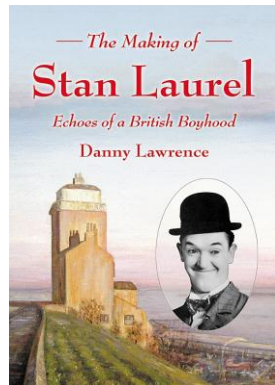


13201

Stan's start THE MAKING OF STAN LAUREL

By Danny Lawrence
 Publisher: McFarland
 & Company, Inc, North Carolina
 www.mcfarlandpub.com
 200 pages. 228 x 150mm,
 soft cover
 Print
 ISBN:978-0-78646312-1.
 E-book
 ISBN: 78-0-7864-8515-4.



Author Danny Lawrence is a retired sociologist from the University of Nottingham.

Publicity says, "This ground-breaking biography examines Laurel's family background, his formative years, and his struggle to establish his show business career. Throughout his life, Stan retained the emotional bonds forged in his youth, sporadically returning to his home town of North Shields.

"Describing Stan Laurel's key role in making his films with long-time teammate Oliver Hardy so successful internationally, the book also analyses how Stan's earliest life experiences are often echoed in those films. Included is a selection of photographs relevant to Laurel's boyhood, many related to recurring themes in the Laurel and Hardy comedies."

I really enjoyed reading this book. It does just what it says it will and answers a few important questions about Stan's background and family. It draws upon some other books, but also questions a few myths in them. It uses the author's personal knowledge of Northeast England and its history. And it presents a cohesive appreciation of Stan Laurel's worth in the history of the cinema and music hall. The theme of exploring Stan's childhood and teenage years is closely followed throughout the book and never becomes too fanciful.

A sample of the text. ..

Stan recalled that his father was an adept showman when it came to advertising the performances at his Theatre Royal. In one stunt he arranged for a lion in a cage to be mounted on a wagon and hauled through the streets. Inside the cage was a dummy dressed to look like a man and inside the dummy was a big piece of meat to ensure that the lion would look as if it was devouring the body. As crowds gathered around the cage, a canvas sign would drop down reading, "Tonight at the Theatre Royal!"

↳ Later we learn that. ..

Arthur Jefferson [Stan Laurel's father] claimed in a 1932 interview with a reporter from the magazine *Picturegoer*, that he was the first to introduce cinema to the north of England. Whether or not this particular claim is warranted, there is no doubt that Arthur was a pioneer. There is firm evidence that he was using Poole's Myriorama, "The New and Improved Cinematograph," at his Blyth Theatre Royal in April 1900 and he may have introduced it to North Shields even earlier. In February 1899.

↳ Further. ..

Laurel and Hardy were even adopted as the code name for a key part of Britain's early warning system against nuclear attack in the 1960s. An obviously "tickled pink" Stan wrote to a friend in 1960 to tell him that a Minister of the Crown had announced in the House of Commons that the new radar system project in Fylingdales, Yorkshire, which would tell the difference between a Russian missile and a meteor, was nicknamed Laurel and Hardy. Stan considered it something of an honour but had one amusing reservation: "I think it was a mistake to name it this - just on account of it having two electronic brains. Actually we didn't [sic] have ONE brain between us!"

↳ Stan wrote regarding schooling (and his spelling and punctuation are retained throughout) ...

I don't remember going to King St. school, I first started at a kindergarten at some house in Dockwray Square, it was down in a basement, then went to a private school in Tynemouth, it was called Gordon's -- he was quite a character, he collected Cats, don't think he ever let them out of the house - you could smell the joint from Jarrow, the fish quay was like a garden of roses compared. The old screwball used to write poetry & we had to sit and listen to it all day long, his favourite one was "Ode to the Tyneside"- used to add new verses to it every day & ask our opinion. I once told him I didn't like it & had to stand in the corner for an hour. Having so many cats I often wondered if he wrote "Kitten on the Keys"

After this episode I was sent to a boarding school in Tynemouth I believe it was called Tynemouth College. the reason my folks had me board there was due to my always being in mischief & trouble at home, like setting fire to the house, (accidently of course) & falling into a barrel of fish guts in my best Sunday suit on the fish quay near the "Wooden Dolly," drinking Gin (thought it was water) got cockeyed & many more escapades too numerous to mention. Think this was the forerunner of my film character!

There is a useful index, a bibliography and a list of (mostly useful) websites. But an enormous custard pie goes to splatter this new book for not including *Bowler Dessert Online*, nor any mention anywhere of *Bowler Dessert*. How could they be so dumb? I also consider a propelled pastry is deemed on account of the price of the book being way too high.

Willie McIntyre

Authors' Note.

My profound apologies for not giving *Bowler Dessert* a mention. The online price is much lower than the RRP – especially in the UK.