

Bowler Dessert

Winter 2003/04 Number 62

New tent

We welcome a new tent – the Call of the Cuckoos Tent, Oasis 241. There are four founding members and the Grand Sheik is Neil Whitelam. We hope to have more details in your next *Bowler Dessert*. Meanwhile you will find contact information on page 62.

Kirch

The Times of 5th June reported that the sale of KirchMedia's film library and TV division had collapsed. KirchMedia, who own the European rights to most Laurel and Hardy films, was made bankrupt in 2002.

Bowler Dessert Treasures

As we went to press, work was progressing on a *Bowler Dessert* CD-ROM, called *Bowler Dessert Treasures* and containing some of the out-of-print issues of the magazine, plus some new material.



25th UK Convention

Next year's UK Convention will be based at Hotel Smokies Park (Best Western), Ashton Road, Bardsley, Oldham, Greater Manchester and hosted by the Blotto Tent. Grand Sheik Peter Brodie says, "This being the Silver Jubilee UK Convention, we aim to make the weekend one to remember! Please book early and help us celebrate twenty-five UK Conventions." Peter's address and telephone number are on page 62.

The Convention cost is £180. Payment is due by 1st March, 2004. The organisers are asking all conventioners, where possible, to share rooms. However, there is a limited number of single rooms at a supplement of £20 per night. Please send a cheque or International Money Order payable to Blotto Convention to Paul Brodie, 53 Shawmoor Ave, Stalybridge, Cheshire, SK15 2RB. Telephone Paul at 07973 205 986.

Friday 30th April

Registration from noon
Films
Memorabilia
Evening meal
Parade of Tents
Late bar

Saturday 1st May

Breakfast
Visit to Plaza Theatre in Stockport for Laurel and Hardy film show
Buffet lunch at Stalybridge Station Bar (the home of the Blotto Tent)
Jazz band
Morris dancers
Visit to Stalybridge Narrow Boat Company
Evening meal
Magician
Disco
Late bar

30th April till 3rd May, 2004

Sunday 2nd May

Breakfast
Laurel and Hardy Games
Buffet lunch
Quiz
Evening meal
Raffle
Fancy dress
25th Anniversary
Entertainment in Smokies Nightclub (Convention has exclusive use)
Late bar

Monday 3rd May

Breakfast
Grand Sheiks' meeting
Farewells

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Back issues available are numbers 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49 and 50 at £1.00 (€1.50, \$1.50) each and 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60 and 61 at £1.50 (€2.50, \$2.50) each, or all fourteen for £14.00 (€20.00, \$20.00).

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://www.freespace.virgin.net/bowler.dessert>.



Online buying comes to **Bowler Dessert**

PayPal has come to *Bowler Dessert Online*. Laurel and Hardy books, CDs, postcards etc are offered for sale at bargain prices worldwide on your favourite Laurel and Hardy website. Online buying is easy and quick. Log onto *Bowler Dessert Online*, which is entering its fifth year. The address is above.



International Convention

15th till 18th July, 2004

To be held in Columbus, Ohio, USA
and hosted by the Perfect Day Tent

The convention will include a Pee Wee Contest (on the Ohio State Capital's lawn), tours of three old time movie palaces (including a screening of *Sons of the Desert*), a trip to the Columbus Zoo and Aquarium, two evening banquets, Oliver Hardy Golf Game, Trivia Contest, Meet the Celebrities, Dealers' Room, Screening Room, Laurel and Hardy Museum, Costume Banquet, Farewell Breakfast and a bus tour. Also planned is an organ concert, parade, and a few surprise events.

The hosts are working on several pre-convention activities: the "Roller Coaster" tour of both Cedar Point and Kings Island, Football and Rock and Roll Halls of Fame, and a trip to the Wright-Patterson Air Force Museum in Dayton.

Grand Sheik Rick Lindner says, "Since our overall theme is the circus, kids and animals, we are asking each of the tents to set up a booth in the lobby of the hotel. Each should have a Laurel and Hardy theme based on one of their movies. The space would be 6' x 10' and could be a game of skill, such as the *Chickens Come Home* version that was so popular at the 2002 Nashville Convention, or something different like face-painting."

Rick continues, "The cost of the convention will be in line with recent ones. Figure about \$275 per person and children around \$200. The rooms are a very reasonable \$99 per night for up to four people, and a Hyatt at that! The hotel is right in the center of Columbus. The three-storey City Center Mall is connected to the hotel and offers several eating places as well as shopping."

Rick can be contacted at 3655 Maize Road, Columbus, Ohio, 43224-2601, USA. Website <http://www.perfectdaytent.com/Convention.htm>. E-mail sodcols2004@insight.rr.com.

Charlie's nephew

The Laurel and Hardy Central website received the following letter. . . .

My uncle, Charlie Hall, appeared in many Laurel and Hardy films. He emigrated to the States in the 1930s and worked with someone called Kennedy and visited England, staying with us just prior to the war. Grandma Hall visited California in 1935 and I have a photo of her on a film set, a caravan, sitting between Laurel and Hardy and signed "Love Mother" (by either Laurel or Hardy because they called her "Mother"), Christmas 1935. I have only two other photos as they were dispersed throughout the family. I am the only one left who remembers Charlie. All his brothers are now dead. His only sister, who also went to live in the USA, never had children. I understood the family lost contact with him after he left films and I think my father heard he was working in a car factory in Detroit.

Bryan Hall



Wolfgang Günther at this year's
European Convention

Museum in Germany

Bram Reijnhoudt wrote on *Blotto Online*, "The new Laurel and Hardy Museum opened in Solingen on 29th March. It was a festive day. Beer flowed freely and a jazz band played. Speeches were made by the Lord Mayor of Solingen, Franz Haug, and other officials, among them Grand Sheik Eric Woods from England, who addressed the stunned crowd in German! The ribbon was cut by Jean Darling of Our Gang fame, who flew in from Ireland for the occasion."

Congratulations go to Wolfgang and Vera Günther, who have worked unstintingly to fulfil this project. Their new address is Burger Landstrasse 19, 42659 Solingen, Germany. E-mail laurel.hardy.museum@t-online.de.

Ulverston statue

South Lakeland District Council has expressed the opinion that the site once selected for the Laurel and Hardy statue in Ulverston may not be the best location. The junction of Market Street and New Market Street is thought not to be ideal for photographs because of the volume of traffic around that corner and because of the backdrop. The matter was discussed with Sons of the Desert representatives and interested parties and alternative locations were discussed. Turn to page 64 to view the site which is now preferred.

The Statue Appeal has received a very welcome £1,000 donation from South Lakes property developer Merewood Homes. Ulverston Town Council bought a Stan and Ollie maquette, which is a replica of the statue which will be erected in Ulverston. A delegation from the Council took the maquette as a gift to Ulverston's twin town of Albert in July.

A donation of over £1,000 from someone who wants anonymity has also been added, bringing the amount in the bank to well over £35,000.

Frank as Stan

Bill Crouch spotted an announcement in the *Daily Record* (10.07.03.) that Frank Skinner will be starring in Tom McGrath's play *Laurel and Hardy* next spring.

Dave Fullbrook adds, "According to the TV teletext, the play, which has been touring in various forms in recent times, is due to run at Hampstead, London next February or March. Frank Skinner and Mark Addy (*The Full Monty*, and *The Thin Blue Line*) are to play Stan and Ollie and, if the reviews are good, it could transfer to the West End."

Perry Smith and Tony Hillman saw a similar announcement in a stage newspaper.

The best medicine

Dave Tomlinson says, "BBC2 has had the best run of the Boys on television for many years. Can I urge everyone to contact the BBC to congratulate and thank them for this run and to encourage them to show even more in the next few weeks and months. Indeed, I'm sure that our efforts to contact the Beeb earlier in the year helped to secure this run. Maybe (if I dare to mention it) we could encourage them to show a few colourised films during prime time childrens' TV. I'm sure this would go down a treat with the kids and may even begin a Laurel and Hardy revival amongst the younger generation. You can contact the Beeb at pov@bbc.co.uk."

Tim Brett of Sheffield said in *Radio Times* (6-12th September, 2003), "After a day's work I used to arrive home with my blood pressure about to go through the roof. Then, while off work with a peptic ulcer, I happened upon Laurel and Hardy. The effect was remarkable. Those gentle buffoons calmed the savage beast in me. I am now well adjusted and have lower blood pressure. If it worked for me, perhaps it can work for others. Just imagine, no road rage or lost tempers and all because of Stan and Ollie. But now the films have ended will I revert to being my former self? Please show these wonderful short films at peak time: the nation needs both the treat and the treatment."

BBC2 replied that there may be more therapeutic Laurel and Hardy films later in the year.



Tent snippets

✧ Ian Kerman of the Helpmates Tent reports that the Any Old Port Tent of Hull has restarted. According to the *Laurel and Hardy Magazine* website he found out by seeing a leaflet at his local library. Details are eagerly awaited.

✧ Dave Scothern's Beau Hunks Tent has a new meeting place. On the third Tuesday of each month it meets at the Wheatsheaf pub, in Nottingham.

✧ Tony Gears tells us that his You're Darn Tootin' Tent is going strong. He describes it as "small but compact, a handful but dedicated". They meet every month for films, a quiz and a raffle.

✧ A fleet of Saps at Sea and a few Live Ghosts popped up to the September meeting of John Ullah's Laughing Gravy Tent. Some stayed on to go to the Laurel and HarDay in Wigan a couple of days later.

✧ The County Hospital Tent is currently enjoying attendances of around sixty at meetings in Bradford. It had a notable contingent at the Laurel and HarDay.

✧ The meeting of the Stranraer junior Brats Tent on 29th August had twenty-four youngsters turn up for a screening of *Any Old Port*, which had a great reception.

Bottesford and Barkston



A communal head-scratch at the Bull Inn

◇ The Beau Hunks Tent's annual Boys at the Bull day was held on 19th July at the Bull Inn, Bottesford. A tip of the bowler to Dave Tomlinson, who organised an excellent mini-tour of the village of Barkston, including a visit to Arthur Jefferson's grave and the now de-licensed Plough Inn, which Stan and Ollie visited in 1947 when Stan's sister Olga was landlady there. Dave has written an excellent guide to Barkston's Laurel and Hardy connections, at <http://users.tinyworld.co.uk/dtomlinson/Index.htm>. Well worth a cyber-visit! The Bull Inn has two scarecrows coming out of the chimney at the moment, dressed as Stan and Ollie.

Grahame Morris



*Dave
Scothern*

◇ A number of Brats attended the event, hosted by Dave Scothern, and also boasted the two youngest members to attend (Oliver Johnson, aged ten months, and John Burton, aged two years – true brats!). This was once again a tremendous event and congratulations go to Dave and his team.

John Burton

A very small extract from Dave Tomlinson's fascinating site. . . .

Stan Laurel's sister, Beatrice Olga Jefferson, began life in the theatre as an actress, continuing what had become a family tradition, treading the boards. Following a short and undistinguished career in acting, Olga retired from the stage and settled down in Barkston.

In 1927 and 1932, summer breaks in the film schedule on the Hal Roach studio lot allowed Stan Laurel time to return to England and visit his family. Although he met with his sister, on neither occasion did he actually visit Barkston. Stan visited Olga in Grantham in 1927. He stayed at the George Hotel. In 1932, at the height of their success, Stan returned to England with Ollie for a summer vacation. At the end of July, 1932, Olga and [husband] Bill [Healey] travelled to London to meet them, her father Arthur Jefferson and her stepmother Venitia for what was to become a rare family reunion.

In 1937 Olga and Bill fully retired from the theatre and became the licensees of the Plough Inn on West Street in Barkston, where they remained until 1950. Olga used to play the piano and sing to the customers. Stan and Olga's father, known to all as AJ, was himself a prominent theatrical figure in the north of England and in Scotland. When AJ took his final bow and retired from the theatre, following the death of Venitia, he went to live with Olga and Bill at the Plough.

On 10th February, 1947, Laurel and Hardy sailed into Southampton Docks. They were astounded at the reception they received. Barkston was snowed under, so Olga and AJ unfortunately missed the Boys' homecoming.

On Sunday, 16th March, 1947, at the end of their first week at the London Palladium, the Boys travelled north to Grantham for lunch at the Red Lion and then on to the Plough at Barkston. They stayed all afternoon at the Plough.

AJ Marriot's book *Laurel & Hardy – The British Tours* recalls two other visits to Barkston, which straddled their theatrical appointment at Butlin's Theatre in Skegness. On Sunday, 22nd June, 1947, the celebrities stopped off at Grantham on their way through from Glasgow to Skegness. They had just enough time for a drink and quick chat at the Red Lion Hotel. On their return journey back from Skegness the following Sunday they had more time and called in at Barkston for a second visit to the Plough.

◇ [On 19th July] we arrived at Barkston to be greeted by John Cooper, his wife Jean, and his cousin Betty. John and Betty are related to the late Bill Healey, as nephew and niece. Although many memories had faded, John recalled times when, as a youngster, he visited Barkston during the late 1940s. This was usually when his mother and father (Bill's brother) looked after AJ and the Plough Inn, while Bill and Olga were away on holiday or seeing the Boys on stage. He briefly recalled times when he sat with AJ in his room at the Plough. He remembered Laurel and Hardy as two kindly old gentlemen, performing an occasional antic for the villagers, but certainly not over-presenting themselves as they were seen on the silver screen: "We came for the afternoon, before the pub opened. We sat and chatted with them before going back on the bus. They were a very quiet pair to talk to, but they weren't too serious. Then again, no one expected them to do a turn."

It was John that first researched and located AJ's grave site. He mentioned his discovery to Bill Cubin in the early 1980s. . . and the rest is history, as they say.

John shared with us a few rare photos of AJ, of his Uncle Bill and Auntie Olga in later years, and of the Boys. He also shared with us a funny story of how he had followed the wrong car to Olga's funeral in Roker (Sunderland), and ended up on the drive at the home of the funeral director. He then returned to the cemetery for a burial before realising that she was being cremated. He eventually, reached the right crematorium only to sit through the wrong service!

Betty recalled that Olga and Bill lived in a house opposite the Plough before taking lease of the inn – but sadly she was unable to recall which house. She also believed that Olga did some hairdressing in the village.

Today, the Plough is no longer an inn and has been refurbished into separate upper and lower floor flats.

Mrs Eardley, the current owner of the Plough, showed us the gardens and the rear of the inn. She kindly invited us all into her kitchen to show us a child's autograph book signed by Stan and Ollie. With twenty of us in the party this did prove to be quite comical and reminiscent of a certain car scene from *Our Wife*!

Dave Tomlinson



Haurel and Lardy

I had the opportunity, you may recall, to meet Haurel and Lardy briefly last year when they were involved in an East London library event at East Ham. A similar event was arranged this year on 21st May with the act booked to appear at Hornchurch Library. The Haurel and Lardy act is one of comedy, illusion, song and dance, magic and audience participation. The packed audience ranged from excited young children to nostalgic grandparents and all thoroughly enjoyed the hour and a half show.

Earlier in the day, three separate classes of children from a local primary school had a rather special treat. They visited the library and, after a brief introductory chat about libraries and then Laurel and Hardy, they got to meet the ace impersonators. Rather surprisingly but rewardingly, 70% of the children knew who Laurel and Hardy were.

During the afternoon, Haurel and Lardy created quite a stir when they did a walkabout, initially in Hornchurch and then in Elm Park. Bewildered members of the public just couldn't believe their eyes. Perhaps the most challenging demand of the day for Graeme and Jem was when they were called into a pub in Elm Park by the rowdy clientele. Instead of any mickey taking, there was unanimous applause as Haurel and Lardy performed their repertoire. It was a sight to behold and one that they tell me they will never forget.

Roger Robinson



In the Beano

Paul Cuthbertson asks, "Did you see the *Beano* of 12th July (#3182)? It had Laurel and Hardy on pages 13 and 14 in a Dennis the Menace special cartoon.

Richard Guilor observes, "The words 'Sons of the Desert' were visible on Ollie's mug."



Itzehoe 2005

Grand Sheik Holger Dörr (above) and his County Hospital Tent will be hosting the 7th European Convention in Itzehoe and Hamburg, in the far north of Germany. Dates have been set for 16th till 19th September, 2005. An extended boat trip and a sight-seeing tour of Hamburg are among the planned activities.

Holger has admired Laurel and Hardy since early childhood. In the early 1990s he read a newspaper article about Wolfgang and Vera's Laurel and Hardy Museum and contacted them immediately. He went to the next meeting in Solingen and became a member of Wolfgang's Two Tars Tent. Since then Holger has been at every European Convention and it was at the one in Düsseldorf in 2001 that he and some friends decided to found the County Hospital Tent.

Contact Holger Dörr, Bismarckstr 11, 25524 Itzehoe, Germany. There is a new convention website in German and English at <http://www.oasis235.de>.

Serious matter

A gent contacted us who had been looking for a birthday present for a friend who is a great fan of Laurel and Hardy. He says, "This chap is coming up to retirement and is a grave digger, with many stories of late night diggings that he had to do as he realised that he had dug in the wrong place during the day and had to get another grave dug for the following day! Remember the tortoise and the candle. After each funeral he goes home and watches a couple of Laurel and Hardy videos to brighten up the day!"

Bishop Auckland plaque

There is now a plaque on South View, the house in Waldron Street in Bishop Auckland where Stan Laurel's sister, Beatrice Olga Jefferson, was born and where Stan once lived. An unveiling ceremony took place on 30th August. . . .



✧ Anni and I would like to express our thanks to Stan Patterson, Tony Hillman and the Hog Wild Tent for a Grand Day Out. We picked up Nancy Wardell and made it to the Town Hall just in time for a coffee before the day's events. The room in the Town Hall where the tent meets must be one of the best places to hold meetings, with its permanent display devoted to Stan's connection with the town and its Laurel and Hardy posters.

About twenty-five Sons set off to parade through the town to South View where Stan's sister Beatrice was born in 1894. Huntley Jefferson Woods (centre right) was to unveil a small plaque on the house. It must have been nice to unveil a plaque to your mother. When the cord was pulled, though, the "curtain" snagged on the plaque and refused to budge! A ladder was called for and an official maintenance engineer rectified the situation. Stan and Ollie would have loved it!



We moved on to St Peter's Church, where Beatrice was christened and Stan was "rechristened" at the same time. Then to 66 Princes Street, where the Jeffersons also lived for a short period. The tour – led by Stan Patterson with his "digital megaphone" – stopped at the site of AJ's theatre, the Eden, and the King James Grammar School, which Stan Jefferson attended. The theatre has long been demolished and sadly the school is closed and in a sorry state.

The group then repaired to a local hostelry for an excellent buffet to complete a "Perfect Day". Earlier Stan had instructed the group to meet at the Castle Arms, which turned out to be the only pub in County Durham without a sign! Fortunately he did say it was opposite the Town Hall.

The Hog Wild Tent presented Nancy with a cheque for £50 for the Charity Fund.

Grahame Morris

✧ A cameraman and a reporter from BBC local news *Look North* did a bit of coverage of us outside the Town Hall and accompanied our little parade up to South View, where a reporter and a photographer from the *Northern Echo* were waiting for us. The TV people filmed the unveiling then had a short interview with Huntley and the *Echo* people did the same.

Unfortunately from our point of view, the TV coverage went out that night and, it being the weekend, the local news lasted only about five minutes, which meant that we didn't get as much coverage as expected, not that I saw it as by the time I got home it was over. I had hoped that they might have kept it for Monday when there were twenty-five minutes of local news.

Tony Hillman

Bohemian caravan

Grand Sheik Steve Bartley met up with an old friend, Graham, who buys and restores old caravans. Graham recently bought a Berkeley 1947, which was once owned by Albert Saveen. Albert Saveen (or just "Saveen" as he was usually known) was a music hall ventriloquist who had fourteen puppet characters, including Daisy May – a tiny schoolgirl dummy. The information received with the caravan related that Saveen, who hated hotels, had this vehicle adapted for touring. It was quite plush with heating, a toilet, etc – not bad for the period. He would park it behind theatres at which he was performing.

With the documents which Graham received was a list of famous people who had stayed with Saveen in the caravan when on the road. "Laurel and Hardy" is written in Saveen's hand. Says Steve, "I wonder if anyone knows any more on this subject?"

2004 calendar

You can do *Bowler Dessert* a favour by buying your Slow Dazzle Official 2004 Laurel and Hardy calendar from your editor. You can save yourself some money too! Send £10.00, which includes p&p. Overseas readers should send \$20.00 (for air mail delivery) or €15.00 in cash.



Hardy's house sold

In a newspaper of 26th July was something about the house at 3687 Fredonia Street in the Hollywood Hills. . . .

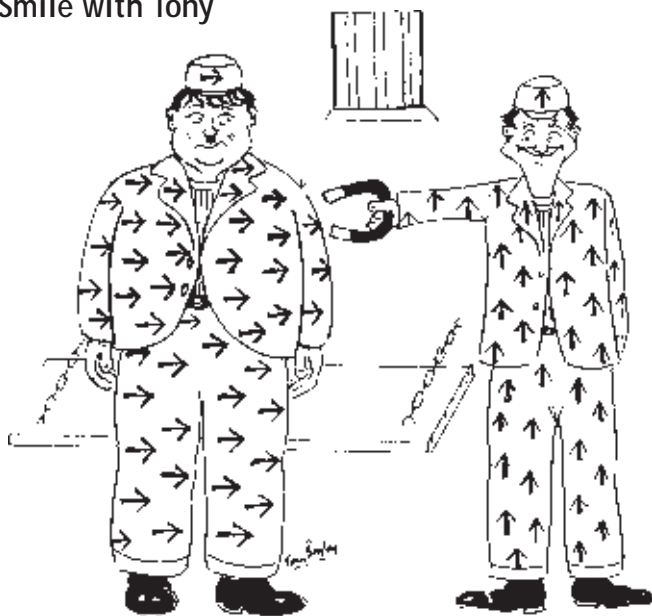
Oliver Hardy's Hollywood CA hideaway of the late 1930s and 1940s has been sold for close to its \$729,000 asking price. The 4-BR 1800 square-foot Mediterranean style house was built in 1928 and belonged to the comic during some of his prime years on film. Hardy's comedy partner Stan Laurel lived across the street. Hardy is said to have regularly yelled at Laurel from the roof.

UK Convention 2005

Remember, at the Grand Sheiks' Meeting at the UK Convention in Birmingham, I announced that the Live Ghost Tent wanted to host the 2005 UK Convention, probably in Bournemouth? We've decided we're definitely going ahead with the plan and we've struck a deal with a very nice hotel right on the sea front in Bournemouth. Of course, the Live Ghost Tent will be proud to host the UK Convention. (If we ever find a large enough and reasonable enough hotel in London we might bid for an International Convention at some stage in the future, but don't hold your breath).

Del Kempster

Smile with Tony



Bath reunion

On 2nd March the (now deceased) Way Out West Tent of Bath had a reunion at the Midland Hotel in Bath. Present were Alan "Mr" Jones, Bob Starling, Paul Tragelles, Mike Welch, Bob Saunders, Chris Rogers, Paul Alecock and myself.

I showed *Two Tars*, *Laughing Gravy* and *Helpmates*. Also a small film I made of a golf day the tent had in 1997, that had not been seen before. All were well received and it seemed like times past.

Graham Walker



The Blockheads and guests at Falkirk for a Stan and Ollie evening

Blockheads on the move

The 20th June meeting in Edinburgh of the Blockheads Tent was held in the Communications Workers' Union Club in Brunswick Street (just off London Road), at the suggestion of Graham Bishop. Gordon Davie says, "It wasn't that we were having problems with the management at the Royal Oak, but since we started meeting there our membership figures have increased and the place is really too small now." The June meeting was something of a trial run, but the new venue has become permanent.

Grand Sheik Charlie Lewis adds, "The room enables everybody to view the films in comfort as well as allowing us to revert to our normal start time of 7.30pm. We can also use the downstairs bar after the meeting and, with prices approximately 25p per pint cheaper than in the average Edinburgh bar, this is not to be sniffed at." The Christmas party has been booked at the new venue.

Charlie spoke of holding a film show in Falkirk at the request of Jim, Robert, Stuart and Andy (aka the Falkirk Four). This came to fruition on 1st August at Lodge St John in Grahamston. There was a good turnout for *Sons of the Desert* and other favourites and around £100.00 was raised for the Statue Appeal.

The function room where the meeting took place has pictures of the past Masters of the Lodge and in 1880 a gentleman called James Finlayson occupied that role! He was a spitting image of Fin and undoubtedly a relative.

Patrol place

Antony Waite's Midnight Patrol Tent has found a new venue, and has changed the day it meets to the first Wednesday of every month. The venue is the New Inn, Derby Street, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent, only a five minutes' walk from the town centre bus station.

Graham's find

At the Farnworth Film Fair, Graham McKenna picked up a copy on 16mm of what he says is the very first black and white cartoon of Laurel and Hardy caricatures in Flip the Frog's sound short *Movie Mad* (1931). It is quite rare and shows the Boys as two pigs. It includes Chaplin and a character like Felix the Cat.



Film Classics

A large number of the Laurel and Hardy sound prints come from Film Classics, a company which reissued films during the 1940s with new titles. The "Film Classics plaque" seen on most of these releases shows a copyright of 1933, no matter which film! They also misnamed stars like Mae Busch ("May Bush") and films like *Chickens* ("Chicken. . .") *Come Home*.

Laughing Gas (July - Sept, 2003)

Roger reports

*Robinson Crusoe*land

Earlier this year I did something that I have done just three times previously in my life. No, it wasn't buying a round of drinks at a tent meeting – I've done that only twice! Now don't get too excited in anticipation of my revealing my "rarity". We are not talking *Hats Off* or *The Rogue Song* here. In fact, when it comes to it, my rarity is commonplace with many other Sons. You see I am talking about changing my job. For anyone who is interested (and presumably if you are not you will have given up reading *Roger Reports* by this time) or for anyone who is considering writing my biography (perhaps the title could be *Watching Paint Dry*) let me give you a swift résumé. My first job was as a Civil Servant. After the relatively easy life at school, it came as a shock to have to work during the day – *Unaccustomed As We Are*. Seeking something more interesting than pen pushing and filing, I then joined the Met Police. I had thought that as I wasn't called Robert I wouldn't qualify as a Bobby, but that's what I was for the next thirty years – *Midnight Patrol*.

Life goes on after you retire from the police and there remained bills (Old Bills?) to be paid. So, next up came a two-year stint of removing pianos and Model-T Fords from persons who hadn't paid their Council Tax in my role as Council Bailiff – *Bacon Grabbers*. I can't say I was over the moon to be doing this job. I mean is there anyone out there who likes paying his or her Council Tax? So I moved on as soon as I could and this brings me on to my third change of occupation. Following the parallel of Laurel and Hardy film titles for my various jobs – only another 103 to go – I've now arrived at my *Utopia*. Putting it another way, I now live and work in *Robinson Crusoe*land. Let me explain. I am now a Borough Patrol Officer in Southend-on-Sea. A what? Haven't you heard of one of them? Me neither, at least not until I successfully applied for the job and took up my post in February of this year. It has just occurred to me that if you successfully applied for a post of "Garden Fence Constructor" would you take up the post or put it down? I digress. A Borough Patrol Officer's task is to try to make the residents and visitors happier with life in Southend. Now if I recommenter correctly, the job description says things like attending to rubbish, graffiti, dumped cars, overhanging shrubbery, cycling on the pavements,

drinking alcohol in forbidden areas and other antisocial acts. But for Mr Robinson, the obvious way to bring happiness to residents and visitors alike is to tell everyone about the fun and laughter that Laurel and Hardy can bring to their lives. So on a daily basis, here I am, walking about in *Robinson Crusoe*land, helping to swell our Saps at Sea membership, enjoying the sunshine and getting paid for it. The other day, I spotted these two



chaps on the beach. They looked vaguely familiar. I can't quite think of where I've seen them before, but in the true spirit of Southend Borough Patrol, I thought I'd tell them about Laurel and Hardy.

So was I successful in bringing a smile to their faces and making them happy? After a twenty-minute conversation, I realised that these two beach boys didn't speak English. I somehow suspected they were from Italy. After all, the 1.15pm train from Turin to Southend Central, stopping at Paris, Brussels, London and Basildon, had just arrived. Now, if I had been trying to explain to these two chaps that it is against the local bylaws to use inflatable water wings on Southend beach on a Tuesday afternoon, I would have got nowhere. But the language of Laurel and Hardy is truly international. Stanlio and Ollio knew precisely what I was talking about. Whether it is Southend, south of London or south of Sorrento, may the world of Laurel and Hardy unite us for generations and . . . centuries of . . . hundreds of years.

Roger Robinson

Postbag

Hats off

During the late forties and into the fifties my father and I were entertainers, although our audiences often begged to differ. We set out to a gig one night in 1952. Laurel and Hardy were appearing at the Nottingham Empire. As we walked along the side of the Empire we saw a familiar figure walking toward us. It was Stan Laurel, accompanied by his wife. I nudged my dad and pointed out that Stan was approaching.



Stan was immaculately dressed in a warm overcoat and snap-brim fedora hat. Mrs Laurel was bedecked with furs, as was the fashion of the day. Dad was dressed very normally, as he wore a funny suit on stage, so changed when he got to the venue. I, on the other hand, was in full tuxedo and carrying a small case containing our props.

As Mr and Mrs Laurel approached, Dad doffed his hat and said, "Good evening." Stan beamed, doffed his own hat and echoed Dad's greeting, adding, "Have a good show!"

"Thank you. The same to you," stammered Dad and so our brief meeting ended, like ships that pass in the night.

My father could not get over it, that an artist of Stan's stature should bother to reply, let alone recognise, or even care, that we were fellow artistes. He retained that memory for the remainder of his quite long life. Those who knew the reputation of the Boys were not so amazed. It was typical of their caring attitude toward all their friends and fans. A lovely moment though, which still lingers fresh in my memory.

Roy Tomlinson

Kenny met them

Kenny Baker, better known as R2D2 in the *Star Wars* films, met the Boys in Southend in the '50s when he was working in *The Midget Revue*. He is quoted as saying that Stan and Ollie were meeting children at a local cinema and that he and the rest of his company went along and that Laurel and Hardy were really nice to them and the children.

Tony Hillman

Statues

In *Bowler Dessert 61* on page 41 there is a picture of two three-foot statues of the Boys seen in Fuengirola for £150 each. I bought a pair of these last summer at Consett indoor market in County Durham for the princely sum of £80 for the pair. What a bargain. I also came across a life-sized pair in a shop in Blackpool for £200 each, but they were too big for both my car and house.

Norman Ramm

Treasure

I bought an assortment of old 9.5mm reels of film some months ago and, because some of them had titles that were unfamiliar and had obviously been changed by Pathé (just like Walton did with some of the 8mm films), I decided to appeal for help in identifying them through the *Letters* page of the American magazine *Classic Images*. Lo and behold, who should be amongst the first to respond to my letter? None other than our dear friend Dave Wyatt. Dave contacted me, stating that he had been trying for years to identify every 9.5mm film and is about to produce a catalogue of the films, detailing changed titles, plot, year of production etc. Thanks to Dave's detective work, I find I have a version of *Over the Fence*, the first Harold Lloyd short (1917), wherein he wears the famous glasses for the first time, and *At First Sight* (1924), the very first one-reel short that Charley Chase made for Hal Roach. Sadly I have to say that *Hats Off* was not found on this occasion, but, as Dave says, Laurel and Hardy's *Duck Soup* was rediscovered on 9.5mm, so there's hope yet for *Hats Off*.

Dave Oyston

Celtic Finn

Do you know that we find, in the Celtic legend *Diarmaid and Grainne* of the Middle-Ages, a warrior chief named Finn?

Jean Poulain

Tibbett's honour

I am no expert and I may have missed past references, but, though I have seen several references to *The Rogue Song*, I can't remember mention of the fact that there was an Oscar nomination for Lawrence Tibbett. There is mention in a large book, *The Secret History of Hollywood's Academy Awards*, by Anthony Holden. Tibbett was nominated as Best Actor in a Leading Role in 1929-30. It was won by George Arliss. According to page 87, MGM "had approached a leading light of New York's Metropolitan Opera for Lawrence Tibbett and starred him in a Lehar rewrite called *The Rogue Song*. This was Tibbett's film debut.

Bill Spalding



Van Gogh

This cartoon is a little tribute to the wonderful tour of the Van Gogh Museum and the Reijksmuseum in Amsterdam, thanks to our brilliant hosts.

Tony Bagley

Ed: A full convention report starts on page 38.

Comments on the last issue

Page 14: What became of George and Beatrice? I know she was still around in the '60s. [Ed: Turn to page 6 for information on Beatrice.]

Page 17: What exactly was the game about?

Page 25: I found Louvish's book a bit of a disappointment – there wasn't enough on their films. Furthermore, there was too much "serious analysis". Can't we just laugh and accept that they were a couple of genuinely nice guys who weren't always lucky in love?

Page 26: The Boys were portrayed by actors in the 1965 *Electronovision* (whatever that means!) version of *Harlow*, starring Carol Lynley. Has anyone ever seen it? They were played by Jim Plunket and John "Red" Fox. I don't know if Bern did beat Jean Harlow in the manner stated. I know that their short-lived marriage was in 1932 and she died in 1937. [Ed: Eve Golden's biography of Jean Harlow, *Platinum Girl* (Abbeyville Press, NY 1991), explains all.]

Page 52: Some day I'm going to get round to watching the 1925 film *Wizard of Oz*. I've long believed that Stan should have played the Scarecrow in 1939 and how about Ollie as the Cowardly Lion?

Mark Taha

Meeting Richard Griffiths

I had the pleasure of meeting that great character actor Richard Griffiths who told me that he had been all set to play Ollie in a musical called *Stan and Babe* by Clement and La Frenais at the Barbican, directed by Trevor Nunn! Apparently it all fell through because the music wasn't up to it so they did *Cats* instead! Does anyone know if a copy of this play exists? I'd love a copy. I would be keen to do an amateur production with new music!

Richard said he thought Harold Lloyd and Buster Keaton were better in terms of timing for the cinema – he thought Stan and Babe a bit slow, but still brilliant. I argued with him, of course. Stan and Babe can make the ridiculous seem realistic and believable and that is genius. He agreed. I didn't quite get him to sign up to the tent or the Sons but he did promise to come and see the show if I could get the script and put it on, which I will try to do. If anyone knows more about Clement and La Frenais's interest in the Boys, that would be helpful. Are they in a tent? I think they live in the US these days, don't they? But they must have come over for filming *Auf Wiedersehen Pet*.

Tony Gears

Mix-up

We have introduced the option for all members to select a film (shorts only) at each meeting by putting the name of the film, or a description of what happens, on a form. These are then entered into a draw and selected at random. The owner of the winning form gets to see the selected film, plus a small prize. This seemed like a good idea with over forty forms handed in at the first time of asking – the winner was John Rodgers who wrote, "Going Picnic Bye-Bye". The film commenced. I asked John if he was enjoying the film, to which he responded, "Yes, but it isn't the film that I wanted to see!"

In my haste to get things moving as we were running late I read the words "Going Bye-Bye" and it never crossed my mind that the word "Picnic" was there for a reason. John, of course, wanted to see *Perfect Day*!

John Burton

Vera Ralston

Vera Hrubá Ralston Alva passed away in California on 9th February. Vera starred with John Wayne and Oliver Hardy in *The Fighting Kentuckian*. She and her husband Charlie were made Honorary Members of the Way Out West Tent at a banquet, which reunited her with *Kentuckian* co-stars Hank Worden and Marie Windsor.

Vera was born in Prague, Czechoslovakia, on 12th July, 1923. She had fond memories of working with the gentle Oliver Hardy, saying, "He was so formal and kind to everyone on the set. He was a true gentleman!"



The Panopticon, photographed this summer by your editor

Betty, Nancy and Bill

Bowler Dessert has in the past told the story of how Betty Spridgeon by chance saw Bill Cubin on television, talking about Laurel and Hardy and mentioning Nancy Wardell as being a living relative of Stan Laurel. Betty recalled that a girl called Nancy was at Batley Art School with her from 1938 till 1940 and that Nancy had told her that her mother was a cousin of Stan Laurel's, so Betty contacted Bill, who gave her Nancy's address. Betty and Nancy had lost touch because of the war, but, thanks to Bill, they were able to renew their friendship after fifty years.

Like Nancy, Betty now looks forward to receiving *Bowler Dessert* and keeping in touch with the Sons of the Desert.



A school photograph, showing Nancy and Betty (front row, second and third left)

The Metcalfes

Nancy Wardell tells us that two Arthur Jeffersons were born on 12th November, 1862. The one quoted in *Bowler Dessert* 61 was indeed Stan's father. A couple of dates were transposed, however, as George Metcalfe died on 5th April, 1915 and Sarah, his wife, died on 16th December, 1916.

Panopticon on Restoration

The 140-year-old Britannia Panopticon Music Hall in the centre of Glasgow needs around £4m to restore it to its former glory. It is the place where Stan Laurel made his first professional stage appearance, aged sixteen years, in 1906. It closed, however, in 1938 and now rests with its crumbling blue façade above an amusement arcade. It featured on *Restoration* (BBC2, 15.08.03.).

Restoration was a series centred round a phone poll which asked viewers to choose just one from thirty buildings which need urgent preservation and redevelopment. The winning building will be restored from funds raised through the programme.

The Panopticon failed to attract the support needed, and had considerably fewer votes than its closest rival. At least it gave the building and its plight a welcome airing and within days 4,500 enquiries were received by the Panopticon preservation organisers.

Tony Hillman remarks, "Griff Rhys Jones mentioned that Stan made his début there, wearing his father's suit, and they showed someone acting as Stan, walking up the stairs and going through a door onto the stage. It later mentioned that with the popularity of films the music hall was killed off, showing a clip from *Putting Pants on Philip* and saying that, in a way, Stan's film popularity helped kill the place!"

AJ Marriot opines, on the failure to win enough votes, "It was a real shame it didn't get through. In my opinion it's the only building that would pay its own way by people going through the door. All the rest would be a burden for life."

In *The Times* (16.09.03.) Roy Hattersley noted, "By focusing attention on the initial thirty candidates, it may attract enough private help to save half of the buildings that were adjudged less worthy than the winner." So there is hope!

Tyne steps

Jazz veteran George Melly narrated a thirty-minute ITV programme on Stan Laurel's early life. It was shown in the north of England on 31st July and elsewhere later. The programme claimed that fifty-two narrow steps in North Shields, leading to a fish quay on the banks of the Tyne, were the unlikely inspiration for *The Music Box*.

In the programme AJ Marriot suggested that Laurel remembered the steps in North Shields when he and Hardy made *Hats Off* and later *The Music Box* on steps in Los Angeles. "We wanted to show that Stan's art and craft was matured in the tradition of the English music hall," said John Mapplebeck of Bewick Films, the documentary's producer.

However, Jonathan Hayward says, "I didn't reckon much to the documentary; it seemed somewhat rushed, parts seemed irrelevant, and the claim that a steep flight of steps in North Shields inspired *The Music Box* looked highly dubious."

Hallmark DVD flop

In the USA, Hallmark released its first Laurel and Hardy DVD on 19th August. It contains *Sons of the Desert*, *The Music Box*, *Another Fine Mess*, *Busy Bodies* and *County Hospital*. Amazon.com and others can supply it.

This was expected to be restored and remastered, from original Roach 35mm material, but it has proved to be of poor quality, from inferior sources.



Overseas media

A bit of news from the Leave 'Em Laughing Tent of Peterborough in Canada. . . .

The 12th February edition of the popular US drama series *The West Wing* showed Martin Sheen's President Bartlett being inspired to do the right thing and send troops to stop a genocide in Africa – after watching the sequence in *March of the Wooden Soldiers*, where Stan and Ollie unleash the giant wooden soldiers against the Bogeymen.

The weekly Canadian news magazine *Maclean's* had Laurel and Hardy on the cover and inside front pages of their 24th February edition – for an article to illustrate the problems associated with dieting! Unfortunately, the Boys weren't identified in either photo or in the article. At least they were seen!

Dean Shewring

Bill's notes

✧ I saw a book with an intriguing title in a charity shop. It was by Ed McBain, renowned for the *87th Precinct* police-procedural novels. It was called *Fat Ollie's Book* – but not our fat Ollie.

✧ *The Herald* (06.09.03.) reported the death on 1st September of Rand Brooks, film and TV actor. His claims to fame are that he was Scarlett O'Hara's first husband in *Gone with the Wind*, and gave Marilyn Monroe her first screen kiss. After retiring from acting he set up a private ambulance service with his first wife – Lois Laurel, Stan's daughter.

✧ I have just bought a Laurel and Hardy video in my local charity shop, with two films. When I got it home I found that it is a colourised version. I haven't seen any of them but don't think that I will approve when I get a chance to watch it. I don't see the point of colourising.

✧ I was invited to the centenary celebrations of the opening of the Elder Park Library in Govan on 5th September (I did a little book on Govan a few years ago – a big seller) and had a talk with two men connected with the Panopticon. Johnny Beattie, the comedian, was one. He was born in Govan and he and I were in the same class in secondary school and are still firm friends. He is keen for restoration, of course. The other was Colin Beattie (no relation) who was donating a memorial window. He thinks the problem with the Panopticon is with the owner who has the ground floor with an amusement arcade.

Bill Spalding

Bep Reijnhoudt

The news slowly spread that Bep Reijnhoudt died on 25th August. She was in hospital recovering from a second major operation and everything was reportedly looking good. But while Bep was still in intensive care and under light sedation she was struck by a brain haemorrhage.

Bep was an essential part of the Perfect Day Tent in Holland, always at the side of her husband Bram to support and help – a role she played admirably at the European Convention in June, despite recent surgery.

Bram, Marleen and Berend wanted a family cremation for Bep, which meant a low profile for the *Sons of the Desert*. We offer our sincere sympathies among the sadness.

From the editor's desk



On the way home from the European Convention in June, I visited Brugge in Belgium. In the centre of the city a gift shop caught my eye on account of an array of some lovely Laurel and Hardy ornaments (about 20cm high) which

I had not seen elsewhere. I bought one – a bargain at less than £10.00 – and contented myself by photographing the others in the shop window.

This reminded me that I had bought a statuette in Belgium five or more years ago. I often remark to myself on the likeness between that statuette and the subsequent design for the Laurel and Hardy statue proposed for Ulverston.

Left: statuette I bought in Belgium a few years ago

Below left: maquette of the Ulverston statue, about the same size (50cm) as above, still on sale for £125.00 in aid of Statue Appeal funds via Eric Woods (address on page 62)

Right: model I bought this year in Brugge

Below: others in the shop window



Son of the Desert Neil Sims is a sculptor and has just finished a couple of splendid busts of the Boys. They are available exclusively from Rob Lewis (address on page 63) at £35.00 per pair, in colour, black and white or metallic finish. They stand 11cm high.



Busts by Neil Sims

Lessons in humility

Dave Oyston came across a charming section in the book Game, Set and Match, by John Caden. There was even a drawing of Laurel and Hardy. . . .



My second lesson in humility, and undoubtedly the most memorable lesson of my whole life, was my meeting with Laurel and Hardy. In 1952, they undertook a farewell tour of Great Britain which was to include only five venues. At that time, they were huge stars – legends in their own lifetime! Stan Laurel had spent some of his childhood in Bishop Auckland and so it was decided that the Sunderland Empire would be one of the five theatres they would play. Even for the biggest stars in the world, playing the Sunderland Empire in 1952 meant at least four and a half hours each night confined to the building. They would be on-stage for approximately one and three-quarter hours of that time – the rest of the time they would be in their dressing rooms.

Consequently, when a rather nervous young priest knocked at the door of the No 1 dressing room and said, "I'm Father Caden, the priest from the Catholic Stage Guild," the door was opened by Stan Laurel with a welcoming smile, and I was graciously ushered in to their holy-of-holies!

He led me over to the other side of the dressing room where Oliver Hardy was relaxing with a book. He was seated at the performers' black worktop, with its large mirror "haloed" with a dozen bright bulbs. He hauled himself out of his chair and with a wonderful "Olly" smile, shook my hand and drawled, "It's a pleasure to meet you, Father. Would you care for a drink?"

I declined, with a stammered, "No thank you, all the same."

"Please do take a seat, Father," Olly insisted. If I had been the Pope, I couldn't have been made to feel more welcome! They talked

to me about England, about my work as a priest and why I chose it, about the influence of the Catholic Church and the Episcopalian Church in America, and many other topics. As I sat there, I had to pinch myself to be sure that these were really the men who had enriched my schoolboy years and early manhood with so much laughter and pathos. They never once alluded to their film fame during our forty minutes conversation. When I tried to say how much happiness they had given me and millions more, Olly, with a deprecating smile, merely said, "Thank you, Father, that's very gracious of you . . ." and gently changed the subject!

As a priest, I had often been intrigued with the personification of "Wisdom" in the *Old Testament Book of Wisdom* – since 1952, I have never ceased to marvel at "Humility" personified in the very disparate persons of Stan Laurel and Oliver Hardy.

◇ Ed: Note that the 1952 tour was not the last and in fact comprised thirty venues. All the details are in AJ Marriot's book *Laurel & Hardy – The British Tours*. One and three quarter-hours on stage; that's longer than the Boys' feature films! In two words, impossible.

Violence

Was the Dalai Lama thinking of Stan and Ollie when he wrote, "If you succeed through violence at the expense of others' rights and welfare, you have not solved the problem, but only created the seeds for another."

Is it a mirage?



Believe it or not this frame is a rectangle

Down at the pub

On 28th February I was chauffeured to the Barton's Arms public house by Mandy (my better half). We had heard that Carl Chinn was planning to broadcast live from the venue that day. Would he still be there? We walked in and, as luck would have it, the broadcast was actually taking place. Carl recognised me and called me over. "We have the Laughing Gravy Train with us," he said (he always calls us that) and live on the radio he asked me about the Laurel and Hardy connection to the pub. I had with me the photograph of the Boys standing outside the pub (perfect for radio, I hear you say!) and told him Stan and Babe would often use the Barton's Arms because the Aston Hippodrome (where they were performing) was only a few yards away.

It was Mandy's first visit to the pub and she wasn't disappointed. She thought it was beautiful. We managed to have a few words with the new manager, Colin Smith. We showed him the photograph and hopefully we can let him have a copy for the upstairs function room.

John Ullah

[abridged from *The Birmingham Bark*]

Sparse recognition

In an interview from *Cult Movies* issue 21 (1997), reproduced in *Laughing Gas* this summer, this question was put to Lois Laurel: "Laurel and Hardy are now considered to be among the greatest comedians of all time, but, during their prime, critical reception was hardly overwhelming. How did your father feel about this lack of critical recognition?"

Lois replied, "It didn't bother him. He felt that he and Babe made 'B' pictures all along, and that Charlie Chaplin and Harold Lloyd made the 'A' films."

Brats

Just a bit of news as to what is happening in the Brats Tent. . . .

Firstly it is with sadness that I have to report the passing of Henry Lawlor following a short illness. Henry was a member of the Brats Tent for a number of years and also attended every meeting of the Blotto Tent in Rotherham while it was up and running a few years ago. Henry was a veteran of the Second World War, having served his country in Burma. He was a kind and gentle Son who, according to his daughter Deborah, would "split his sides" when watching the Boys. At the funeral service it was announced that *The Trail of the Lonesome Pine* would be played in Henry's memory. I couldn't help thinking that Henry would have been pleasantly amused when the hi-fi didn't work (in true Laurel and Hardy style!).

On 28th July we held another curry night at the Lajawab restaurant, with twenty Sons in attendance. This time the event coincided with a buffet evening which entailed an "all you can eat" menu for a mere £5.95. We couldn't believe our luck as this proved to be excellent value.

We hosted a 15th Anniversary Banquet at the New Crown Inn in Handsworth on Monday 27th October.

John Burton



A Chump at Modena

Italy's A Chump at Oxford Tent is still prospering, having celebrated its tenth anniversary. Its magazine *Due Piselli in un Baccello* (*Two Peas in a Pod*) has reached issue number 10, with stories and drawings which continue to impress.

Grand Sheik Medici Tiziano has a new address: Via/Della/Morane No 461, 41100, Modena, Italy.



Chris on the loose

Chris Coffey has moved house. In the process he discovered, "I have more tapes, both video and audio, of the Boys and the Sons than I thought. I should catalogue what I have and finish the projects I have started before I start anything else."

His new address is 37 Holbrook Close, St Helens, Merseyside, WA9 3XH. His phone number remains 01744 817130. E-mail Chris. Coffey@merseymail.com.

The Bacon Grabbers Tent won a lottery grant, which was spent on a DVD player, a video player, a projector and a small sound system. Chris says, "Super 8 has served us well these last fourteen years. When I get sorted I will put our surplus super 8 and 16mm stuff for sale on the tent website, cheap to any tent that can give it a good home."

Chris gave a talk to a retirement group in Warrington. He says, "They are people who have retired from the NHS and still meet up once a month for a social. I was guest speaker and talked for forty minutes on Laurel and Hardy. I showed them *Wrong Again*. As it is a silent film I didn't need the speakers and amp! The little speaker inside the projector sufficed for the music. It is nice showing the Boys to an audience you know normally don't watch them and probably would not out of choice. The laughter in the audience was there, but not as much as at a tent meeting."

Remarks Chris, "Now I can attend conventions at last (health permitting) what does one do when one does not indulge in alcoholic refreshment nor is mobile enough to go on the outdoor trips?" There is a solution – Neil Evans and Chris will take charge of the Laurel and Hardy Cinema at next year's UK Convention and provide the gear for the PA announcements plus the late evening discos at the hotel. Chris has done DJ work on and off for twenty years and says, "I particularly enjoy it. For those attendees who enjoy a twirl around the dance floor or listening to dance music, I would like to know every conventioneer's favourite dance records from each of the 50s, 60s, 70s, 80s, 90s and 00s! Of course, I have a brilliant collection, in my opinion, and, having done over a hundred functions over the years, have few problems. But it is the Sons' party so I would like them to let me know now what they want, as a refusal to oblige on the night often offends."



Nothing new

I have just noticed one subtitle in Harold Lloyd's *Safety Last* (1923) goes, "His pal Limpy Bill – they had one pocketbook between them, usually empty." A Beanie Walker-ism, eight years before *Laughing Gravy*.

David Wyatt

Topsy and others

I taped the film about Gilbert and Sullivan, *Topsy-Turvy*. During a rehearsal scene the performer George Grossmith says to another performer, "Well, that's another fine mess you've got me into!" WS Gilbert intervenes to say, "No, my line is 'another nice mess' and I would be obliged if you would say it *comme ça*!" Grossmith obliges the writer. Is this a coincidence or is Mike Leigh, who wrote and directed *Topsy-Turvy*, a Laurel and Hardy fan?

George Grossmith was the highest paid star of the D'Oyly Carte company and wrote the 1894 humorous classic *The Diary of a Nobody*, illustrated by his brother Weedon. Weedon was an actor who specialised in portrayals of "inconsequential men who take themselves too seriously"! *The Diary of a Nobody* is the diary of Mr Pooter, who lives at "The Laurels", Brickfield Terrace, Holloway. Now isn't that interesting?

The Times magazine on 22nd February had an interview with Alex Ferguson, with the reporter describing going to Ferguson's house thus: "In we all went, into a hall. Off the hall to the left was what I later discovered was a snooker room, complete with a tartan carpet and small busts of John Wayne, Stan Laurel and Oliver Hardy."

Speaking of John Wayne and Oliver Hardy, on the same day *The Times* published the obituary of Vera Ralston, who appeared in *The Fighting Kentuckian* with them. [Ed: see page 14.] She attended the convention in Las Vegas in 1992 and was happy to sign autographs. She signed a photograph of her with John Wayne and Ollie for me.

Grahame Morris

Bee big

In *The Hoose-Gow*, one scene scripted but not filmed involved eating some of the warden's coconut cake, and swallowing a bee that had landed on it.

Antony Waite



Laurel and HarDay

Beer Engine, Wigan, 6th September, 2003

Neil Evans reports

We started with our own Chris Coffey presenting the *Sci-Fi Connection*. He connected Laurel and Hardy with everything from *Red Dwarf* to *The X-Files*.

Dougie Brown entertained us with some foreign language Laurel and Hardy films, including *Les Politiqueries*, which has a party

scene with cabaret consisting of a magician and the famous Hadji Ali.

As usual we had mountains of memorabilia to browse through as well as displays on the walls.

Tony Bagley and his band of faithful helpers had the customary Nancy Wardell Charity Auction, raising £332; congratulations to everyone who bid for something.

The Bacon Grabbers Quiz, devised by that cunning Dave Wyatt, this year had the theme "Who's That With Laurel and Hardy?" You had to identify people in scenes with the Boys. Last year's winner Matthew Ross won. Well done, Matthew!



The Avalon Boys did us proud again, with a half-hour spot of great entertainment. They also accompanied the Grand Sheiks in the loyal toasts and singing *We are the Sons of the Desert*. Many Grand Sheiks had already had one or two pints of our special brew, Ugly Dougly Bitter, named in honour of Dougie Brown (who else?).

But the highlight of the day was undoubtedly the World Kneesie-Earsie-Nosey Championships. To tie in with our sci-fi theme we had a contestant from Alaska, who wasn't actually there in body. The Grand Sheik of the Below Zero Tent in Anchorage, Alaska had visited us earlier in the year to demonstrate the "Alaskan Freestyle Technique" which keeps them warm on long cold nights in Anchorage. It has to be seen to be believed! Back at our home-grown contest we again had a large entry from many different tents and, in a first for the Laurel and HarDays, we had a draw between Denise from the Hats Off Tent of Derby and Zog from Alderaan (before Darth Vader blew it up).

Altogether another great day. Oh, one more thing: we are going to do it again in 2004. We never learn, do we?



Reporter and technical ace Neil Evans (top), MC Ian Parker (above), Chris Coffey and guest speaker Dougie Brown (below left), Gary Winstanley and Steve Barlow, launching their latest Laurel and HarDay video (below centre) and the Kneesie-Earsie-Nosey finalists: Zog, Denise, Craig and Michael

Chris Coffey writes about the *Sci-Fi Connection* on page 32



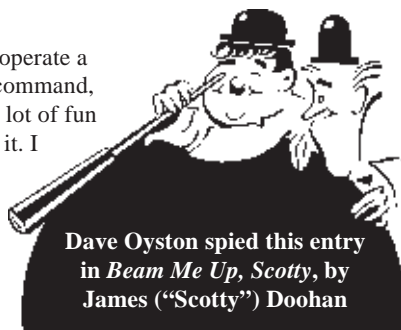
On the wrong *Trek*

There was a scene in *The Voyage Home* wherein I endeavor to operate a twentieth-century computer. When it fails to respond to voice command, I'm handed a mouse and promptly start to speak into it. I had a lot of fun with that scene. It had a sort of Laurel and Hardy sensibility to it. I always looked upon DeForest as Ollie and I was Stanley.

It was a motif that kept going beyond the film. DeForest, Nichelle, George, Walter and I shot our last scenes – the heads for the time travel sequence. We finished at about ten-fifteen in the morning, and we were scheduled to be transported back at four-thirty from Monterey to Los Angeles, connecting through San Francisco. So we said, "C'mon, let's get out of here."

After about half an hour, we got into an airplane, a prop plane, and we sat there and sat there, and nobody told us why. The air conditioner came on and produced a hum. I said, in a Stan Laurel voice, "Ollie?" De turned around and said, "Yes?"

"Ollie, I wonder if we should tell the pilot that a hum isn't going to get us there." The whole place broke up (except for one person who obviously didn't understand the whole thing – I guess).



Dave Oyston spied this entry in *Beam Me Up, Scotty*, by James ("Scotty") Doohan

Fat One and Thin One

Then the most fortunate couple in American cinema was born, Stan and Ollie – the Thin One and the Fat One, as the Europeans called them. Added to the plaintive, confused, and defenseless humor of the English ex-clown was the American Oliver Hardy, "Babe", with his bossy, but just as catastrophic, know-it-all, constitutionally clumsy character. That coupling of stupidity and ingenuousness excited the tenderest of sentiments and a vague sense of superiority in audiences.

La Repubblica (1990),
translated by AK Bierman

Leo's project

Leo Brooks has been in touch, saying that he is engaged in a research project on Oliver Hardy Sr for the Laurel and Hardy Museum of Harlem and the US National Parks Service.

Dante Memorial Fund

Henry August Jansen (3rd October, 1883 - 16th June, 1955) starred with Laurel and Hardy in A-Haunting We Will Go (1942). In The Linking Ring (June, 2003) Byron Walker had an inspiring announcement. . . .

Bargain corner



Bill Crouch visited the Amsterdam Waterlooplein Flea Market in July and saw this three-foot tall statue for sale for €55

America's love of magic and magicians is a matter of record in the history of the United States. As a result, in death, the great names from the "Golden Age of Magic" have all been suitably interred and their final resting places duly marked. All except Harry Jansen, professionally known as Dante.

Those travelling to the Pierce Brothers Chapel of the Pines in Los Angeles, California, wishing to pay their respects to the Master Magician who gained international fame as Dante, are unable to do so.

In the basement, which is never opened to the public, are over 30,000 small 4" x 6" boxes in an area referred to as "Communal Vaultage". Dante's name is on one of those boxes.

Now, 47 years after Dante's death, the surviving family members would like to give the great magician and his wife the final resting place they deserve.

To this end, the Dante Memorial Fund has been established to purchase an inurnment niche for Harry and Edna Jansen at the San Francisco Columbarium in Northern California. (Dante's only surviving daughters now live in Northern California.) This centrally located, unique 1898 historical building survived the famous 1906 earthquake in San Francisco, and is now the only operating cemetery in the entire city.

Donations may be sent to The Dante Memorial Fund, c/o West America Bank, PO Box 47, Novato, CA 94948, USA.



Ulverston Carnival

Over two hundred Sons of the Desert were in Ulverston for the Carnival on 5th July. Fifty-one of them were from Bradford's County Hospital Tent, with a similar number from Birmingham's Laughing Gravy Tent. The parade, a visit to the Laurel and Hardy Museum and a few cocktails made the celebration in Stan Laurel's town of birth a day to remember. Among the lookalikes were youngsters, below centre, Matthew Lines (as Ollie) and Jack Ramsden (as Stan).



Hardy's mother's grave

Success! The burial place of Ollie's mother has been found. On a reasonable hunch, I drove to Atlanta and took the train to the West Lake stop. I disembarked and hiked some distance to Westview Cemetery – a gigantic place. I stopped at the office and told a woman there that I was looking for an Emily or Emmie Jackson or Hardy. After some initial confusion, she pulled up a reference to Emily Norvell Hardy – Ollie's mother. She then gave me a map of the cemetery and I realised that my destination was on the far side of the place, at least half a mile away. Ollie's mother is entombed in the largest mausoleum I've ever seen. It's called Westview Abbey, built around 1942 in the Gothic style. The mausoleum chapel looks exactly like a 12th century European Gothic chapel. I wandered through beautiful marble halls with the crypts stacked up to the ceiling. The big roof exhaust fan needed repair, so the whole thing was slightly airless. Magnificent, awesome, creepy and claustrophobic all at the same time.

I had the location of her crypt, Tier EE, #1011, but, since there are no numbers written on the walls, it was meaningless to me. I was alone in this building, just wandering up and down lengthy corridors, looking at names. I finally heard a sound and found a caretaker doing some work. I showed him my information and he immediately took me to her crypt. She's located on the basement level. The floors were slippery from all the humidity and rain, and he was afraid I'd fall. Her crypt was five tiers up, just below the ceiling, making it hard to read. We determined, however, that it said "Emily N Hardy 1860-1948". So I learned some things – one that she, unsurprisingly, had given up the name Jackson, and had gone back to the name of her second husband, Oliver Hardy, Sr. Secondly, the year of her death, which I had previously not known: she did live to the ripe old age of eighty-eight. I'm going to try to find out the day and month, then search for obits in the Atlanta papers.

Any Hardy fans who want to visit the grave should go to Westview Cemetery (on the west side of Atlanta), then to Westview Abbey, the mausoleum at the opposite end from the main gate. One hopes that Haywood Graham, the chap who showed me around, will be in the building to show the visitor downstairs to the correct corridor. Emmie seems to be all alone down there, with no family in adjoining crypts, a long way from Grovetown.

Bob Wilson

Adverts

◇ David Todd, 2 Inverleith Avenue, Edinburgh, EH3 5PT (telephone 0131 551 1865) has original oil paintings of Laurel and Hardy for sale, plus limited edition prints. They are also available through Grand Sheik Charlie Lewis.

◇ Grand Sheik Antony Waite is researching Laurel and Hardy caricature appearances in cartoons. He says, "Can anyone sell or lend a copy of Leonard Maltin's book *Of Mice and Magic* (or photocopy the bits I need)? It is out of print, and I am finding it difficult to get a copy."

Charity evening in Essex

The Men o' War Tent staged a charity evening on 17th May with £120 raised going to Macmillan Nursing. Says Paul Harding, "This was an 'open' show and, with a view to raising funds, we promoted it in the local media. Some of Laurel and Hardy's best silent work was represented in the compilation *Laurel and Hardy's Laughing Twenties*, together with probably their best feature film, *Way Out West*."

Tent logos: no 3



The logo of the Men o' War Tent was drawn by Paul Harding, who has been the Grand Sheik throughout most of the tent's existence.

In brief

◇ Alberto Sordi, the Italian actor, film director and script writer, died on 25th February in Rome. He was eighty-two years old and was known in Italy for many years as "the voice of Ollio" in dubbed Laurel and Hardy films. Sordi starred in his own right in many Italian film comedies of the fifties and sixties.

◇ Glenn Mitchell was married on 6th September to Linda. Congratulations and best wishes.

◇ Grand Sheik Graham McKenna was interviewed on the Radio Leeds *Good Morning* programme by Ruth Whiteley on 29th July. This went out live from his home!

◇ Rob Lewis tells us that the Helpmates Tent has said goodbye to Bill Winfield, who has moved to Cyprus. Says Rob, "It was a shame to see Bill go. He was one of the Helpmates' characters."

◇ At the beginning of June, John Osborne from Dublin visited the Laughing Gravy Tent of Birmingham, of which he is a member, in addition to being a member of his local Jitterbugs Tent.

◇ *TV Quick* earlier this year reported that Johnny Vegas and Dustin Hoffman are to play Laurel and Hardy. We await details.

◇ Antony Waite tells us that a Swedish work colleague says that the Boys' names in Swedish, Helan and Halvan, translate as "the whole and the half"!

◇ About twenty Laurel and Hardy fans in Belleville, Illinois began a two-day film festival of their silent films with a pie fight on 19th July.

◇ Steve Bartley has found a rarity on the Monkees' website <http://www.monkees.net>. It is a song titled *Laurel and Hardy*.

◇ A Hal Roach Studios website has been launched. Visit it at <http://www.halroachstudios.com>.

◇ The County Hospital Tent has a new website at <http://www.groups.msn.com/countyhospitalonline>.

◇ There is a Kneesie-Earsie-Nosie tutorial on the <http://www.laurel-and-hardy.co.uk> website.

◇ Who else whistled the *Cuckoo Song* thirty to forty times a day, as well as *The Trail of the Lonesome Pine*? Latterly, even as an old lady, she was one of Stan and Ollie's greatest fans, although she attended only one convention (the 1993 Scottish Convention in Stranraer). Dougie Brown reports that Penelope the cockatiel died after a short illness in April.

◇ *Yours* magazine has its annual *A Year with Yours 2004* out now. On the cover is included a picture of Laurel and Hardy.

◇ Tony Gears writes, "I'm a teacher and at school I came across the book *Living Language* by George Kewith and John Shuttleworth, published by Hodder and Staughton. On the cover is a picture of our heroes from *A Chump at Oxford*."

◇ *Mr Laurel and Mr Hardy: An Affectionate Biography* by John McCabe has been reprinted.

The Lot of Fun

24th UK Convention

*2nd till 5th May, 2003
based at the Great Barr Hotel, Birmingham
and hosted by the Laughing Gravy Tent*

The Hal Roach studio was known as “The Lot of Fun” and that describes to perfection the 24th UK Sons of the Desert Convention. I always knew that when I passed on the baton, I mean pineapple, to John Ullah and the Laughing Gravyites at Southend last year, the conventioners in Brum would have the time of their lives. And so it proved to be. As past masters in hosting a great Convention (who could forget that 1998 International extravaganza?) the Laughing Gravy Tent came up trumps again.

From the word “go” on Friday afternoon, after Registration, there was a buzz in the air. What a warm feeling it is to be back with the rest of the family that is the Sons of the Desert. The Parade of Tents confirmed that we had come from far and near. Thirteen Sons had travelled from America (now that is far), the welcome quintet of Mathias, Michael, Peter, Harry and Christel had again joined us from Germany, and UK Sons from



Mandy welcomed all with Won't You be my Lovey Dovey?

***A report by Roger “Happy Conventioneer” Robinson,
with photos by Steve Robinson
and Willie McIntyre***

north and south of Hadrian's Wall were there in abundance. Together we filled the room with international levity. The Friday entertainment commenced with the sweet sounds of “Lola”, alias Mandy Finney, singing *Won't You be my Lovey Dovey*? There is no answer to that. Well, actually there was, because Paul Price, our congenial MC, had us baying for more so loudly that the chant of “We want Lola” could be heard all over the rest of the Midlands.



The Loyal Toasts followed and Steve Smith, one of the Tent's founder members, paid a fitting tribute to another founder member, his friend and our friend, the much missed Barrie Finney. Although Barrie died a few weeks after the Southend Convention in 2002, he had



Hosts John Ullah and Mandy Finney with Ollie and Stan

already designed a logo for the Birmingham Convention. My goodness, we wore those Convention T-shirts with pride over the weekend.

Sunshine arrived on Saturday for our “Away Day” from the hotel. Coaches conveyed the merry Sons to the attractive town of Bridgnorth. Everyone had a one-way ticket to travel on the steam train that runs through the pretty Severn Valley. The choice of train was our own and Sons were able to stop off at their leisure at the intervening stops between Bridgnorth and Bewdley. As Sons were reunited with the coaches everyone seemed even merrier. Had the lure of local taverns been too much to resist?

With a quick turn-around back at the hotel, the coaches next conveyed us to Perry Barr Greyhound Track. How appropriate it was that the Sons now found themselves cheering on Laughing Gravy's canine relatives in an evening of excitement, delight, frustration and fun. We had a suite of function rooms to ourselves in the main stand. Quite frankly we had it *made* in every way. We *made* ourselves at home, *made* our predictions, with a little bit of Lady Luck some Sons *made* a



Loco Sons in an engine shed at Bridgnorth

packet but most of us *made* a monkey of ourselves and emptied our wallets far too quickly! Kevin Hepplestone did have his night *made* for him as he was selected to present the trophy to the owner of the winning greyhound in the Laughing Gravy Stakes. There was a resounding cheer for our hero, the red fez-bedecked Heppy, as he carried out his special duty on the podium. He was indeed a Lucky Dog.

Whoever said that Sunday is a day of rest has obviously never been to a Sons UK Convention. Pat Finney was the Games Mistress, complete with whistle. Every time she blew the whistle there was a spontaneous chorus of "Good morning to you, Good morning to you, Good morning dear teacher, Good morning to



Pat Finney instructed George Cook and all on the intricacies of the Chickens Come Home game



Peter Brodie was another Lucky Dog at the races. He will be hosting next year's UK Convention!



Last year's convention hosts were able to relax this time

◇ The Millennium Suite in the hotel had frequent Laurel and Hardy film shows. It was also the location of a "Fintastic" talk from John de Santo, who is researching the life and works of James Finlayson. And here was presented the World Premiere of the film of the 1998 International Convention.

you! There were three indoor team games, comprised of throwing bean bags at a model ghost (*A-Haunting We Will Go*), dressing up in medical attire (*County Hospital*), and herding paper chickens into a box (*Chickens Come Home*). With huge laughter all round, full marks go to Pat for devising such a memorable hour of frenzied fun. Further fun followed with the ever-popular Eric Woods (he must be related to Mae Busch!) presenting the Stan Hooton Memorial Quiz. The brave contestants responded to the questions with blank looks, witty errors or an impressive knowledge of the Laurel and Hardy films. Charlie Lewis and Martin Tierney proved that they didn't need any coughing from the audience to assist them in carrying the trophy back to Scotland. And to think that we all regarded them as Blockheads!



There were obligatory cocktails at the Charlie Hall pub



Terry Weir wore the best waistcoat

In the afternoon, shuttle buses conveyed us to the Charlie Hall pub for the partaking of a glass or two of good old mountain water. It is a great credit to John Ullah and his tent to have persuaded Wetherspoons to name this fine pub after Birmingham-born Charlie Hall. "The little nemesis" is remembered in the pub with photographs and a short biography together with many stills of Laurel and Hardy. No wonder the local press and TV were on hand to capture the magic moment when so many Laurel and

Hardy fans raised their glasses and sang their anthem. Back at the



hotel we were joined by our favourite lookalikes, Bud and Steve Hodgson. They were in top form both as Stan and Ollie and also in their lively rock-a-billy repertoire.

Bob Hickson (left) looked none the worse for his recent surgery



Roger Robinson and Paul Allen got carried away when they won first prize in the Fancy Dress Contest

It was the Sons themselves who provided the bulk of the evening's entertainment. Firstly, the Fancy Dress Parade saw strangely clad friends as Laurel and Hardy characters or depicting a facet from their films. The non-participating conventioners were generous in their applause and, in my humble opinion, accurate in their judgment (my goodness it was hot in that dustbin!). The main entertainment, according to the posters and flyers, was "The Happydrome, Birmingham". Cleverly, John Ullah had incorporated *Sons Entertain* under this banner and with his panel of International Judges (Del Kempster, Laura Tierney, Harry Hoppe and Kathy Hess) had the audience laughing with their caustic and witty remarks following each act. Full marks go to all the participants for making us laugh, cry, cringe, fall asleep, drink more but above all enjoy a variety evening that had to be seen to be believed. The deserved winners were Neville and Michael Beardsmore and Stuart Grant in their *Return of the Three*



Averril Renton came second in the Fancy Dress Contest for her interpretation of a "Sun of the Desert" and Graham Bishop had a special mention for his "Blue Boy"

◇ Memorabilia from the collection of the late Barrie Finney was auctioned and proceeds were donated to the Statue Appeal.

Must-Get-Beers act – mind you, they were on home soil.

Convention Mondays are always a bit sad. It is time to say our goodbyes and head home. This year, before the Grand Sheiks' Meeting, there was one extra bonus. The Charlies, Birmingham's answer to the Oscars, produced a few extra smiles and chuckles. We were reminded of each of the nominee's qualifications for being mentioned at this prestigious ceremony (sending too much money to pay for the convention / making too much noise during the weekend / missing the coach to the dog track etc). Despite making a Charlie of themselves, the winners all seemed to be pleased enough to walk away with their trophies. Yes, laughter prevailed until the very end of this wonderful convention.

Next year more laughter and fun is guaranteed when Blotto of Tameside play hosts to the UK Conventioneers. I know I will be there but I will still have such vivid memories of the 2003 UK Convention when the Laughing Gravy Tent celebrated its tenth year in the best way possible, by presenting the convention I will always remember as "The Lot of Fun".

Thanks

One hundred and twenty-one people attended the full UK Convention in Birmingham. We also had various guests popping in along the way. I would just like to say "thank you" to everyone who came. Judging by the cards, letters and e-mails, it seems everyone enjoyed themselves. Thanks to your generosity we managed to raise £1,108.37 for the Statue Appeal.

Incidentally, the night before the convention around one hundred and fifty Sons made their way to our Laughing Gravy Tent meeting. It was a great night and I was so pleased that people took up our offer to sample the madness of one of our meetings.

John Ullah



Neville, Stuart and Michael starred in The Return of the Three Must-Get-Beers and walked off with the top prize in the Sons Entertain section



At the Ball That's (Not) All for Steve (Stan) and Bud (Ollie) Hodgson

◇ Dave Dodd won the Wall Quiz, which featured drawings by Barrie Finney.

Also in the cast: Viola Richard



Bob Spiller reveals that she was no shrinking violet!

An obscure actress for little more than twelve months in silent two-reelers at the Hal Roach studios has developed quite a following over the years and generated more than a little curiosity. Did Viola Richard (for it is she) work at other studios and what happened to her? There were few clues.

William Everson considered her “attractive, pert and vivacious with a fine sense of comedy timing” but suggested that her resemblance to Clara Bow could have “held her back from important roles.” From such a comparison arose the possibility that she was already in films in the mid-twenties and conceivably ended up at the Roach lot, a refuge for those whose careers had faltered. The only hard fact came from Randy Skretvedt: her Roach contract was abruptly terminated early in 1928. The Internet Movie Database offered some personal details but these only added to other misinformation.

Not until quite recently did dedicated research in the USA unlock aspects of her private life, an outline of which appears in Fact File 1. Coincidentally in the UK, a virtually forgotten film provided another key. Open sesame at last!

Long after the demise of Pathescope, its films released on 9.5mm have revealed footage that



*How to win at bridge: Sailors, Beware!
Viola is on the left*

Fact File 1

With acknowledgements to Bill Cappallo and Brad Farrell

<i>Full name</i>	Evelyn Viola Richard
<i>Born</i>	26th January, 1904, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada
<i>Parents</i>	John Richard & (English born) Alice Sweeting
<i>Relocation</i>	Parents move to USA 1910
<i>1st husband</i>	Alexander Kempner 1928-38
<i>2nd husband</i>	Sydney Rusinow 1942-51
<i>3rd husband</i>	Lawrence McCafferty 1953-73
<i>Enterprise</i>	The Viola Richard Corporation Cosmetics Company, Beverly Hills
<i>Died</i>	28th December, 1973, Palm Springs, California

might otherwise never have survived. Dave Wyatt, long-time collector, cataloguer and co-researcher of this gauge, spotted our Viola in *Exclusive Rights*, a six-reel feature released in December, 1926.

In Pathescope’s two-reel cut-down, she has a screentime of less than a minute. Her absence from the cast list in the AFI catalogue offers further indication that this was probably no more than a bit part in what the *Moving Picture World* review described as an “exceptionally lurid and sensational melodrama of crooked practices”. Now what was a nice girl like Viola doing in a film like that? Playing a gangster’s moll who keeps a gun in her handbag ready for a killing, that’s what! Perhaps she had small parts in other films, but our subject remains elusive.

Fact File 2 contains Viola’s Roach filmography, but difficulties remain in determining the full extent of her roles. *What Women Did for Me* is not readily available, *Love 'Em and Feed 'Em* is a lost film and only a three minute extract exists from *Never The Dames Shall Meet*. Uncertainties too surround her credited walk-on appearances in *Tit for Tat* and *Sprucin' Up* at her old studio. Whether these were the result of social visiting or a tentative career resumption is unknown, but as she is reported to have become fairly affluent by then, the former seems more likely.

Fact File 2

Filmography: Hal Roach films

<i>Title</i>	<i>Release date</i>	<i>Series</i>	<i>Role</i>
Why Girls Love Sailors	17.07.27.	All Star (L&H)	Willie's girl "Nelly"
What Women Did for Me	14.08.27.	Charley Chase	Dean's daughter?
Sailors, Beware!	25.09.27.	All Star (L&H)	bridge player
Love 'Em and Feed 'Em	12.11.27.	All Star (H solo)	telephone operator
Do Detectives Think?	20.11.27.	All Star (L&H)	Judge's wife "Mrs Foozle"
Never the Dames Shall Meet	24.12.27.	Charley Chase	Charley's wife
Dumb Daddies	??.28.	Max Davidson	?
Leave 'Em Laughing	28.01.28.	All Star (L&H)	dental nurse
Flying Elephants	12.02.28.	All Star (L&H)	Stone Age girl "Blushing Rose"
Limousine Love	14.04.28.	Charley Chase	learner driver "Mrs Glanders"
Should Married Men Go Home?	08.09.28.	L&H	golfer
Tit for Tat	05.01.35.	L&H	"passerby"
Sprucin' Up	01.06.35.	Our Gang	"second pedestrian"

For her admirers, concentrated watching of Viola on screen reveals hitherto unnoticed details: facial expressions, gestures, dress and the occasional lip-reading opportunity. All this scrutiny for a supporting player? Certainly. Brief screentime perhaps, but impact nevertheless. Blending easily with the required Roach rough and tumble starting with the fishing nets in *Why Girls Love Sailors* and culminating in the mud of *Should Married Men Go Home?*, Viola retained her natural feminine charm. Though we never heard her voice, her image endures to captivate us still.

◇ Ed: A studio gag shot appears on the front cover of this issue. High jinks with Stan! Note that the bench seat has been placed on wooden crates of film stock.



*Nitrous oxide will affect all three:
Leave 'Em Laughing*

Finn's poser

All learned persons who profess
To be well-versed in G&S,
Of course, will know what kind of mess
Caused Ko-Ko to repine.

Likewise, within the SOD,
We know that, in the films we see,
A "mess" will of the "nice" kind be,
And never will be "fine".

What, NEVER? Well, Hardy never!

Even in the film *Another Fine Mess*,
Ollie said, "nice mess".

But there was a FINE mess in one of the films.
So called by STAN.

An L&H fan (a clever one),
Will know in which film that was done,
And blame put on James Finlayson.
Do you?

M Finn

◇ The solution is on page 61.

Tin Lizzies

The Ford Motor Company is celebrating its hundredth anniversary with a limited edition of its bestselling model. Over the past two years Ford has produced a series of brand-new Model Ts, accurate in virtually every detail to the 1914 model, the first car to be mass produced on a moving assembly line and favoured in Laurel and Hardy films. The new production run of "T100s" is restricted to six cars – and none of them is for sale.

Original Model Ts were on show with one of the T100s at the company's birthday celebrations this summer. 11th May was Henry Ford Day at the Heritage Motor Centre, Gaydon, Warwickshire and the milestone car was a main feature of the Goodwood Festival of Speed in July.



Anthony Caruso

Anthony Caruso, who appeared as Mike in *Jitterbugs*, died in his Brentwood home on 4th April, after a long illness. He was born in Frankfort, Indiana in 1916. A friend of Alan Ladd, he appeared in more than a hundred films and a hundred television shows, usually cast as a thug. Caruso was in great demand for television westerns in the 1950s and 1960s, appearing in *The Lone Ranger*, *Broken Arrow*, *Gunsmoke*, *Zorro*, *Laramie*, *Wagon Train*, *Bonanza*, *Maverick*, *The Virginian* and as the villain El Lobo in *The High Chaparral*. He was equally popular as a well-dressed bad guy in *The Untouchables*, *Police Story*, *Ironside*, *Hawaiian Eye* and *Perry Mason*. Caruso is survived by his wife of 63 years, actress Tonia Valente, and son, Tonio.



Len Trodd (right) with Tony Caruso at the 1992 International Convention in Las Vegas at the Palace Station Hotel banqueting evening



Clunk click

Dave Oyston sent us this 45rpm record, released in 1983. He says, "It has nothing to do with Laurel and Hardy and I cannot find anyone who can tell me anything about it. Anyway, it's a load of rubbish."



The Hindu says

Antony Waite found an article on Laurel and Hardy in the online edition of India's national newspaper *The Hindu* (06.07.01). It mentioned the cinema as a source of escapism from life's hardships. . . .

Oliver and his frail friend had to reflect this grim reality, besides other forms of human behaviour that could make one laugh and even forget troubles. Not that life is any different, today. As the awesome duo achieved its apogee in style, several of their admirers, in a host of climes, tried to imitate them, without ever achieving anything more than just mimicry.

The Mirror reflects

Stephen Barlow observes that in September *The Mirror* ran a phone poll for the funniest Brit. There were twenty to choose from, including Stan Laurel. The best gags of all twenty were given, the one from Stan being his deathbed skiing quote.

Helpmates at Rochester

The Helpmates Tent will have a day of films, live entertainment, a sales room, a private bar and a buffet on 7th February, 2004 at the Corn Exchange, Rochester, Kent. The Mayor of Medway will be the host. Admission will be only by tickets obtained in advance.



It's a
darb

Have you ever wondered what inspired Charley Chase's exclamation, "It's a darb!" in *Sons of the Desert*? Anthony Walker tells us that the *New Dictionary of American Slang* by R Chapman has this entry:

Darb: 1920s, a person or thing that is wonderful, superior, from Ruby Darby, an Oklahoma show-girl admired by oil-drillers.

Archived Dessert

Dave Walker has donated a copy of *Bowler Dessert 24* to the Sons of the Desert Archive at a Californian university. Thanks, Dave. Dave kindly answered the plea in your last *Bowler Dessert*, requesting a copy of that vintage issue, to complete a set of all issues of the magazine held in the Archive, thanks to Dwain Smith.

And so on, and so forth

For only the second time in its existence the Early to Bed Tent screened *Nothing But Trouble* at the February meeting. To the Grand Sheik's surprise it went down very well, although not as well as the two classics put on afterwards, *Below Zero* and *Thicker Than Water*. Lucy and Amy Bramley continued their run of success in Vice Sheik Bob Hall's tricky quizzes and took home some salami. Did they enjoy it as much as King Christopher?

The tent's ninetieth meeting had a programme with a difference. The 1974 documentary *Cuckoo* was shown, followed by clips from *The Rogue Song*, the Spanish *Pardon Us*, and various footage from the UK tours and interviews. During the interval we ran some film adverts from the 1960s, then quizmaster Bob had a rare chance to enter the quiz, done on this occasion by the Grand Sheik. Bob took his chance and also took home the trophy! *Leave 'Em Laughing* appropriately completed another fine evening.

Easter Sunday saw *A Chump at Oxford*, *With Love and Hisses* and *Hog Wild*. Lucy and Amy Bramley again won the quiz, about *A Chump at Oxford*, and took home some tea and crumpets for Ash Wednesday. Sadly Professor Einstein was unable to attend due to illness so the tent has contacted Stephen Hawking to see if he requires help on any matter!

The May meeting screened *Pardon Us*, *The Finishing Touch* and *Perfect Day*. One of the tent's most long-standing members, Phil Hinchliffe, won

the *Pardon Us* quiz, taking home some chewing gum for that buzzing tooth!

I regret to report the death of Walter Warmasley, our oldest member, on 23rd April. Walter was a lovely man and the whole tent will miss him. He loved Laurel and Hardy and did much voluntary work at the Midland Railway Centre, his other interest being steam engines. Sadly, our list of absent friends, whom we toast at every meeting, grows longer.

For the June meeting loyal members turned up to see *Fra Diavolo*, *Two Tars* and *Twice Two*. Ken Kind won the quiz, taking home the richest fruitcake he'd ever seen!

Our tent had to compete with Elvis at our July meeting. The regular venue, the Spital Hotel, was holding a charity Fun Day,

including an Elvis impersonator, to support the Weston Park Cancer Appeal. Downstairs *American Trilogy* was booming out but fortunately the tent's programme started with some silent footage including *West of Hot Dog*, *Something in Her Eye*, the British Tours and *The Lucky Dog*. By the time *Unaccustomed As We Are*, *Berth Marks* and *They Go Boom* came on, Elvis had left the building! Mick Reast won the quiz and all the raffle proceeds were donated to the Cancer Appeal.

Finally, I'd like to thank those Sons of the Desert who sponsored me in the Bolsover Fun Run, which I completed dressed as Stan (or Ollie) in *Men o' War*. The event has raised over £4,000 for local charities.

Grahame Morris



Taking time out at a Beer Festival were (left to right) Michelle, Anni, Bob, John, Irene, Phil and Grahame

Top wit

The best press cartoon of the summer was in the *Evening Post* (22.07.03.), with reference to the Boys at the Bull event in Bottesford (see page 6). It was spotted by Roy Tomlinson.



Don't apologise, this gives me a chance to say,
"This is another fine mess you've gotten me into."

Laurel and Hardy and science fiction

by Chris Coffey



It turned out that the 11th Laurel and HarDay had a bigger science fiction theme than we ever intended. When I decided to open the Day with a sci-fi talk, it was to help explain the space-time anomalies inherent in this year's Kneesie-Earsie-Nosey World Championship.

We had done sci-fi before, in an epic presentation of *Laurel and Hardy Go to the Moon*, the dreamchild of Roger Robinson, who still has thousands of unsold copies ferreted away in Neil Armstrong Way (and maybe still available through the usual outlets).

It wasn't going to be an easy presentation, because the source material would be a mixture of video and DVD, and as yet we cannot copy bits of DVD to tape, so we would have to go through the menus to get to the extracts we wanted.

My first selection was from *Babylon 5*, from the excellent fifth series episode *Day of the Dead*. A sub-plot concerns the arrival on the space station of Rebo and Zooty (played by Penn and Teller), a comedy duo popular with other races as well as humans. Make what you will of the thin man and the fat man, and that they both wear bowler hats, but you have to admire the physical dexterity of their hat swapping antics.

Captain Lockley is not amused by Rebo and Zooty and retires to her quarters. She switches on the TV and Rebo and Zooty are on every channel, except one which is showing a commercial, and then she hears those dreaded words, "And now back to our Rebo and Zooty Movie Marathon, with the film *Sons of the New Desert*."

My second selection was from an episode of *The Twilight Zone*, called *Two*. It was Grand Sheikh Antony Waite's letter in a previous *Bowler Dessert* that alerted me. Antony explained that the episode takes place in a deserted city in an uncertain future after a terrible war. The sleeve notes on his DVD (but not mine) advised that the episode was shot on the then disused Hal Roach studios backlot. It made sense because the series was made by MGM and they did have links with Hal Roach. As we were screening the clip and looking at the ruins, Neil Evans said to me, "I think that's the Pink Pup!" So, at a future meeting, we will have to show the episode, press pause, load a certain silent

Boys' video, press pause, and do a visual comparison.

The episode featured the recently deceased Charles Bronson. As an aside I asked the audience who was the only member of the *Magnificent Seven* still alive. Several voices shouted out the correct answer.

The third connection was with *Red Dwarf*. I was going to show only the one clip that Steve Barlow had lent me, but while I was on the door on the day, Craig Lightowler from the County Hospital Tent in Bradford loaned me a different video clip, which he had thoughtfully wound on to the right spot. This clip involved the crew of *Red Dwarf* meeting recreations of famous people from Earth's history, like Abe Lincoln, Albert Einstein, Stan Laurel and Marilyn Monroe. Regular attendees would have twigged the less obvious connection, from a David Wyatt talk at a previous Day because Marilyn went to school with Stan's daughter Lois, and she shot a commercial at the Hal Roach studios, against the almost legendary "wall".



Charles Gemora in Swiss Miss

Steve Barlow's clip from *Red Dwarf* showed Cat and Lister referring to the absent Rimmer and Kryton as Stan and Ollie. Isn't it reassuring that three million years into an alternative future the Boys will be remembered? That really is "perpetuating the work and memory of. . ." to quote our Sons Constitution.

The fourth connection was the 1956 George Pal feature film *War of the Worlds* in which the Martians invade Earth and Gene Barry falls in love. We showed the clip of the Martian nest. The connection was that the Martians were designed by Charles Gemora (born one hundred years ago this year). Rather than show Ethel the Chimp, I showed Charles distracting the Boys lugging a piano across the rope bridge in *Swiss Miss*. With all my reference books still packed away due to the house move, my dodgy memory vaguely recalled that Charles actually made his own gorilla costumes.

The fifth connection was a must, the opening to Episode Five of *Flash Gordon Conquers the Universe*. After seeing how Buster Crabbe had been saved from the perils of a death ray, and a couple of hammy link scenes, we had the Emperor Ming recruiting Dr Zarkov to his team of leading scientists, helping him with his modest plan to conquer the universe. We then showed our lovable Emperor Ming as the Commandant in *Beau Hunks*, uttering those immortal lines, "This is the Army of Forgotten Souls. Men come to this God forsaken spot to forget and be forgotten. Men come here to accept the hardships of the desert and the wasteland. To be without food, without water, and to laugh at it all." (No jokes please about it sounding like Paul Brodie's plans for the 2004 Convention). And then we heard a maniacal laugh that we had heard a few moments earlier when Ming thought he had killed Flash. How much would Charles Middleton charge to haunt a house?

The sixth and final connection was an episode from *The X-Files* in which Stan and Babe actually appear. It is called *Clyde Brookman's Final Repose*. At the end of the episode Stan and Ollie are on the television. It's the skeleton scene from the end of *The Bullfighters*. Dana has been watching a 20th Century-Fox movie (and they made *The X-Files* so the plug is natural). This episode had another connection with the

Boys because the character Clyde Brookman has committed suicide. In the 1920s a gentleman named Clyde Brookman directed many silent movies, including four Laurel and Hardy films and several Buster Keaton films. I recall that Keaton had lent him a gun and this Clyde then committed suicide. Spooky eh?

Well, that was the end of the scholarly overtones. At this point I must explain that, on the stage, on either side of the banner, were two pink aliens wearing fezzes. Any similarities to blown up balloons were purely co-incidental but they added a nice touch to the sci-fi theme.

Anyway, it came to the Kneesie-Earsie-Nosey World Championship, and this was where the understanding of space-time and its interaction with the rules of the competition has to be grasped by the judges. You see, we had two contestants from the Below Zero Tent in Alaska! The Grand Sheik and his daughter had visited the Beer Engine earlier in the year and we had recorded the Alaska Freestyle variation of Kneesie-Earsie-Nosey. This involved doing the actions but also singing, "I am the very model of a modern Major General" at the same time. So they had been here in this space, but not in these exact co-ordinates of space-time, so subtracting the curvature of the Earth to 150 degrees and minutes West where their home tent lies from the hours and minutes they were here made their entry appear within the rules.

These representatives from the USA did not make it to the final three who were from England, from Germany, and from Alderan. Michael Schmitz from Germany was eliminated for first taking it too seriously, and then too frivolously. For the first time ever the judges declared a dead heat, between Denise and Zog, the Alien from Alderan (see Neil's report on page 20). How could an alien do so well, I hear you ask? Answer, he studied the rules and found that bribing the judges is permitted. So, the strength of our Equal

Opportunities policy in the World Championship has survived the invasion of the Euros, the Americans and the Extra-Terrestrials!





Bow and bass

Jean Poulain sent us this sketch, of unknown origin, which has the caption, "Laurel plays with Hardy like a bow with a double bass."

Big steps

Laurel and Hardy recalled that only a few spectators were on hand to watch them making their first film, and that many walked away during the first scene. But, during the filming of *The Music Box*, a police guard was brought in to keep spectators at bay. The two comedians were deluged at lunch time by autograph hunters and fans. It is reported that, during their three days working on the famous steps, they signed around 2,000 autographs and that more than 3,500 people watched them at work.

✧ This story comes from publicity material. Reach out for that pinch of salt!

Stockport

Remember *The Music Box* and *Way Out West* being shown at the Plaza cinema in Stockport last year? Jonathan Hayward says, "It was such a success that on 28th March this year *Big Business* was shown along with the Marx Brothers' *A Night at the Opera* (which incidentally features Billy Gilbert in a small role). Both films were well received by an appreciative audience of approximately two hundred people."

On 25th April came a Laurel and Hardy double bill: *Sons of the Desert* and *Helpmates*. Dean Carroll estimates there to have been around 350 to 400 patrons. He observes, "The audience seemed to prefer the slapstick tomfoolery of *Helpmates* to *Sons of the Desert*, but both films got a good reception."

Dean continues, "In the audience was an old friend (and former Be Big Tent member), John Heavyside. John had taken his niece and nephew. As a treat he had put together a little souvenir programme, to give them something to look at before the start of the films. The couple sat behind them were so impressed that they went to ask one of the ushers where they could buy a programme!

"If more shows are to follow next year, I was thinking of putting together a souvenir programme on behalf of the Be Big Tent. As well as pictures and some information about the films, I thought we might advertise the local tents. If other tents are interested, perhaps we could split the costs."

Calamity

Three years ago Grand Sheik Liam Muldowney said that if members sent a donation for Stan and Ollie's statue he would send a certificate. John Osborne recalls, "We had to think up a title to put on it. I could not." On spotting his neighbour, John offered him photos of his car. John goes on, "As I kept them in a box in the top of a cupboard, I ran indoors, not looking what I was doing. I got a chair, stood up fast, caught my head on the bottom of the door and landed over by the sink, stunned, with my head bleeding. I suddenly thought up a title – Master of Calamities, which is the story of my life."

Rowan's view

An interview with Rowan Atkinson in *The Times* magazine (29.03.03.) said, "He admits to Jacques Tati as his most obvious influence, and pays a debt to Chaplin, Stan Laurel and the other slapstick proponents once the staple of Saturday morning telly." Atkinson bemoans the fact that Chaplin (and, I would add, Laurel and Hardy) are hardly known to anyone under thirty years old.

Grahame Morris

Comedy classics

I have a DVD called *TV Comedy Classics* (BTM sire 1013) which features an episode of the *Dick Van Dyke Show* called *Never Name a Duck*. The ducks are named Stanley and Oliver. (The other shows on the DVD are *Beverly Hillbillies* and *You Bet Your Life*.)

In *Diamonds are a Girl's Worst Friend* in Season 2 (1980) of *Minder*, Terry (Dennis Waterman) compares Rose Mellor (who is offering him a job) and himself to Laurel and Hardy, amongst others. They are in bed at this point.

Stephen Barlow

Merseyside photo call



Ronnie Berg is on Stan's right (left of picture)



Ronnie Berg is second right on the back row. Ida Laurel is second left on the front row and Lucille Hardy is seated between the Boys



Stan and Babe with Lucille Hardy

Tony Traynor sent us these photographs from the autographed collection of Ronnie Berg, who was the Welcoming Officer for Liverpool's Council when the Boys visited the city.

They played at the Empire Theatre in 1947, 1952 and 1953.



*Stan dances with Marion,
Ronnie's wife*

As a hatter

John William McMicking's perceptions

I have just purchased a copy of *The Laurel & Hardy Digest* and the first thing that struck me was the inaccurate statement on page 47 that “Stan usually wore his bowler back-to-front.” I am a hat maker by trade and it was my early childhood exposure to the films of Laurel and Hardy that ultimately led to my choice of profession. I specialise in nineteenth century reproductions of men’s hats, working entirely by hand, using the methods and equipment from a time which predates the Industrial Revolution and the subsequent factory system. I am recognised by a select and knowledgeable few as one of the world’s foremost experts on hats and I can tell you that Stan *never* wore his bowler back-to-front. Of the hundred-plus films made by Stan and Ollie seventy-five or so see them in some version of their “standard” costuming, featuring bowler hats. I have seen at least seventy of those seventy-five films; I have gone through the McCabe, Kilgore and Bann book *Laurel and Hardy*, carefully examining the many photographs contained therein and I can state as one of the world’s leading hat experts that there is no film or photographic evidence to support this apocryphal anecdote. Indeed this statement would have been better placed in *Chapter 30: Apocryphal Anecdotes*.

Charles Middleton wears his square crowned “Cambridge” bowler backwards in the scene in *Pack Up Your Troubles* where he confronts Stan and Ollie at their lunch wagon. Both Stan and Ollie turn their Foreign Legion havelock caps back-to-front to keep the sand out of their eyes in



Spot the difference



Drawing by Jean Poulain

Beau Hunks. Stan wears his tricorn (three-cornered hat) backwards in *Fra Diavolo*. And Ollie puts Stan’s hat on his own head back-to-front during the hat mix-up in *The Music Box*. (The bow at the back of the sweatband is clearly visible as he puts the hat on his head.) But neither Stan nor Ollie ever wore his own bowler hat backwards.

Also, William Coke ordered his bowler hat from James Lock & Co in 1850, not 1849 and the story of his testing the hat by “stamping on it twice” is also apocryphal. I live and work in Canada, but, through the wonders of the modern postal system, I am, among other things, employed by James Lock & Co, for whom I reconstruct silk top hats.

Finally, I am also a trained theatrical tailor and have worked for a number of theatre festivals in Canada and I think you should have also included the story about the Boys ordering ten suits each at the beginning of each year in Chapter 30. If you go through the photographs in the McCabe, Kilgore and Bann book and pay close attention to Stan’s double-breasted, pinstriped suit which first appears in *Hats Off*, you will see it steadily deteriorate, becoming increasingly ragged. The middle button on the left side is lost between *The Battle of the Century* and *Leave ‘Em Laughing*. A tear appears in the left lapel and another begins at the lower edge of the left front by the making of *Habeas Corpus*. The trousers of this suit are replaced by an unstriped pair for *The Laurel-Hardy Murder Case*. The tears in the coat are finally mended with patches for *One Good Turn*

◇ The world of Laurel and Hardy is a fertile one for questionable stories where printing the legend rather than the facts often took precedence.

The Laurel & Hardy Digest

There was a tear in Stan's coat in Laughing Gravy (1931), still there in Busy Bodies (1933)



and a stitched tear is visible in the back of this coat in *Busy Bodies*. The coat and the now torn and mended unstriped trousers make their final appearance in *Hollywood Party*. Other suits come and go for both Stan and Ollie, but there is no evidence to suggest that, once a suit was damaged in a film, it was replaced by another, identical suit. Also, you say that the Boys had their suits specially tailor-made to be ill fitting. When they were portraying their middle class characters (as opposed to their vagabond or vagrant characters) both Stan and Ollie appeared to be well tailored with properly fitting suits (even if Stan's trousers always seemed a little long and any overcoat that he wore seemed a little big). If you look in the reprint of the 1927 Sears Roebuck catalogue you will see ready-made, off-the-rack suits that greatly resemble the suits worn by both men. Indeed, even during the MGM years, when they were given ill fitting suits occasionally, they were not all that ill fitting. And if you look at Stan's ragged, pinstriped suit and Ollie's tight tweed jacket, which were worn more often than not when they played their lower class characters, both the suit and the tweed jacket fitted each man quite well when they first appeared when new. Stan's suit became ragged and worn over time with use and Ollie's tweed jacket (first seen in *Call of the Cuckoos*, last seen in *Scram!*) only became "tight" after he was dunked in the mud puddle in *Angora Love*.



Drawing by Jean Poulain

◇ Part of John McMicking's article appeared in *The Laurel and Hardy Magazine* (June - July, 2003) and was followed by some comments by AJ Marriot. . . .

I was both disappointed and astounded at the contents of Mr McMicking's letter. "Disappointed" because, although Mr McMicking worked hard to convince us of what Stan *didn't* wear, he made no mention of what Stan *did* wear.

I was "astounded" because, after his near lifelong study of Laurel and Hardy's hats, it appears that Mr McMicking has failed to notice that they are two very different styles.

Stan himself stated that, after initially wearing a bowler, he took to wearing an "Irish derby". Some years ago, accepting Laurel's version that he wore an Irish derby as being the factual one, I wrote the following:

The term "twin bowlers" used by some to describe Laurel and Hardy's regular head-gear, is a misnomer. Stan wore a bowler in only six of the Laurel and Hardy films – the last time in the aptly named *Hats Off*. After this he switched to a derby – which is round in section – as opposed to oval, and has a flat rim – as opposed to a curved one.

This effectively means that not only did Stan not wear his bowler hat back-to-front, but that, in one hundred out of the one hundred and six Laurel and Hardy films, Stan didn't wear a bowler at all.

◇ However, John McMicking asserts, "To avoid the sort of confusion that has arisen within the pages of *The Laurel & Hardy Magazine*, I feel that I should state for the record (and for the benefit of those few among you who do not know this already) that 'derby' is merely the American name for the hat that is known in Britain as a bowler. A derby *is* a bowler. 'Derby' and 'bowler' are simply two different names for the same hat."



Organiser Bram Reijnhoudt, with a watchful eye



A colourful welcome



Jan van Thiel, taking time off from his work on Blotto Online, was the Master of Ceremonies

Flying Deuces



Throughout the convention one had free entrance to the birdpark, well worth a visit

6th European Convention

6th till 9th June, 2003

based at the Hotel Avifauna in the Netherlands

A hotel in a birdpark was the centre for the convention, with a truly international flavour. The hotel in Alphen on the Rhine had never seen such goings-on and the Sons had never seen such a convention.



The Theater Tuschinski was full, but conventioners had reserved the best seats



There was a choice of four excursions: the Hoorn museum, the Red Light District, a Canal Cruise or the Rijksmuseum and/or the Van Gogh Museum. Left is one of the many giant posters on display in Hoorn

A film room in the hotel proved popular. Films on show there included *Dr Pyckle and Mr Pride*, *The Flying Deuces*, *The Fixer-Uppers*, *The Chimp* and *The Bohemian Girl*. The Dick Van Dyke Show episode *The Sam Pomerantz Scandals* (1963) included a Laurel and Hardy routine by Van Dyke (Stan) and Henry Calvin (Ollie).

At the Theater Tuschinski special treats were the trailers for both *The Rogue Song* and *Hinter Schloss und Riegel* (the German language version of *Pardon Us*). Also screened were *Block-Heads* and *Blotto*.

Euro euphoria

Bram Reijnhoudt and the team deserve the highest praise for a superb convention. The hotel was in a beautiful birdpark and literally across the road from the River Rhine, a perfect setting.

The opening banquet featured *A Night in Honolulu*, complete with dancers and the Van Dijk Band. The band played music from the Pacific region, with Polynesian dances from Tahiti and Hawaii, plus Latin American and Oriental dances.

Saturday saw the Sons depart for Amsterdam and the wonderful, Art Deco, Tuschinski, built in 1921. The conventioners filled the VIP balcony and the public were admitted to the stalls to watch *Do Detectives Think?* among other 35mm films.

Some of us left Amsterdam to visit the museum at Hoorn, where the top floor was devoted to Siep Bousma's amazing collection of Laurel and Hardy memorabilia. The Our Gang film *Barnum and Ringling, Inc.* was shown, starring Jean Darling, who was interviewed by Willie McIntyre to introduce her new book, *A Peek at the Past*. The evening's entertainment was provided by the Max Tak Orchestra and England's own Avalon Boys, followed by an open air film show, with rare glimpses of Charley Chase and Our Gang silent shorts, followed by *Our Relations*.

After breakfast in the sunshine we crossed the road to board the Avifauna V on the Rhine. As soon as we cast off the heavens opened and it poured all the way to Leiden, then the sun came out for the fishing contest and walk round the town. On the journey back lunch was served, although one table of English people was left without sausages! Needless to say, the whole boat was informed of this mishap in song! Once back, scholarly overtones made an appearance with a talk by Claudia Sassen on *Larry Semon and the Laurel and Hardy Connection*, followed by Pee Wee and sales in the Dealers' Room. The final Fancy Dress Banquet had everyone rocking and rolling with the Beatles, Buddy Holly, Eddie Cochran, Chuck Berry and Elvis, as played by the excellent John-Boy and the Waltons.

Grahame Morris



Jaap Beukelaar fished for something "caught in the ocean this morning!"

The text and photographs are by Willie McIntyre except where stated



No strangers to Bowler Dessert, the Avalon Boys (above) gave their own interpretation of Laurel and Hardy songs

*The twelve-piece Max Tak Orchestra is a regular at meetings of the Perfect Day Tent. They played at the 4th European Convention in Rolduc in 1999 and, this time, in the Theater Tuschinski, the orchestra played a live soundtrack of Leroy Shield tunes for *Do Detectives Think?*, compiled by Piet Schreuders – a premiere! They entertained again in the evening, at the hotel (above left)*



In Leiden some walked to the centre of this historic university town, others took part in a fishing contest and others visited cafés



Claudia Sassen gave a talk on Larry Semon and Laurel and Hardy. Claudia recently assisted the Filmmuseum in Amsterdam with identifying Semon comedies which were thought to be lost. Among these comedies was The Headwaiter, which also stars Oliver Hardy. Claudia plans to turn her Semon research into a book

A model T Ford, built in 1914, led a short parade through the birdpark. Robert Radevan escorted Jean Darling



Tom Schermer entertained with Laurel and Hardy music on his street organ

Sound check

The programme in the Tuschinski was well received by the audience of seven hundred-plus people. But there was one disappointment. The first images of the restored *The Rogue Song* trailer lit up the screen. Restored? There was no sound!

I used a walkie-talkie to get in touch with the projection booth, high up in the huge theatre, asking to turn on the sound – and was perplexed to hear that there was no soundtrack on the film!

It was embarrassing to read the credits given to the Vitaphone project for having combined image and sound on the trailer of this lost MGM production. It turned out that the Film and Television Archive of UCLA in California had sent the wrong print to Amsterdam! We pass on their apologies.

Bram Reijnhoudt



Ben Young used his dad (Laurie) as a chair, emulating a scene in Block-Heads

Grand Sheik Mathias Günther (second from left) with members of his Glückliche Kindheit Tent





John-Boy and the Waltons. The lead singer (centre) is a Member of Parliament!



Paul Allen and Roger Robinson won the Fancy Dress Contest. The onlooker is Jim Bunkle



Second prize went to Markus Fromm (right)

◆ ◆ ◆

Third prize went to Peter van Rooij and Gerard de Braaf

Snippets

◆ The obligatory quiz was held on the boat trip to Leiden, but this time it was a written quiz. It was won by the Swiss Miss Tent.

◆ For a small fee, a lightning artist drew pictures of conventioners.

◆ A Memorabilia Room was well attended, with an enormous array of items for sale.

◆ Ked Nooy was a very knowledgeable tour guide for the Rijksmuseum and the Van Gogh Museum.

◆ Michel Coopman (from Belgium) was the winner of the fishing contest. Bram says, "He should have been disqualified because of the length of his fishing pole (he brought his own gear). But the other six contestants caught nothing. Michel had fish to a total length of 1 metre 6 centimetre. Because every contest should have a winner, he got the medals and the laurels anyway."



In the news

Press items spotted by Tony Bagley, Stephen Barlow, Bill Crouch, Gino Dercola, Clive Mitchell, Eddie & Nancy Murphy, Dave Oyston, Nick Rich, Dwain Smith, Perry Smith, Bob Spiller, Mike Storey, Roy Tomlinson, Tony Traynor and Len Trodd

◇ The piece on Laurel and Hardy's visit to Portsmouth in 1952 (reproduce from *The News* on page 36 of your last *Bowler Dessert*) reminded Edward J Laker of Southsea that he was fortunate enough to see them twice. In *The News* (05.11.02.) he said, "I wish I'd had the nerve to visit them in their dressing room, as by all accounts they were quite approachable on their tour."

◇ *The Sun* (26.12.02.) had an article on partnerships such as Lennon and McCartney and pondered, "Does being named first in a double act mean you are the more talented?" They quoted five famous partnerships where this was true and five where it wasn't, saying this of Laurel and Hardy:

Stick-thin Stan Laurel overshadowed boisterous Oliver Hardy, in stature if not size. The world's first superstar comic double act made 117 [sic!] films between 1926 and 1952. Laurel, the son of a British showman, died in 1965, outliving his on-screen partner by eight years.

◇ "Pigeon droppings stop Ulverston clock," read the headlines in the *North-West Evening Mail* (14.02.03.). Stan would have been proud!



This drawing was in the Culture supplement of the Sunday Times (16.02.03.), illustrating the screening of Block-Heads on BBC2

◇ In *The Herald* (17.02.03.) was an article about the unhealthy diet of residents of Greenock. A large picture of the interior of the West Station café had an array of photographs of film stars, including the Boys.

◇ An item in the *Sunday Times* (21.02.03.) was about the costly rebuilding of Wembley stadium. It was headed, "Another Fine Mess".

◇ As a "don't know" on the prospective war with Iraq, I observed the peace march and the anti-war stands taken by various celebrities with interest. I know that celebrity endorsement for a particular cause is an excellent way of winning it publicity. However, I still believe the most intelligent political comment made by a celebrity to be the wise words of Oliver Hardy: "What business have me and Stan got telling people how to vote? They probably know more about it than we do."

Mark Taylor in the Sunday Telegraph (02.03.03.)



This familiar photograph from The Finishing Touch appeared in a lengthy article on builders, entitled Tactics to avoid another fine mess in The Telegraph (15.03.03.)

"Another crazy crop of Premiership lookalikes" was in The Daily Star (27.01.03.). It called Lee Bowyer "Stan Laurel's stand-in"



◇ *The Daily Mail* (19.03.03.) printed a query in the *Coffee Break* column from Alan Whitmore of Coventry:

Has anyone made a pledge along the lines of, "I'll eat my hat if. . ." and actually carried it out?

The reply was:

The most famous case was in the 1937 Laurel and Hardy film *Way Out West*, when Stan

Laurel was ordered by Oliver Hardy to eat his hat after saying he would if he didn't get a deed. Stan takes a salt cellar from his pocket and begins one of cinema's classic comedy scenes, helping to establish the saying.



✧ In the *Express & Star* (19.04.03.) John Ogden told the tale of Clifford Fellows meeting two giants of Hollywood at the Dudley Hippodrome. . . .

They were among the most famous funnymen in the world, yet all Ralph Ogden remembers is the thrill of actually seeing them on stage, along with an actor dressed as an American policeman.

But he does have one precious and personal memento from that week back in 1947: a drawing of Stan and Ollie by his father, Clifford, which has been autographed by the two top comics.

"They stayed at the Station Hotel and he sent them the drawing to be autographed," recalls Mr Fellows. "They did so, and also sent my father an autographed picture, but as a young man I carried it about in my wallet for a long time, showing it off and damaged it a bit. My father was an accomplished artist, although he was not known as such outside the family and a close circle of friends."

✧ In 13 short years, it has become one of the most recognized interjections in the English language, rivalling, and perhaps passing, such time-tested outbursts as "ouch" and "yikes". I speak, of course, of "D'oh," an expression used with an intensity and inflection suited to circumstance by Homer J Simpson, patriarch of TV's most beloved animated family.

"D'oh" now has its own dictionary entry. You can look it up. It was coined, or at least adapted, by Dan Castellaneta, the actor who supplies the voice of Homer (not to mention a dozen or so other "Simpsons" characters, among them Mayor Quimby and Krusty the Clown). At the midseason TV press tour in January, Castellaneta talked about where he got Homer's "D'oh". Would you believe old Stan Laurel and Oliver Hardy comedy shorts? "It's always written 'annoyed grunt' in the script," he said. "And the first time I saw it, I said, 'What's an annoyed grunt, Matt [Groening]?' He said, 'I don't know, whatever you want.' So I went back and watched those shorts, and there was a character – well, an actor – named Jim Finlayson who used to always go, 'D'ooooohh!' Like that. And so I went, 'D'ooh!' And Matt said, 'Well, this is animation, you've got to go faster.' And so, sped up, it's 'D'oh!'"

Castellaneta said he believes what Finlayson was doing was "actually a euphemism for 'damn'. I think it's like he was trying to say it and he couldn't. In the '30s, you couldn't say 'damn' until Clark Gable, so he went 'D'ooooohh'."

Noel Holston in New York Newsday (27.04.03.)

✧ Plans for a new theatre to be built at Redbrick Mill have already aroused interest in who it might be named after. The name Stan Laurel has been put forward because of the comedian's close connections with Batley Carr.

Mr Stephen Battye, a director of Redbrick, said he was in favour of the idea but would like to hear the views of other local people. "I know Stan Laurel didn't live here but he did visit the area and he still has a lot of relatives living in the district," he said.

"His grandparents used to live in Warwick Road, Batley Carr and also in Soothill. I also understand his two cousins, John and Charles Shaw, had rag warehouses in Batley Carr and that Stan's younger brother Teddy went to Mill Lane School.

"The more I think of it the more I believe 'The Stan Laurel Theatre' would be the ideal name for a community theatre in Batley Carr. It would also help bring the two towns of Batley and Dewsbury together because his grandparents also lived in Crackenedge Lane for a time and Stan also appeared at the Empire Theatre in Dewsbury."

Mr Battye said if the theatre was given planning permission and it was named after Stan Laurel, Stan's daughter Lois would be invited to open it. He also pointed out that there was a precedent for having a theatre in Batley Carr because there had been one there in the 19th century. "A man called Matthew Wharton from Warwick Road converted the old skating rink on Bradford Road into a theatre in 1837. The more I look into the history of Batley Carr, the more I realise just what a thriving little place it was, both culturally and commercially."

*Margaret Watson in the Yorkshire newspaper
Batley Times (01.05.03.)*

◇ Wordsmith [Woody] Allen isn't known these days for his slapstick, but his ineptitude as a domestic-service robot during a posh soirée is worthy of Stan and Ollie.

Radio Times supplement
10-16 May, 2003

◇ *The Scotsman* (05.06.03.) said of the new film *Anger Management*, "As a double act, Jack Nicholson and Adam Sandler will make you nostalgic for Steve Martin and John Candy." The arresting headline read, "Laurel and Hardy (not)".

◇ The heading *Floral and Hardy* appeared in the gardening section of the *Sunday Herald* magazine (08.06.03.)!

◇ *The Herald* (16.06.03.) recalled that it was the anniversary of Stan Laurel's birth and included a photo of Stan in *Putting Pants on Philip*.

◇ The same newspaper the next day featured the new book *Scotland and the Music Hall 1850-1914* by Paul Maloney, published by Manchester University Press, hardback £47.50, paperback £15.99. The article had information on the Britannia Panopticon Music Hall.

◇ A reader in *Radio Times* (5-11 July) likened Alan Coren without Sandi Toksvig on *Call My Bluff* (BBC1, weekdays) to Laurel without Hardy. "Unthinkable," he said.



Haurel and Lardy were at the Paddock Wood Hop Farm in Kent, as captured in *The Courier* (11.07.03.)



This photo was in the Culture supplement of the *Sunday Times* (13.07.03.) to illustrate an article on blockages in e-mail systems!

◇ I was puzzled by the episode of *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner?* (BBC2, 10.07.03.) featuring Les Dennis. Anne Robinson said that one of Dennis's dinner guests, Stan Laurel, "died alone in poverty". This statement was made several times. Nothing could be further from the truth. Stan Laurel spent his final years happily married to his wife Ida and living in a comfortable apartment overlooking the Pacific Ocean. Maybe such living arrangements count as "poverty" to the well heeled Ms Robinson.

John Washbourne in the Letters page of Radio Times (26.07.03. - 01.08.03.)

◇ The July issue of *Impact*, the action film mag, featured a picture of Bruce Lee and Sammo Hung from *Enter the Dragon*. The caption was, "Sammo and Bruce pay homage to Laurel and Hardy. . . ." One can only presume this is a reference to the fact that Sammo is a large gent and Bruce isn't!



The Herald (07.08.03.) noted the anniversary of Oliver Hardy's death with this unusual photo



A reader was given a newspaper clipping with this photograph, depicting what might have been taken for Laurel and Hardy fans. They were in fact Saracens rugby supporters, wearing their traditional headgear

◇ There was a fine article in *The Washington Post* (10.08.03.) about Milledgeville, Georgia, where Oliver Hardy grew up and where his mother ran a boarding house. Hardy was mentioned.



This photo was in the Nottingham newspaper *Evening Post* (16.08.03.) concerning DIY

◇ The *Sunday Post* (31.08.03.) had a letter from a reader who had been enjoying the Laurel and Hardy films on television and had heard that James Finlayson was born in Dundee. He asked if this was true. The newspaper (erroneously) answered that he was born in Edinburgh and brought up in Larbert.



The Mirror (01.09.03.) had this heading



Laurel and Hardy Charity Fund

Nancy Wardell (left) tells us that the Charity Fund stood still for a while. Cash in the bank last October amounted to £227.86. Up until 18th August this year a further £185.95 was donated. Following that, money was received from the sale of notelets etc, plus donations from the Hog Wild Tent, the Leave 'Em Laughing Tent and the Beau Hunks Tent. Nancy was able to donate £200.00 to the British Limbless Ex-Service Men's

Association, the money going towards war veterans and war widows. The total in the bank is currently £804.96.

✧ David Brian of the County Hospital Tent has produced and is selling some great Christmas cards, notelets and calendars to raise funds for the charity. His address is 28 Buckingham Crescent, Clayton, Bradford, BD14 6EJ. E-mail dasand@tiscali.co.uk.

Star fans

The following show-biz celebrities are all fans of the Boys: Paul Ross, Deborah McAndrew (*Coronation Street*), Rhona Cameron, Darren Day, Ricky Gervais, Roy Hudd, Michael Leader (*EastEnders*) and Tony Robinson.

Tony Hillman

Mr Levity

Brats member "Father" Andrew Fitzpatrick attended a play at Sheffield's Crucible Theatre recently, entitled *It Runs in the Family*. He mentioned Jeffrey Holland was one of the actors in the play and I advised him of Jeffrey's links with the Sons.

Andrew then stated, "It never clicked at the time, but one of Jeffrey's lines in the play was, 'This is no time for levity' at which another actor (name unknown) looked at Jeffrey, smiled and twiddled his tie in a similar way to Ollie. This was obviously an 'in joke'."

John Burton

John Huntley

Did you see that John Huntley has died? An obituary was in *The Times*. He came to the Palace Theatre in Newark some years ago and did a lecture and showed some Laurel and Hardy films.

Grahame Morris

Colonial

The Two Tars Tent of Philadelphia received an invitation from the Colonial Theatre in Phoenixville. The afternoon of Sunday 9th November was



chosen for the tent's resultant visit to the theatre with a show featuring *Block-Heads* and *Helpmates*. Opened as a vaudeville hall in 1903, the Colonial has recently had an extensive refurbishment amid a blaze of publicity. As we went to press, Dave Oyston (above) was about to travel to the USA to visit Bill and Gretchen Roth and to attend the gathering at the Colonial.

Train crash

On 3rd August this year there was an accident on the Romney, Hythe and Dymchurch Railway. The engine driver was killed. This railway line is of interest to us as it was reopened by the Boys in 1947, captured on a cinema newsreel and in the press. It was also a feature of last year's UK Convention.

Little acorns

At the European Convention, Cor van den Boogaard and Willy Janssen discussed plans for founding a new tent.

Contact them as follows:

Cor van den Boogaard, Paulus Potterstraat 35, 5684 Al Best, Netherlands.
cor.van.den.boogaard@philips.com

Willy Janssen, Paardenhei 31, 5685 Gw Best, Netherlands.
janssenw@yahoo.com

✧ The annual auction at the Laurel and HarDay was a great success, thanks to Tony Bagley and his team. Some wonderful items were donated and sold and it involved a lot of hard work. So a big "thank you" to you all. The result gave me a big boost.

It was lovely to see all the familiar faces. I really enjoy the Laurel and Hardy family and wish Laurel and Hardy could have known that their names would continue into the future. Maybe they know now! They are still giving pleasure and our Charity Fund is giving some help and hope in their names to the many people who need that. Thank you.

Love and God bless,

Nancy Wardell



Bowler Dessert staged an "old and new" photograph during afternoon cocktails in the town of Leiden. Left to right are Willy, Cor, Tony Bagley, Bob Hickson and Phil Ruston

Did you see?

◇ Astonishingly, it would appear that the BBC is finally beginning to pay attention to the fact that there has been very little for the Laurel and Hardy enthusiast on TV in the last decade or so.

Mike Jones

◇ *Last of the Summer Wine* (BBC1, 02.02.03.) again had a few musical notes from *Ku-Ku*.

Block-Heads was on BBC2 on 21st February. A superb, clear print, delightful to behold. It was a taste of good things to come. . . . Happily, the Laurel and Hardy films shown this year have been too many to list here, sometimes shown as a triple bill of shorts and even a double feature. I estimate that almost all of the sound shorts have been shown.

On the money programme *Working Lunch* (BBC2, 16.04.03.) one of the viewers was quoted by presenter Adrian Chiles as saying, "I tuned in at your usual starting time only to see Laurel and Hardy instead. The only clue was that there were no city prices. Do you use the same scriptwriter?" Adrian said, "Yes!" It was the start of an Easter season of the Boys, with *Their First Mistake* and *The Chimp*. On 18th April was the extended, three-reel, version of *Laughing Gravy*.

Way Out West on 4th May was a welcome return of an old favourite. *Perfect Day* and *Me and My Pal* were shown on 16th June, Stan's birthday.

Blotto on 31st July was the full twenty-five minutes version, for what I think was its first screening in that form on UK television.

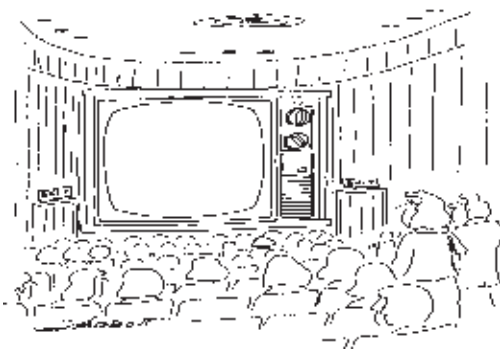
ITV1 had a programme on 26th June about "wrestling half-naked in befouling substances". They titled it *Another Fine Mess!*

University Challenge (BBC2, 15.09.03.) asked who were the duo in *Our Wife*. Neither team got it right.

Willie McIntyre



The extra reel of Laughing Gravy was on television



◇ Did you see *The Bill* in March? Two of the coppers paid an obvious tribute to the Boys. As they got out of their patrol car they passed each other their hats. Wrong hats for wrong bonces and they exchanged them with mutual withering looks. It lasted only a couple of seconds but it was magic. They still live on, across the years.

Roy Tomlinson

◇ I was watching by chance on 4th March *The Dukes of Hazard* on Sky. The story had two bumbling crooks called Stan Abbott and Ollie Costello, who took Daisy Duke hostage. In their hideout they were watching *Putting Pants on Philip* on a movie screen. They had named themselves after their old comedy heroes and it wasn't a bad story. They tried to rob an armed car and failed, of course.

On *Weakest Link* (BBC2, 01.04.03.) the question was asked, "Which comedy team came to England in 1940 in the film *A Chump at Oxford*?" The contestant passed.

Have you seen the 1988 Laurel and Hardy documentary which runs on the Classics TV Channel 247 on Sky? It's not bad, with clips from *Saps at Sea*, *Two Tars*, *The Battle of the Century*, *Flying Elephants* and more. Also on the E Channel 250 is *The Curse of Our Gang*, which is very sad, with a clip of Hal Roach's funeral.

Nick Rich

◇ *My Darling Clementine* from 1946 (C4, 07.04.03.) had a sequence in which *I Dreamt That I Dwelt in Marble Halls* was sung.

Bob Hickson

◇ Did you see the last few days of *I'm a Celebrity – Get Me Out of Here* on ITV1 in May? When John Fashanu was putting a dickie bow tie on Phil Tuffnell, John started to whistle *Ku-Ku*.

On BBC1's *Bargain Hunt Live* a mirror was being auctioned and a large gentleman and a thin gentleman seemed to be bidding against each other. The auctioneer said it was like a film from Laurel and Hardy.

Bill Bailey

◇ Loads of shorts on BBC2. Especially notable were *Berth Marks* (01.07.03.) and *They Go Boom* (02.07.03.). Am I correct in saying that this was the first time in British TV history that these were shown? *Berth Marks* probably. *They Go Boom* has appeared before on ITV in the early 1980s, but without its soundtrack, and with subtitles!

Jonathan Hayward

◇ Did you know Rod Hull played a Stan-like character on Aussie TV in a show called *Kaper Kops*. I didn't till the documentary *Rod Hull: A Bird in the Hand* (C4, 03.07.03).

Stephen Barlow

◇ I caught the last few minutes of Anne Robinson's programme *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner?* (BBC2, 10.07.03.) in which Les Dennis was the guest. There was a clip of *The Trail of the Lonesome Pine*, then Les said about Stan being the brains of the pair with all the ideas etc and about him insisting on being listed in the telephone directory so that fans knew where to find him. Les certainly seems to be a big fan of Laurel and Hardy so I sent him a copy of our *Stan Laurel Trail* pamphlet about Stan's connection with Bishop Auckland.

Tony Hillman



Ray's collection

Ray Dempsey has an enormous display of Laurel and Hardy collectables, only a small number of which can be shown here. The arrays in the photos on the top left and top right are items from Barrie Finney's collection, and are now owned by Ray.



Line up

Linedancer (July, 2003) magazine had on its front cover Gary Slade and Jim McClure. Here is part of the two-page featured article



Gary Slade and Jim McClure are Stan and Ollie. Gary and his friend Carl Blower, aka The Dudes, are Line dancers and Carl's a James Finlayson lookalike. Together they're getting themselves into another nice mess. . . .

"I don't Line dance," says Cumbrian Jim McClure, aka Oliver Hardy, with a wry smile on his face. He doesn't know what he's missing of course but his colleagues Gary (Stan Laurel) and fellow "Dude" Carl Blower most certainly do. Jim and Gary are the best Laurel and Hardy lookalikes you've seen and if, like the author, you spent many a happy holiday in the 1970s watching the two hapless individuals work their way through sawmills, hospitals and the delivery of pianos to unwitting suspects, you'll know what I mean. Jim and Gary have all the mannerisms you'd expect from the disastrous duo, not to mention a variety of authentic outfits. Carl makes for an impressive Fin too.

It's all good clean fun unless, by luck or by design, you happen to be whacked round the head

with a plank or have something large dropped on your foot. You might be surprised to discover the enduring popularity of Laurel and Hardy.

Jim takes up the story. "Well, our first Laurel and Hardy experience took place on a trip to Hamburg organised by the late Bill Cubin, the curator of the Laurel and Hardy Museum in Ulverston. He said, 'Do you want to go to Germany for a month and work as lookalikes?'" So, for some bizarre reason, they agreed and now, 12 years later, they're in heavy demand from TV companies, Entertainment and Lookalike agencies, the corporate sector, private bookers and party organisers in the UK, Bahrain, Dubai and, indeed, throughout the Middle East. But why?

"The TV shows are enjoying reruns in the Middle East," says Jim. "It's really huge over there. You see, it's not seen as the usual 'corrupting Western' show. It's just good, clean fun and everyone loves it." Back home there are some 200 Laurel and Hardy lookalikes and 37 branches of the Laurel and Hardy Appreciation

Society. "The scene is huge in Holland," adds Carl.

A recent return to UK TV (BBC2) has energised the trio and they have several aims apart, that is, from learning the latest Line dances.

Just how good these guys are at their chosen profession (it can be a full-time occupation, depending on bookings) becomes clear as they walk into the *Linedancer* offices and proceed to cause havoc. Making drinks was never quite as complicated. How do they like their coffee? "Well," says Stan, "I like mine in a big cup!" "And so do I," says Ollie.

Perhaps fame has affected them? "No. Admittedly we have been on *Blue Peter*, *The Big Breakfast* and *Brookside* but it doesn't make any difference. We're simply trying to enjoy ourselves and keep the Boys' legendary work in the public eye." Each year, the dudes join 200 other fans for the annual Laurel and Hardy parade in the town [Ulverston]. In Glasgow, where Stan Laurel's dad was a well-known figure in local theatre, the dudes are supporting efforts to reopen the Pickard's Museum, a small venue where Stan made his debut as an actor.

The main aim is, understandably, to keep the memories alive (and kickin') through personal appearances. Booking these lookalikes is a great way to add a certain something to an event. "We'll meet and greet, mix and mingle and do several card tricks," says Jim.

No prizes for guessing where they'd like to go next. "America, for sure," they exclaim.

◇ Jim and Gary have a website at <http://www.thetoplaurelandhardylookalikes.com>.

◇ *Linedancer* magazine has a website at <http://www.linedancer.com>.



Tintin comic

Jean Poulain sent us a four-page comic strip on Laurel and Hardy from *Le Journal de Tintin* #610 (30.06.60.). Jean points out, "It is full of mistakes and naivete." But the pictures are good!

Whither Laurel and Hardy?

What happened? The team of Stan Laurel and Oliver Hardy dominated the world's movie screens during the early 1930s. While other film comedians are remembered and celebrated, Laurel and Hardy have slipped away almost completely from sight – in North America, at least.

In other parts of the world, in particular the UK and other parts of Europe, the Boys have attained the prominence you would expect as beloved film comics of the past – but not so in the USA or Canada.

As far as Laurel and Hardy themselves are concerned, we in North America should be extremely envious of Laurel and Hardy buffs in the UK. In Britain, as an example, if you find you're getting bored seeing all those Laurel and Hardy adverts in magazines and newspapers, you can go to the shops and buy readily available Laurel and Hardy videos and DVDs – or stay home and watch BBC2 for selected Laurel and Hardy shorts and features. You might want to go to one of the recent plays about Stan and Ollie some evening at your local theatre or attend an annual British Sons' Laurel and HarDay. You could even go to one of the annual UK Conventions.

Additionally, in the rest of Europe, the example of the Dutch and German tents is notable for arranging regular screenings of Laurel and Hardy movies, for holding a two-yearly European Convention, for opening Laurel and Hardy museums and exhibits, and for having access to a company (Kinowelt) that regularly releases the Boys' films on video and DVD.

In the United States, Laurel and Hardy are virtually forgotten. Even recent lists of famous comedy pairs totally ignored this fabulously funny duo. The opening of the Laurel and Hardy Museum in Harlem, Georgia has been a tiny ray of sunshine in our dismal rain-soaked darkness of comedic-deprived despair. (Say that one five times fast!)

In Canada, the only (rare) evidence of the Boys' existence was their appearance on the cover and inside front pages of the 24th February edition of the news magazine *Maclean's*. Even then, they weren't identified, either in the photos or the article on dieting, which their pictures were used to illustrate! Either the editors thought they were so famous that they didn't need to be named – or they'd never heard of them.

I think what I'm trying to say is, "Keep up the great work in the UK and Europe in promoting Laurel and Hardy, because you are definitely onto a winner." It's just that I wish I could say the same for us on this side of the pond.

Dean Shewring in Canada's Laughing Gas (April - June 2003) [abridged]

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 (zero-region, likewise suitable).

Pardon Us (1931). b/w.
Distributed by Kinowelt.
Price around €25.00.

The story of Laurel and Hardy in prison, and their escape, is offered here in its familiar (52-minutes) form. What is exciting about this DVD is the extra material. The additional “restored” version lasts 68 minutes, incorporating extra footage from overseas versions of the released film (most of which was released on video tape in the UK in 1995). There is also the dubbed German version, as with all the Kinowelt DVDs, plus a three-minute German trailer for *Pardon Us* (known as *Hinter Schloss und Riegel*) in which Stan and Ollie actually do speak German. Add to this treasure an eight-minute alternative ending with the Boys speaking Spanish (not dubbed!) and we have a fascinating release.

Also included are *The Second Hundred Years* (1927), lasting 21 minutes, and, of the same length, the Laurel solo film *Eve's Love Letters* (1927).



The warden in the familiar English-language version of Pardon Us is played by Wilfred Lucas



In the Spanish version of the ending, the warden is played by Enrique Acosta

Brats (1930) 21 minutes / **Helpmates** (1932) 20 minutes. Distributed by Kinowelt. Price around €25.00.

In *Brats* Stan and Ollie play dual roles, as themselves and as their children. The film has lots of splendid comedy moments and we have here



the original 1930 release with the original background music, rather than the more familiar Le Roy Shield accompaniment. It is something of a novelty and one for all Laurel and Hardy “students”.

Helpmates is one of the Boys’ best shorts, with slapstick performed to perfection as they try to

tidy up after a wild party.

The bonus silent short is *Early to Bed* (1928), in a good print apart from a few blemishes. The Beau Hunks Orchestra’s backing and sound effects are well placed.

The disk is poorer value than other DVDs in the series on account of its overall shorter running time, but it is worth having.

Due for release by Kinowelt is a second boxed set of ten Laurel and Hardy DVDs, available from amazon.de for around €120.00.

The Flying Deuces (1939) 68 minutes / **Utopia** (1951) 82 minutes. b/w.
Distributed by Madacy Entertainment. Price: around £12.00.

This double-sided DVD has the two features reviewed in your last *Bowler Dessert*, but in marginally better prints. Despite the fact that the DVD originates in the USA it is rated zero-region and plays on UK machines.



... and the Spanish version has a different ending, with Stan and Ollie on screen alone, after their release from prison

The Sleuth (1925) 26 minutes / **West of Hot Dog** (1924) 26 minutes. b/w. Distributed by Artsmagic. Price: see below.

In *The Sleuth* Webster Dingle (Stan) is a detective who is hired by a woman who thinks her husband is unfaithful. It gives Webster a chance to try out some disguises and he eventually has to confront a band of hoodlums. The opening titles are out of rack and they jump.

Stan goes west to claim an inheritance in *West of Hot Dog*, but he encounters thugs who are to benefit if Stan should die. Staying alive proves problematic!



Artsmagic DVDs

Artsmagic has released a new range of region-2 DVDs, chiefly of the solo films of Laurel and Hardy. Most subjects are the same as on the video tapes released in 1999. The picture quality is variable – often inferior and occasionally good. Some of the releases are in widescreen! The sound is usually poor. If one can accept the limitations, it is good to see some films which until now have been unavailable on DVD. All these releases are available from Amazon.co.uk and Play.com. Or contact Artsmagic Ltd, Unit 11, Rassau Industrial Estate, Ebbw Vale, Gwent, NP3 5SD. Prices vary, but we have seen them as low as £5.99 plus p&p.

Titles released are:

Kid Speed / Enough To Do
Kill or Cure / This Is Your Life / The Tree in a Test Tube
The Lucky Dog / The Stolen Jools
Mud and Sand / The Sawmill
The Paperhanger's Helper / Hop to it
Bellhop
The Sleuth / West of Hot Dog
The Wizard of Oz
Utopia

Another Fine DVD

Issues 1 and 2 of *Another Fine DVD* newsletter have been published by Antony Waite. He says, "It now seems that hardly a month passes before new Laurel and Hardy material is available on DVD. With so much to choose from, which do you opt for? As a collector it would be nice to say "all" – but I think a happy medium of good quality DVDs to replace steadily the worn-out video versions is the best route. That is where we come in, with a special newsletter which will give basic details of new and forthcoming releases, as well as full reviews of those already available, good places to buy them and price ranges." Antony's address is on page 63.

Shorts

✧ The Robert Youngson compilation *The Further Perils of Laurel & Hardy* (1967) has been released in the UK by Orbit Video on a DVD rated zero-region, ie region-free.

✧ Universal Benelux is due to produce a series of Laurel and Hardy DVDs for the Dutch and Belgian markets, based on the same masters as are being used for the German Kinowelt DVDs.

✧ In the USA, Hallmark has released a DVD of *Sons of the Desert* etc. See page 15.

✧ Also released in the USA are seasons 1 and 2 in a DVD boxed set of *The Dick Van Dyke Show*, containing the episode *The Sam Pomerantz Scandals*, notable for its Laurel and Hardy sketch by Van Dyke (Stan) and Henry Calvin (Ollie).

✧ Richard Guilor writes, "I bought *Utopia* on DVD, released by Stonevision. The quality is worse than the super 8 print I've got. I wondered in what way the *Atoll K* version of this film differs from the *Utopia* version." Scott MacGillivray is your man, Richard! The chapter on *Atoll K* in his book *Laurel & Hardy: From the Forties Forward* (Vestal Press, 1998) provides the answer.

Video review

It's an Annual Event (2003)
 103 minutes. Colour and b/w.
 Produced and distributed by SAM Films. Price: £5.00 plus £1.00 p&p from SAM Films, 37 Marlborough Avenue, Spring View, Wigan, WN3 4PY. Cheques payable to Gary Winstanley.



Stephen Barlow and Gary Winstanley have put together a new compilation of favourite clips from the first ten Laurel and HarDays in Wigan. With new and skilful editing techniques the resulting tape is a fine concoction, packed with humour. Featured are Bill Cubin, Nancy Wardell, AJ Marriot, Ronnie Hazlehurst, the Avalon Boys, Dave Wyatt and dozens more, including the regular Bacon Grabbers Tent organisers. Great value. Don't miss the bonus features after the main programme.

Stan and Max

Dave Wyatt sent us text from Max Miller – The Cheeky Chappie by John M East (published by Robson Books, 1993, first published by WH Allen & Co Ltd, 1977), in which Stan Laurel had the following to say. . . .

I saw Max Miller's act three times. The first time was in the early 1930s when I went back to old Blighty for a holiday. Just by chance I booked a seat at the Holborn Empire. Max was on the bill; I guess he'd just hit the big time.

No doubt about it he was a great comic. I'd never seen any artist involve the audience so much. They'd do anything he wanted them to do – like lambs to the slaughter.

After we'd finished our booking at the London Palladium in 1947 I went to see Max again. By that time Max's act was a work of art. His timing was perfect; he projected his personality as well [as], if not better than, any performer I have seen on either side of the Atlantic.

Finally, it was in 1953 when Max invited us to the theatre he was playing. He was using much the same material, but he was still as bright as a button.

That lovely artist, Turner Layton, drove Babe and I down to Brighton that Sunday. You were there of course and you may remember dear old Max only cracked one gag: "Which one of us is going to top the bill?"

No doubt about it. Max Miller was the most private and solitary performer I've ever met. I mean on and off the stage. I got the impression it was almost impossible for him to share anything. He even kept his thoughts to himself. It was following this predictable talk, about the weather and how the variety theatres were dying on their feet, that he dried up. Babe and I were tired out and it wasn't the time or place for show business backchat. It was rather funny, wasn't it, when Babe said, "Come on, Turner, give us a song."

I don't mean this in a nasty way, but I reckon that the Cheeky Chappie only came to life if you went to a theatre where he was appearing, and paid five shillings for a seat in the stalls.

No director could tell Max what to do: his act was faultless. He didn't need actors to feed him lines, or, more important, share the spotlight with him. Moreover, actors would cost him. He wanted to keep all the money from the box office for himself.

For Max Miller the audience became his prop; his supporting cast; his inspiration. He stood on that stage, responsible to nobody and taking all the risks. He really was "The One and the Only" – a very unusual Cheeky Chappie.

Covered



When on holiday in Cornwall, Dave Oyston picked up the magazine (above) for Hill House Hammond customers. John Hurst also gave us a copy. The cover text includes the words, "Win Stan & Ollie's original autographs." The closing date for entries was 31st January, 2003 and a list of winners was available until 6th March. Dave says, "Had I found it earlier, I might have sent an SAE for the winner's name and address and put in an offer for the prize."

Final exam

California's Way Out West Tent celebrated the end of school and the beginning of summer at its meeting in June, which featured a Laurel and Hardy "Final Exam" trivia contest. The winners received diplomas and were honoured onstage with a graduation ceremony. To honour Stan Laurel's 113th birthday, two cakes were served between films.



Jim and Barbara wed

Jim and Barbara Bunkle were married on 6th September, a date that clashed with the Laurel and HarDay. This meant that a few Saps couldn't make Wigan, as we were busy doing a jigsaw puzzle in Southend. It was a pleasure to witness Jim and Barbara officially qualifying for a joint membership of Saps. Jim was insistent that the Sons brought along their fezzes to the evening reception. Much to the astonishment of other wedding guests, Jim and Barbara led the ten Saps in a particularly jolly version of *We Are the Sons of the Desert*.

Roger Robinson

Jean Redman

It was with great sadness that Glenis and I heard of the tragic death of one of our former, near-founding members, Jean Redman. With her husband Jack, who survives her, Jean came from Bradford. Due to Jack's ill health they eventually – logically – became firm members of the County Hospital Tent in Bradford. They would still come along when they could to our Laughing Gravy Tent Christmas meetings. She was a lovely lady. She loved the fellowship of the Sons and the Boys very much. She passed away in July.

Graham McKenna

Harlem museum and tent

The Berth Marks Tent in Harlem has a new e-mail address, HarlemOrBust2006@bell.south.net. The address refers to the Berth Marks Tent's intention to bid for the 2006 Sons International Convention. They will submit their bid at the Columbus convention in 2004. Dave Bullard has been elected Grand Sheik and he can be contacted at PO Box 99, Harlem, Georgia, USA.

Gino Dercola writes, "I encourage each of you to try to join and support this tent in Ollie's birthplace – we all need to offer our help to the great people of Harlem who have done so much in recent years to preserve and promote the legacy of the Boys – and these nice volunteers do it out of love."

Harlem city officials hosted a reception for Sons on 3rd October. This was followed by a regular meeting of the tent. The annual Oliver Hardy Festival took place the next day. Stand by for a report.

Denise Carter is the new curator of the Laurel and Hardy Museum. She has produced a newsletter which covers news from both the Berth Marks Tent and the Museum.

Harlem has a new website of interest. It's at <http://www.harlemga.org>.

Simon's song

No less than three newspapers ran the story of Simon on 6th June. A cockatiel named after *Pop Idol* judge Simon Cowell had been missing for eight months when he was reunited with his owner – because he could whistle the Laurel and Hardy theme tune!

Owner Joyce Bell was heartbroken when he flew off from her home in Johnstone, Renfrewshire. She spent weeks searching for him, but finally came to accept that he had gone forever.

Simon flew nearly seventy miles to Fife and ended up in a pet rescue centre, where he was bought by Trevor Montgomery, attracted by the cheeky bird's perfect whistling of *Ku-Ku*. As the bird whistled the tune, Trevor's pal told him about a "lost" advert he had seen, describing the bird's speciality. Trevor placed a "found" ad in the same newspaper and a tearful Mrs Bell was eventually reunited with Simon.



Ulverston in love with weakest link

The above heading announced a short item in the North-West Evening Mail (04.03.03.), spotted by Eric Woods. . . .

I see plans to erect a statue to Laurel and Hardy are in full swing with the Yorkshireman responsible for sculpting Eric Morecambe commissioned for the job.

I can't see what people see in the tedious twosome and considering the only link with the town is that Stan Laurel was born there (I believe he left around the age of three or so) I don't see the point.

Especially as, unlike the bespectacled entertainer from across the bay, Stan the man didn't even have the decency to adopt his hometown's name for his stage name. Mind you, I have to admit Ulverston and Hardy doesn't quite have the same ring.

Anyway, in the spirit of things, I would like to suggest a couple more obscure links for the good burghers of Ulverston to investigate.

It's a little known fact that "father of rock and roll" Bill Haley's mother, Maude, apparently a woman of strong religious convictions, emigrated to America with her family from Ulverston before the First World War. And, allegedly, pole vaulting for height, rather than distance, was pioneered in 1843 by the upwardly mobile members of the town's football and cricket club. We won't have to think of that many more before we have enough for a theme park or at the very least a hall of fame.

The irony of course is the father of 19th century global exploration, Sir John Barrow, rightfully remembered by the Hoad monument, and Nuremburg trial judge Lord Birkett, each register Ulverston on their birth certificates and are two men whose combined impact on world affairs far outweighs the bumbling bowler wearers.

Twice Two Tars

The legend goes that, when *Two Tars* was in the cinemas on its first release, it was so successful with one group of patrons that it had to be reshowed before the main feature could be shown.

Charity races

In *The Perry Winkle*, Rob Brigstock wrote, "When the Saps at Sea decide to go to the races, you can bet on them having a good time. On 8th March we attended a race night at the Bell public house, in support of the Building Blocks Appeal. All money raised was to help the new children's unit being built at Southend General Hospital. Including my wife Kay and myself, the number of people representing the Saps at Sea was fourteen. The Saps sponsored a race which was called the Laurel and Hardy Derby, in which we had a horse called Another Nice Mess. I also recall a horse in another race named Laughing Gravy." The event raised £1,000.

Diner in Germany

Clive Mitchell took this photograph through a restaurant window on a visit to Mittenwald in June 2001.



On the Brats' screen

John Burton says, "I have obtained an almost complete set of Laurel and Hardy films on DVD and the Grand Vizier grudgingly agreed to purchase a DVD player from society funds. (Thanks, Alan.) The tent can now screen almost any films chosen by members." At the meeting on 10th March John said, "Tonight, however, we will start with *Hog Wild* as it is the favourite film of John Jr. It is his second birthday today!" The tent has introduced a family membership package.

Cartoon research

Antony Waite has a short black and white clip of a cartoon in which a character at a piano introduces a cinema screen, showing an animation called *Haurel and Lardy in Spite of Everything*. There are no credits on his copy, so Antony asked around for information. He can now report, "The title, I believe, is *Bosko's Picture Show* from 1933. Strangely though, *Bosko's Garage*, mentioned in much Sons literature, does not appear in a list of Bosko films I have found. It seems highly likely that *Bosko's Garage* does not exist – being in fact *Buddy's Garage* from 1934. Buddy was the character that replaced Bosko in the early *Looney Tunes*, and they do look similar!"

Antony now has over thirty sightings of the Boys in cartoons, without including TV appearances. He has even come across Stan and Ollie influencing Bill Plympton's Nik-Nak crisps advert!

A pig remembers

Payne Johnson (one of the three pigs, Jiggs, in *Babes in Toyland*) said, "I remember sitting on Hardy's lap. Laurel and Hardy were wonderful. They were great with the kids and played with them."

ParaNorvell activities



At Sons gatherings the song *Uncle Joe's Mint Balls* is often sung, with Bob Hickson in the lead. Your editor expressed surprise to learn that these mint delicacies do in fact exist so Chris Coffey (left) sent him some, to prove the point. Chris says:

Uncle Joe's Mint Balls keep you all aglow
Give one to the editor of *Bowler Dessert*
And watch the b****r go.

Chris adds, "I first came across this song in the 1970s on a Mike Harding LP. The mints are still available in shops that stock jars of assorted sweets behind the counter. You ask for a quarter and they pour or lift them out onto the scales. They then pour them into a paper bag. A nice old traditional procedure."

Suck 'em and see
And you'll agree
They're the best in all the land.



Chris observes, "Look at the wrapper on each. They are made in Wigan. If there had been a Laurel and Hardy film with an appropriate title, the Wigan tent might not have been Bacon Grabbers."

Irish hopes

Grand Sheik Liam Muldownie writes, "I have been out of it for a while and not doing a lot. This is something that I hope to correct in the near future and prove that the Irish Sons are a force to be reckoned with. I really am going to make the Manchester convention a priority for next year and make amends for the fact that an Irish tent Grand Sheik hasn't crossed the water for a convention."

Laughter night

The Men o' War Tent had a theme of "laughter" at its 15th February meeting. . . . Because of their hilarious laughter sequences, the films shown were *Leave 'Em Laughing*, *Blotto* and *Fra Diavolo*. Dave Plumstead won the tent's website competition by guessing the evening's programme.

Author's plea

Larry Epstein is an author who is writing a book about comedy teams. He says, "The book will be published next year and will, of course, include a lot of material about Stan and Babe. I'm looking for any original material, such as unpublished interviews, letters, and so on, about any of the major classic comedy teams. Any suggestions about material that I should include will also be appreciated. Please e-mail me at auntedsmile@aol.com."

Brum excursion

Paul Allen, Ray Dempsey and Roger Robinson went to the Laughing Gravy Tent's March meeting and took in two pubs before the meeting. Roger says, "We certainly enjoyed another visit to our twin (just like Alf and Bert) tent in Brum. Our visit was made even more enjoyable by a meal at the Charlie Hall pub and before that the Barton's Arms, at one time frequented by Laurel and Hardy. What a glorious building, both inside and out. It is a real treasure to behold and, with a little imagination, you can see the Boys enjoying the ambiance of this fine Edwardian pub."

Lin's move

Lin Jarvis of the Busy Bodies Tent has moved to Caernarfon in Wales. She tells us, "I have been asking around to see if there are any fans of the Boys. Alas I have had a range of responses from a simple 'no' to a completely aghast look from one young man.

"I do know of a small pub a couple of miles away and I have been informed that it is full of the Boys' memorabilia and the landlord is a fan. So I think I will go and investigate."

By the way, Lin has a lovely cockerel called Ollie!

Curios and oddities

Dean Carroll found a postcard of William Janney (Alan Douglas in *Bonnie Scotland*) last year at an antiques fair. The postcard is #748 in the *Picturegoer* series.





Jean Darling at the European Convention this year

The Laurel and Hardy bookcase

Peeks at peaks

A PEEK AT THE PAST

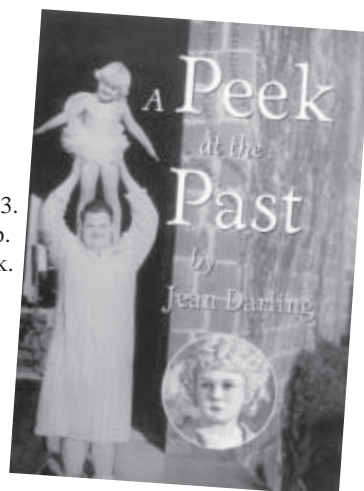
by Jean Darling

Published by Blotto Press

112 pages (240 x 165mm). 2003.

Price: €25, £17, including p&p.

ISBN 90 8075591-5. Paperback.



This is a new and expanded edition of Jean Darling's memoirs, with new chapters and fifty photographs. On 7th June, Jean received the symbolic first copy of her book, the presentation being the culmination of a short interview at Hoorn as part of the European Convention.

Anyone who has met Jean will know that she is always pleased to chat about her life, especially concerning her time at the Hal Roach studios. On page 7 of the book she says, characteristically, "Now, my friend, I invite you to sit back and relax while we wander together through the archives of my mind." We know that we are in for a series of reminiscences told with a chatty and candid approach.

Jean is best known to us, of course, as a leading member of Hal Roach's Our Gang. We learn here that her performing career began at the age of six months and that she studied opera, was a model, and appeared on Broadway. Jean hosted her own television shows for NBC in New York and KHJ-TV in Hollywood. She toured the world singing with her husband Kajar the Magician, wrote short stories for mystery magazines and told her own children's stories as Auntie Poppy on radio and television in Ireland, where she has lived since 1974.

Piet Schreuders and Bram Reijnhoudt put the book together and it has been published as *Blotto #35*. It is available only from Blotto Press, Postbus 870, 1200 AW Hilversum, Netherlands and is for sale only to the UK and Europe.

Willie McIntyre

Unlikely story

The *Northern Echo* (27.02.03.) made the following announcement:

One of Stan Laurel's descendants is to cast her spell over crowds at a medieval castle as one half of an international magic act. International illusionists David and Angelique Diamond, who specialise in "close up magic" and dramatic illusions, are working at Lumley Castle, near Chester-le-Street, County Durham. Angelique is the great-great-great-granddaughter of Stan Laurel, the star of the silver screen who hailed from County Durham.

Tony Hillman, Vice Sheik of the local Hog Wild Tent, subsequently spoke to Angelique, who said that the revelation about being distantly related to Stan Laurel was given off the record, so she was a little annoyed when it appeared in print. Tony says, "She said that for some reason, which she doesn't know, her immediate family's relationship to Stan had always been hushed up, which seems strange when not only she but also her father is in show business. Her father went under the name of Eddie Angel and worked in films and on the stage. Unfortunately she's been estranged from him for some years. I contacted him and he knows nothing about the claim. It would appear to be false."

Nancy Wardell says she thinks it very unlikely that there is any truth in the story. Nancy has checked it out and says, "I very much doubt it."

Silver screen

In 1925 the projectionist at Akron's Majestic Theater in Akron, Ohio coated the white cloth screen with silver paint to reflect better the light of the movies being shown. Harry C Williams then applied his silver paintbrush to the movie screen at Norka Theater on East Market Street. The effect worked so well that other movie theaters adopted the technique. The trend spread throughout the nation until the phrase "silver screen" came to symbolise Hollywood Movies. In May 2000 the vacant and deteriorating home of the world's first silver screen was razed.

Sparkie

Stalwart

We have sung the praises of Frank Sugden before in *Bowler Dessert*. He shows films monthly at Be Big Tent meetings and is much appreciated. He holds the world record for showing films at tent meetings.



*Frank Sugden
on projection
duty at the
Be Big Tent.
Photo by Bob
Hickson*

LeRoy's Knights

Shanghai Knights, the Jackie Chan film recently in cinemas, featured several tunes often heard in the films of Laurel and Hardy, Our Gang and Charley Chase. The music in the film is performed by the Beau Hunks Orchestra and was written by LeRoy Shield for the Hal Roach comedies.

Burble

The conductor shouts a list of destinations in *Berth Marks*, but it emanates as a burble. The gag was reworked by Jacques Tati at the start of *Monsieur Hulot's Holiday* (1953).

Complete Steve's collection

Steve Kenyon is looking for help. He writes, "I have managed to collect all the Laurel and Hardy films apart from *Now I'll Tell One*, *Hollywood Revue of 1929*, *Hats Off* and *The Rogue Song*." We know that *Hats Off* and *The Rogue Song* are "lost" films, but does anyone know of a source for copies of the other two films?

Tell me that again

Laurel and Hardy used repetition often in their films. Paul Keegan wrote in *Psychopathology of Everyday Life*, "One of cinema's discoveries was that everyday life is repetition – as if our actions are constantly trying to remember something – and it turned this to account in the figure of the accident-prone hero. Mayakovsky noted that Chaplin characteristically repeats a gag three times, and he called these passages 'analytical sequences'."

Rogues' gallery

Four members of the Laurel and Hardy Stock Company were never more lovingly depicted than by Barrie Finney for the International Convention in Birmingham in 1998.



James Finlayson



Charlie Hall



Charley Chase



Mae Busch

The stolen jools

*Roy Tomlinson gives a first-hand account
of a strange incident*

In the week commencing 14th April, 1952, Laurel and Hardy paid the first of their two visits to the Empire, Nottingham. I was standing in the alleyway leading to the stage doors of the Empire and the Theatre Royal, together with a small bunch of regulars, all waiting to catch a glimpse of the great pair.

Our patience was partially rewarded when the stage door of the Theatre Royal suddenly crashed open and two blonde ladies came rushing through, high heels clip-clopping on the cobblestone pathway and obviously in a highly excitable state. To our great joy, we recognised them as Mrs Laurel and Mrs Hardy. They dashed through the Empire stage door and we heard their high heels clatter down the corridor to the dressing rooms.

Moments later and pandemonium struck. There was a babble of voices and we heard the heels of the two ladies rattling back along the passage, then up the staircase which led to the dressing rooms of the lower ranks. They were accompanied by two sets of heavier foot-beats as Stan and Ollie followed behind. On top of all this racket, Babe was emitting a loud and long wailing “O-o-o-oh” in a similar manner to so many scenes in their movies. The procession reached the very top of the stairs in this fashion. A slight pause. Then, down they all came again – the ladies’ heels agitatedly clip-clopping and Ollie’s “O-o-o-o-ohs” growing ever louder and longer. Our little group began laughing at this unexpected treat and laughed even more so when the whole process was repeated. All the way to the top of the stairs, then all the way down again, with Mr Hardy’s vocal efforts taking pride of place in the sound stakes. By now we had reached near hysteria and actually reached that point when the ritual was performed for the *third* time, with full sound effects. By now we were helplessly rolling against the alley wall.

We thought we had reached the high point of this unscheduled performance, but the best was yet to come. The stage door suddenly crashed open and out ran the full cast, led by Mrs Laurel and Mrs Hardy, with the two Boys in the vanguard, the



very bulky Oliver bringing up the rear. As they ran toward the Theatre Royal they were actually leaning backwards, in the manner depicted in cartoons to denote speed. Stan and Ollie were in their stage costumes, complete with bowler hats, which they were clutching in order to keep them on their heads. The two ladies were making clucking noises, whilst Babe was still emitting his anguished “O-o-o-o-ohs”. The only quiet member of the party was Stan, who ran along grim faced but silent.

This vision really did for us and we rolled around, clutching each other for support, lest we collapsed with mirth. We were still virtually helpless when the stage door keeper came out and told us the awful truth. The two wives had returned to their rooms at the County Hotel, which stood beside the Theatre Royal and could be accessed through the theatre in order that the artistes could get to their dressing rooms in privacy if they so wished. They found the rooms ransacked and all their jewellery stolen, together with other effects. That was the cause of all the pandemonium and the news had the immediate effect of sobering us up. Merriment was replaced by shame that two such wonderful gentlemen and their wives should be treated in this manner whilst visiting our city.

So far as I am aware, the stolen goods were never recovered but the unfortunate incident did not deter them from returning to Nottingham the following year, when they paid a four week visit in their special Christmas Show.

One thing puzzles me, however. A story in very similar terms appears in *Bowler Dessert 60*, but relates to their visit to Shrewsbury, one week after their trip to Nottingham. Surely they could not have been so unfortunate for lightning to have stricken twice? All I can say is that I witnessed all the above events, the memory of which is vividly etched in my mind’s eye.

CD centre

Reviews by Willie McIntyre

Stan & Ollie Tekst & Muziek

A souvenir audio CD was in the “goodies bag” issued at the European Convention in June. This disc contains a 50-minute summary of three Dutch radio programmes, each an hour long, “exploring the history and characters of Laurel and Hardy”. The programmes were aired in 1990 on the occasion of Stan Laurel’s centenary, ingeniously incorporating dialogue and music from the films. The narration in English on this single CD is by Bram Reijnhoudt. You will hear Hardy asked in Brussels to pick his favourite film and Stan asked to do his “crying” in Paris! There are two extras: a Dutch version (with lyrics) of *Ku-Ku* from the mid-1930s, and a reconstruction of the Shield composition *The Moon and You*, culled from soundtracks of several films and used by the Beau Hunks Orchestra.

The disk is now on sale for £5.00, €7.00, including p&p.

The three original radio programmes are also available as a set of three audio CDs: (1) Stan (2) Ollie and (3) Music. More than half of the content is in English (soundtracks, interviews etc) or music, but the narration is in Dutch. Highly recommended. The price for the set, including p&p, is £10.00, €15.00. It is available from Bram Reijnhoudt, Postbus 870, 1200 A W Hilversum, Netherlands.



Honolulu Baby 19 min 25 sec (1995).

This is an unusual CD, released in Germany by RCA. There are four versions of *Honolulu Baby*, performed by Silverscreen and directed by the Crazy People. The label’s claim “starring Laurel and Hardy” is misleading – they are heard for only a few seconds. The tracks are *Radio-Vocal-Mix*, *Radio-Rap-Mix*, *Dub-Club-Mix* and *Rave-Mix*, with *Introduction* stuck in the middle! It is not readily available in the UK, and I bought it at a convention this year. It’s worth looking out for this one.

◇ Hallmark has released a double CD pack called *Singing Comedy Duos* (720182). One disc has eighteen songs from Laurel and Hardy films and the other disc has twenty tracks from Flanagan and Allen. It’s in the shops at £6.99.

Shell card

In your last *Bowler Dessert* (on page 60) was artwork which Bill Spalding found in a book called *Ragtime to Wartime: The Best of Good Housekeeping: 1922-1939*. It came from a series of Shell cards which had punning references to real place names with their locations on a map. Bram Reijnhoudt tells us that it appeared in *Punch* on 17th February, 1937. In addition Bram supplied a colour version of the illustration, from Siep Bousma’s collection. You will find it on *Bowler Dessert Online*. Click on “Punch”.

Painting gift

In the *Blockheads Bulletin*, editor Gordon Davie noted, “Charlie Lewis explained to us that a friend of his had painted a picture of the Boys, which was auctioned at this year’s UK Convention, to raise funds for the Statue Appeal. To ensure that it could be seen and enjoyed by many people rather than gracing one person’s living room wall, the tent put in the top bid and presented it to the Ulverston Museum. How much did we pay for it? Well, in a Laurel and Hardy auction, what else but one twenty-five? (£125, in case you thought it fetched less than two quid!)”

The Tipton Slasher

While I was relaxing on Dave Williamson's luxury yacht this summer, I was idly thumbing through his copies of *Canal Boat and Inland Waterways* ("Britain's biggest waterway magazine"), when I found in the current (August, 2003) issue an article entitled *In Search of the Tipton Slasher*. I nearly spilled my pink gin in surprise. That of course was the name of Noah Young's character in *Do Detectives Think?* (sometimes known as *Do Defectives Drink?* at conventions), the silent Laurel and Hardy film released on 20th November, 1927. I sat up on the chaise longue and put down my plate of caviar and oysters, the better to study the article.

The real Tipton Slasher was a man called William Perry, who lived from 1819 until 1880. He was the Bare-Knuckle Fighting Champion of England, 1850-57, and the expression "Slasher" referred to the swinging punches that he often used to defeat his opponents. Perry had several siblings and lived close to the canal at Tipton. By the age of seven he was earning money from it. His first job was that of a night soil man. I won't go into details, suffice it to say that this is before the era of flush toilets. While working with small boat operators, Perry grew tall and muscular, and fought regularly for the privilege of going through the locks first. Time even in those days was important for business and the canals at certain locations were busy to the point of frustration. By 1833, at the age of only thirteen, he had licked all the challengers on the towing paths and his reputation was growing.

Two years later he moved to London, did a spell of canal navvying and, with the enticement of ready prize money, entered the world of the pugilist. His fighting career was now underway; the prizes were increasing; but Perry, now known as the Tipton Slasher, started the habit of betting all of his money on himself – a habit that was to bring about his ultimate downfall.

During the 1840s and 50s, Perry had regular recorded fights, made a lot of money, and ran at least two pubs. In 1857, Tom Sayers, a lightweight at eleven stone, challenged the Slasher, who at thirty-eight was overweight and totally out of condition. Perry put all of his money on himself to win, as was his custom, but by the tenth round the game was up, his face was a mess, and his seconds threw in the towel.

Perry ended up as he began – a night soil man.

Dougie Brown

Lowry's laurels

This Lowry painting, called *A Procession*, struck a chord with Bob Spiller. Picture this – Lowry's impression of a Sons convention parade, with the participants reduced to matchsticks!



Stan's citation

Roger Robinson brings to our notice a website, <http://www.gwenharlow.com/client/kinevideo>. Says Roger, "Through this site I have managed to get a copy of the *Tribute to Stan Laurel* programme, made in 1965, shortly after his death, with contributions by Dick Van Dyke, Buster Keaton, Lucille Ball, Phil Silvers, Bob Newhart and others. I watched the programme with some apprehension as I had been led to believe that it was awful. I was pleasantly surprised with it overall and, although it was obviously put together in a bit of a hurry, I found that it was a fitting reminder that Stan was held in high esteem by the top comedians at the time of his passing. Highlights are a silent *In the Park* Buster Keaton / Lucille Ball sketch, a Dick Van Dyke lecture on comedy and, perhaps most cherished, the charming photos of Stan Laurel in the closing credits."

The Saps at Sea Tent screened the *Tribute* at its meeting on 11th May.

Look what we found!

No, Bob and Tony, we said, "fan club" not "fang club".



Thirst for knowledge

A very special thank you for *The Laurel & Hardy Digest*. A truly amazing labour of love. I thought I was fairly knowledgeable about the Boys but this volume exposed my inadequacy of knowledge with a vengeance! Something new to learn on every page. Indeed, since subscribing to *Bowler Dessert* and receiving all the available back copies, I realise that I am nowhere near the scholar I once fancied myself to be. What a lot to learn and what a pleasure it all is.

Just the other day I was flicking through a book entitled *Remember When*. It is by Robert Opie and I obtained it from *Reader's Digest*. Out of the blue and from separate sections of the book, tumbled the Boys in a *Bonnie Scotland* advert and the following passage:

Dancing was a popular pastime and the arrival of American servicemen in Britain increased the passion for the jive and the jitterbug – which inspired the title of Laurel and Hardy's film of 1943.

It shows that you never know where you will find them turning up!

Roy Tomlinson

eBay

After reading *Bowler Dessert*, I checked out eBay. Never been there before. Incredible amount of stuff – saw a couple of Laurel and Hardy autographs going for about £400! Unbelievable.

Neil Evans

On show

Once again this year, Laurel and Hardy exhibits were on display at the Southend Pier Museum, including the blue plaque unveiled by Sir John Mills during the 2002 UK Convention. The new pier entrance was opened this year and the plaque was placed there in a permanent position.

Call them rats

The *Daily Mail* (19.03.03.) had this question and answer in the *Coffee Break* column. . . .

I recently met a man wearing a gold rat on his lapel. When asked why, he replied that he was a "Water Rat". Who are the Water Rats?

The late Bernard Bresslaw, when King Rat, defined the aims of The Grand Order of Water Rats. "In 1889 a small group of music hall luminaries came together to enjoy their mutual company in pursuit of aims which matched philanthropy and conviviality. Those men, animated by the vagaries of their calling, aimed to elevate their profession to a position of some substance." Since 1889 there have been just over 850 Water Rats, and never more than 200 at one time. Over the decades we can bask in the reflected glory of such well known Rats as Laurel and Hardy, Danny Kaye, Will Hay and Ted Ray.

Nancy Wardell sent us this clipping and adds, "Stan loved being a Water Rat and especially that it was a charity."

Psychedelic Boys

Bill Crouch
sent us this
photograph of
a 1967 poster
display



Finn's solution

M Finn is referring on page 29 to the film *Sugar Daddies*, in which Stan, as a lawyer, tells Fin, "A fine mess you've made of things!"

M Finn adds, "The learned G&S persons will also detect a link to the G&S production *HMS Pinafore*:

"What, never?" "No, never."

"What, NEVER?" "Well. . . hardly ever."

This became a popular catch phrase in Victorian times.

One good turn

George Burns and Gracie Allen were married in 1926, becoming an official team the same year that Stan Laurel teamed up with Oliver Hardy. Like Laurel and Hardy, George knew that you had to keep the audience above you, not below you. Making the audience feel superior is a prime requisite for comedy.

Two for the Show – Great Comedy Teams
by Lonnie Burr

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.
Norman Leigh, 112 Hatfield Road, Bolton, Lancs, BL1 3BL.
✉ normanleigh@bacongrabbers.co.uk
✉ neilevans@bacongrabbers.co.uk
✉ chriscoffey@bacongrabbers.co.uk
✉ www.bacongrabbers.co.uk
✉ www.laurel-and-harday.co.uk
✉ www.laurel-and-hardy-museum.co.uk

Beau Hunks Tent of Nottingham

Oasis 236, founded 2000
Wheatshaf, 1 Nuthall Road, Bobbersmill, 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
Communications Workers' Union Club, Brunswick Street (off London Road), Edinburgh. Monthly, September till June, first Friday, 7.30 till 10.00pm.
Charlie Lewis, 70 Silverknowes Gardens, Edinburgh, EH4 5NG.
✉ charlie.lewis@scotland.gsi.gov.uk ✉

Blotto Tent of Tameside

Oasis 137, founded 1988
Stalybridge Railway Station, Buffet Bar, Platform One, Ramsbottom Street, Stalybridge, Tameside. Monthly, second Wednesday, 8.00pm.
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, Gourrock, 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

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.
Dougie Brown, The Mill House, Seabank Road, Stranraer, DG9 0EF.
☎ 01776 702 870 ☎ 01776 706 484
✉ dsb1971@aol.com

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

Busy Bodies Tent of Stourbridge

Oasis 128, founded 1991
Stourbridge Cricket Club, High Street, Amblecote, Stourbridge. Monthly, last Wednesday.
Tony Bagley, 118 Orchard Street, Brockmoor, Brierley Hill, West Midlands, DY5 1HN.
☎ 01384 76869 ✉

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@tiscali.co.uk
✉ http://freespace.virgin.net/bowler.dessert

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

Call of the Cuckoos Tent of Keyingham

Oasis 241, founded 2003.
Neil Whitlam, 23 Northfield, Keyingham, East Yorkshire, HU12 9TA.
☎ 01964 626160
✉ neil@whitlam2.fsnet.co.uk

Chickens Come Home Tent of Lancaster

Oasis 210, founded 1998
Gregson Community Centre, Moorgate, Lancaster. Bi-monthly, usually last Saturday.
Bill Bailey, Piggin' Fine Mess, 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

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
✉ countyhospitalonline@groups.msn.com
✉ dthackray@aol
http://www.groups.msn.com/countyhospitalonline

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 158, founded 1992
Bristol Civil Service Sports Club, Filton Avenue, Bristol.
Irregular. Monday, 8.00pm.
Peter Andrews, 14 Mackie Avenue, Filton, Bristol, BS34 7ND.
☎ 0117 979 0205

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

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.

☎ 0113 2539 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 Calthorpe Arms, 252 Grays Inn
Road, London, WC1X 8JR. 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

Oasis 185, founded around 1992

No meetings at present.

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

New Inn, Derby Street, Hanley, Stoke-
on-Trent. Monthly, first Wednesday,
8.00pm.

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

☎ 01782 613816

✉ vickynanthony@stokelaurelnhardy.
fsworld.co.uk ✎

Midnight Patrol 2 Tent of Wirral

Oasis 110, founded 1989

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

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

☎ 0151 513 0322 📠 077129 48579

✉ thetop@lookalikes.fsnet.co.uk

✉ gary.slade@ntlworld.com

🌐 http://www.thetoplaurelandhardylook
alikes.com

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

Pardon Us Tent of Gateshead

Oasis 234, 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, 6.45 till 10.00pm.

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

☎ 01702 526 187

✉ roger.robinson5@btinternet.com ✎

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



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>



This is Ulverston

Stan Laurel was born in Ulverston at 3 Argyle Street, the home of his maternal grandparents. The late Bill Cubin had a commemorative plaque placed on the house in 1974. Last year this plaque was stolen, so a new plaque was fitted higher on the wall of the house. Mysteriously, the old plaque was later discovered abandoned, a few yards from the house.



The current owner of the house is Mabel Radcliffe, seen here holding the original (retrieved) plaque. Inset is the new plaque, which is on the wall



Bill Cubin's grandson Mark helps to look after the museum which Bill created

The Laurel and Hardy Museum continues to delight Sons and tourists alike, with photographs, documents and assorted memorabilia, plus continual showings of Laurel and Hardy films in a custom-made small cinema.

The Sons of the Desert have raised around three-quarters of the amount required to erect a statue of Laurel and Hardy in the town, a project which, it is hoped, will be completed within the next year or two.



A statue of Laurel and Hardy will be erected in front of the Town Hall



Nearby is the Stan Laurel Inn and Laurel's Bistro