak German.

Men o' War (1929) / *Any Old Port* (1932) / *Towed in a Hole* (1932) / *Why Girls Love Sailors* (1927). b/w.

Three sound shorts with a "bonus" silent short, *Why Girls Love Sailors*, make up this worthy "nautical" collection.

Towed in a Hole has sound slightly out of sync. Curiously, dirt and hairs are visible along the bottom of the picture for the first couple of minutes, disappearing on the first "wipe". The visuals are identical to those on the VVL DVD reviewed in your last *Bowler Dessert*.

Why Girls Love Sailors is not as good technically, only fair, but we must appreciate that this was once a "lost" film, rediscovered in 1986, and having it now on DVD, with a backing by the Beau Hunks Orchestra, is a most welcome renovation.

A Chump at Oxford (1940) / *From Soup to Nuts* (1928). b/w.

A Chump at Oxford is the full (European) version of the feature and is splendid. It even has a "trailer" of highlights.

Included is the silent *From Soup to Nuts*, of which the first two reels of *Chump* were a reworking. This isn't quite sharp and is a bit jumpy at times, but the sound effects and background music are good.

In keeping with the "education" theme, we have the bonus classroom scene from *Pardon Us*.



Block-Heads (1938) / **Unaccustomed As We Are** (1929).

Block-Heads is once again a first-class print of one of Stan and Ollie's best features, well constructed and pure Laurel and Hardy.

Unaccustomed As We Are (1929) is included, for interesting comparison with its reworking in *Block-Heads*, but the dialogue on this, the team's first sound short, is noisy and far from clear.



The All New Adventures of Laurel and Hardy: For Love or Mummy (1998). Colour. 84 minutes. Distributed by Monarch Home Video. Price: \$29.99 from amazon.com.

Bronson Pinchot and Gailard Sartain play the nephews of Stan and Ollie in a yarn best suited to children's matinées. It's difficult to envisage what sort of movie our familiar Laurel and Hardy would be making if they were time-warped into the movie world of today, but it's likely that they would be rather different from the characters of their 1920 and 1930 films we all love. So Pinchot and Sartain can be excused for diverting a little from familiar formulae. Indeed there is no reason at all why they should be identical clones of the familiar Stan and Ollie.

There is a mummy on the rampage and a Hardy love plot. That's about the extent of the story, but don't be discouraged. There are a few genuinely amusing sequences.

"Kids will love this movie!" proclaim the cover notes and as such the film should be categorised. Laurel and Hardy aficionados should approach it only with caution and an open (or vacant!) mind. I did and I enjoyed the experience. I smiled at the statement that Ollie was striving for the office of Grand Pooh-Bah* of the Fraternal Order of the Nile and savoured the meeting of the fraternal society, which was obviously a parody of the Sons of the Desert, which society is itself a parody!

The DVD is available in a region-free format. The catalogue number is MHV 7548. The film is also available on VHS video. Visit the website <http://www.monarchvideo.com>.

* The *Collins Dictionary* defines "Poo-Bah" as "a pompous, self-important official holding several offices at once and fulfilling none of them." The term originates from *The Mikado*.



March of the Wooden Soldiers (1934). b/w. 77 minutes. Distributed by Eureka Video. Price varies – see p51.

This version of the feature is the same as that reviewed in your last *Bowler Dessert* except that



that one was coloured and this one isn't! Whilst the master material is identical, this version has more noise (crackles, hisses etc), which has been digitally removed from the coloured edition. The fact that this version has a playing time shorter than the other version

by thirty-five seconds is due to the MGM logo being included on the coloured version, along with some video titling. So enjoy all seventy-seven minutes. The big question is, "Why do they have a still from *The Bohemian Girl* on the cover of this DVD?"

Hustling for Health (1919) is a fifteen-minute "bonus" item, with Stan but without Ollie. Frank Terry by chance meets his friend Stan and invites him to his home. Stan upsets Frank's wife and neighbours – an event which was to recur in *Unaccustomed As We Are* and *Block-Heads*. The train station is also familiar, to be seen in *Berth Marks*. This is a good, clear print in which blemishes are few. The musical accompaniment is OK, but the story is nothing special.

USA videos



Nostalgia Family Video in the USA has released a selection of ten video tapes, each with four short sound films. Feature films are available on additional tapes. Telephone 1-800-784-3362.

Classic cartoon on super 8

Classic Home Cinema in Cleethropes has released on super 8 *Hollywood Picnic* (1935), a one-reel coloured cartoon in which film stars go for a picnic. Laurel and Hardy are among the celebrities. There is a great sequence with the Boys on a seesaw, blowing a feather from head to head. Prints cost £25.99 plus 85p p&p. Telephone 01472 603089.

Julie Bishop

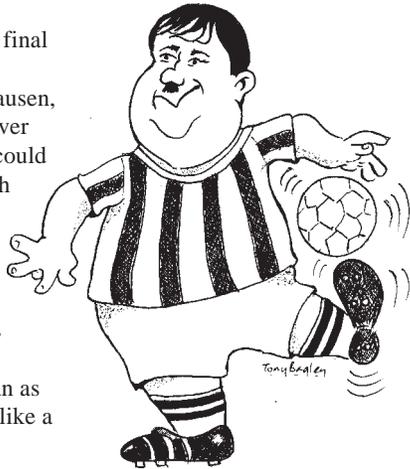
Jonathan Hayward forwarded an obituary from *The Stage* on the death of occasional Laurel and Hardy co-star Julie Bishop, sometimes billed as Jacqueline Wells (*Any Old Port* and *The Bohemian Girl*). She died last year on her eighty-seventh birthday. . . .

Julie Bishop was an American leading lady of mostly routine films who for some years was known as the Queen of the Bs. Born Jacqueline Brown on August 30, 1914, she debuted on screen at the age of nine in *Children of Jazz*. A busy child actress during the silent era, she made a host of films under the name of Jacqueline Wells. She took four years off from films in her teens, during which she attended dancing lessons under Theodore Kosloff. She returned to the screen in the thirties, appearing in a number of Hal Roach pictures and then began to play leads in features and serials. In 1941 she switched studios and changed her name to Julie Bishop.

Champion

At the Champions League final this summer between Real Madrid and Bayer Leverkusen, one of the players was Oliver Neuville. "It couldn't be, could it?" asks Tony Bagley, with this cartoon. "Had it been *our* Oliver he would have put fear into any opposition."

Stephen Barlow tells us that the Irish player Steve Staunton is nicknamed Stan as the players think he looks like a certain Mr Laurel!



True buffoon

Every now and then there comes to the screen a young man who "carries on" idiotically, who appears – casually observed – a mere clowning fool, but who, more thoughtfully considered, shows himself that rarest of artists, a true buffoon, gifted with the power of bringing laughter which is strangely close to tears. Such a man is Charlie Chaplin; and such a man Stan Laurel is by way of becoming fast.

Motion Picture News on the release of *Mud and Sand* (1922)

Anagram contest result

In your last *Bowler Dessert* we gave ten anagrams of Laurel and Hardy film titles. Readers were invited to unscramble the letters and list the titles, then use all the scrambled words to form a sentence or a paragraph. John Hardy of Canvey Island, Mark Toha of Ealing and Antony Waite of Newcastle-under-Lyme have received all available back issues of *Bowler Dessert* for their entries.

The film titles were *Wrong Again*, *Bonnie Scotland*, *Helpmates*, *Busy Bodies*, *That's My Wife*, *Any Old Port*, *Pack Up Your Troubles*, *Me and My Pal*, *Two Tars* and *Towed in a Hole*.

Antony's paragraph is the overall winner:

To play a gag on army madmen, the Boys had the use of some oil, heated at a smithy, to make some fake lost coins. This bid by the pals, upon the bulky platoon, was to uproot a few of the worst thieves in the regiment and was a theme of their own creation – in fact it was better than their mother's invention! To spruce up the coins, which were worn in a money belt, Stan and Ollie used highly dangerous, and banned, dry chemicals.

Relations

The final scenes are a reversion to the custard pie era. Birthday cakes are banged over heads, and James Finlayson and Alan Hale romp all over the place with their faces streaming with chocolate cream and icing.* And when it comes to Laurel and Hardy getting their feet stuck in bowls of cement and spinning about like top-heavy pendulums, the fun reaches a climax. By that time we had no idea whether they were the respectable brothers or the dissolute sailors. Not that it mattered in the least, for it is all good, straightforward, slapstick fun, requiring no analysis.

George Tallow in a press item on seeing Our Relations in 1936

* Ed: Such scenes with Fin and Groagan are not seen in the film which (Randy Skretvedt reports) was recut after the preview.

Driver missing

Tony and Esme Baker were scheduled to attend the Southend convention. Tony was the driver of the train which carried Laurel and Hardy in 1947 on the Romney, Hythe and Dymchurch Railway. However, Tony developed shingles and had to cancel his visit, much to his dismay.

CD centre



Reviews by Willie McIntyre

Golfer's Blues by Charley Chase. 78 min 3 sec (2002). Price £12.00.

The films of Laurel and Hardy's stable companion Charley Chase have a profusion of song and dance routines, sadly now rarely screened or heard – a very unfairly forgotten talent of the silver screen. A collector and fan has put Charley's musical numbers onto one disc. Over fifty tracks convey Charley's extreme talent with many self-penned songs. He even sings in four different languages and plays many instruments.

There are a lot of crackles and hisses, with some abrupt cuts, and all the track numbers don't coincide with the cover notes. Otherwise it's a gem! The CD would normally sell for £15.00 but, as an ardent devotee of *Bowler Dessert*, Gavin Thomson has made it available to readers for £12.00. Order from Gavin at 33 Heathery Knowe, Glasgow, G75 0EZ or by e-mailing lovely_unicorns@yahoo.com.



Charley and the Ranch Boys in High Cs (1930)

Songs of the Desert by the Avalon Boys. 34 min 38 sec. Avalon 002 (2002). Price £12.00.



Lifelong Laurel and Hardy fans, the British trio the Avalon Boys took its name from the vocal group who appeared in *Way Out West*. The audience reaction to live performances of songs like *Honolulu Baby* and *Dixie* persuaded them that a new generation might enjoy these great classics so *Songs of the Desert* was recorded in March this year and released in May.

This interpretation of music from Laurel and Hardy films is

one of the most exciting ventures of the year. There are fifteen tracks. Songs like *Trail of the Lonesome Pine* and *Shine on Harvest Moon* are there, of course, and there are two instrumental tracks. *Fresh Fish* and *By the Light of the Silvery Moon* aren't directly from films and *I'm Looking at You* is a new composition with the flavour of the 1930s. *In the Good Old Summertime* is my favourite track.

Don't expect the Avalon Boys to sound like the inspirational group of the 1930s. They don't! Their renderings are very different. They are without question skilled musicians and the CD is a joy – a refreshing, easy-going album you will want to play again and again.

◇ Willie McIntyre has copies for sale at £12.00 each plus £1.00 p&p.



The Laurel & Hardy Collection 56 min 20 sec. HMV 5320482 (2001). Price £5.99.

Track number 2 is *Another Fine Mess* by The Boston Barbers, which was once released as a single. With this exception, the twenty-two items, from film soundtracks, have been released before on various Laurel and Hardy CDs, but the selection is good and the reproduction is superb. You will smile at the dialogue tracks and sing along to the musical items. I particularly like *What Flavours Have You?* (from *Come Clean*). The packaging is smart and the CD is on sale at HMV High Street stores or via the Internet.

The Laurel and Hardy bookcase



Dance of the Doppelgänger

Sigmund says. . . . Simon says. . . .

STAN AND OLLIE: THE ROOTS OF COMEDY The Double Life of Laurel and Hardy

by Simon Louvish

Published by Faber and Faber.

518 pages, 215 x 133mm. 2001.

Price £25.00. ISBN 0-571-20352-3. Hardback.

“Biographical truth is not to be had.”

Sigmund Freud

Freud’s name occurs on page 297 so let’s quote him. In fact, his verdict on biography only comes after strictures astringent enough to deter any would-be writer. Yet still they come. . . .

. . . to join the legion of Laurel and Hardy authors. Ponder the urge, seemingly unabated, to write about our heroes and welcome the latest recruit Simon Louvish, introduced by his publisher as a “biographer of comedians”. He professes initial reluctance and well he might for, as he acknowledges, the “gurus of Stan and Ollie studies” (his words) have already explored the

field. Moreover, video nowadays has made everyman his own film critic.

Undaunted that such considerations could blunt the impact of any new study, our author offers his own justification. “The forest”, he writes, “has been lost, somewhere, among the trees” (it could happen) and “questions have remained open to fresh examination” (’twas ever thus).

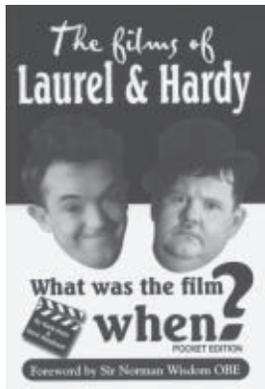
The twists and turns of the tale are expounded anew but enlivened by insight into the “roots of comedy”, recent research and judicious personal observations. The Louvish style is amiable with colourful turns of phrase while his eye for the relevance of contemporary events opens up a wider context. Above all, genuine enthusiasm informs his writing.

Commendably he is at pains to avoid printing the legend. Faced, however, with the stumbling blocks of lack of firm evidence, conflicting claims and blurred testimonies, our analyst is constrained to resort to speculation; interesting but providing no resolution. Sigmund’s biographical truth soon slips away, accelerated by whichever of his caveats explains the omission of incidents and areas in the saga that “zealots” (could he mean me?) would have hoped to see included in such a comprehensive undertaking.

The forest becomes denser when the biographical rhythm slackens to accommodate dovetailing the films into the text. Lurking behind the trees are the “pedants” (not me again?) wincing at numerous inaccuracies but more disconcerted by a continuing trend. Carried away by his obvious admiration for the films (aren’t we all?), our commentator indulges himself with lengthy plot synopses, credits, dialogue quotations and other documentation overshadowing thereby his well-observed assessments. Blame it on the iceman – or the Faber editor. Had this dead wood (as well as some sidetracking) been pruned, *Stan and Ollie* could have resulted in a better focused book and less of a trek through the forest for the reader.

New “fans” and general readers of film biographies can reliably be directed to this account of the Boys’ “double life”. For “aficionados” too there is much to savour. The last word? Doubtful. Questions remaining? Certainly. As previously predicted in *Bowler Dessert*, enthusiastic writers with new perspectives and offering reinterpretations will continue to appear for this is a tale that does not fade. . . .

Bob Spiller



Return of the bantam

WHAT WAS THE FILM WHEN . . . ?

by Mark Potts and Dave Shephard
Published by Wonderworks.

227 pages, 147 x 105mm. 2001.

Price £4.99. ISBN 0-9528760-2-7. Paperback.

This is the fourth* pocket-sized Laurel and Hardy book to be added to my collection and it is the best. It contains an enormous amount of information, ranging from detailed storylines to behind-the-scenes notes. The photographs are especially appealing and I liked the “official” European Sons of the Desert film ratings and the guide to the solo films of Laurel and Hardy.

The love and care behind compiling the book shows through clearly and elevates the fine 1996 original version to a very elegant piece of work. “Ideal for carrying around in your back pocket while attending Laurel and Hardy events or film fairs etc. . .” say the authors. I wish the index were fuller, though, highly desirable in a reference book of this kind.

For every copy sold the publishers will donate £1.00 to the Laurel and Hardy Statue Appeal. You can buy a copy by sending a cheque for £5.69 (including p&p) to Mark Potts, 2 Barrons Road, Shavington, Near Crewe, Cheshire, CW2 5EW.

Willie McIntyre

* The other three diminutive books are *Dick und Doof* by Heinz Caloué, *The Life and Times of Laurel & Hardy* by Amy Dempsey and *Laurel & Hardy* by Brian J Robb, reviewed in your last *Bowler Dessert*.

Full strength

Two reviews of What Was the Film When. . . ? from the Amazon.co.uk website:

◇ This book is A6 size and crammed full of Laurel and Hardy figures, facts and interesting snippets, all production details, and all the co-stars identified, as well as all the opening lines to the earlier films. There is also a classic sketch section, a British tour guide and a check list at the back of the book for collecting the films on video, DVD, etc. A nice touch is the foreword by the great Sir Norman Wisdom, who writes quite a moving little piece. For value for money an outstanding contribution.

Tony, Manchester

◇ Without doubt the best Laurel and Hardy book on my shelf, crammed full of facts, cast lists and production dates, as well as crystal clear photos, some of which I had never seen before. An absolute “must buy” for all devoted Sons of the Desert.

Brooky, Cheshire

Amplification of essence and enchantment



LAUREL AND HARDY – LIFE AND MAGIC

by Harry Hoppe

Published by Trescher Verlag.

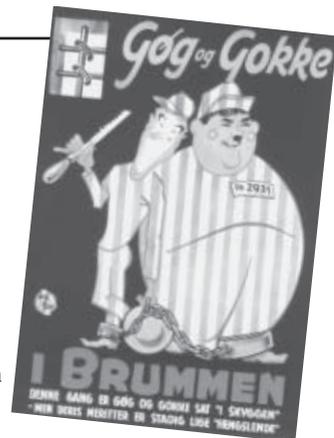
160 pages, 300 x 214 mm. 2001.

Price €20 (plus €5 p&p).

ISBN 3-928409-38-7. Hardback.

This second edition of Harry’s respected book, with parallel text in German and English and superb photographs, has sixteen added pages, in full colour, of lobby cards and posters. And it’s now hardbacked. Contact Harry Hoppe, Herderstr 3, 40237 Düsseldorf, West Germany. E-mail harry@slowburn.de.

◇ Your editor has copies in stock at £12.50, plus £3.50 p&p.



Sons scuttlebutt



- ◇ At a meeting of the Early to Bed Tent, Paul Robinson won the quiz. As this was based on *Pack Up Your Troubles*, he won a hot water bottle full of coffee! At another meeting when *Babes in Toyland* was shown, the youngest member, Lucy Bramley, won the quiz, taking home the trophy and some sausages which weren't pig – they were pork!
- ◇ The *Birmingham Bark* tells us that, in all the time he had been coming to Laughing Gravy Tent meetings, Roger Danvers had never won anything in the raffle until the tent's recent Free Draw, when his name came out of the fez. He chose a Stan "Headliners" statue. He already had Ollie and had been "looking for Stan for ages".
- ◇ Howard Parker and his Hats Off Tent had their Christmas meeting on 8th December at the Derbyshire County Cricket Club.
- ◇ The Live Ghost Tent has a new meeting place – the Pilgrim in Kennington, London – so on 16th March the tent had a film appearance of the boy from Kennington who made good, one Charles Chaplin, in a clip from *The Pilgrim*. Channel 4's *Film Fever*, featuring the Sons, also had a showing.
- ◇ Paul Harding, Grand Sheik of the Men o' War Tent, says, "The format of meetings seems to have settled down comfortably to the silent short, sound short and feature film, but we will vary it on occasion."
- ◇ Marion Grave has been involved in an hour-long television programme on Laurel and Hardy, which BBC2 will be screening this autumn.
- ◇ One of our readers looked up in the *Oxford English Dictionary* the word "flapdoodle", which had been used in the press in a Laurel and Hardy book review. It is described as, "Informal noun, chiefly US – nonsense. Origin: mid 19th century." The word could catch on in the Sons of the Desert!
- ◇ John Ullah's tent's birthday outing on 20th April was to Liverpool, where Tony Traynor and his tent were most hospitable.

Curios and oddities



Mathias Günther gave us a photograph taken by his friend Wolfgang Noll somewhere in Europe

Shellac 78

I have a 10" shellac 78 in mint condition, featuring the Rhythm Rascals playing *Speedway Sam / Dance of the Cuckoos*. It's on a Vocalion disc (Broadcast 916) pressed in Middlesex. Under the title of *Dance of the Cuckoos* is the name Steinberg. Is *Dance of the Cuckoos* the Laurel and Hardy theme tune? And if so, how much is the disc worth?

Adrian Fegan, Cardiff

Your 78 dates from 1931. The Laurel and Hardy Museum in Ulverston (Stan Laurel's birthplace) rightly notes that the music was composed not by a Mr Steinberg, but one Mr Hatley (Steinberg may have orchestrated the arrangement on your 78).

T Marvin Hatley became the musical director for the Hal Roach Studios, for whom "the Boys" worked as a team from 1927. An Oklahoman born in 1905, Hatley was a Sullivan-esque former band leader who played jazz piano for the KFVB radio station and, later, KFVD, whose building was located on Roach's LA studio lot. By the late 20s, he was contributing music to the radio's two-hourly morning broadcasts, meeting listeners' requests and also composing musical time signals.

Apparently, while fooling about on the piano one day in spring 1930, he played a tune that sounded like the call of a cuckoo and Stan Laurel, who heard it, latched onto it as the perfect introductory theme for himself and "Babe" Hardy.

The Cuckoo Song was recorded by Hatley and the other two members of the resident Happy-Go-Lucky Trio, clarinetists Vernon Trimble and Arthur Stephenson.

The tune certainly paved the way for Hatley to succeed Le Roy Shield as musical director at Roach Studios and go on to pen many other memorable Laurel and Hardy musical moments, including *Honolulu Baby* (from 1933's classic *Sons of the Desert*). Hatley died in 1986, attending Laurel and Hardy conventions and cheerily reminiscing of his days with "the Boys" till the end.

While Laurel and Hardy are one of the most famous acts in the history of 20th Century entertainment, a collector would probably pay no more than £10 for such a novelty shellac disc.

Record Collector (December, 2001)

Venom

I was playing a CD by the British heavy metal group Venom. At the end of a track called *Dead of the Night* the song breaks down and the guitarist (who glories in the name Mantas – real name Jeff Dunn) starts playing *Dance of the Cuckoos*.

Stephen Barlow

Directorial pride

David Allan, Operations Director with Direct Line Financial Services, was asked in Glasgow's *Evening Times* (07.12.01.), "What famous person, dead or alive, would you like to meet?"

He replied, "Can I cheat and say Laurel and Hardy? Even the kids love their antics, seventy years after the films were made."

Crying

Stan's cry-baby expression is not a leave-over from his childhood days. He has cultivated it only after a lot of hard work. It took him several months to get even a semblance of the expression he wanted. He stood before a mirror several times a day, closed his eyes a little, puckered up his mouth – and tried to look like a squalling youngster. It was darned difficult!" he confesses. "The first few days made my jaws ache so much that I had to use liniment on them before I could eat!"

Film Pictorial (July, 1932)

Bowler Dessert Online

Keep up to date with Sons news through *Bowler Dessert Online*. There are updates two or three times each month.



<http://freespace.virgin.net/bowler.dessert>

The dream

One evening, as I reminisced,
My mind chose to recall
Bill Cubin on the balcony
Of Coronation Hall.

Then, when I slept that night, I dreamt
Of Ulverston and there
Sons of the Desert sang a song
With Bill, in County Square.

The tune – from Balfe’s *Bohemian Girl*;
The words were rearranged,
Not quite as Bunn had written them
And some words had been changed.

The song

“We dream of a statue in Ulverston town,
With Ollie and Stan side-by-side.
Their comedy duo gained world-wide renown
And Laurel is Ulverston’s pride.”

“The riches, as yet, in the statue account
Are less than the scheme would claim,
But, also we dream of a final amount,
Enough to accomplish our aim.”

Etc.

Eddie Nelson



Hal Roach

Bann on Roach

Richard Bann said, “Hal Roach was easily the most interesting person I ever knew. I can’t think of anyone else in the history of mankind who would hold greater interest for me.”

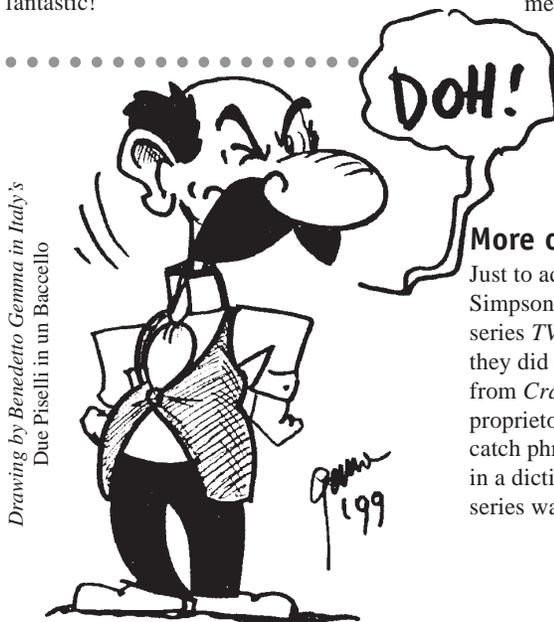
Melancholy letter auctioned

An incredible letter, dated 26th March, 1934 and hand-written by a very doleful Stan Laurel to Ethel Stanley of New York, was auctioned on the Internet and sold on 16th October last year for \$627.78.

In the letter Stan wrote, “I know exactly the foolishness of my doings – but my spirit & ambition has been broken & I just don’t care anymore – I have tried to keep going & it’s too much for me – it is impossible to be funny with a broken heart & rather than make pictures that wouldn’t be good I prefer to finish at the peak. I have no one to blame but myself – I just made a mess of my life & career & hate myself for it.”

Avalon Boys’ thanks

The Avalon Boys’ new CD is featured on page 55. David Blunt of the Avalons says, “I am at a loss for words at the kindness we have been shown by all the Sons of the Desert we have met so far – just fantastic!”



*Drawing by Benedetto Gemma in Italy's
Due Piselli in un Baccello*

More on “doh!”

Just to add more to the James Finlayson / Homer Simpson story. . . . In the ten-minute BBC1 occasional series *TV Heroes*, used as a slot-filler some years back, they did one on Peter Glaze – the short guy with glasses from *Crackerjack*. It was said that Glaze was proprietorial over the word “Doh”, which he used as his catch phrase while doing a double-take. It was entered in a dictionary as a word used by Peter Glaze. The series was presented by the ever-annoying Danny Baker.

Robert Cheadle

The Rogue Song trailer on show

On 6th April the Sons and Landmark Loew's Jersey Theater presented *An Afternoon with Laurel and Hardy* in Jersey City. With pristine 35mm prints of *Hog Wild*, *Come Clean* and *Way Out West*, the programme marked the first public performance of the restored *Coming Attraction* trailer for *The Rogue Song*, as well as a recently discovered *Hearst Metrotone Newsreel* featuring the Boys.

Rare posters in print

Blotto (winter, 2001/2002) had a colour supplement with Dutch posters from the thirties for Laurel and Hardy films, thanks to the Dutch Filmmuseum and Thomas Leeftang.



The Flying Deuces

Harlem's Hardy Heavy

Chris Coffey says, "I had a nice letter from the museum in Harlem. Two bottles of Hardy Heavy are now there, with my compliments. I have warned them not to open them, as they are now extremely rare amongst beer bottle collectors."

Teaser solution

Solution to the teaser we set on page 5: the illustration on page 59 reminds us of *Wrong Again*.

The Sunday Post

Spaghetti comedy?

Is Clint Eastwood the son of Hollywood legend Stan Laurel?

No. The story swept Hollywood during the 1960s when Clint was filming his early spaghetti westerns. He had been born in 1930, around the same time as Stan and his wife Lois had a baby (Stanley Robert Jefferson). The baby died a few weeks after birth. But a rumour circulated that the baby hadn't died and Clint was really the couple's son. Eventually an Italian newspaper printed a photo of Clint smiling and looking like Stan Laurel and the story grew arms and legs. The actor was often asked about his relationship, but for some reason would never give a straight answer, which simply fuelled the rumours.

The Sunday Post (02.09.01.)

Sad story of Stan Laurel's mum

Janice Hawton got speaking to some old pals and it wasn't long before the conversation turned to a poignant subject.

On December 1, 1908, a woman called Madge Metcalfe died in Glasgow, aged 50. Two days later she was buried in an unmarked grave at Cathcart Cemetery. Madge was Stan Laurel's mother.

A mother of four, she was a well-known stage actress and was married to the prominent playwright and theatre producer Arthur Jefferson, Stan Laurel's dad. She helped her husband design many of his theatres and he credited much of his success to Madge's creative talents and sharp business mind.

Sadly, after suffering from ill health for a year or two, Madge died suddenly in Glasgow, when Stan was 18. Telegrams and letters of condolence poured in, but to this day her grave stands in Cathcart Cemetery without a headstone to act as a fitting tribute to her life.

Now Sons of the Desert are lobbying for an appropriate memorial to be erected, but Janice doesn't know if or when the situation will ever be remedied.

Gary Moug, The Sunday Post (04.11.01.)

Home viewing

Despite their semidetached house in Penicuik looking like any other from the outside, hidden in the attic of the Scott household is their very own cinema! Not simply a fancy new TV. Nope, Alex, Mary and Alan Scott take a trip back to the golden age of the big screen sitting in a 1930s-style picture house. As they take their seats – seven originals rescued from renovations at the Odeon cinema in Edinburgh – the background music fades. It's played through a miniature replica of a theatre organ, built over three years by Alex (74).

As his son Alan (42) starts up the projector from a special booth built in the back of the attic, the lights dim and the curtain comes up to reveal the opening scene of a Laurel and Hardy comedy.

Kirsten Gray, The Sunday Post (06.01.02.)

And finally. . .

Friend insists Stan Laurel died in the Lancashire town of Oswaldtwistle Hyndburn. I disagree.

You're right to disagree. He died in Santa Monica, California, on February 23, 1965, aged 74 and is buried in Burbank at the Forest Lawn Hollywood Hills Cemetery.

The Sunday Post (23.06.02.)

UK tent listing

All known 37 UK tents, their meetings and Grand Sheiks

Bacon Grabbers Tent of St

Helens, Wigan and Manchester Central

Oasis 113, founded 18th Oct, 1989

Beer Engine, Poolstock Lane, Wigan, Lancashire. Monthly, first Wednesday, 8.00pm. Marble Arch, 73 Rochdale Road, Manchester 4. Monthly, third Wednesday, 8.00pm.

Chris Coffey, 64 Dale Crescent, Sutton Leach, St Helens, Merseyside, WA9 4YE.

☎ 01744 817 130.

✉ neilevans@bacongrabbers.co.uk

✉ chriscoffey@bacongrabbers.co.uk

🌐 www.bacongrabbers.co.uk

🌐 www.laurel-and-hardy.co.uk

🌐 www.laurel-and-hardy-museum.co.uk

Beau Hunks Tent of Nottingham

Oasis 236, founded 2000

Rose and Crown, Derby Road, Nottingham. Monthly, third Tuesday, 7.30pm.

Dave Scothern, 192 Melton Road, Stanton on the Wolds, Nottingham, NG12 5BQ.

☎ 0115 937 3196

Be Big Tent of Tameside

Oasis 26, founded 25th Feb, 1977

Greyhound, Burlington Street, Ashton-under-Lyne, Lancashire. Monthly, last Monday (bank holiday meetings brought forward a week), 8.00pm.

Bob Hickson, 69 Bucklow Drive, Northenden, Manchester, M22 4WA.

☎ 0161 998 0607

Berth Marks Tent of Ulverston

Oasis 24, founded 5th October, 1976

Laurel and Hardy Museum, 4c Upper Brook Street, Ulverston, Cumbria, LA12 7BH. Open daily, February till December, 10.00am till 4.30pm.

Marion Grave, Crake Valley House, Greenodd, near Ulverston, Cumbria, LA12 7RA.

☎ 01229 861 614 ☎ 01229 582 292

🌐 www.laurel-and-hardy-museum.co.uk

Blockheads Tent of Edinburgh

Oasis 103, founded 1984

Royal Oak, 1 Infirmary Street, Edinburgh. Monthly, September till June, second Friday, 7.30 till 10.00pm.

Charlie Lewis, 70 Silverknowes Gardens, Edinburgh, EH4 5NG.

✉ charlie.lewis@scotland.gsi.gov.uk ✎



Key

☎ indicates home phone number ✉ indicates e-mail address

☎ indicates mobile phone number 🌐 indicates website address

☎ indicates venue phone number

✎ indicates tent has a page hosted on website <http://www.sotd.org>

Call of the Cuckoos Tent of Clyde

Coast

Oasis 166, founded 1993

No fixed abode: irregular meetings. Free monthly newsletter.

Willie McIntyre, 39 Bankhouse Avenue, Largs, Ayrshire, KA30 9PF.

☎ ex-directory

✉ bowler.dessert@virgin.net

🌐 <http://freespace.virgin.net/bowler.dessert>

Chickens Come Home Tent of Lancaster

Oasis 210, founded 1998

Gregson Community Centre, Moorgate, Lancaster. Bi-monthly, usually last Saturday.

Bill Bailey, 17 Pennine View, Morecambe, Lancashire, LA4 4QB.

✉ wardbailey@ic24.net

🌐 <http://freespace.virgin.net/david.wilkinson8/index.htm>

A Chump at Oxford Tent of Oxford

Oasis 111, founded 1989

Duke of York, Norfolk Street, Oxford.

Quarterly: March, June, September, December, second Monday, 8.00pm.

Alan Kitchen, 26 Mayfield Road, Farmoor, Oxford, OX2 9NR.

☎ 01865 862 821

✉ alan.kitchen@excite.com

Come Clean Tent of Widnes

Oasis 71, founded March, 1987

St Basils Parochial Club, Hough Green Road, Widnes, Cheshire. Monthly, third Tuesday, 8.00 till 11.00pm.

Eric Woods, Laurel House, 102 Hough Green Rd, Widnes, Cheshire, WA8 4PF.

☎ 0151 424 1552

✉ ericgwoods@yahoo.co.uk

County Hospital Tent of Bradford

Oasis 36, founded 1979

ILP Club (Private Function Room), Leicester Street, Off Wakefield Road, Bradford. Monthly, first Friday 8.00 till 10.30pm.

Dave Thackray, 16 Westwood Avenue, Eccleshill, Bradford, BD2 1NJ.

☎ 01274 640 739 ☎ 07976 876 264

✉ dthackray@aol

Early to Bed Tent of Chesterfield

Oasis 193, founded 16th June, 1995

Spital Hotel, Spital Lane, Chesterfield. Monthly, third Sunday, 7.30pm.

Grahame Morris, Appleton Lodge, 87 Shuttlewood Road, Bolsover, Chesterfield, Derbyshire, S44 6NX.

☎ 01246 824 523

✉ morrisofderbyshire@lineone.net ✎

Fraternally Yours Tent of Bristol

Oasis 152, founded 1992

Bristol Stadium Ltd, Filton Avenue, Bristol. Irregular. Future: 02.09.02, 28.10.02, 02.12.02, Monday, 8.00pm.

Peter Andrews, 14 Mackie Avenue, Filton, Bristol, BS34 7ND.

☎ 0117 979 0205

Blotto Tent of Tameside

Oasis 137, founded 1988

Stalybridge Railway Station, Buffet Bar, Platform One, Ramsbottom Street, Stalybridge, Tameside. Monthly, September till June, second Friday, 7.30 till 10.00pm.

Peter Brodie, 4 Wilson Crescent, Ashton-under-Lyne, Tameside, OL6 9SA.

☎ 0161 339 7355. ☎ 07702 056 556

✉ pbrodiegws@aol.com ✎

Bonnie Scotland Tent of Glasgow

Oasis 21, founded 3rd May, 1976

No fixed abode: irregular meetings.

Janice Hawton, 5 Tantallon Avenue, Gourcock, Renfrewshire, PA19 1HA.

☎ ex-directory

✉ chonzie@ukonline.co.uk ✎

Brats Tent of Sheffield

Oasis 80, founded 1988

New Crown Inn, Handsworth Road, Handsworth, Sheffield. Monthly, second Monday, 7.30pm.

John Burton, 337 Handsworth Road, Handsworth, Sheffield, S13 9BP.

☎ 0114 254 8151

✉ john-burton@supanet.com

✉ john.burton@sch.nhs.uk

There is no guarantee that Grand Sheiks or Webmasters update information regularly, so please contact Grand Sheiks if in doubt

Brats Tent of Stranraer Academy

Founded 1998

Restricted membership (school).

Stranraer Academy, McMasters Road, Stranraer, DE0 8BY. Every Friday during term, 12.55 till 1.15pm.

Douglas Brown, The Mill House, Seabank Road, Stranraer, DG9 0EF.

☎ 01776 702 870 ☎ 01776 706 484

✉ dsb1971@aol.com

Busy Bodies Tent of Stourbridge

Oasis 128, founded 1991

War Memorial Social Club, High Street, Amblecote, Stourbridge, West Midlands. Monthly, last Tuesday.

Tony Bagley, 118 Orchard Street, Brockmoor, Brierley Hill, West Midlands, DY5 1HN.

☎ 01384 76869 ☎ 07753 831016 ✎

Hats Off Tent of Derby

Oasis 119, founded 1990

Pastures Social Club, Mickleover, Derby.
Bi-monthly (commencing February),
third Wednesday, 7.30 till 10.00pm.

Howard Parker, 138 Smithfield Road,
Uttoxeter, Staffordshire, ST14 7LB.

☎ 01889 565 979

✉ howard.parker@talk21.com ✎

Helpmates Tent of Kent

Oasis 25, founded 1978

Events held in London or Holiday Inn,
Chatham. Irregular: see website or
magazine for dates.

Rob Lewis, 63 Wollaston Close,
Parkwood, Gillingham, Kent, ME8 9SH.

✉ laurelandhardy@blueyonder.co.uk

✉ oxford0614@aol.com

☎ http://www.laurelandhardy.org

☎ http://members.aol.com/oxford0614

Hog Wild Tent of Bishop

Auckland

Oasis 190, founded September, 1994

Town Hall, Bishop Auckland. Monthly
(except January and August), first
Tuesday, 8.00pm.

Stan Patterson, "Dunluce", 2 Compton
Grove, Bishop Auckland, Co Durham,
DL14 6LX.

☎ 01388 605 844

Laughing Gravy Tent of Birmingham

Oasis 167, founded autumn, 1993

Bromford Social Club, Church Road,
Erdington, Birmingham, B23. Monthly,
first Thursday, 7.00 till 11.00pm.

John Ullah, 42 York Road, Erdington,
Birmingham, B23 6TG.

☎ 0121 628 6919

✉ j.ullah@lineone.net

☎ http://www.sotd.org

Laughing Gravy Tent of Tingley

Oasis 47, founded 1981

Tingley Working Men's Club, Bradford
Road (near roundabout), Tingley,
Wakefield. Nine times a year: second
Monday, September till May, 8.00pm.

Graham McKenna, 5 Ryedale Way, Ting-
ley, Wakefield, W Yorkshire, WF3 1AP.

☎ 0132 539 953 ✎

Leave 'Em Laughing Tent of

Merseyside

Oasis 37, founded October, 1979

Ferndale Lodge pub, 15 Crosby Road
North, Crosby, Liverpool, 22. Monthly,
first Tuesday.

Tony Traynor, 89 Bedford Road, Bootle,
Merseyside, L20 2DL.

☎ 0151 476 6621 ✎

Live Ghost Tent of London

Oasis 179, founded 1994

The Pilgrim, 247 Kennington Lane,
London, SE11. Bi-monthly: see
website.

Del Kempster, 112 Tudor Drive, Morden,
Surrey, SM4 4PF.

☎ 020 871 54223.

✉ delkempster@hotmail.com

☎ www.liveghost.com

Live Ghost Tent of

Middlesbrough

Founded around 1992

No meetings yet.

Ian McLean, 1 Gosforth Avenue, Redcar,
Cleveland, TS10 3LH.

☎ 01642 492 159

✉ ian.mcclain@ntlworld.com

Men o' War Tent of Colchester

Oasis 70, founded 1987

Usually Manifest Theatre, Oxford Road,
Manningtree, Essex. Irregular, approx
5 per year. Dates in website/news-
letter. Saturday 7.30 till 10.30pm.

Paul Harding, 38 Kingsman Drive,
Clacton-on-Sea, Essex, CO16 8UR.

☎ 01255 429 887

✉ menowartent@hotmail.com

☎ uk.geocities.com/menowartent

Midnight Patrol Tent of Potteries Staffordshire

Oasis 209, founded 1997

Wheatshaf Hotel, Shelton, Stoke-on-
Trent, Staffordshire. Monthly, second
Tuesday, 8.00pm.

Antony Waite, 53 Garnett Road East,
Porthill, Newcastle-under-Lyme,
Staffordshire, ST5 8AP.

☎ 07811 679 456 ✉ vickynanthy@
stokelaurelnhardy.fsworld.co.uk ✎

Midnight Patrol 2 Tent of Wirral

Oasis 110, founded 1989

Stork Hotel, 41 Price Street, Birkenhead,
Wirral, Merseyside. Monthly, third
Monday, 8.00pm.

Mike Grimes, 9 Eccleshall Road, Port
Sunlight, Bebington, Wirral,
Merseyside, L62 4SA.

☎ 0151 644 1681

and Gary (Stan) Slade, Lockley Castle,
1c Britannia Road, Wallasey, Wirral,
Merseyside, CH45 4RN.

☎ 0151 513 0322

✉ thetop@lookalikes.fsnet.co.uk

☎ http://www.laurel-hardy-lookalikes.
co.uk/thewirralbranch.html ✎

One Good Turn Tent of Huddersfield

Oasis 200, founded 1995

Albert Hotel, Victoria Lane, Hudders-
field. Monthly, second Wednesday.

David Ian Barker, 52 Tom Lane, Crosland
Moor, Huddersfield, Yorkshire,
HD4 5PP.

☎ 01484 462 616

Our Relations Tent of Fife and Tayside

Oasis 191, founded 1994

Windsor Hotel, Victoria Road, Kirkcaldy,
Fife. Monthly, last Sunday 2.00 till
5.00pm.

David Dyke, 107 Kinnis Court,
Dunfermline, Fife, KY11 4XJ.

☎ 01383 736 310 ✉ iw.cormack@
flackhouse.freeserve.com.uk

Pardon Us Tent of Gateshead

Oasis 243, founded 2001

Mount Hall, Eighton Banks. Inactive;
hopes to restart soon.

Ray Hall, Favells Gate, Galloping Green
Road, Eighton Banks, Gateshead, Tyne
& Wear, NE9 7XD.

☎ 0191 487 2614

✉ ray@favellsgate.co.uk

Saps at Sea Tent of Southend-on- Sea

Oasis 207, founded 1998

Railway Hotel, Clifftown Road, Southend-
on-Sea, Essex. Monthly, second
Sunday, 6.45pm till 10.00pm.

Roger Robinson, 115 Neil Armstrong
Way, Leigh-on-Sea, Essex, SS9 5UE.

☎ 01702 526 187

✉ sapsatse@waitrose.com (likely to
change) ✎

Second Hundred Years Tent of Bury/Radcliffe Manchester

Founded 2001

On hold - looking for new venue.

Steve Bartley, 22 Wolsey Close,
Radcliffe, Manchester, M26 3AG.

✉ StpBartley@aol.com

Their Purple Moment Tent of Stranraer

Oasis 115, founded 1989

Ruddicot Hotel, London Road, Stranraer.
Monthly, last Friday, 8.00pm (quiet
just now - contact Grand Sheik).

Dougie Brown, The Mill House, Seabank
Road, Stranraer, DG9 0EF.

☎ 01776 702 870

✉ dsb1971@aol.com

Them Thar Hills Tent of Carlisle

Oasis 43, founded 1981 [Resting]

Melvin McFadden, Fairhaven, Grange
Gardens, Wigton, Cumbria, CA7 9DH.

☎ 01697 345 887

✉ melvin.mcfadden@btinternet.com

Tit for Tat Tent of Leicester

Oasis 232, founded 2001

Aylestone & District Conservative Club,
Saffron Lane, Leicester. Monthly, last
Tuesday, 7.30pm.

Ian Gamage, 25 Cottage Farm Close,
Braunstone, Leicester LE3 2XZ.

☎ 0116 223 4958

✉ iangamage@hotmail.com

You're Darn Tootin' Tent of Stockton-on-Tees

Oasis 183, founded 1995

Royal Hotel, West Street, Stillington,
Stockton. Monthly, third Tuesday,
7.30pm.

Anthony Gears, 1a South Street,
Stillington, Stockton-on-Tees,
Cleveland, TS21 1JN.

☎ 01740 630 942

✉ tony@egglescliffe.org.uk

This list was compiled by Grahame Morris (Grand Sheik of the Early to Bed Tent), with considerable help from Anni. Please send Grahame any additions and alterations for inclusion in your next Bowler Dessert



