

The North-West

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GEORGE FORMBY

Newsletter

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**Warrington's little
Ray of Sunshine
Ashley Lynch**

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Welcome To No. 3 of the N.West Newsletter. I am pleased to report that the N.W. Members are delighted with the tit-bits of news items of George and the Branch Meetings and I am looking forward to receiving as much information from as possible.

Just Received news on the grapevine that Anthony Mason was playing on Llandudno Pier last Saturday afternoon and a young boy stood in the audience wearing a large badge and singing along to all George's songs. Low and behold it was our Ashley, who was chosen as our N.West Celebrity Of The Year at Warrington. Our Ceb is getting everywhere!



Now it must have been a bad day for Anthony as, now and again, he would forget the next line. As Anthony said "It's a bit daunting as one gust of wind and I'm off the end of the pier." So he was pleased when he saw Ashley and he invited him to sing with him on the stage.

G-R-E-A-T - Ashley knew all the words and everybody loved it. They gave Ashley thunderous applause. Our celebrity is a Llandudno STAR.

Just Received a letter from Jeffrey (Formby) Booth along with a torn out page from an engineering magazine. I read it (thousands of small print) from top to bottom, looking for George's name, and wondering why he had sent it. And then turned it over to see what was on the other side and to my amazement saw a full sized photo of George with a broad beaming smile. It was an advert for Rainham Steel & Co Ltd and was headed "Big Beams." I immediately faxed the company and asked for a copy of the photo. Also thanked them for remembering George. As usual - No reply!

Jeffrey referred to the new newsletter as "the best thing since sliced bread"
(Now I wonder, what what was the best thing before sliced bread)

Blackpool

Branch

Saturday Aug 5th, in spite of tropical conditions, turned into another enjoyable evening. We were pleased to see John Broadhead for the first time at the Wainwright and Jenny Cronshaw's family in full force. As shown on the back page there will be no September meeting because of it coinciding with the Wintergardens. Also there is a change of date. We meet again on the 14th of Oct. (Not the 7th) as the club is being used for the Conservative Conference at the beginning of Oct.

Two years ago Charles went to make arrangements there and was frisked by security before he got through the door. I don't think we could stand that much excitement again! See you on the 14th Oct if not at the Wintergardens. Eve & Charles.



Photo from the North Wales Evening Leader. Handed in by Jeff Shone.

□ JOEY MEETS GEORGE - Wrexham coach Joey Jones came face to face with George Formby who will be forever remembered in the Isle of Man. Picture: LES EVANS.

Busted:- Anthony Mason was run off his feet during VJ Celebrations. He performed for the BBC Radio at Shrewsbury, Aberystwyth Holiday Camp, Llandudo Pier, Tetley Walker Club and finished in a big pub in Lancaster - when disaster struck. His skin bursted while he was playing - fortunately he managed to finish his act and no-one was any wiser.

Great Night at Liverpool!

It was "No Holds Barred" as I went into the Broadgreen venue and the first thing I heard was Harry's booming voice "Where's that Brian Edge, I'll kill him."

Harry, who was looking fitter than ever, was running round the room in his boxer shorts and stocking suspenders, and, I must admit he looked awesome. Even Frank Bruno would have trembled at the sight. It appeared that Harry wasn't pleased with the latest report on his boxing years. "He got it all wrong" he shouted. "It wasn't a towel roller that knocked Billy Barton, "The Battling Bruiser from Bradford" out. It was the lucky horseshoe that I had packed in my glove. Fortunately, Brian didn't turn up and who could blame him, although at one point I thought I saw him peeping round the door to see if it was safe to enter. Whoever it was, he had a white flag.

Well finally, after about 30 minutes we managed to calm Harry down and we got on with the show. But we could still hear mutterings from Harry's corner. "Wait till I go to Crewe" I heard him say.

N.West Newsletter readers will be pleased to know that we will be taking a full report at the Crewe meeting. There will be press photos taken and, hopefully, TV cameras. So, don't miss the next meeting at Crewe. It'll be a sell out! And It'll be better than watching Eastenders or Brookside.

On with our Liverpool report and I was delighted that we had a nice crowd, John & Doris Myerscough and Cyril & Sheila Palmer looked all sun-burnt after their holidays and the crowd were in a jolly mood - although the hot, sweaty weather was stifling.

As I've always said, Liverpool is the ideal place for learners to make their debut as we only have a small number attending and they are all sympathetic to anyone who wishes to get started. Great venue!

Dennis Lee was talking to a chap at the VJ celebration recently and he told him that he had seen George in Burma. He said George entertained the West Yorkshire regiment there in 1945 at a place called Teok. He remembers George being accompanied by Beryl and a chap called Tony Eaton. The performance took place within earshot of military fire. George certainly got around and he wasn't afraid of being close to the front line.

REMEMBER CHRIS MIDDLETON? Well he has just rung to tell me that he is selling his Dallas "B", which is good condition and with case. Price £120 or nearest offer. You can ring him on 01925 32574.

Nice Letter from Pam & John Baddleley.

Dear Stan, Just a note to thank you for organising the evening at Warrington. We are pleased that Ashley is our new Celebrity for 1995/96 and we wish him lots and lots of luck. We could tell how much he and his family were enjoying the concert.

It is good to know that we have a society that can unite together in time of need. Let us hope and pray that all will be well in the future.

Also, congratulations on the new newsletter. We shall look forward to reading about the GFS N. West Branches, Pam & John.

Thank you both for your letter. I agree, it is wonderful that we have a caring society and I was extremely pleased that we all responded at such short notice.

Just received a letter from Bob Norton who lives in Guernsey.

Dear Stan, Please find enclosed photos of George's 'Abbott' uke which I eventually bought, after many years trying! I can't believe that it's mine at last, and I must have played the opening song "You Can't Fool Me," from "It's In The Air," where George is playing the Abbott, and thought "Blimey, it's my instrument now!!!"

I shall be taking it to Blackpool in September for members to admire, and also to future exhibitions.

Many thanks for getting me started with my first uke (Dallas B) which is now owned by Rick Parfitt of Status Quo, who I am teaching to play, when he stays with me. Who would have thought, 4 years ago, that I would have ended up with one of the legendary instruments!! Best Regards, Bob.

I know how you feel Bob about owning one of George's ukes and seeing him play it on TV. Every time George plays my Will Van Allen in "Off The Dole" a little shiver runs up the spine - especially when he says "It is a good ukulele." The funniest thing is, watching it dropped on the floor at the beginning of "Let George Do It" and cringing with the thought that it might get damaged.

Dennis Lee says... On page 4 of the 2nd edition it was stated that George never appeared at the Wigan Hippodrome. I can contradict that because I saw him myself there, around 1947 - 48.

I remember waiting for George's appearance for what seemed to be a very long time as various supporting acts did their bit first. George finally came on stage very smartly dressed wearing his evening suit. He finished his act to thunderous applause and finished with "Well folks, I'll have to go because Beryl wants her fish & chips and the chip shop will be closed." That statement brought the house down!

Isn't it amazing how the press always exaggerate the story to make it sound as if some big battle is taking place?

FANS BATTLE TO KEEP GEORGE AT HOME IN RESORT

FANS of entertainer George Formby are fighting to keep their appreciation society on the Fylde.

Blackpool's George Formby Society prides itself in being at the heart of the entertainer's international fan club, but now other groups around the country are suggesting meetings elsewhere.

Reception

Society organisers Charles and Eve Stewart believe that Blackpool should be the home of the society because the comic singer adopted the town as his own.

Throughout his career George had a home on the Fylde Coast and the first ever meeting held in honour of the star was held in Blackpool's Imperial Hotel back in 1961.

Suggestions that meetings should be held elsewhere in the country have had a bad reception at the Blackpool society, who meet at the Wintergardens four times a year.

Eve Stewart said: "Blackpool is the mecca of entertainment in Northern England. George appreciated that and made it his home.

"The resort also has the accommodation to house George Formby enthusiasts, as well as things to do for their families."

George Formby and his home town, Blackpool, go together like "fish & chips" or "ham & eggs" or "liver & onions" or "Jack & Jim" or Harry and his uke-banjo and I'm pretty sure that the GFS will never consider moving away from there.

We have a superb relationship with the Blackpool Council, and the Tourist Board.

Eve Stewart said, "You have to be careful of what you say to the press as they always try to turn it into "Crisis" editorial. Quite right, Eve!

A George Formby member named Nellie

Was assisting Paul Daniels on telly

He cut her in two, then stuck her with glue

And slapped a big patch on her be... have we any more limericks?

Why don't you have a go at writing limericks, poetry, or lyrics for a song? It's really quite enjoyable and you don't know if you can do until you try. Send your efforts in and I will help you with them if you wish.

We have never objected to meetings being held in different parts of the country. In fact, we've always welcomed trips to Stourbridge and Milton Keynes to hold meetings and this was appreciated by the southern members. Also, over the past two years we have held excellent, well organised meetings in Leeds.

However, our main meeting has always been held in Blackpool, for the past 33 years, and it will never be moved from there.

Our little N.West Newsletter is doing OK.

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I printed 160 copies for the N.West branches and already other branches are asking to be put on the mailing list. A further 50 copies had to be printed for the Warrington Branch.

The Rev. G Mackenzie recalls - Before the war I was curate of a parish on the edge of Preston in Lancashire, where George & Beryl lived. I knew them in a casual kind of way. They were not long there very long as they had moved to another house - which I think they had built - in a different parish (Broughton) on the edge of Preston.

I did not meet up with them again until they came, briefly, to N.Africa in 1943, where I was the Staff Chaplain at First Army HQ. They stayed a few days while they were appearing - along with Beatrice Lillie and others - in a special show in a theatre in Tunis. This was to celebrate the victory in Algeria/Tunisia.

I rather think, although my memory at times is not as it should be, that George became ill and had to return home. Rev. G Mackenzie.

My thanks to the Re. Mackenzie for the information. I checked George's log, which was kept by Beryl, and can confirm that he did take ill on the 20th (possibly June or July) 1943, but he was back on the stage on the 23rd when he entertained 1,400 R.A.F at Almaza and 3,800 mixed forces.

George & Beryl were very busy People!!!!

It's little wonder that people had difficulty in getting close to them. During the war years they must have been jumping from one place to another and never stood still for more than a few days - or weeks. Apart from entertaining on the stage, raising funds for the war effort and for various charities, singing to the troops, entertaining in the bomb shelters, etc. They also made eleven films:- Trouble Brewing 1939, Come On George 1940, Let George Do It 1940, Spare A Copper 1941, Turned Out Nice Again 1941, South American George 1941, Much Too Shy 1942, Get Cracking 1943, Bell Bottom George 1944, He Snoops To Conquer 1945 and I Didn't Do It 1945. What a record!!!

T'nod Tegrof ot pord eht rotide a wef senil
htiw yna swen smeti. Ro esle!

What a Great night we had at the **N. Wales** meeting. The new venue, The British Legion at Penyffordd, Nr Buckley, is excellent. The room is a typical British Legion type with a nice clean room and bar, good stage, plenty of seats, car parking and pleasant steward who makes you feel welcome. The sound system - under the expert eye of Christian Lee - was superb and he did a great job of mixing the sounds. Nice work Christian, every branch should have a similar set up.

I am amazed how the N. Wales branch has progressed, considering that a couple of years back they were desperately short of artists. I counted over 20 members carrying uke cases and during the thrash everybody appeared to bring a uke out. I thought "where have all those ukers come from?"

Now you can always tell when they enjoy their meetings as all the members walk around humming George's tunes. Well, there was certainly a lot of humming that night. Maybe it was the hot weather.

From N Wales - Chris Moody Writes In.....

Dear Stan, A couple of night ago we received a request from BBC Wales for Clare and I to appear on the Alan Daulby Show the following day.

We arrived at the studio at dawn and helped the post lady to carry the mail up the steps (they must receive as much mail as Stan) and we were introduced to Alan Daulby who was suitably dressed, in shorts and T-shirt, for the hot weather, and who, sits with his feet in two buckets of cold water.

Immediately prior to the interview they played George singing "I Did What I Could With My Gas Mask" and during the interview we managed to get a plug in for the N Wales meeting.

Clare sang "Hitting The High Spots Now" wearing an enormous pair of headphones which were like two dustbin lids. She managed it in one take. We were made very welcome and had a brilliant day. Chris Moody.

Thanks Chris for your article.

A George Formby member named Ray
 Did a show on his own, without pay
 But it wasn't quite fair, there was only 10 there
 Till a coach came and took 'em away - Bum Bum.

SALE MEETING - by Stan Evans

What a grand meeting we had. The room at the Sale Hotel was filled to capacity and there was no shortage of players.

We are always pleased to see members like Walter Longshaw with us as he has composed some wonderful George Formby type songs for the members. He has also written one for Rob Davidson, who incidently is coming along well with his magic tricks, so we want to hear it. Come on Rob.

WALLY CRONSHAW - CHAIRMAN

I was amazed how well Wally looked at the Sale Meeting. He bounced up onto the stage and had a certain glow with him as he made his few announcements and drew the raffle. He was also joking with the crowd like someone who had won the lottery. In fact, he looked better than some of the crowd, including myself, and he most certainly looked fitter than he did at the Wainwright Hotel monthly meeting. Good for you Wally. If anyone has got the spirit to overcome situations it is you. We are all with you every step of the way!

Wally suggested that he will be retiring as Chairman of the Sale Branch but quite honestly I don't think that he should. His heart and soul is in this job so he should stick with it. Vast changes have taken place at Sale and this is due to his enthusiasm. Still waiting for reports from Sale. Come on Martin.

Another "George at War" Story

I certainly remember George & Beryl in Normandy. They were the first entertainers to visit us after "D" Day. I was a member of a Field Dressing Station R.A.M.C. with the 43rd Wessex Div. Monty's troops had captured Bayeux but we couldn't make the vital breakthrough into Caen. G & B arrived on the scene whilst there was a slight lull in the land fighting. Their stage, if I remember correctly, was the back of a 3 ton Bedford truck. To the delight of the few thousand audience George must have gone through every song in his lengthy repertoire. His show was a real morale booster.

Before performing, G & B enjoyed a meal with Monty and, as George quipped, he didn't know if it had been by invitation or an order. I felt honoured to have been one of the audience in 1944. His visit was appreciated and he went on to entertain many millions all over. Alan Hodgetts

Don't Forget to send in any news items for the GF N.W Newsletter - Births, Weddings - all snippets of news etc. I'll bet you've forgotten already!

From Harry Stanford..*Oh Dear, I wonder what mood he's in.*

Dear Stan,

I must thank Brian Edge (*don't trust him Brian*) for his marvellous write up in the last issue of the N.West Newsletter. His sense of humour nearly knocked me out.

Funny things can happen when you first start learning to box . My first fight was against a very experienced fighter and he punched me from pillar to post. At the end of the first round four men (they call them seconds) jumped into my corner and the referee came over and said "Only two seconds." I jumped up off my stool and said "I thought there was a minute." He replied with "Not you, sit down!" And that is a true story.

Now that was during the days when George Formby was the TOPS playing his Ukulele and when I look back to those days I think of George singing - or rattling out "Sitting On The Top Of Blackpool Tower" while I was battling it out at the bottom of Blackpool Tower and staying on my feet

Well thank you Harry for your excellent report. At 82 years of age I'll bet you've got hundreds of little tales you can relate to. You put a good letter together so, let's have one each month. Hope you live for another 82 years (different jokes of course).

And Another War Story. **Formby & Solomon** **Bring House Down at Baragwanath!**

Man knows nothing but what he learns from his own experience, said somebody once, and on Tuesday, writes a Rand reporter, I had two experiences which added to my sum total of knowledge.

At 10.45 am, I sat in the Y.M.C.A. Hall at Baragwanath Military Hospital and, amid an audience which packed the place to overflowing, I watched Beryl Formby walk on the stage, her Bird of Paradise hat nodding to her every step. She told us George would be along in a moment, that she was not working on this occasion. We cheered and whistled her to the echo

Then George teetered in. I watched the two men propped up in a bed in the centre of the aisle, and they clapped as best they could. The rest of us, in dressing gowns, blues, battledress, shorts, the lot, took the roof off. George was in his shirt-sleeves. "Only taken me jacket off so far, lads," he said into the microphone with a leer, and you could have heard us in Booyens.

Don't Forget the News Items - or else I'll set Harry on to you.

We went into the whole routine which we knew so well from the wireless and the pictures, but we lapped it up. The old ukulele had never sounded better because it was being played just for us, and George got some stories off his chest that I guarantee nobody at the Colosseum has heard yet.

These boys, far from home and sticken with disease, literally ate him up. He was allowed to leave the stage only when we all knew that he had done his dash, that he was tired, and had a lot more work ahead of him. The whole show had been relayed to every ward in the hospital, and the men in bed were grateful.

I watched George & Beryl talking to the fellows in the wards before they left. Everybody's eyes sparkled, but none more than "Happy Shannon's" He is a bit of a comedian himself, also from Blackpool, and the Formbys made a special point of wishing him well.

And in the evening, with the lightning playing throughout the sky, I drove out to the hospital again. I crept in at the back door, in a hush that was awesome. Hundreds of men sat silent, while Solomon, the pianist, interpreted Chopin for them. Not a sound except for the liquid notes from the stage. A quiet which was as impressive as the hoots and yells I had heard in the morning. Solomon, with no tricks, had the entire hall in his spell. Scarletti, Haydn, Beethoven, Brahms. As he announced his next number, a murmur of approbation would break out among the audience and then we were Solomon's to do with as he wished.

I spoke to Solomon in his dressing room when it was all over. "These soldier audiences are too wonderful for words" he told me "I never tire of playing for them."

Did I mention something about two experiences in one day? I certainly had them on the Tuesday.

CLIFF GREEN of Maidenhead Writes... I was serving as a pilot in the Far East, during the war, and just after it ended I was taken ill with TB (tuberculosis). After a series of moves I finally arrived at Baragwanath Military Hospital in Johannesburg, South Africa. There were hundreds of patients there, mainly from the Far East. Some were on the road to recovery while others were confined to bed.

In the hospital there was a large Y.M.C.A. hall with a stage, and there, from time to time, entertainment was provided for patients allowed out of bed. We had films or stage shows by amateurs, staff and occasionally professionals who were appearing in Johannesburg.

In 1946 (October, I believe) George Formby, who was appearing at the local theatre, took time out to entertain us. Beryl came with him - complete with hat - and he joked and played to a packed audience for hours. Nobody, who was there,

Continued Over

could fail to have lasting admiration for this man who gave pleasure to men who were ill and had not seen England for many years.

After the performance he visited the men, in the wards, who were too ill to leave their beds. That particular day he gave so much of his energy and talent that he became ill and was unable to perform at the theatre for a few nights afterwards. I count myself lucky to have had the wonderful experience of being there. Cliff Green

Alf Caldwell of Warrington Recalls...

Some 50 years ago, my uncle had a serious accident at the wire works where he was employed. Three fingers on his right hand were severed and naturally he could no longer play his favourite instrument, the ukulele banjo, which he gave to me.

His brother, Jack, taught me how to play and started me off with "It Aint Gonna Rain No More, No More." Unfortunately my father couldn't stand the sound of me playing the same tune over and over again and he chased me out of the house. The only way I could practise was to go into the outside toilet to play.

Because of my interest in George and the ukulele, I made contact with Jessie Bailey, who was the wife of Fred, the well known Warrington grocery wholesaler and George's life long friend.

I would visit them regularly and Jessie always gave me home made scones and coffee. She would also bring out her private collection of George and Beryl photographs and also cine reels of film. One reel was taken of George with his first car. She also had about eight of George's film scripts, which she kept in the loft.

Jessie's sister, Dorothy, was courting my uncle Bill and they discussed getting married. He suggested that they wait until after he comes back from the war. Unfortunately he was killed in France. I often wonder what would have happened if my uncle had lived to marry into the Bailey family. Maybe I would have met George and learnt more about playing the uke. Also I wonder what happened to the large collection of memorabilia she had stored in her loft.

Thanks Alf for your memories. I'm sure that you must have many more. Now Fred & Jessie were genuine friends of George & Beryl and they had many photos to prove it.

Daily Mail 1961

Row Brews Over Formby Will.

Family to contest 'any change to our advantage.'

A legal battle is threatened over comedian George Formby's decision shortly before his death to leave the bulk of his fortune - it may amount to £250,000 - to school teacher Pat Howson, his fiancee of three weeks. One of the 56 year old comedian's sisters, Mrs Ethel Corliss, said yesterday that the family would take a serious view of any alteration in George's will detrimental to his 82 year mother and to them.

Mrs Corliss, wife of a Liverpool licensee, told me: We certainly don't want any squabble over money matters so soon after George's death, but if there has been a change in the will to our disadvantage we shall certainly contest it seriously.

'BEQUESTS'

"One of our main considerations is that mother should be well provided for." Mrs Corliss revealed that she saw George about a month ago at his St Anne's home. She said he told her that his mother, Mrs Eliza Booth, and his sisters, Louie, Mary, Ella and herself would receive bequests in his will. She added: "He didn't mention anyone else." I suppose he thought that his brothers Frank and Edward could stand on their own two feet.

"Four days before he died I saw him again and he made no mention of any alteration to the will." The comedian had so many valuable possessions, from jewellery to top-class cars and a luxury cabin cruiser Beryl 2, that it will take some time to produce the final figure of his fortune, but the minimum is £100,000.

NO COMMENT

The house, Beryldene, on St Anne's promenade, is to be sold by private treaty. The price being asked is £11,500. George named it after his wife, Beryl Ingham, who died there on Christmas Eve. Then there is what was to have been his new home, White Lodge, at Little Lea, near Preston, for which he paid a five figure price the day he went into hospital. Later this week details of his wife Beryl's will are expected. She left nearly £20,000 - all to her husband.

Fred & Jessie Bailey - George's friends - there is a tale around Warrington that George & Beryl called in at their house and asked if they could store some jewels for them while they were on tour. "No problem" shouted Fred, who had a loud (typical market grocer) voice. George then brought in quite a large collection of various pieces of jewellery and, so nobody could break in and find them, poured them down the top of the piano.

Where Was Beryl Born? A copy of Beryl's birth certificate was kindly sent to me in 1991 by Joan Littlewood when we had the exhibition at the Warrington Museum. Beryl was born on the 9th of September, 1901 at 16 Alliance Street, Accrington, Lancs. Her father's name was John Ingham, who was a Yarn Dyer (Journey-man) and her mother was Elizabeth Ann Ingham (formerly Jackson). The birth was registered on the 7th October 1901. Beryl died on Christmas day 1960 and she was cremated at Preston.

Whispers - Rumour has it that George Cheetham is getting a little upset with Stan Evans's constant reference to 'bones' when he sings 'Bananas' as he really feels it is disrespectful for anyone to pass remarks about his favourite instrument!

On the quiet Stan is also in the wars with the newly formed Crewe outfit who are incensed by the outrageous acronym suggested in the new magazine. Even his wife, Eva, has hauled him over the coals about it! It seems that the South Cheshire George Formby Ukulele Society have told Stan in no uncertain terms that their initials actually stand for Sparkling Concerts, Great Fun, Usually Superb and those who have not yet been to Crewe are urged to go along there and have a great night out.

Also on the grapevine its got out that Walter Longshaw (prolific Mancunian writer of such songs as 'Princess Lulu From a Honolulu Isle', 'My Grandad's Bowler Hat', 'Robin Hood and his Merry Men', 'Don't Let Them Touch My Ukulele', and loads of others) has written a new song for Sale's Rob Davidson, who is a member of a Magic Society. It is called 'I'm Willie The Wizard From Wigan' and it is said that he will be performing it for us all very soon.

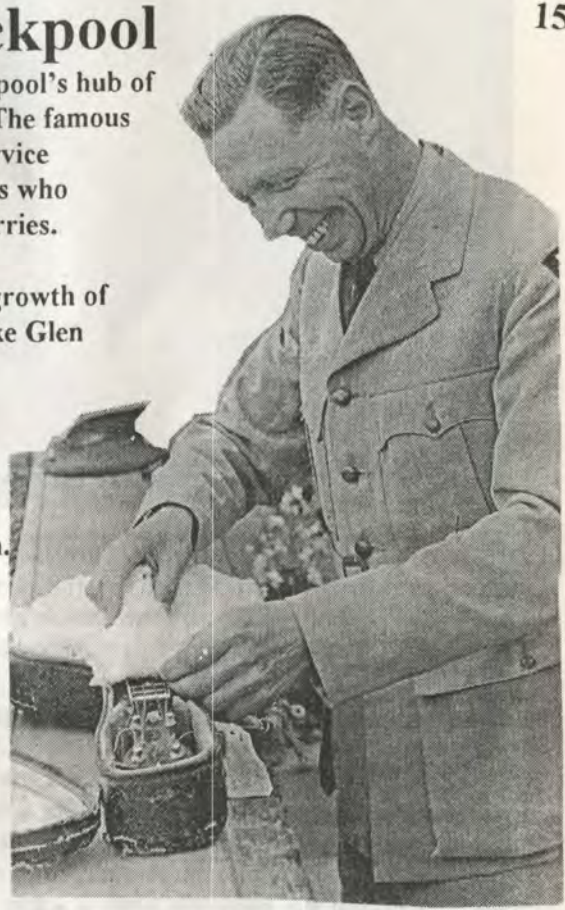
My thanks to Whispers for the article but you've got it all wrong! My suggestion to re-name the branch South Cheshire Ukulele Meeting is a winner. It's short, sweet and straight to the point, and just think of the publicity you will get. With a name like that the royal family could take an interest and possibly become patrons. Terribly sorry about the bones George, but I just can't think of anything that rhymes with stones. I've tried zones, and drones, and loans, and moans, and even telephones, but somehow they don't go down as well as Bones. You'll just have to live with it George. You are right. Walter has written a great tune for Rob and it is time that he performed it.... We want Rob!

War-time Blackpool

The Tower Ballroom was Blackpool's hub of entertainment during the war. The famous dance hall was crowded with service personnel and war-weary workers who flocked inside to forget their worries.

Blackpool and the war saw the growth of the big dance bands and stars like Glen Miller would play there to the American GIs. Blackpool's location was an important factor as people were reluctant to holiday in the south and east because of the fear of of invasion.

Home grown entertainers like George Formby, Arthur Askey, Richard Murdoch, Lew Stone and Webster Booth made many appearances on the Blackpool stage and George was actually performing at the New Opera House when war was declared in 1939.



BBC TV. Did anyone watch "Staying On" which featured Victoria Wood, on Friday 4th August at 8.30pm? Victoria lay on a settee, watching TV, and a mimicked voice of George came over "Well' I've never played me ukulele in a bunker before," followed by a screechy Beryl impression, "Did you notice that even Hitler joined in."

I'll bet me right arm and me bike that the voice belonged to David Clarke who appeared in "Stars In Their Eyes." I've no idea who the Beryl was.

Just Received two letters.. One was an anonymous chain letter from one of the readers claiming that if I produce 20 photocopies and send them out to the members I will receive about £50,000. Excitedly I opened the other and it was an Income Tax Demand - pay up or else. I wonder if the tax man will be satisfied if I send him one of my photocopies?



A couple of experts in
mid-flight
Steve Hassell & Wilf Salt

The Ukulele or Banjolele by Bob Drinkwater

Members who become interested in the uke sometimes find themselves having to decide on whether to stay with the ukulele or learn to play the banjolele as well. My advice is - learn to play both instruments. In the early 30s I purchased a wooden ukulele for three pennies and with the aid of a tutor book and loads of determination, I taught myself to play very quickly.

But my fascination with the ukulele didn't last long as, at the time, George Formby was making the headlines and becoming a big star. I became so impressed with him that I decided to take up the banjolele and soon learned (from his 78s records) how to play the double-touch stroke, which was the name it was referred to in the 30s. I played the banjolele quite a lot in the 30/40s and fortunately I kept the wooden ukulele close by. I also wrote solos, melodies and arrangements of songs composed by Cole Porter, George Gershwin and Irvine Berlin, and many more.

It was obvious that the wooden ukulele was the instrument that could do justice to these wonderful tunes and so I've always advised members that they should attempt to play one. There are still many fine ukuleles about that can be purchased for a reasonable price and the "Martin" is high on the list. These range from the "0" model to the esteemed "K5", which is reputedly the finest ukulele ever made. Another well made ukulele is the "Kamaka" which is still made in Honolulu. Of course, there are quite a number of other ukuleles like Kumale, Gretsch, Harmony, Favilla, Lion and Healy. In the boom years we also had the Spanish ukes like the Alvarez, Fernandez, Comez and the popular Salvador-Banes.

It is fascinating that the wooden ukulele will never alter its sound from the day it is new. Uke-banjos, however do alter depending on tightness of skin or weather conditions etc.

There are no standard instruction books available that lay down the basic guidelines for playing ukes or uke-banjos etc. So I feel that the various societies, such as The George Formby Society or The Ukulele Society of Great Britain should set about to produce one instead of leaving the task to individual members.

Thanks for your article Bob. Regarding Roy Smeck, who died a few months ago, I had a phone call about 2 years ago from Bill Waddington, who plays Percy Sugden in Coronation St, and he jokingly said "Tell your members that I've got the best uke-banjo in the country. It is a Roy Smeck". Well a few months later he rang again to tell me that his uke-banjo had been stolen from around the London area and asked if I would keep my eyes open for it. He is particularly concerned in getting it back if possible.

From Pam Baddeley

Dear N. West,

We've been to Spain, but never again, We wouldn't go there twice. But we had a Pleasure Cruise to Hi Tiddley Hi Ti Isle and Jonathon has been Swimmin With The Women, however I Don't Like the temperatures Hitting The High Spots so we had to find some shade Under The Blasted Oak. We've also been Sunbathing In The Park and Sitting On The Sands All Night with the Lancashire Toreador Playing His Spanish Guitar.

Can't wait to Get Cracking in Blackpool, Believe It Or Not - So Smile All The Time Jon & Pam.

Thanks Pam, but you know that The Best Of Schemes often go wrong so Jon might finish up Sitting On The Top Of Blackpool Tower, Cleaning Windows like Dare Devil Dick the Daring Young Man. So let's hope it all Turns Out Nice Again for you both. Cheers.

FORMBY SONG QUIZ No.2 by Brian Edge

Just how well do you know George's songs?

1. Who's watch and chain still dangles there?
2. Which song made reference to the famous cricketer, Don Bradman?
3. Which song made reference to the World H/weight Champion, Joe Louis?
4. In which song did the N.C.O.s wife make an improper suggestion to George?
5. What did George sell for fourpence down the lane?
6. Where is life so fast and swift and gay?
7. Under whose spell did slave girls come under?
8. Who took monkey glands to get young and slick?
9. Who joined the navy to fight Napoleon?
10. Who sings "You've got me crazy Honey Lamb?"

Answers at the foot of page 18

From Wally Cronshaw

Dear Stan, Many thanks for the mention in the August edition of the N.West Newsletter. However the results of the hospital tests are the worst possible they could be and I have just experienced the worst week of my life, not only for me but for my family also. But, with the help of the members of the GFS I am beginning to come to terms with the situation.

My wife and I wish to thank all the members who were concerned for my health.

Another upsetting aspect is that I will have to retire as Chairman of the Sale GFS of which I loved every moment. However, the Cronshaw family will still come to as many meetings as possible.

Many thanks to the rest of the Committee and to the Ratcliffes, the Palmers, Ivy Lockabie and others who have made Sale into one of the top clubs. I feel proud to be a member of the GFS. All The Best, Wally Cronshaw.

Thank you Wally for your letter. I, and the members, are deeply sorry that there is sadness with you, and your family, at present. We sincerely hope, trust, and pray, that miracles take place at times like these.

If kind thoughts are powerful then we want you to know that the whole might of the George Formby Society, and the healing strength of George's uplifting songs are with you, at all times. Keep a strong faith.

S.O.S. from Julian Pilling.

Julian organises a small band and they perform at charity shows and barn dances etc. Now they are looking for someone to join them who has a bit of flare with the uke/banjo. He/she doesn't need to be an ace player as they are not a brilliant band, and even a beginner will be given help and encouragement to get started. Now Julian lives at 126 Railway St, Nelson BB9 9AL so if anyone wants to contact him please do so.

Acoustic Instruments of Southport have got a nice s/hand uke in, with case. It has no name but it is in good condition and ideal for beginners £110. Ring 01704 564036

10. Jenny Cronshaw (she's great!)
 eighty old and slick (Have You Ever Heard This One). George's Grandfather.
 (Hi! Billy Willy) 6. Hi! Tiddly Hi! Ti! Isle. 7. The Hindoo Man. 8. A man of
 That. 3. I'd Do It With A Smile. 4. The Home Guard Blues. 5. Cattle Skins
 1. Uncle Dick (My Little Snapshot Album). 2. I Could Make A Good Living At

As you know we had problems with our former venue so we have relocated at Penyffordd British Legion. Our first meeting was great and exceeded our expectations – we had an attendance of about 50! There were our usual members in addition to some other old familiar faces. Cyril Palmer came with his friends and entertained us in his unique style. We were also pleased to see Bernard Young accompanied by Ollie Pearson from Sweden who thoroughly enjoyed playing for us. We hope to see him again sometime in the future. The Crewe contingent consisting of Brian Edge, Wilf Salt Tom Peddie and Des Redfern lent us their usual very welcome support. Brian Williams and friends who came all the way from Caernarfon enjoyed themselves. (They have invited us to go to their neck of the woods to do a concert which is in the process of being arranged.) We were visited by representatives of a local, well known barbershop choir - The Clwyd Clippers - at the instigation of John Edmiston one of our and their members. This has led to an invitation to a joint concert at the Theatr Clwyd towards the end of the year.

Our youngest member Claire Moody was in fine voice as usual and is increasingly in local demand. Recently she was interviewed on Radio Wales together with her father Chris about their interest in George Formby. The meeting was ably held together by my son Christian who is our PA Technical Director (unpaid!)

Stan Evans called in on his paper round distributing his newsletter. Everybody agreed it was a welcome publication for the North West region. Despite rugby tackles, an army of bouncers and a couple of rottweilers Stan still managed to break through to the stage to entertain us! As usual he was very humorous.

Many thanks to everybody else who attended and particularly those who donated raffle prizes.

Our meetings are becoming increasingly popular and we extend a warm welcome to all. If you would like to visit us but live some distance away we may be able to provide FREE bed and breakfast facilities on a limited scale. Please give me a ring on 01244 544799 and I'll be happy to provide further details.

We hope to have thousands of you there in the future :

" YOU CAN'T STOP ME FROM DREAMING! "

Sept & Oct. N.W. Meetings.

All in order so you can tick them off.

SEPTEMBER 1995

Sept 1st, Friday, Mold Branch - British Legion - see page 13

Sept 2nd, Sat, NO MEETING at the Wainwright Club

Sept 8th, Friday, Liverpool Branch -Broadgreen Conservative Club.

Sept 15th, Friday, Sale Branch - Sale Hotel

Sept 22nd, Tuesday, Crewe Branch - Wistaston Memorial Hall.

Sept 29th, Friday, Warrington Branch - Alliance Social Club

OCTOBER 1995

Friday 6th N.Wales Branch. Dennis Lee on 01244 544799

Saturday 14th, Blackpool Branch. Eve Stewart on 01253 768097

NOTE ABOVE DATE CHANGE OCT. ONLY.

Friday 13th, Liverpool Branch. Tom Bailey 0151 228 9769

Friday 20st, Sale Branch. Martin Harrison 0161 962 3919.

Tuesday 24th, Crewe Branch. Brian Edge on 01270 69836

Friaday 27th, Warrington - Stan Evans on 01925 727102



All times are around 8pm till 11.30pm. Entrance is usually 50p.

WARRINGTON MEETING

Once again we were pleased that members came from all over the country to be with for our special occasion. We will continue holding these special meetings and trust that our CELEBRITY - Ashley - will be able to attend. What a real treat he is.

Deadline for the next issue is the 15th of September - so as George would say - **GET CRACKING**

If you wish to receive regular copies of the George Formby N.West Newsletter just send a cheque for 50p plus 25p. Or £2. 25 (inc post) for the next three issues - Payable to Stan Evans, Address on front cover.

Or Branch Organisers can order a minimum lot of 10 for £3 plus 60p postage and you are welcome to sell them to help raise extra funds for your branch.