

THE

GEORGE FORMBY

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Newsletter 111



Specially Produced for George Formby Fans
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Welcome to Newsletter No. 111

And we start with another sad loss. Many will remember John Hickinbottom the marvellous organist/pianist/keyboard player who supported us at Warrington whenever we held a charity night. Well sadly we have to report that dear John, at a young age of 48, has passed on to a higher life. Another of Warrington's great characters has left us and we are still reeling from the blow.

News of John's passing came as a great shock to Anthony Mason and myself. He was such a talented man. Down to earth and practical, and without any airs and graces. Definitely a rare breed that knew no bounds. Nothing was impossible to John. He'd have a go at tackling any practical problem. He was a huge, rough and ready man who could repair anything, even without the aid of a tool box.



On one occasion we were in the middle of a show when one of the artists tripped over a cable and blew the sound. "Give it here" John growled. He whipped out his penknife and cigarette lighter and the job was done in seconds. He saved the show!

Over the years John had been a professional player, backing many top class stars. His latest work was with Carl Denver, who passed on recently. He told me of the arguments he had with Helen Shapiro, and his experiences with top singing star David Alexander. For years he travelled on cruise ships with the bands.

The service, which was held at Northwich Parish Church, was conducted by Rev Adam Friend and Rev Paul Dawson. John worked as advisor to the group of churches in the area so they were aware of what a great character he was. They attempted to keep the service as light-hearted as possible with comical anecdotes of the experiences they had with John, "On one occasion they turned up for a service only to find John on the floor with the organ stripped down. He was mending a fault." That was John! However they had no need to worry as he'd have the organ repaired in time for the service.

The committal was held at Walton Lea Crematorium, Warrington where the church hall was packed to the doors, - many standing at the rear. Due to the light-heartedness it was reasonably easy to keep control of emotions, but, during the closing scenes there wasn't a dry eye in the church when the curtains closed to the wonderful strains of John's musical talent. One could imagine his huge hands swiftly, and delicately gliding across the keyboard. There was no doubt about it, the man was tremendously gifted.

There will never be another John Hickinbottom. Goodbye dear friend. Goodbye.

Spare a thought for Jim Bramwell

Things haven't been too good for Jim this last few years as Joan has not been in the best of health and she is currently having hospital treatment. However, he doesn't let things get on top of him, and he is still his cheery self.



JIM'S ON TV—Over the past months he has been tuning into Auction Drop on Sky TV and purchasing all sorts of bargains: watches, cameras, CDs, towels, crockery etc. and as Jim said, "The postman calls almost every day with a parcel or two." Only a month ago he bought two 45 piece Dinners Services at a bargain price, though Lord help me I don't know what he's going to do with them as there's only two living in the house. Each time he puts a bid in for an article his name will pop up on the TV screen: "Jim from Newton," and he often gives me a ring, "Did you see my name on telly last night?"

GERRON YER BIKE—But his latest buy has certainly got him on the move. He's bought a Pedal Bike and, although he's not ridden one for over 20 years, he's having a go and providing quite a lot of amusement in Newton le Willows. Every time he sets out for a ride, he falls off it and locals claim it's the best entertainment they've had for years.



Jim on his bike with his 45 piece dinner set.

TAKE CARE—So, if you intend paying a visit to Newton le Willows, close to the Little Theatre where George made his first appearance in 1921, beware of Jim coming round the corner. You might not recognise him at first glance, because he's full of bruises, however, he's determined to master the thing even if it kills him.

Is Ravi Somaiya Mad? Asks Doreen Crosby—

He writes "The ukulele is the least pretentious instrument imaginable. It is a guitar whom no one liked at school; if it were a person it would be crap at sport and describe itself as "mad". You'll never find groups of smelly Goths discussing their favourite ukulele riffs in mind numbing detail. Any band member who wields it probably finds him, or herself, last on the last of groupies backstage.

Picture the most attractive person. Now picture them twanging away at a small uku- lele, - Sexual charisma: NIL. Anyone who takes up the ukulele does it from sheer love of the instrument. Like tuba and accordion players they are afforded none of the glam- our that a violinist or lead guitarist gets.

George Formby, the jaunty northern chap and the instrument's leading proponent in his 50s heyday, even invented facial expression to go with it. Trying picking up a ukulele without sticking your front teeth out.

Thanks Doreen. Not sure if he's mad or not. At the Ken Dodd event we were among the first to respond, but placed the very last on the bill after all the noisy guitars had gone home.

Still Going Well at Crewe—Eighty-

five attended the July meeting at Crewe. We were down on artistes due to holidays having had apologies from Steve Hassall, Arthur and Mary Newton, Jonathan and Pamela Baddeley, Don Chalkley, Cyril Palmer and Sheila, Brian and Mary Allan and Joyce and Gareth Sumner.



We were pleased to see Jack Crimes again after illness and also Arthur Langdon back after three months in hospital, and I was particularly delighted that Connie was able to be there and take her place on the mike. It did not take Stan Evans long to quote a somewhat risqué rhyme which was challenged by Connie and ended up with lots of fun and laughter.

Alice Cronshaw retaliated at remarks made about her by Alan Newton at the previous meeting by producing a pair of gaily-coloured underpants which were thrown into the audience and back onto the stage amid much laughter. The audience sang "Happy Birthday" to Pauline Spark who is such a great Formby follower. Alan Chenery and Pat very kindly made the journey from Fleetwood for Alan to M.C. the show. Alan was ably assisted by Alan Newton the Concert Producer. Chris Metcalf took up his usual position on the door and Angela Caldicott was Sound Engineer in the absence of Colin who was working. Again I have to report sterling support from Harry and Vera Jones, Peter Howard, Brian and Iris Hough, Evelyn Metcalf and Alan Newton in setting up the show in the afternoon, the ladies who put on the refreshments and all you good supporters for helping to clear up at the end of the evening.

Artistes performing at the July meeting: Alan Chenery "Wigan Boat Express," "I Wish I could Play the Ukulele" and "Little Back Room up Stairs." Cliff Royle "Somebody's Wedding Day," "John Willies Jazz Band" and "Fifty Percent of its Mine" Brian Edge "I'm the King of the Swingers," "Wigan Pier and "Avalon." Alice Cronshaw "Too Young" and "When You're Smiling" and "I'm Going to Sit right down and Write Myself a Letter." Walter Kirkland "Frank on His Tank," "You Can't Keep a Growing lad Down" and bones medley. Bernard Ashmore (debut) "Putting on the Style" Connie Edge "Running round the Fountains" & "Lambeth Walk." Stan Evans (a tribute to the late John Hickinbottom) "Smiles." The Pastits (Stan Evans and Stan Watkinson) "Baby," "You'll never find a another fool like me" medley, "Side by Side Medley." Ashley Caldicott and friend Stan "There is Nothing Like a Dame." Jim Knight "Leaning on a Lamppost," "We've Been a Long Time Gone" and bones medley. Alan Newton "If I had a Girl like You," "McNamara's Band," "The Lancashire Lad and his Uke" and "Buenos Sera." Des Redfern "D-I-V-O-R-C-E," "Its in the Air" and "Count Your Blessings and Smile." Bill Turner "I'll see you in my Dreams." Alison Nadin "Folding Paper" Vera Jones "If I had my Way" and "If I had my Life to Live over" (accompanied by the Pastits")

Thanks Brian. It was an excellent night as usual and it was nice to see Connie back in the census seat.

BIG 1940s WEEK – END COMING UP AT MORECAMBE ON SEPT 11th & 12th
RING JOHN TAYLOR ON 01524 426173

Doddy to reinstate the ash to historic village

By **JON TUNNEY**

ECHO Reporter

KEN DODD is digging out his gardening gloves for Saturday to bring back the meaning to the name Knotty Ash.

Local folklore has it that Doddy's beloved village took its title from a gnarled old ash standing outside the pub.

The much loved comic, also known as the village squire, was tickled when approached to do the honours with a new ash for the site.

The tree was donated by TV botanist David Bellamy, and it will take pride of place in a spot as close to the original as possible.

As well as bringing a bit of history to life, the tree-planting will mark the start of the Knotty Ash carnival.

It is designed to celebrate the designation of Knotty Ash as a conservation area.

Organisers hope to make the event an annual affair.

Doddy will be drawing the crowds at the weekend bonanza by running his own stall as well as planting the tree.

Funds raised from the event will be ploughed into future conservation projects designed to protect the heritage of Knotty Ash.

Plans outlined by carnival organiser Yvonne Irving include turning the grounds of the now-derelict Thingwall House into a nature conservation area, a scheme backed by local schools.

Ms Irving also wants to see the old Knotty Ash school hall renovated as a centre for youth activities.

Organisers are keen for anyone with carnival ideas or a tried-and-tested attraction which would enhance the village spirit of the event to get in touch.

Ms Irving said: "Now that Knotty Ash has received conservation status, we wanted to mark the occasion, so we decided upon a carnival day."

Anyone interested should ring Yvonne on 0151-228 9930.

The organisers were very brave putting this outside show on. We had some bad weather previous and any rain on the day would have ruined the occasion. No doubt Ken Dodd is blessed.



TREE-MENDOUS: Doddy

KEN DODD CARNIVAL

We were invited to perform a 20 minute spot at the Ken Dodd Carnival, and emails went out to a number of players, which resulted in the following players turning up: Mike Turner, Stan Watkinson, Phil Jones, John Shreeve, Don Horton, Alan Chenery, Neil Forshaw and Wilf Murray. Plus our fan club.

We arrived at the fun-packed field (round the corner to Doddy's bungalow) and the area was crammed with people of all ages, - on the hottest day of the year.



Here we have Pat, Hazel, Janet, Wilf, and Christine, roasting in the hot sun.

Ken looked very tired during the brief time we saw him so no doubt the hot sun had tired him out.

An appeal was put out for contestants for Ken's Jam Butty eating competition but none of our group were hungry.

Young Cliff's a Busy Lad!

Weeks are usually busy for us in the world of Formby and this week has been no exception. Last Saturday we did a performance in Holywell and raised about £600 for Charity. The people in the Town really enjoyed our performance, and delved deeply into their pockets. Wednesday saw us perform in Pentre Broughton at the 80th. Birthday Party of Frank Humphreys. Friday was our usual Concert night, and on Saturday we played at a Home in Flint. Monday sees some of us off to a Warner's short break in Nottinghamshire with other Formby enthusiasts.



We expected a low turn out, due to the holiday period, but 72 paying persons were in attendance, including a number of first time guests, as well as Janet Hawkins and Christine Booth; both from Milton Keynes. Charlie Morrison also brought along two granddaughters. Faithful supporters from Sale, Blackpool and Crewe. So what of the show.

Deg Bruce and Phil Hughes acted as M.C's with support from Jim Knight. Following a Thrash, Jonathan Baddeley took the stage with Our Sergeant Major and Lancashire Toreador to be followed by Walter Kirkland with Frank On His Tank and a Bones Medley during which he was accompanied by the other Bone Shakers. Next were Gerald Jones who twiddled Andy The Andy Man and the unusual song Under The Blasted Oak; Tom Meredith, TT Races, and Blackpool Rock (didn't he do well); Alan Chenery, I Love To Play My Ukulele and Wigan Boat Express; Brian Edge Thirty Thirsty Sailors (not easy words to get round) and Guarding The Home Of The Home Guard.

At present we have about half a dozen learners. Three of them agreed to go on the Mikes for the very first time and did the War Time Medley, supported by a few of our members. Those on the Mikes were Russell Rees-Davies, Malcolm Ingham and Eric Morris's Grandson Ryan. Later on we had a performance by young Daniel Smith who sang We Remember George and a Formby Medley. Our "learners" have to be congratulated on their performances, and we hope before long others will join our "First Timers" on the Stage. Well done!! The Three Tenors sang Blackpool Belle, and an Old Time Medley.

A cheque for £900, being money raised for Charity at our Centenary Concert in May, was presented by Margaret Royle to John Maddock of Claire House Children's Hospice. John responded with sincere thanks, and presented the Branch with a framed receipted acknowledgement of our support.

We celebrated a number of Birthdays; Jim Knight (75); Frank Humphreys (80), Charlie Penman, and Norma Edwards. Frank's being a special day was celebrated with Birthday Cakes and the singing of Happy Birthday. There was a Raffle, and some confusion as to who had requested Lamp Post for a special occasion. Eventually some played this for an Elderly Lady in the audience; and then had to dash into the main lounge of the Legion to play it again for a lady who was celebrating her 90th Birthday; and did her friends enjoy it? It was obvious they did.

The Branch then put on a presentation of the Show they performed at the Blackpool Centenary under the name "Black, White and Welsh". This comprised a George Formby Living Marionette (Alison Nadin) complete with Uke, supported by five gents all dressed in black trousers and shirts, white ties and black bowler hats. They performed Blackpool Rock, and Little Ukulele. CONTINUED FOOT OF NEXT PAGE...

Andy Eastwood—Very Professional—Just received a parcel from Andy including a copy of his latest CD.

Like Alan Randall, Andy has gone for variety rather than pure Formby, and the results are great, with "Little Ukulele, When I'm 64, Isn't This a Lovely Day, He Played His Ukulele When The Ship Went Down, Take Your Pick, Something Stupid, Lancashire Toreador, Dream A Little Dream Of Me, Mister Sandman, Talking To The Moon About You, Happy Days Are Here Again, William Tell's Ukulele, Busy Line, and Blackpool Rock." Price £10 inc pp Tapes £6.50. From Andy Eastwood, 81 Glenville Rd, Christchurch, Dorset BH23 5PX. For an extra £2 you can order 4 well produced coloured photos.



www.andyeastwood.com

And Andy is certainly doing extremely well with his theatre bookings. From April to July alone, he has over 60 engagements on his books. These take him all over the country and on the following dates he will be appearing in the N. West:

KEN DODD SHOW July 8th RHYL Pavilion. Nov 2nd, 3rd, 4th CREWE Lyceum.
WE'LL MEET AGAIN May 13th CREWE Lyceum, June 6th RHYL Pavilion.

Formby Players at

Newton le Willows—The lads

did a grand job at an outside event on Sat July 18th, for the 15th Annual Event when they performed amongst all the hot bands: Black Dog, Devil To Pay, Sauce, Chicken Run, Beware Of The Pig, to name a few. They sang a selection of GF favourites: Windows, Wu, Lamp Post, Nightshirt, Ukulele etc. and the crowd attempted to join in. For the first 10 minutes it looked



Left to right: Mike Turner, Gerry & Viv Mawdsley, Andy Little, Neil Forshaw, Ray Young (with monkey on his back) Fred Stevenson, Steve Massey

grim when the disc jockey had problems plugging the mikes in—"Well" he said, "I'm not used to having singers." However, all went very well and they did George proud. Newton is close to the little theatre where George made his debut in 1921.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE SIX—Pamela Baddeley sang some nice songs and then followed Jim Knight (Can't Stop Me From Dreaming and a Bones Session with his fellow players); Des (early arrival) Redfern (Out In The Middle East and Mr. Wu's A Window Cleaner Now); Cliff Royle (Formby Fans Are Meeting Tonight and Granddad's Flannel-ette Nightshirt); Jonathan Baddeley a couple of unusual and humorous songs (The Old Cane Bottom Chair and When The Waterworks Caught Fire) and Alan Chenery (Putting On The Style and singing Mississippi I Remember You accompanied by Jonathan on his Uke). Nice comments were made that you picked songs which suited your lovely voice Alan. The evening then concluded with a Thrash.

Formby Friends Please Note. Our Christmas Buffet will be on Friday December 3rd. Tickets £5 (with reductions for children) will soon be available from Myra Knight. Please book early. Next Practice Night is Monday 6th Sept.

Scotland Was One Of The Best Trips Ever!

And what a great and wonderful time we had. Everything went perfect! Good company, great laughs, wonderful hotel, nice large concert room, great food, PERFECT!



Nethy Bridge, which is about 20 miles to the right of Inverness, is quite a distance to travel, but distance isn't too bad if you have a happy crowd of merry songsters and jokesters keeping everyone awake. Time travels quick when you are enjoying the trip.



Alan the driver

As usual we made our driver, Alan, part of our company and he soon joined in enjoying a laugh and a joke with us all. Alan Chenery, who was a coach driver for many years, and Colin Wood did a grand job in assisting the driver and helping with the map reading. They also ran the Tea, Coffee and Wine distribution along with Paul and Jill Woodhead. All in all, great teamwork!

CHRISTINE WOOD—God bless her—as usual, she took the strain every time we hit a snag. On one occasion we entered a very narrow lane which led to a doubtful bridge. We travelled up to the frail looking wooden bridge only to find that it was limited to four tons, and our fully loaded coach was in the region of twenty tons. All could see the strain she was going through but made it worse by inciting the driver to “have a go” with calls like “you’ll be sorry for the rest of your life if you don’t take up the challenge” and “build a ramp and take a flying leap at it.” I’m sure that poor Christine thought we were serious, but relieved when driver Alan reversed the coach back up the narrow lane.

EVE STEWART—What a brave woman Eve is. She is far from well and is regularly visiting the hospital, but, although Charles begged her not to take the trip she insisted on coming, and we are pleased that she did because it did her the world of good. On her first day she had a stumble, which shook her up, but from then on the coach party took good care of her. Eve’s friends, Joan Littlewood and Thelma Cartwright stayed by her side throughout the trip like a pair of angels.

RAIN—It’s a good job that we had a happy crowd because the weather was terrible. It rained constantly throughout the trip but it didn’t dampen our spirits—no fear! On arriving at the Nethy Bridge Hotel we were greeted by a very pleasant manager who made up all feel very welcome. He introduced us as the George Formby crowd who were here to provide some entertainment.

PAUL WOODHEAD—During the coach trips Paul, conjured up entertainment in the form of three quizzes and was doing exceedingly well, receiving thunderous applause.

However, the third quiz, which was based on George Formby, was his downfall. From then on he was in disgrace, booed and jeered whenever he made an announcement. The body language from the photo below shows how determined he was that your Editor didn't get 20 points out of 20 so we had to dedicate the following poem to him.

THE FIENDISH QUIZMASTER by Stan Evans
We've just had a coach trip to Scotland
With the fans from the George Formby club
We sipped gallons of tea from the tea urn
And loads of boiled sweets for our grub

To save being bored on the coach trip
Paul Woodhead, - a kind hearted man
Came up with a type of a quiz game
Considered by all, a good plan

Well he asked us a right load of questions
On George Formby, - which we should all know
If we answered each one correctly
We'd be honoured as champ of the show

Now Stan was red hot with the answers
In fact he was leading the field
He pictured himself as the champion
With a cup and a trophy and shield.

But Paul resorted to skulduggery
In fact he committed a sin
When he mucked about with the answers
To make sure that Stanley can't win

But Stan was too wise for the Feller
From then on it began to get grim
When he rallied his troops from the party
And they all threw tomatoes at him

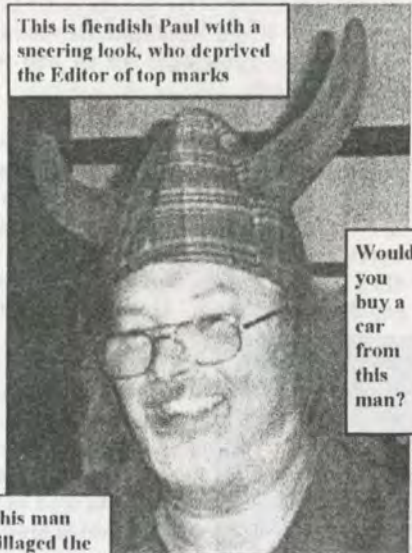
But Paul said, "Now don't let's get angry
It's only a game after all.
Fair's fair, less of your squabbling."
And Val aimed a trifle at Paul.

Well it hit him right where it hurt him
And he sunk to his knees in defeat
He knew he was definitely beaten
As the blow knocked him clean off his feet

Well this is the end of my story
And I hope that your ear I did bend
Just don't muck about with the Editor
Cos he has the last word in the end. Bum Bum.

CONTINUED PAGE 10

This is fiendish Paul with a sneering look, who deprived the Editor of top marks



Would you buy a car from this man?

This man pillaged the Editor

Fortunately it went no further

This man above is accused of fiddling the answers so that your Editor didn't get top marks, but we always give an accused man a fair trial so, members of the jury, what is your verdict. Guilty or Not Guilty?

One question was "Name George Formby's dog" and I answered "Willie Waterbucket" WRONG you should have replied with Mickie Dripping. I appealed stating that George had several dogs but to no avail. This is one mean quizmaster!!!

The last question required the answer "Chinese Laundry Blues" and as the sheet was too narrow to include the full title I abbreviated with "Mr Wu." WRONG—you should give the full title. SO, what do you think? You've only to look at his face to see he's guilty!!!

CONTINUED FROM PAGE NINE—What a grand concert room we had. It was perfect in every way. Nice and spacious, plenty of tables and chairs, small corner stage, dance floor, bar etc. and the manager gave us full permission to use it as we wish.

ALISON NADIN—Our thanks go to Alison for loaning us her sound equipment. It was ideal and the sound was perfect. Alan & Colin soon had the equipment set up and we were ready for three full night's concerts.



RORY MCKENZIE—Apparently an artist was booked to entertain us for the last night and he had a surprise when he arrived to find that we were in the middle of our own concert. I apologised to Rory, an Accordion Player, to which he replied, "Auk man, dunna worri, ah git paad if ah sing or naut. For the next half hour Rory did a spot with songs and jokes and then joined us with a number of popular sing alongs. He added more to a great atmosphere.



MARIA—Well this lady had all the men worried. She would stand at one end of the room, eyeing them up, and then she would make her attack, she'd pounce on them like a dog after a rabbit. She hounded them all, constantly looking for dance partners, but they were too busy, trembling and hiding behind their pint glasses from Maria. As soon as the men looked away she would shout "Chicken" at them, which made them tremble more.

Although she was a guest at the hotel, she helped with some of the chores, such as collecting glasses etc. which gave her an opportunity to get friendly.

WEDDING — On the last day we visited Gretna Green, where courting couples elope to get married. During our stay we were invited to the wedding of Walter Kirkland and Alice Cronshaw. It was Walter's idea because he said he was fed up of living over the brush, - "too bristly" he said.



The service was officiated by the fiendish quizmaster, Paul Woodhead, who—without rehearsal—did an excellent job in joining man and wife.

Walter is a lad! While the bride is posing for the photo, the bridegroom is chatting up one of the guests.

As soon as the knot was tied Alice was showered with daisies and milky bobs plucked from the fields. A currant cake was purchased and crumbled up so that everyone got a crumb. Crowds gathered around thinking they were witnessing a real marriage.

As soon as the knot was tied Alice was showered with daisies and milky bobs plucked from the fields. A currant cake was purchased and crumbled up so that everyone got a crumb. Crowds gathered around thinking they were witnessing a real marriage.

DARK HORSES TOM and NORA—We were amazed at the style of Tom & Nora Meredith on the dance floor. They were brilliant. Tom might be struggling with his memory at times, but he's certainly not forgotten how to jive on the dance floor. They danced through the night like Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers.

Players Wanted for WIGAN PIER 4th and 5th Sept. ring Alan Chenery on 01253 681439 or me on 01075 727102. Weather permitting it is an outside event. Times: 11am to around 5pm.

HAPPY TRIPPERS VERDICT ON THE TRIP—Colin & Christine Wood: All went very well and they are asking for another trip. Jackie: Very nice, good company. Kay: Brilliant time, enjoyed every minute. Valentine Wood: Very good but I feel sorry for Christine because she didn't have a go at that bridge. She'll regret it. Dot Wood: It's been a great trip, but not long enough. Ted & Ruth Kennedy: Smashing! Thoroughly enjoyed it. Excellent organisers. Jim & Myra Knight: I'd like to thank those who made it possible, and those who kept us happy on the coach, wonderful. Jack & Margaret Davies: Had a wonderful time, well organised, lots of fun and laughs. Cliff & Margaret Royle: Thanks to all who organised, and those who supplied teas, coffees wines and toffees etc. Pauline: It's been a lovely holiday and we've made more new friends.



Christine's Highland Fling

Derek & Joan Platt: Really enjoyed the trip, well organised, great! Absolutely fantastic, good crowd. Alice Cronshaw: I'm lost for words (I don't believe it). Walter Kirkland: If anyone wants any toilet seats repairing I'm your lad because the one in our room kept collapsing. Peter & Cynthia Whittaker: Thoroughly enjoyed it. Thelma Cartwright: I'd like to thank everybody for all the help they've given us with our friend. Joan Littlewood: You're a great gang and we love all of you. Bill & Sheila Found: No complaints, Brilliant. Alan & Eunice Evans: We really enjoyed the concerts. Nora & Tom Meredith: Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious, and my only complaint is there were not enough chocolate eclairs. Eve Stewart: We've had a super trip and we really enjoyed it. It is beyond price and it has done me the world of good. Paul Woodhead couldn't say anything because he was still licking his wounds from his beating. Jill Woodhead said: I must apologise for Paul's dreadful behaviour. Betty Cox: I'm short in words and in stature. Molly: We've had a most fantastic time. Alan & Pat Chenery: It's been very busy so I'm looking forward to getting home to have a rest. Tony & Marje Elsdon: We've had a brilliant weekend and a glorious time. Chrissie: Absolutely wonderful. Mike & Margaret Sharp: We'd like to thank everyone for making us feel so welcome. Brian & Beryl Fisher: Great weekend, non-uke player but this time next year I hope to get a tune out of my uke. Alan Braithwaite the coach driver said: It's been great, you've been a good bunch and I'd be pleased to take you all again.



Royce on reception

ROYCE—But the star of the show has got to be Royce the Hotel dog who sat behind the reception with his paws on the desk. He sat there looking at each of the guests as they passed by.

RAINY SCOTLAND—The rain was still pouring down until we reached England and then the sun shone brilliantly. Fortunately the continuous rain didn't dampen our spirits.

Three cheers for the organisers and especially to Christine Wood who carried all the paperwork and the stresses and strains of the trip. But we still think she should have had a flying leap at that bridge. Val Wood said it was "A Bridge Too Far" but I think she'll regret chickening out for the rest of her life.

Three concert organisers who did a fine job keeping



Alan Chenery

Colin Wood

Paul Woodhead

the concert going. Whenever we run a coach trip we always check that there is a concert room available. On this occasion the room was excellent and these three lads did a fine job in making use of it. Making thanks to Alison Nadin for the loan of portable sound equipment.

Paul the Quiz Cheat Fires Back (after reading a preview of this month's Newsletter)— Hi Stan. Great newsletter as always. Just to let you know that Alice & Walter sent me a card as a thank you for officiating at their "wedding".

Good write up on Scotland but I think you should mention that you're my hero, even if my adulation is rejected. It might also be worth mentioning that although you were unable to answer two of the quiz questions, you did still squeeze into first position, due not least of all to my sympathetic pitch. It might also merit a note that where I was sat, you could see all the answers! Love to Eva.

Thanks Paul but I forgot to mention in the report that the top prize (20 out of 20) was to be a cup, trophy, medal and shield. However, because you mucked about with the answers I got a cup of coffee in a plastic cup. And you charged me a pound to enter. I will admit that once or twice I leaned forward to see if I could see the answers, but this was merely to check that you were not fiddling the answers. However, I couldn't see them because they were folded round the back of the top sheet. I rest my uke case.

Many Thanks from the Organisers- Dear Friends, Hope that you have all recovered from our trip to Scotland. It was a great success and the weather didn't dampen our spirits. Thank you for making the Scotland trip such a great success. It was your support and friendliness that made it a success. Thank you too, to the helpers. Stan and Eva - the sweet monitors. Paul and Jill - the wine monitors. Thanks Paul also for compering and organising the concerts. Weren't they good, a super concert room too. Hope to see you all next year. Wherever we go. Chris Colin Alan and Pat.

Hey waiter, this chicken's only got one leg!

Well, are you going to eat it, or dance with it?

Hey waiter, what's this fly doing in my soup. I think it's doing the backstroke.



Jim Bowen—During Sept 1991, Jim Bowen appeared on BBC Radio. He was commenting on an event in Blackpool and particularly mentioned that our young Michael Davies, a great talented player and entertainer at the age of five, was being brought up to be crackers.

I jokingly wrote to him through his agents claiming that any more comments like that and he would get 500 banjo uke players outside his bedroom window.

Bull's Eyes Jim Bowen.

We received the following reply: - Dear Stan Evans, First of all, let me make it clear that I know all about George Formby, his career, and the pleasure he brought to millions. As a musician

I also appreciate the enjoyment George created with his uke—something perpetuated by my mate Alan Randall.

I also know that George's greatest attribute was his sense of humour and his ability to cock a snook at others by lampooning their 'intelligence' with his own down to earth approach to life. Thank goodness most Lancashire folk have this gift. That's why we produce the best comedy talent in the world.

Having said that, we also have another gift: That of never taking ourselves too seriously. We get on with our lives and do what we can to earn a few bob and spread a little happiness. Correct me if I'm wrong, but that's exactly what George Formby did? It was only when other people around him misinterpreted his 'magic' that things started to go wrong.

Nothing I said on radio was designed to hurt, offend or upset anyone. Let's go through some of the objections: "Bringing them up to be crackers, bring them up to be daft" is what I am quoted as saying about young Michael Davies being a GFS member. George admitted to being both daft and crackers, so what's wrong with that? It's just the meaning of daft and crackers that appears to be in dispute. Aficionados of Formby and those with a knowledge of Lancashire folk won't need explanations.

All you GFS members are absolutely barmy (as above) but you are a brilliant bunch and happy a Larry when it comes to your devotion to George. That's fine, but please don't take yourselves too seriously. George wouldn't want that. His music and his humour were there to enjoy.

Don't force your love of the man on others. I have always been a great admirer, but I'm not a member of the GFS. That's my right, but it doesn't mean that I don't think as much of the man as any other member. For example, I support Blackburn Rovers and love trumpet players and jazz, but I don't expect everyone else to do the same.

The GFS does a great job in perpetuating George's name. He was one of the greatest natural entertainers of all time. His films and music still bring pleasure 30 years after his death. No one ever disputed that. Carry on doing what you do, but don't take it all too serious and expect us all to be the same. After all, George was an original. Jim Bowen.

BIG WAR—TIME WEEKEND COMING UP AT MORECAMBE ON SEPT 11th & 12th
RING JOHN TAYLOR ON 01524 426173

Sale Report

by Hilda & Vera—Once again

Cyril opened the meeting, which had a greatly reduced attendance, this was attributed to other events which were taking place this week-end – the Lifeboat event at Blackpool on Saturday and Transport Sunday in Fleetwood. Also there was an event in Newton-le-Willows on Sunday. We were very sorry to hear that Eve Stewart was back in hospital and we all wish her well.

Each artist had the opportunity to return to the stage and to sing four numbers in total which, once again, resulted in a good evening's entertainment.



Vera

Hilda



Ken Ratcliffe and Dick Eaves

The M.C.s for the evening were Dick Eaves and Brian White who both did a sterling job in introducing the following players: Eddie Bancroft *Mr.Wu's a Window Cleaner Now, Leaning on a Lamp-post, Licence and The Window Cleaner*; Brian White *T.T.Races, When I Was a Lad* (ably assisted by his wife, Elizabeth), *Lancashire Toreador and Wigan Pier*; Jon Baddeley *It Serves You Right, Home Guard Blues,*

Grand and Healthy Life, They Laughed When I Started to Play and, with his wife Pam, *Baby and Count Your Blessings and Smile*; David Rhodes *My Grandad's Bowler Hat, Wigan Boat Express, Hindoo Man and He Played His Ukulele When the Ship Went Down* – a great song; Alan Southworth *Fanlight Fanny, Somebody's Wedding Day, Andy the Handyman and My Plus Fours*; Arthur Newton *Sitting on the Top of Blackpool Tower, Nine O'Clock* and a lovely medley *Careless Love, Down in the Valley, Lilli Marlene*; Cyril Palmer *What More Can I Say, You Can't Stop Me From Dreaming, Hula Heaven and I'll See You In My Dreams*. Roy Brannon made his debut on the Sale stage with *Fanlight Fanny* and didn't he do well?

Many thanks to all the above performers who gave us a very full and enjoyable evening. Also many thanks to the ladies who provided us with the very welcome light refreshment and all who helped in any way. *Thanks Ladies. Hee you do remind me of The Cheeky Girls.*

Uke Wanted

—Andrew Willcox, who used to attend Liverpool, is looking for a banjo uke. He had a German Musima uke but had trouble with the plastic vellum and cant get another. He wants a reasonable uke, not too expensive. His number is 01744 635645 after 7.30.

Keep Your Eyes Open For Mark Walsh -

Because this lad certainly has the talent to make a name for himself in the entertainment world. He's got the lot!!!! Good clear voice with plenty of attack, perfect timing, Lancashire accent (although he's a Londoner), a cheeky, happy and permanent smile. Formby is a very rare gift and he's GOT IT!!!! There are many who attempt to sound like George but Mark is a natural performer.

And what a grand time we had when Brian White and Mark came to Penketh for the day. Mark particularly wanted to visit George's Hill Crest home in Stockton Heath and the Formby grave in the Warrington Cemetery. He also came to view George's memorabilia at my home, and was particularly delighted when he received a few items for his London collection.



Mark & Brian visit George's grave

Mark brought me a copy of his latest CD—which is now playing merrily as I am typing this report), and it sounds really excellent. I particularly like the way he feathers the strings quietly, during his singing, and then opens up with the uke solos. This is a talent that so few have.

BACKING TRACKS—Something I learnt at the latest Blackpool monthly meeting was that Mark actually produces his own backing tracks, and these also are REALLY EXCELLENT. He also makes ukes. The lad is TALLENTED and deserves to go far!!!

MAIL ORDER—CDs can be purchased from Mark Walsh, 17 Curlew Close, Crossways, Thamesmead, LONDON SE28 8HT, and the price is £10 inc postage.

Alice Cronshaw writes—Walter & I would like to thank all on the Scottish Coach Trip for their services at the Gretna Green Wedding Ceremony: The 25 Bridesmaids, Bill the Best Man, Paul Woodhead the Vicar, Tom Meredith for walking me down the gravel isle and getting us lost, the Search Party who found us, Val Wood for the posy of flowers, and Jill for the Wedding Cake Crumbs. Walter gives a special thanks to the men on the coach for their First Night Advice. He's far more relieved now and says it's far better than living over the brush.

THE PAST IT'S (Well & Truly) have done some unusual shows but this 90th Birthday bash takes some beating. On a blazing hot day we arrived at the venue and found that the stage was a small, and tall, triangle perched in the corner. And guess what was in the centre, domineering the whole stage? It was all the brewing up equipment with a large, boiling hot tea urn stuck in our backs, - and they insisted it stayed there. We were perched in one room, where the buffet was set out, while all the noise and activity was in a different room, near the bar. We saw only the backs of the 100 or so people that were there. So what did we do? We put on some singalong and left it running. It was the easiest bash ever.

Blackpool Gazette Monday July 19th 2004. - Turned out nice again—They may have started out the day sheltering from the drizzle rather than leaning on a lamp post but the sun eventually decided to shine for the members of the George Formby Society.

The group congregated outside Blackpool Lifeboat Station on Saturday to show off their ukulele skills and raise cash for the RNLI. With microphones and other equipment wrapped up in plastic bags to protect them from the rain, it did not take long for the George Formby enthusiasts to hit their rhythm venturing out from the cover of their stage to wander among the small audience.

Throughout the afternoon the weather improved and the songs of George Formby could be heard drifting along the prom.



Charles Stewart and Alan Chenery send many thanks to all the players and supporters who turned up at Blackpool and Fleetwood for the outside events. The weather was unkind during Saturday morning, but improved in the afternoon. £456 was collected for the Lifeboat Fund.

Sunday however, was a beautiful sunny day at Fleetwood and £340 was collected for the Alan's Chenery's Donna's Dream House.

Thanks for the Email. George & Beryl would have been delighted that you collected for the Lifeboat fund as they were keen supporters.

The Past Its (Well & Truly) didn't make the trip as the rain was bucketing down and we didn't fancy a 100 mile round trip not knowing if it was cancelled or not. However you had sufficient players.

Alan Chenery reports on Blackpool

It turned out nice again at Blackpool with a good crowd and 8 new visitors who all enjoyed the evening they were all greeted by Thelma Cartwright and Pat Chenery as Eve is still in hospital. Here's hoping we see her soon. It was nice to see Mark Walsh from London and Brian White from Bury. It was the first visit for Brian.

The performers for the evening were Mark Walsh, Don Horton, The Pastlits (the two Stans), Brian White, John Mason, John Taylor, Alan Middleton, Alan Chenery, joined by Hazel Astin For Pink Toothbrush & Frank Bennett, there were songs of various types enjoyed by all. Many thanks to Charles for the sound and Eileen for the buffet.

ATHENRYE—For months we have had a constant battle between The Past Its and Des Redfern on who is going to sing the Irish rebel song: Athenrye. It appeared that that whoever turned up first had the right to sing it, and usually The Past Its would beat Des to the post.

ALAN MIDDLETON—However it looks as if Alan has sorted the problem with a "send up" on Athenrye, which goes: -

By a lonely prison wall, I heard a young girl calling
"Michael they are singing it again.
If I hear it one more time, I'm going to lose my mind
I'm fed up with the fields of Athenrye

Oh no, the fields of Athenrye
If I hear it one more time I think I'll die
For it's such a boring song, it goes on, and on, and on
I'm so fed up with the fields of Athenrye

From a lonely prison wall I heard a young man calling
Mary, why do you think that we're inside
For in here we all agree, transportation will set us free
Free from the fields of Athenrye

Chorus

From behind the harbour wall, she watched the last star falling
As the prison ship sailed out against the sky
"Hold on" that girl did say, "I'm coming to Botany Bay
To escape from the fields of Athenrye."

Scotland

During the trip Paul & Jill Woodhead set up their own brewery on board coach and sold glasses of wine at £1 per glass. They did a roaring trade and especially to the group on the back seats who got drunker after every glass. The sales brought a total of £115. 50 which was donated to Alan Chenery's charity, Donna's Dream House. Paul & Jill wish to thank all who contributed.

Can't wait for the next coach trip— should we have two per year?

Jon Baddeley Emails—Hello Stan, On 30th July. there was a very interesting television programme about the lead singer of The Bonzo Dog Doo Dah Band. Their only successful record was called I'M THE URBAN SPACEMAN in 1968. According to the programme, this record was produced by Paul McCartney who played a wooden ukulele on the record itself.

Thanks Jon, we appear to be getting more information on The Beatles" playing ukes.

Bob Muirhead reports on Liverpool—We had a great night

at Liverpool although the "Past Hits" were sadly missed, however Andrew Little did a superb job as Organiser/MC, brought along his own sound system which was great and also seemed to suit the room. Andrew opened the proceedings with a couple of Formby numbers followed by John Shreeve who included "TT Races" (one of my own favourites), Chris Hopkins gave us a couple of excellent Blues numbers on the Wooden Uke then Dicky Hart and the Pacemakers did an Old Time medley. Phil Jones and Bryn arrived and were promptly ushered to the mike, Phil gave his usual polished performance preceded by a little chat on the great "Al Bowley" and his impact on the music of the day, Phil's snippets of information on the artists/composers of the music concerned always make my night, and judging by the interest shown the rest of the audience also.



Andy Little did a fine job!

Bryn gave his first couple of numbers on a Dallas which I judged to have been owned by that lovely man Frank McKeown, Bryn later confirmed this was so and said that (like my own Frank Bennett Uke) it will never ever be disposed of.

George Morgan arrived at the interval with his usual selection of wooden ukes including a very rare "Radiotone Ukulele Guitar" (where does he find them), George opened the second half with "Robinson Crusoe" and of course by special request "The Drunken Mouse", everyone then came to the mike for another spot and far too soon it was time to close. It



Dicky Hart and the Pacemakers

was interesting that almost everyone used a Wood Uke in their second spot and Andrew in his closing chat remarked how nice it was to hear the mellow tone of these instruments alongside the usual Banjo Ukes. Thanks to all who attended and contributed to a great night including Tom Bailey (our ever cheerful Boss Man), Alan, and Roland for a huge and very successful raffle, and of course a special Thank you to Andrew Little for a great job, roll on the second Friday in August. *Many thanks Bob.*

Paul Woodhead Emails—Via my website, the owner of a

Herefordshire hotel listened to my CD on line at www.cdbaby.com/woodhead. He then 'phoned me up to reference other places I had played at. The result is that I have been booked July 24th to entertain at a mini festival (he calls it a Garden Party), in the hotel grounds. I am on the line up with 5 multi-piece bands & groups & have 2 x 45 minute spots. Nothing odd about that you may think. The garden party / festival is called "An Afternoon of Eccentric Music"! The other bands come from Scotland, London, Bristol & Hereford & feature bluegrass, electronic and jug band music except that each is odd in some way. The bluegrass band for example apparently describe themselves as a "bluegrass & general mayhem" band! Perhaps I've finally found my niche - a music loony! *Thanks Paul, best of luck with it. And what about the other title: Quiz loony.*

Dates For Your Diary - in George's Anniversary Year

Sat & Sun 4th & 5th September—WIGAN PIER—Food & Drink supplied to players. Ring Alan Chenery on 07967 222585.

BIG WAR-TIME WEEKEND COMING UP AT MORECAMBE 11th & 12th SEPT.
RING JOHN TAYLOR ON 01524 426173

Paul Woodhead wants to know "When did the Newsletter start and what triggered it off. " *Thanks Paul. The Newsletter was the brainwave of the late Wally Cronshaw, Chairman of the Sale meeting, who hounded me for weeks to start a monthly Newsletter. He, like many others felt that the GFS Vellum, although smart in design, didn't cover the nitty-gritty bits of news items that went on in and around the N. West area.*

For a long time I ducked and dived to avoid Wally because I felt that a Newsletter would have an effect on the national Vellum. However, he cornered me at one particular Sale meeting and, believe me, he looked very ill, - with only a short time to live. I felt then that if a man could be so persistent even during a severe illness, he deserves satisfaction. The first copy was printed June 1985 and we will be 10 years old next year.

MORE FROM PAUL—I did my "Afternoon of Eccentric Music " party yesterday, at Hereford, and I had two 1 hour spots from 2pm to 3pm and 6pm to 7pm. However, as we had such a great time including a surprise visit from my son & partner who live in Brecon, we stayed on until the end. We were visited by a Formby fan who heard it advertised on the radio that there was a ukulele player opening the show. Didn't catch his name but he took a card to get in touch via eMail. Also two of my nursing home customers (Activity Organisers) turned up with their families

The party was a strange eclectic mixture - all ages and many, many characters. There were publicans and actors - a big contingent from London including a chap who runs a video production company who sang his own songs to electronic computer music backing. There were fireworks and lots of other things going on. Anyway it must have gone ok because they proclaimed that it will be known as "The New Priory Festival of Eccentric Music" and will be an annual event & that they would like me back next year.

Thanks Paul.

AND THERE'S MORE FROM PAUL:- "Daddy Wouldn't Buy Me A Bow Wow" was written in 1892 by Englishman, Joe Tabrar. A singer (name unknown) was asking her agent to find her a good song & while discussing it, Joe wrote the above song. The singer turned it down thinking it unsuitable and of course later it was a huge hit.

On the subject of rejecting songs, is it correct the George refused Run Rabbit Run before it was offered to Flanagan & Allan? **DOES ANYONE KNOW?**

Paul also included a large number—too many for space available—of songs with unusual titles. The one I picked was "Mama get the hammer there's a fly on papas head." And he's inviting readers to send in any other odd titles.

George Formby Meetings

North Wales Branch - British Legion, Penyffordd (10 miles from Chester) Every 1st Friday in the month. Tel Jim Knight 01978 358472 Adm 50p.

Liverpool - Broadgreen Conservative Club, Every 2nd Friday in the month - Ring Tom Bailey on 0151 289 1711 - Bring Your Uke

Sale —Timperley Liberal Club, 43 Park Road, Timperley. Every 3rd Friday in the month - Ring Cyril Palmer 0161 748 6550 Adm £1. Inc. Tea & Biscuits.

Crewe Branch - Wistaston Memorial Hall - Every 4th Friday in the month - Brian Edge on 01270 569836.

Westhoughton - The Red Lion Pub (Opp. Police Station) Ring Gerry Mawdsley on 01942 817346 - Every last Wednesday in the month. Uke Tuition.

Blackpool. SOUTH SHORE CRICKET GROUND, Common Edge Rd, Blackpool. Every last Monday in the month -Tel Eve & Charles Stewart on 01253 768097. Wonderful Buffet—Always in need of players.

Wintergardens George Formby Society Meetings:

11th and 12th September following Liverpool

13th and 14th November following Liverpool

Concerts usually start around 1.30pm each day.

Please Ring the Secretary, Sylvia Roe on 01142 846245 for details on the GFS or Wintergarden meetings.

Web Site —Two Lancashire Lads:

www.stanevans.co.uk/formby

E Mail: stan@stanevans.co.uk

The George Formby Newsletters finish June 2005. To receive by post please send a cheque for £2.25 for 3 months, or £7. 50 to receive issues up to June. Cheques payable to S. Evans - Address Front Cover.



Foreman:- Come on lads, it's Monday morning, followed by Tuesday and Wednesday. Half the week's gone and you've done nothing yet.

Man in cinema:- "Sit down in front." - "I can't, I don't bend that way."