

THE NORTH - WEST

GEORGE FORMBY

Newsletter 7

Volume 1, No.7
January 1996



Specially Produced for the
North - West Branches of The George Formby Society
by Stan Evans, The Hollies, 19 Hall Nook, Penketh, Warrington
Cheshire WA5 2HN

Tel or Fax 01925 727102

2 **Welcome to Newsletter No. 7** and, do you know? It doesn't seem a month ago since Wally Cronshaw - God Bless Him! Was chasing me from one branch to another to get me to publish a N. West Newsletter. He was determined that we had to have one and he wouldn't let go until I gave in.

From Alice Cronshaw - Dear Stan, Would you please express to all our members how grateful my family, Jenni and I are for the wonderful support we received with cards and flowers when Wally died. He loved the George Formby Society and when he was asked to be Chairman at the Sale Branch his mind worked overtime making things happen to add enjoyment to the meetings.

If he is watching over us he will be proud of you all for the support you have given. God Bless You All, Alice Cronshaw.

And thank you Alice for keeping your head up. It is a terrible time for you but I am sure that Wally, if he does watch over us, will be pleased that you come to the meetings. Time eventually heals all wounds. It was nice to see you at Blackpool.

28th November 1938 **Blackpool Evening Gazette**

B.B.C. Apology to Mr George Formby

For an "unfortunate reference" to one of his songs, the B.B.C. on Saturday apologised to Mr George Formby.

Last Monday evening, during a gramophone programme, a compere censored the comedian's record "When I'm Cleaning Windows" with the remark that the windows were "not yet clean enough."

On Saturday Mr Formby appeared in a "Sing Song" broadcast in the National programme and at the outset the announcer said: "As an extra attraction we present George Formby, to whom we owe an apology. An unfortunate reference was made to one of Mr Formby's songs in the programme last Monday. We are sorry this occurred, but we are still the best of friends, which is borne out of the fact that George is with us tonight."

George had a rousing reception from a large audience.

Wilf Salt and Family wish to thank all for the kind expressions of sympathy which was sincerely appreciated. It will always be remembered with gratitude.

There was a bit of a sweat going on with Ann and Ken Ratcliffe on the afternoon of the last Sale meeting. It was their Christmas Party Night and Ken rang the venue to ask if it is OK to bring the food along as every room in their home was full, and they couldn't move for butties and bol - au - vents.

"Oh," said the landlord, "I have some bad news for you - we've double booked, so you can't have the room." Well, you could have knocked Ann down with a couple of fairy cakes when she heard the news. "What are going to do with all this food?"

Anyway, it all Turned Out Nice Again when Ken jumped on his bike and went to see the manager at the Brooklands Sports Club. "No Problem" was the reply, "As long as Harry doesn't play his banjo" (shame - you've been banned again Harry - given the red card)

Well, after 2,000 phone calls, and a lot of running round, about 100 members turned up at the Brooklands and a good night was had by all.

In future, all the meetings will be held at the new venue which is quite easy to find. Travel down Marsland Rd (where the old venue is) and turn into George's Road (near the Elf Petrol Station) - go across the next road and it lies a few yards up on the left.

Where are the GFS Archives???

I must admit that there has been quite a bit of concern regarding the whereabouts of our valuable Archives. The latest came by way of a fax from Ken Ratcliffe who is concerned that they appear to have disappeared and were not on show at the last Wintergardens meeting.

He Writes:- "Congratulations on the success of the new N. West Newsletter

I am writing on the future of the GFS Archives. They were donated by members, friends and public etc. who wanted to remember George. They have not been on display for some time and yet Blackpool is the place where they belong. Surely a place in the Wintergardens can be found for safe keeping. Has anyone any ideas?" Ken Ratcliffe.

Thank you Ken. There have been other enquiries re. the missing archives, and it doesn't appear that we have an Archivist listed on page two of our magazine. The last we heard was that Steve Bottom had been promoted to the job of Archivist but now it is rumoured that he is no longer with the GFS.

GF Anagrams by Derek Ball - Crewe Branch

1. Froggy Robe Me.
 2. Lean Blue Joke.
 3. Local Book Twerp.
- Answers at the bottom of page 30

After a 1000 Promises Martin Harrison has Finally sent in an Article - He's worse than Anthony Mason!

- Maybe not.

A VISIT TO THE EARLSTOWN HIPPODROME. . .

In August I visited Harry & Lottie Stanford who live in Earlstown where George made his debut in 1921, at the age of 16.

There is some confusion regarding the actual site as the theatre was burnt down before the second world war. However, Lottie knew where it was as she went there, in the "Penny Rush" as a child. The local people knew it as Kemps as it was named after the family that owned it.

After Lottie's detailed recollections of where the theatre used to be Harry & I set off in search. He directed me down Chemical St, and, much to our regret, we found that the famous site is now a scrap yard. We asked the owner if we could take a few photos and told him all about George, his first appearance on that very spot, and how privileged he was to own such a historic site. He told us that the site is for sale so if we bought it we could have a permanent George Formby Exhibition on the very site where George made his first appearance. Perhaps a Conference Centre for GF meetings. The National Trust have bought Paul McCartney's house in Liverpool so perhaps I should give them a ring.

Anyway Stan, it shows what effect this George Formby lark has on your sanity and the lengths we will go to. And, it's amazing how safe you feel walking down the street with Harry. Everybody crossed over to the other side. I'm not sure if it because he used to be a boxer or because he was carrying his five string banjo.

Thank you Martin. I've dug out a bit of information for you on the next page but there is still some doubt on whether, or not, this is the very place. Perhaps Lottie will tell us. Some of the library information read:- Messrs Hughes & Wylie 21/3/21. Jack Adams, Comedian. Brothers Clermont, Novelty Head & Hand Equilibrists. Hippodrome 6.45 and 8.40. 3d, 6d, 9d and 1/-

Manager Mr Fred Harrison & Ass. Manager Jack Harrison.

Film, Mon, Tue & Wed "Bleak House." Special Engagement of George Hoy the son of the late George Formby. Change of patter Thursday & Saturday.

If You've Not Sent An Article In - Bow Your Head in Shame

Rolling back Rink years

HERE it is – the old Rink, picture palace of a million memories!

Up to the mid 1950s the Rink was one of the most familiar landmarks in Earlestown, right opposite the town hall. But it was demolished to provide the site for the replacement police station in Market Street.

This 1924 picture harks back to the silent screen days of Charlie Chaplin and Harold Lloyd, to the stirring adventures of Tom Mix and Tony, the wonder horse.

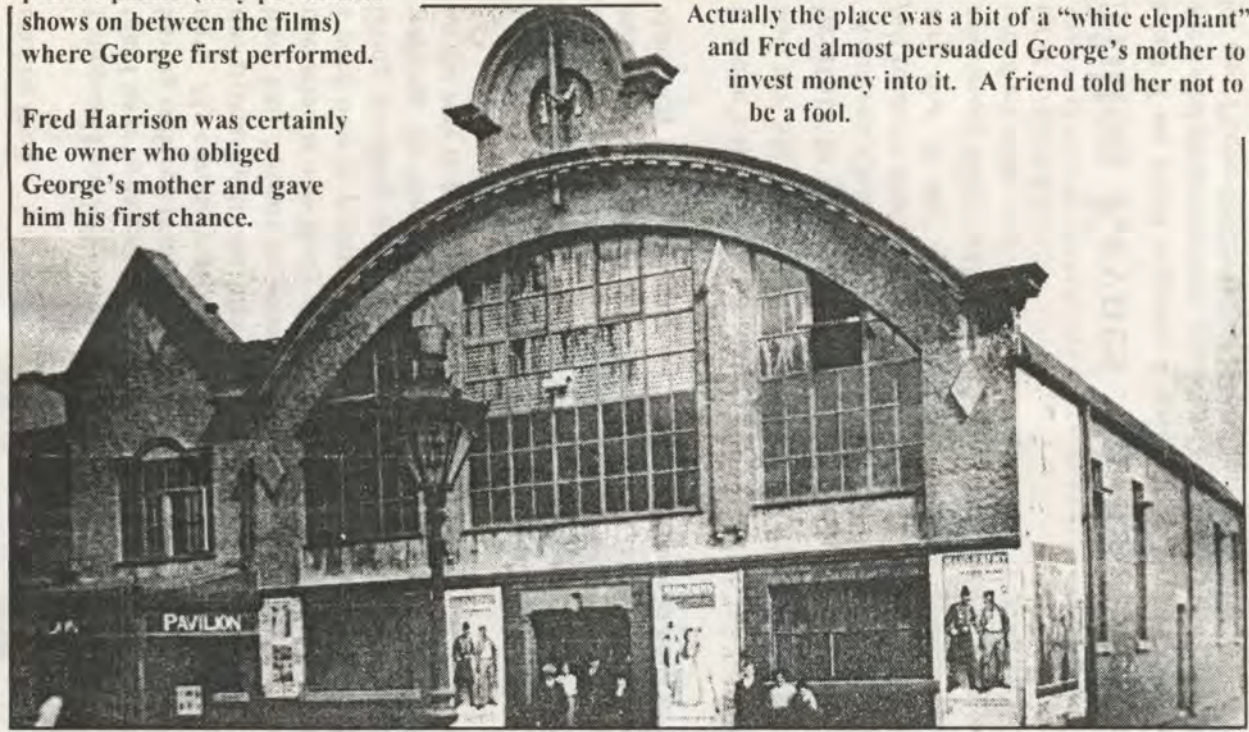
Proper name of this friendly little flea-pit was The Pavilion, though everyone in that locality knew it as the Rink. This because it had originally opened as a roller-skating business.

I'm indebted to

There is still confusion regarding the picture palace (they put theatre shows on between the films) where George first performed.

Fred Harrison was certainly the owner who obliged George's mother and gave him his first chance.

This photo was taken in 1924 so is it the place where George first played? Some locals disagree. Actually the place was a bit of a "white elephant" and Fred almost persuaded George's mother to invest money into it. A friend told her not to be a fool.



Douglas Waring of Leigh Street, Newton-le-Willows, for the loan of this nostalgia-soaked photograph.

Douglas tells us that, in those dear departed days, admission charges ranged from a squashed front-row threepence (just

over 1p) to one shilling (5p) for a posh seat at the back.

Many people have contacted me to describe how fond memories were rekindled by my earlier mention of the cheerful old cinema proprietor, Fred Harrison, a

spare, silver-haired character who sat in the Pavilion foyer.

His catchphrase was: 'Hurry on in, dear. Chocolates under the seats!'

Says Douglas Waring: 'I watched the last film shown at the Pavilion in September,

1955. It was called *Seven Bridges to Cross*, starring Tony Curtis.'

One fascinating aspect of this look-back picture concerns the ornate cast-iron gas-lamp with a huge lantern top. This lamp, which can be just made

out in the foreground (slightly to the left of centre) once formed a sort of mini island around which traffic used to clatter during the cart-horse and cobbles era.

☐ ANYONE know when that big lamp was finally snuffed out?

6 *Just had a letter from Charles Peacock...*

Dear Stan, Thanks for sending me Issues 5 & 6 of the Newsletter which I thoroughly enjoyed reading. It is a tragedy that each issue headlined the death of a member of our society. Both Ashley and Wally were larger than life characters and I will miss seeing their happy, smiling faces.



I suppose I am lucky in as much as I believe that I have been given a second chance after having suffered from Angina for many years now. My coronary arteries had narrowed due primarily to the high level of cholesterol my blood, but now that I have had 5 heart by-passes I should soon be feeling a lot better. The operation is now fairly routine and everything went according to plan - all I need now is patience for the next 3 months or so! I have to avoid lifting anything over 2 lbs in weight, but have to exercise regularly by walking. By the time your next newsletter is distributed, I should be well on the way to a complete recovery.

Linda received lots of telephone enquiries while I was in hospital, and I have since received many cards and phone calls. Through your newsletter I would like to thank all the people who thought about me, as it really did mean a lot. Our society is well known as a caring society, which is absolutely true, and I consider myself fortunate to have so many friends.

If I don't see you before, I will see you at Blackpool in March, if you see me struggling to carry my guitar and amplifier, don't hesitate to give me a hand. Best Wishes, Charles.

Thank you Charles. We are very pleased that you are well on the way to full recovery and look forward to seeing you soon at the meetings. I am sure that if any of the members see you attempting to carry your equipment, they will pounce on you from every angle. No way will they allow you to lift anything - DON'T FORGET LADS - HELP OUR CHARLES!!!!

Milton Keynes May 4th 1996 - Jeffrey Booth has asked if we could organise a coach party for the day, so if anyone is interested please contact me, Stan Evans, and I will be pleased to arrange for one. Phone 01925 727102. Don't forget - Coach Trip to Milton Keynes

North Wales George Formby Society

7

Report by Kevin Blanchfield.

The December meeting heralded a shift of emphasis from George Formby to Gracie Fields! Dennis Lee unveiled his new "I Took My Uke To A Party" number and was so full of pathos that there wasn't a dry glass in the house. His wife, Leslie, also made her singing debut with another of Gracie's songs. There is, though, no truth in the rumour that they intend to retire to the Isle Of Capri!

The meeting also provided the opportunity for another debut from Brian Harrison, who, although a member since the group was formed, has only just taken up the banjo. He gave a remarkably controlled and nerveless performance of "I Wish I Was Back On The Farm." Brian, who works for the Halifax Building Society took out a mortgage for the purchase of the banjo, which means he will be playing it for the next 25 years.

We have been invited to play at Minstrel Lodge, Rhosneigr, Anglesey, details of which will be given at the Jan 5th meeting.

The Branch has been given a new Ashley Lynch Thrash Book & Tape which we look forward to playing at the next meeting.

Christian Lee has been asked to provide a demo tape for Telegraph Records, and the group have other talk and sing engagements with local voluntary groups.

Our pre-Christmas meeting was well attended despite it being the day before the Blackpool week-end. We look forward to seeing members from other branches at our regular 1st Friday meetings and welcome them to our comfortable and well equipped facilities at the Royal British Legion, Penyffordd.

Thanks for your report Kevin - re the new thrash book & tape, read the next piece.

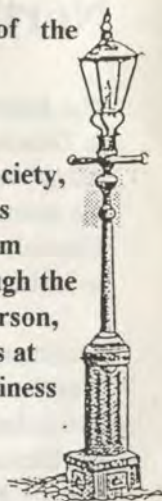
SLIP UP On New Thrash Tape - it was Anthony's fault! - Oh no it wasn't! - oh yes it was!

The new Thrash Tape & Book has got a fault with BANJO BOY. It is printed in the wrong key. It is very easy to transpose - or I will be glad to exchange it for you.

Did You Know That George was the President of the Warrington Cine Society for many years? I'll bet you didn't!



In Feb 1938 he wrote:- As President of the Warrington Cine Society, I am more than pleased to extend this message of welcome to you all, and am only too sorry that it has to be through the medium of this letter instead of in person, but not being able to be in two places at once, I must apologise and plead business engagements.



Now, although it is rather late in the season, I want to take this opportunity of wishing all my friends in Warrington a Happy and Prosperous New Year.
George Formby, President.

In March 1939 he wrote. I am delighted to again have the pleasure of addressing you through this programme and do again send a message of welcome to you all. I trust that this year I shall find time to pay you all a visit, but just at the moment it looks rather doubtful as my engagements through the whole of 1939, I am afraid, will keep me away from the Warrington district. Even so, my thoughts will be with you and the success of the Cine Society.

Carry on the good work and I am sure you will make a very big success of it all. Yours Faithfully, George Formby.

Rob Evans, of the Warrington Cine Society kindly brought me the copies of the above two letters and also a tape recording of Percy Hughes who, at the age of 91, is their oldest member. He was a friend of George, and Fred Bailey, and has a few stories to tell of their younger years.

Percy only met Beryl once and, on the occasion, she gave him the cold impression that she didn't want him around.

If You've Not Sent An Article In - More Shame

One Story On The Tape. . . .

George, a fanatic on motorcycles, persuaded his father to buy him a new motorcycle. He went to Preston to buy one for him. It was a highly polished Matador which was admired by all around.

Among the gang there was Jack Issac who's father was the owner of Bailey Issacs Meat Pies, in Warrington. Jack had an AJS which was quite a common bike. One day, George challenged him to a race up the steep brew of a cart track, which was the main road to Chester, and got beat easily. George didn't like this as he always wanted to be the best in everything he did, so he challenged him again. Again he got beat so, on the spur of the moment, he asked Jack if he would agree to swap bikes. Jack accepted and finished up with a smart looking Matador motorcycle.

After a time Jack got fed up with his fancy motorcycle so he asked his father if he would do a part exchange for a better bike. He always wanted a Sunbeam motorcycle. They trundled off to the same dealers at Preston - two brothers who built the bikes - where George's father had bought the bike from, and the dealer said he would allow him the full price against a Sunbeam. The deal was done and Jack was pleased.

Before leaving, the dealers told them why the bike was slow. George's father had told him that George was a bit of a flier so he asked him to govern the bike down to a 30 miles per hour speed limit. Our George never knew any difference.

GEORGE IS STILL HITTING THE HIGHSPOTS!

Crewe branch members Kath and Ken Banham visited the GREAT NORTHERN AUDIO VISUAL COMPETITION at the Wilmslow Guild on the 2nd December. The competition comprised of 34 entries of audio visual sequences each sequence lasting up to 12 minutes. The entries were judged after each showing and the entry by Leicester man John Hicklin entitled "For the Bet of One Shilling!" featuring the life of George Formby was adjudged the overall winner. The same sequence came third in the National Audio Visual Championships in September. The title of the winning sequence alludes to the incentive George had to take his uke on stage for the first time.

Kay Higgins - a very keen Formby fan is having a conversation with George in the Douglas, I.O.Man. shopping centre It's amazing what effect George has on people - fancy talking to a statue.

Cliffe Royle

sent in an item from the Saga Magazine.
From Mrs Eileen Bilton.

When I was in my teens I paid a visit to my dentist. After he filled one of my teeth he started to talk about music. He said that he played the ukulele at the local Merchant Navy Club and asked if I was interested in music. I was told to stay in the chair, he would not be long. Five minutes later, he was sat at my feet strumming his ukulele. I tried very hard not to laugh and offend him. I changed my dentist.

Thank you Cliff for the snippet.

H.S Corran writes. . . I copied a video of "No Limit" some time ago - having seen the original film in the Thirties (I am now 80). Before 1939 I was very much a Steam Packet buff and had a keen interest in the I.O.Man S.P.Co. steamers. So when I watched the video I was amused to see:

1. The first view of the steamer which carried George to Douglas was of "Mona's Queen (111) which was very new at that time (Launched 1934)
2. But when George fell in the water he was dropped a lifebelt with the imprint clearly marked "S.S.Manxman".
3. Finally the last shot which shows the steamer sailing out to sea is actually of "Ben My Chree (1V) ".

I find these inconsistencies rather surprising, particularly over the lifebelt.

My thanks to H.S for the article. Has anyone else seen any GF errors?

Blackpool Meeting - We had a great night at the Wainwright December meeting. Being Christmas, a few faces were missing, but those that were there certainly enjoyed it. Eve & Charles give off the right vibrations that make all welcome at the Wainwright, and every month they, along with their helpers, set out a lovely spread of food, overflowing with variety. Anyone who has not been is missing out on a great night with superb atmosphere. They all play a part, even with the removal of the P.A. equipment after the show. A great team of dedicated workers. Many thanks to you all.



David Naylor, one of the original members of the GFS has sent in a photo of his son Andrew, who is also a very keen Formby fan.

David was the lucky member who attended the Lytham St Annes auction in 1961 soon after George's death. The reason why it was his lucky day is because he didn't expect to come away from the auction with one of George's ukuleles - for only £6. David kindly loaned it to us to display in the Warrington George Formby Exhibition in 1991.

David writes. . . .

Andrew is 10 years of age and goes to a special school in Liverpool. He enjoys playing football and cricket and he has won a medal in his school races. Andrew enjoys strumming along to George although he can't handle the chords yet. He gets up early for school and straight away asks for a GF video to be put on. It is the same when he comes home. So much so that his older brother and sister complain that George is on too much.



Andrew's favourite films are "Keep Your Seats Please" and "Feather Your Nest" and he also loves songs like "Swing Mamma." One of his highlights is the visit to the Blackpool meeting. He sits entranced when various members perform on the stage.

The first word we ever understood him saying was "George" and he repeats some words that are said in the films. So George has even helped him with his speech. David Naylor

Isn't it wonderful that George has helped our young member with his speech? Unlike today's films, George's are so simple and innocent that they appeal to both young or old. We are very pleased David.

The **Liverpool Meeting** was a bit different!

We all got up on stage, to perform the group thrash, and there wasn't one person in the audience - not one! At the end of each song we had to applaud ourselves - most unusual. Anyway it was a good night.

12 **What a great little treat** we had at the last Wintergardens meeting, at Blackpool. The highly successful show, "For Me And My Girl", which features Gary Wilmott singing "Leaning On A Lamp Post", was finishing on the Saturday night and, as they were having a celebration party that night, we were asked to give them a surprise with a number of Formby Songs.

A group of good players were chosen including Anthony Mason, John Shreeve, Dean Spencer, Kieran & Ray Marshall, Dennis Lee, John Baddeley, Peter Thomas, Alan Yates, Lee Shetcliffe, [REDACTED], Eve & Charles Stewart and Michelle Kisby and we paraded in much to the surprise of the party.

In fine form the group burst into song with 5 numbers, Rock, Windows, Mr Wu, Nightshirt and finished up with "Lamp Post." Gary Wilmott said a few words in appreciation and we all bounced off to the bar for a free drink on the house. **TURNT OUT NICE AGAIN - Bah Gum!** I'll bet George was proud.

S.O.S. Mr Beeton on 0161 761 3702 is looking for a uke banjo for his 5 year old grandson - who is a keen GF fan - to learn to play on. Anything reliable but not expensive will be ideal. Betwen £30 - £50 if possible. If you have one please give him a ring.

Peter I'anson has got a GIBSON UB2 Uke Banjo for sale. It is in mint condition with Dot Inlays and with original case. It was made around 1928 and the price is £700.

Also a **Lyon & Healey** long scale Banjo Uke - no price and no case but you can ring Peter on 0113 2822898

Cyril Palmer writes:- 16th December and Sheila is currently in hospital undergoing tests, and hopes to be out quite soon (before Christmas) On Sheila's behalf, through the Newsletter, I am taking the opportunity to thank all the many friends for their enquiries, kind wishes, cards and flowers.

We are both more aware than usual, of the remarkable way that an involvement in the Formby Society has multiplied our circle of friends. Cyril Palmer.

If You've Not Sent An Article In - Shame - Shame - Shame

F Draper remembers George. . . .

I do remember seeing George and his wife in Cherbourg, probably about March 1940. The show was put on in a small French theatre.

George sang the songs he made famous, told jokes and then a trampoline was brought on stage. He showed us how it should be done - Beryl too, as I recall - then invited we service men to have a go, with hilarious results.

The next day he sailed for home at the end of his tour, giving an impromptu performance as the vessel cast off. **F Draper.**

G Allen reports. . . . The first time I saw George was on

D - Day 13 as we were unloading from our landing craft on the beach at Arramanches, France. He was with his wife Beryl and of course, his ukulele, entertaining and raising the morale of the troops.

The next occasion was when they were travelling to Gt Yarmouth, Norfolk for his summer show and unfortunately he was in collision with my wife's car (incidentally my wife is Beryl too) They were taken to Kings Lynn Hospital but fortunately not hurt - just badly shaken. I reported the incident to the Daily Mirror and subsequently received £1 - 1 shilling for the information. **G Allen (ex R.A.F.)**

Barbara Davis of S Africa, has a story to tell. .

W.A.A.F. camp at Weedon, near Morecambe, Lancs and the date was the 30th of December 1944. We were snowed in and the conditions were grim, In fact, we were the last W.A.A.F. to occupy the camp. Miss Trefuis Forbes, the Commandant, closed it as two girls had died of pneumonia.

It was my 21st birthday, then, Barbara Pelling - No. 2007365 - what a memory! I was so dejected, what a way to spend a 21st birthday, not even a card as the mail could not get through, but George made it. He gave us a concert and someone told him that it was my 21st. As soon as he knew this he had me on the stage, and really lifted my spirits, dried my tears and sang to me. It was a wonderful ending to what began as a sad day. I shall always remember dear George Formby.

Snippets Of Gossip Wanted For Your Newsletter

More on the T.T.Races-Pt 2 from the notes of Harold Rowell who lectured on the making of "No Limit."

.....Of all our locals only two riders agreed to stage the crash stunts. I refer to Jannal and Arthur Plant. It was Arthur who crashed through the balsa wood gate at Sulby Bridge. In those days the entrance to the slip road was narrow and crooked and it was inevitable that he would fall off. Fortunately he was not hurt. I also understand that it was Arthur who drove into the duck pond at Sulby.

Jack Cannell was the rider who slid to earth, close to the rocks on Creg Wyllies Hill. It was suggested that he should end up in a position most suitable for the cameras.

After a few days we became disgruntled about our pay. In the first case the visiting motorcyclists were reputed to be receiving around £20 per week together with free keep in the Majestic Hotel, while we received a mere £2 per day, which was halved if rain stopped play. Then we discovered that Harry Winters and his donkey were getting £5 per day. We reckoned that they were getting £2.10 shillings each and didn't like the idea of being paid less than a donkey, so we visited Monty Banks and told him that we wanted £3 per day, wet or fine, and that he had till 2pm the following day to make up his mind. He refused and, sadly, we parted.

Monty Banks hadn't realised how incompetent, and dangerous, some of his own riders were. He also seemed unaware of the ill-feeling that existed amongst them. A few days later we received a phone call from Monty Banks and he agreed to pay us the £3 per day.

They started work at Governors Bridge and Kavanaugh had an accident. Apparently he had approached the Hairpin at a great speed and forgotten that the gear lever was on the left. At the crucial time he had changed up gear instead of braking. He was lucky to escape with severe bruising. One other rider, because he hadn't had a lesson on stopping, finished up crashing through a plain glass window of a stationary car. It was rumoured that he had 100 stitches in his posterior. Just after this incident it started to rain so we all went home three quid better off.

Next Page

DoN't FoRgEt An ArTiCiE fOr YoUr NeWsLeTtEr

Continued. . . .

Quite a few of the motorcyclists wanted the job of riding into the corner bar of the pub and then out at the other door to rejoin the race. Monty wisely selected Gerrish. The stunt was done with two bikes. One to go into the corner while the other was ticking over ready to ride out. The steps were a wooden ramp cleverly painted to look like steps.

At Ballig Bridge, it was decided that a villain should force George through the gap and down into the river. Unfortunately he selected me to take the place of George. We measured the gap in the wall and decided that I must have at least two thirds of the width of the road to manoeuvre in. The villain was quite a reasonable bloke, I thought, but not a competent rider. On our rehearsal run he cut across and took my front wheel from under me. I was lying in a heap on the bridge, with my thumb sticking out at an impossible angle. They thought that it was broken. I was taken to Nobles where the dislocated thumb was popped back into place.

Back in Ballig I found that the rain had held up the shooting. The road was drying but the wooden ramp was still very wet and slippery. I suggested to my partner that, as my hand was still sore, we should exchange roles and he could ride the ramp. I set off about 10 miles per hour faster than previous and he followed at the same speed. He reached the river alright but slipped off the ramp. He finished up with bruised ribs and a ride in the ambulance. More Next Month From The I.O.M.

What did the I.O.M locals think of George?

George was a thorough gentleman. He was always considerate and, like all great entertainers, he never spared himself. He gave of his best at all times. If there were any failings it would be that, without the restraining hand of his wife, Beryl, he might have been too generous and become a soft touch.

If he had one regret about the film it would be that he was considered a high insurance risk and therefore unable to ride as he wished. However, he would ride from one location to the next on the famous "Rainbow" bike. And, although every precaution was taken to preserve George in one piece, he did ride in one particular scene which was considered the most dangerous. More Notes From Harold Rowell Next Month.

Have You Forgotten The Editor????

George's Film "No Limit" - made 60 years ago - is still shown regularly on the Isle Of Man.



Commander H Luton recalls. . .

As a young boy I spent two weeks on holiday in Ballaugh with my sister and parents and I recall some aspects of the 'shooting' of the film in that village. I don't believe that I saw George Formby at all because the 'action' was concerned with leather clad, helmeted motor cyclists, however I remember seeing Monty Banks who was directing the whole 'circus' of riders, cameras, assistants. Etc.

I also spoke to one or two of the stunt men, or perhaps my father did and I was listening - they were talking about having spent the whole previous day falling off and rolling down the hillside - somewhere towards Sulby, on the right towards Ramsey (Goby Valley)

Ballaugh Bridge was actually on the angle of the course so riders had to make a half left turn exactly on the hump of the bridge (quite a marked hump) when they were airborne! Quite a feat. The road has since been straightened as it was considered too dangerous at today's speeds.

A sod wall was constructed, and whitewashed, in the gateway on the right. (just after the bridge) and one of the stunt riders came over the bridge, fairly slowly, and smashed straight into it. This I never saw in the film. There was a lot more action at Ballacraine. This involved riding up a plank, through a front door of a pub, and out at the back with poultry flying in all directions. I think it was somewhat toned down in the film.

Tony Dean Writes. . .

Dear Stan, I enclose a photocopy of George & Beryl with Mr & Mrs Hillard (Printers Bolton) and a friend of mine, Mr Charles, George Weight. This photo was taken at Newton Ferris, South Devon on the river Yerlm. Mr Weight told me that he bought a Bentley car off George and that in the early years, Beryl was a 'good laugh.' He also told me that when he was on holiday with G & B, George would play his ukulele in a boat. When it was going dark you would see the glow worms in the trees.

Mr Weight is now in his 80s and he still goes to his factory to do a full day's work. He has very fond memories of George & Beryl.

Greg Croft met George!

Thumbing through the North-West Newsletter - No.4 on page 11, I was stunned when I saw the gently smiling face of 'Our George' looking up at me - a very special photograph. It was George as I remember him on the occasion when I was privileged to meet him, and Beryl, in 1935.

Previous to that I had only seen him in his films; a somewhat slender, 'gawky' kind of chap. I remember clearly feeling surprised, perhaps even shocked, as George came on stage at the Wintergardens in Cliftonville, Kent, walked to the microphone, gave that unmistakable grin - and said: "I know what you're thinking - hasn't he put on weight!"

After visiting them backstage, George invited me to accompany himself and Beryl back to their hotel, the Grand, a slow stroll which took half an hour or so. I was careful to keep George between myself and Beryl, who throughout only spoke in monosyllables - she had a remarkable talent for making one feel like an intruder. Perhaps a lesser fan might have 'got the message', excused himself, and left, but no way was I about to do that! George was courtesy and friendliness itself - how could two people be so different and married? I drank in every feature of his face as we walked along, re-educating my mind as to how he really looked. The picture of him in the Newsletter, seeing it, was almost like meeting him again. What a wonderful, lovely man he was! Thank you Stan for sending me a copy. Thank you Greg for your article - keeping sending 'em in.

From Frankie Baker. . .

I am an ex-member of the R.A.S.C. with the 5th British Infantry Division, later attached to Army Welfare Service - Comedian.

While stationed in Northern Ireland in 1941 we formed a troop show which was deemed good enough to tour with George Formby. A London impressario namely Gordon Crier, came over to polish up the show.

We did a show at the Derryloran school in Cookstown, Co Tyrone and Mr Formby was great. His wife, Beryl, kept herself busy tuning the many ukuleles he had. This was, unfortunately, the only show as the division was posted overseas for the rest of the war. Frankie Baker.

Since the loss of Ashley, **WARRINGTON** is reverting back to holding "Special Meetings" only and the next will be on the 29th of March - George's 35th Anniversary of his death in 1961. More news later.

Sixty seven attended the South Cheshire George Formby Ukulele Society's combined Anniversary and Christmas Party on the 28th November. The meeting attracted three new local members, all with playing interests, who came along armed with their own instruments. They all seemed to have a good night if their facial expressions during the evening were anything to go by. They all said that they would be back and it would not surprise me in the least if they were not furiously practicing in readiness whilst these notes are being written!

During the night there was a big surprise for one of our founder members. In between our meetings it had been Wilf Salt's birthday and his family thought it would be nice to have a little celebration with all his friends around him. Wilf's daughter, Jennifer, brought along a magnificent cake decorated with a ukulele, and with the room lights dimmed, she wheeled in the cake with everyone singing Happy Birthday! Whilst Wilf was somewhat bewildered by the happenings the big shock came for everyone when they saw the cake which gave away his age, - an unbelievable 75 years! Who in the room could have believed that? Of course Wilf has always been very fit, an athlete and sprinter in his youth and a league football referee for many years. He also sent a few notable players off in his day whilst acting in that capacity so just watch it! Also watch his right foot if you happen to be standing next to him in the thrash - he tends to shoot it out sideways when he gets to the climax of the solo! You have been warned! Keep up the good work Wilf!

The concert was full of fine performances, additionally Lee Potter delighted us with his lovely voice and Stan Evans performed a great water trick on the top of Denis Lee's head. (unfortunately I have to report that it worked!) The night was concluded with a class act, his first visit to Crewe, hopefully not his last, a real star performer - Martin Harrison. Everyone agreed it was a great night.

During the month our M.C. Jonathan Baddeley did an excellent P.R.Exercise for both the George Formby Society and our local branch with a 15 minute spot on B.B.C. Radio Stoke. The beeb are going to publicise all our meetings in the future so that is great. Well done Jonathan!

Answers to Anagrams on page 3 ---- Let's have some more Derek.

1. George Formby. 2. Banjo Ukelele. 3. Blackpool Tower

Well, if you can't get Mohammed to the mountain then you must take the mountain to Mohammed. For months Alan Yates has been promising to send an article for the Newsletter - he's worse than Martin Harrison! In the end I had to stick a mike under his nose at the Wainright meeting and make a recording of his voice.

"It's about a chap who has lived in Fleetwood, all his life, and when the film 'Bell Bottom George' was being made there, he went for an audition to be a film extra - he appeared in the film as one of the sailors. Also the young boy in the film who rode the bike, also lives in Fleetwood. It was his mother's 100th Birthday party recently and he asked me to go along to entertain. She also had a Chippendale performer. One other Fleetwood resident, who runs the local Sea Cadet Force, appeared as a sailor in the film."

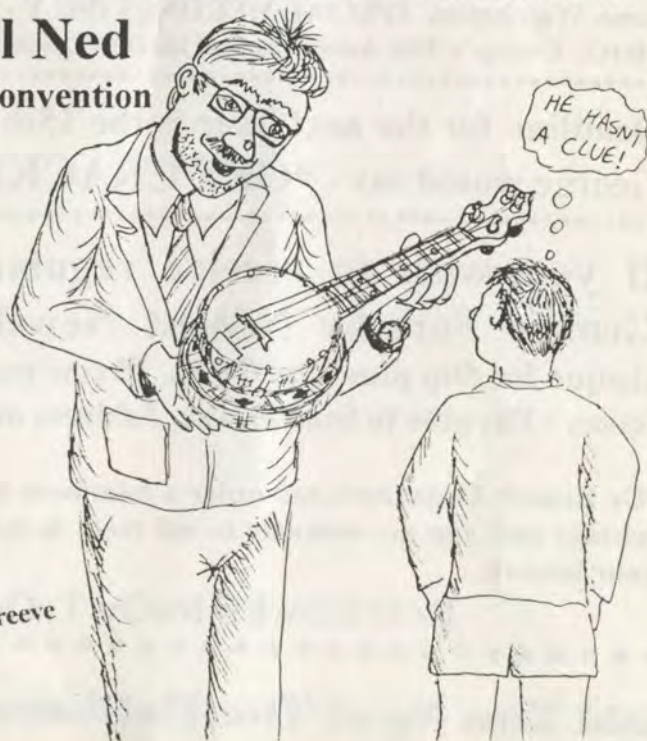
Thanks Alan - it's not much of an article considering that I travelled 100 miles to get it. Anyway we've got you started so we can expect more in the future. Keep sending 'em in.

While at Blackpool I was lucky to get a few words from Jenni Cronshaw - even shorter than Alan's article - "My English teacher, now Mrs Sibyl Howard, sang a duet with George, at the Manchester Hippodrome, when she was four."

Know it all Ned at the Formby Convention

Nice ukel son. I know everything about ukels. The best one in the society is a "Rubwig" and over there you will see the very "Rip Van Winkle" which Fred Formby played in the film "Let Fred Undo It."

By John Shreeve



N. West Branch Meetings and Future Dates.

N. Wales Branch - British Legion, Penyfford - Every first Friday in the month. Ring Dennis Lee on 01244 544799. Adm 50p

Blackpool Branch - Wainwright Club, Hornby Rd, Blackpool - Every First Saturday in the month - Ring Eve Stewart on 01253 768097 Future Dates:- Jan 6th, Feb 3rd, Mar 2nd, Apr 6th, May 4th Jun 1st, Jul 6th, Aug 3rd, Sep 7th Oct 5th, Nov 2nd, Dec 7th. Adm £1 with Buffet.

Liverpool Branch - Broadgreen Conservative Club - Every Second Friday in the month. Ring Tom Bailey on 0151 228 9769 Adm 50p

Sale Branch - (NEW VENUE) Brooklands Sports Club, George's Rd, off Marsland Rd, Sale. Ring Ken Ratcliffe on 0161 430 8290 Adm 50p

Crewe Branch - Wistaston Memorial Hall - Ring Brian Edge on 01270 69836. Future Dates:- Jan 26th, Feb 27th. Adm 50p

Warrington Branch - Alliance Sports & Social Club Evans House, Orford Lane, Warrington. SPECIAL MEETINGS ONLY - Next Meeting Friday 29th March, George's 35th Anniversary of his Death. Stan Evans 01925 727102

Deadline for the next issue is the 15th of January - 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.

ReTtElSwEn RuOy TrOpPuS

Did You Spot The Deliberate Mistake?