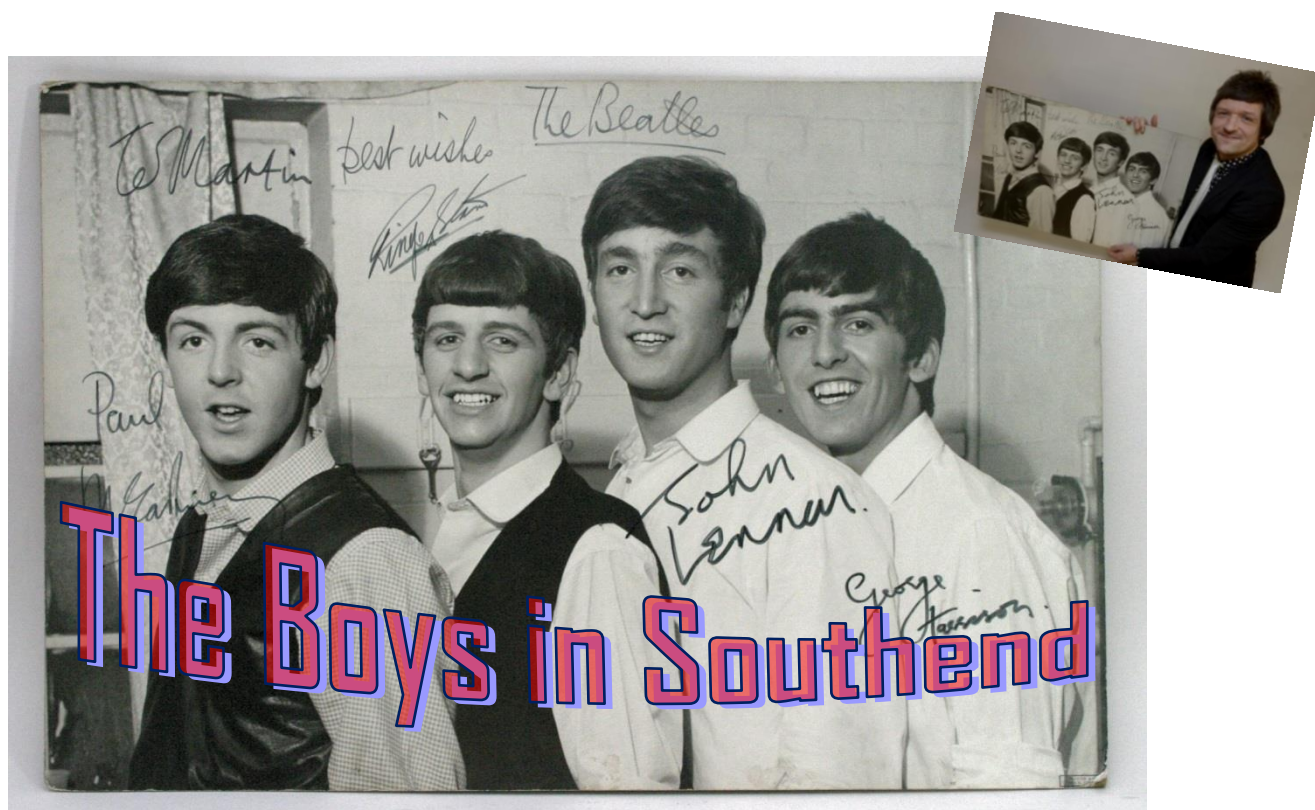




# Update

Number Four

March 2016



Laurel and Hardy appeared at the Southend Odeon to full houses for a week in August 1952. The Beatles made two appearances on 31st May and 9th December 1963 at Southend Odeon to full houses, but I think there may have been a tad more screaming at the four Boys, John, Paul, George and Ringo than there had been for our Boys, Stan and Ollie. There are quite a few surviving photographs of The Beatles in Southend in the dressing room and on stage before their appearance. This large signed photo was recently sold for auction and fetched £5,000 from a mystery online buyer in Switzerland. The small picture shows the auctioneer holding the fab picture of the Fab Four.

When Laurel and Hardy were at Southend Odeon, Arthur Levenson was the deputy manager. He can be seen behind Stan in the photograph. He was the manager by the time the Beatles came to town and can be seen between



John and George. Arthur arranged for the four Beatles to sign and dedicate the large photo for Martin his son. Martin decided recently to make some extra room in his loft and hence the auction. He was stunned by the price believing it might make £1,000 if he was lucky.



When I was doing the research for my book 'A Spot of Trouble in Southend', I met Martin and he was extremely helpful. He told me *"It is safe to say that one, if not the highlight of my father's illustrious career, was his meeting Laurel and Hardy. He remembered that as a very special moment during his 40 years with the Rank Organisation"*.

The book was originally published in 2012. Since then I have been able to obtain more information, photographs and anecdotes pertaining to the Boys visit, stay and performance in our town. As a result of which a revised and updated version was published in 2015. The book outlines their film careers and then onwards to the live stage appearances in their later years. The focus though is on their 1952 tour when they visited Southend and contains previously unknown information and photos of their supporting acts, people they met and first-hand accounts of people who saw them on stage. It is richly illustrated with photos and personal letters between the Boys and their supporting artistes, many of which have never been published before. The book also contains the script for 'A Spot of Trouble'. What is evident is that this was an enjoyable tour for the artistes and friendships were established that continued for many years.

Now don't let this put you off, but Cliff Sawyer features on the cover. Why? That is because he now has the prop of the violin case that Stan used in the sketch. Perhaps one day, when he wants to make a bit more room in his cellar, he may send it to auction. I hope that that mystery buyer in Switzerland doesn't bid for it, because I have my £5 ready and waiting.

This photo shows the Odeon as it looked just after L & H appeared. It has now been absorbed as part of the University of Essex, but it is easy to spot where it was in Southend High Street. I am sure that some Sons may wish to photo the site where the two Boys and then the four Boys once brought delight to Southend audiences.



## A Spot of Trouble in Southend

Revised & Updated



**- memories of their visit in 1952**

**Roger Robinson**

The Revised and Updated 'A Spot of Trouble in Southend – Laurel and Hardy – memories of their visit in 1952' will be available during the Pre-Convention and Convention. £10





# Sons in the Desert



Top Right:- Jack Stevens of the Helpmates tent with Stan's valet, Jimmy Murphy in 1984



Our trip on the Romney, Hythe and Dymchurch Railway on the Monday of the pre-Convention will commence at Hythe in Kent, a small market town. Here we board the smallest public railway in the world. Our first stage is to enjoy the green fields and grazing livestock on the Romney Marshes. We will alight at New Romney. Laurel and Hardy fans are familiar with

the newsreel film footage of the Boys visit in 1947 when they re-opened the section from New Romney to Dungeness, which had been closed during the 2nd World War and used for military purposes. On the right is a photo of an armoured train that ran up and down the line during the war. Remember the fun that Stan and Ollie had when they were getting in and out of the small carriages, opening the door of the tunnel with the enormous key and their reaction to the train whistle. We will have our own Stan and Ollie with us to evoke many of those memories. When we re-board the train to continue onto Dungeness the scenery noticeably changes. We will be travelling into Britain's only desert, Dungeness Estate. Yes, we will be 'Sons in the Desert'. This 468 area shingle headland is sparsely populated and has a power station, a few isolated cottages and a nature reserve. Should you somehow



get separated from the group, then I suggest that you make your own way to Fort Arid!



