

THE NORTH - WEST

GEORGE FORMBY

Newsletter 1 1

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Specially Produced for the
North - West Branches of The George Formby Society
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Welcome to Newsletter No.11 and

what news have we got this month? Well, March 96 certainly went out with a bang. Two meetings were held on the same night - March 29th - and both in memory of George's 35th Anniversary. We are pleased to report that they went down very well. The Crewe report is on page 9

Warrington attracted no less than 150 members (and non-members) to their special occasion and the whole thing went with a great swing. Report in centre pages.

It was also an occasion for helping nine year old, wheelchair bound, Stephen Williams to go to Disneyland in Florida. £302 was raised which included a £150 donation from the local Council, to the Warrington Branch, and £50 which was collected by Glad Geoghegan, of London, for the Ashley Lynch fund. This was kindly given by Ashley's mother, Denise.



Our friends from the World War Two Society did us proud as they paraded in with their service uniforms. More on pages 10 and 11.

Blackpool - Eve & Charles Stewart Write- Our meetings are getting busier and Easter Saturday was another great night. The Eastwood family joined us from the South Coast, as well as friends from all over the N. West and Yorkshire to entertain and share the conviviality on offer. We were happy to have Peter & June here from Mirfield for the first time, and "Bizzy Bee" Dickie Speake made his usual unique contribution. Our M.C. Allan Middleton was certainly glad of the Bank Holiday extension!

Stan's excellent N. West Newsletter kept everyone up to date with the latest events. Will you please notice that **THERE WILL BE NO SEPTEMBER MEETING BUT INSTEAD, THERE WILL BE TWO IN AUGUST - 3rd & 31st.**

Thanks Eve & Charles for your report. It's amazing how well these monthly meetings are thriving. Blackpool was full to capacity, N. Wales had about 35 to 40. 40 members turned up at Crewe and the Sale branch is always full with about 40 - 50 members. 150 turned up for the Warrington Special meeting so the N. West is certainly doing very well. The smallest number is at Liverpool where they usually have around 20 to 25 visitors.

**George's Light has certainly been shining for Harry
He looks better now than he did before he was ill.**

The George Formby Society

3

have a lot to thank this little lady for. She didn't realise, at the time, that she was sowing the seeds for the future Formby family.



Part 1.

Our story of the Formby family begins in a small public house in the back streets of Ashton under Lyne, near Manchester, and the year would be around 1883. Each night, Sarah Jane Booth, George's grandmother, would sing for her glasses of wine. The more songs she sang, the more drinks the customers would pay for. Sarah was a diminutive, four feet one inch woman with long and straight blond hair. She was also a happy person who enjoyed entertaining and making people laugh. Of course, they had to keep her tanked up with drink. Unfortunately, towards the end of the night she became so hopelessly drunk, and bad tempered, that the local bobbies had to be called in to calm her down. It was later discovered that poor Sarah was carted off to jail over 140 times for being drunk and disorderly.

While she was cooling off in the cell, her eight year old illegitimate son, Jimmy Booth, who was born on October 4th 1875, was unable to gain entry into his home, 26 Hodgson St, and most nights he had to sleep on the front door-step. Young Jimmy suffered, through neglect, in his early years and it was later learned that he carried resentment towards his mother until the day she died. He was not a healthy boy. He looked pale faced and ragged and constantly suffered from a chest complaint which gave him a hacking cough. The cold conditions he lived in didn't help his situation.

Continued Next Month

4 Harry Is Back With A Bang

After his long illness, Harry graced the stage at the Warrington 35th Anniversary, and at Jim Gough's Birthday Party, and you could hear a pin drop as he told his 70 year old jokes and strummed his banjo uke. A few days later there were mumblings in the Warrington camp and members rang to ask if I had seen the big newspaper splash on Harry's campaign to get recognition at his home branch as a 5 string banjo player. Already the newspapers are getting wind of the situation and we understand that Harry is now considering taking the case to the European Court Of Civil Rights. However, Warrington are standing firm and insisting that he is still well and truly banjoed. ☺

Now read on . . .

NEWTON residents can be forgiven for thinking George Formby is alive and well and living in their town — for Newton has it's very own George, ukele playing look-a-like Harry Stanford.

Harry, 84, started playing the ukele and banjo for fun but he soon began entertaining others on stage when he joined the George Formby Preservation Society five years ago.

Since joining he has performed all across the North West, in Warrington, the society's base, Altrincham, Sale, and even Blackpool.

Harry of Rydal Street, Newton, said he was a great fan of George and saw him several times and even went to see his last ever performance at Manchester.

Earlestown even plays a significant part in the history of the popular entertainer because he made his first appearance on stage at the Hippodrome.

Banjo

A former professional boxer, Harry even plays the banjo as well but said: "The chairman of the society won't allow me to play my banjo any more, it has become a bit of a joke."

Harry joined the society after visiting the George Formby exhibition at Warrington Museum in 1990.

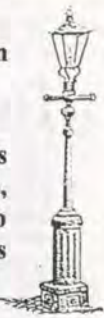
The exhibition, which attracted thousands from all over the country displayed a vast and valuable collection of memorabilia which included the ukele George played.

Since then Harry has been to every meeting of the society and can often be seen performing at the Alliance Club in Orford Lane, Warrington.



Well, Should Harry be allowed to play

his 5 string banjo at the Warrington Special Meetings or should he be left to suffer for having deserted George in the very town where he lived, and where he is buried. John Major rang to say that he is in agreement with us and that he will fight any action put up by the European Court of Human Rights. I'm not sure if having John Major on our side is beneficial as he appears to have lost every fight up to now and, with a record like that, Harry would most certainly have him on the canvas in the first round. Drop a line to the Editor.



Let's Hope that George's Light is shining for dear Len Phillips, of Liverpool. Poor Len is going through a rough time at the moment and this month alone he has been mugged 2 or 3 times. On each occasion the muggers have stolen his money and, previously, vandals smashed his house windows and set fire to his car. About 3 months ago, two masked men entered his home and tied him up so that they could rob his house. It's becoming a sad state of affairs when he is unable to leave his house for fear of muggers. Please spare a few thoughts for Len.

Alan Yates, & his Mum Marilyn Rang -

Stan - Your short piece on the BBC TV show, "Today's The Day" in the last issue, was interesting. Last year, a friend of ours, who is the warm-up comedian for the show, invited us to the show at the studios in Manchester. He said "bring your uke and I'll see if I can get you a spot." He asked the presenter, Martyn Lewis, and he was pleased with the idea. This resulted in Alan doing a 30 minute warm-up spot and the crowd loved it. *Thank you both for the short article. These are the sort of snippets that we need for the Newsletter.*

Phil (T.T.Races) Jones and his daughter, Tammy, are certainly getting about. He rang to ask directions to the Warrington Meeting but finished up at Crewe - about 30 miles away. I wonder if he took the wrong turning?



N. Wales G F S. March saw the N. Wales members performing at the Women's Institute Regional Conference and at the Bird Centre, Broughton. In the latter event we were joined by the lads from Crewe who added their own panache to the proceedings. As BIRD stands for Brain Injury Rehabilitation Dept. It really wasn't worth at least two of us going home.

The April meeting proved to be exciting. Our normal venue was changed at the last minute and we had to use the Penyfford Village Hall - Thanks to Dennis Lee - and all went well indeed. We will however be returning to the British Legion in May.

We were honoured by the visit of Walt, Chris and Andy Eastwood from Christchurch who were in the North looking at a suitable University for Andy. Andy is following in his mother's footsteps who is herself a music graduate and teacher. He performed several spots and amazed us with his versatility, the highlight of the night being a duet between himself and Anthony Mason.

Stan Evans conducted a telephone interview with BBC Radio Wales for the programme "Off The Wall." The finale of the night was when Jonathon Baddeley (clarinet) Andy and Anthony got together and Andy rounded off the night with a bravura performance of the "Old Coal Hole" and "I'm Saving Up For Sally."

Bookings continue to come in for the group and the next performance is in Rhyl on the 24th April 96. Kevin Blanchfield. *Thanks Kevin for your report.*

All-ticket gig for banjo boys

THERE was much mirth in the offices in the London bureau of a noted North American television organisation this week, when it was discovered that at least two reporters were hard at work checking out a tip. Normal practice, of course, but in this case the story they were examining had great comedy potential.

Someone told them that parking wardens in Bristol are to be issued with banjos as part of a new charm-the-tourists policy. The idea was that, in between putting tickets on cars, the wardens will pause and serenade any passing tourists with a quick burst of George Formby-style twanging.

Eventually, it turned out the whole idea was a spoof and originated with an off-the-cuff quip by some joker on BBC's Radio 5.

But the idea of a traffic warden warbling "When I'm Cleaning Windows" to a small ukelele is rather appealing.

George's 1961 funeral on Friday

THE funeral of George Formby will take place at St. Charles' Church, Aigburth, Liverpool, at 11 a.m. on Friday, followed by interment in the family grave at Warrington.

There will be a Requiem Mass at St. Wilfrid's Church, Preston, at 10-30 a.m. on Saturday.

George's mother, Mrs. Eliza Booth, of Liverpool, and his brother, Frank, visited Preston today and arrangements were being made to move his body to Liverpool.

(See page three "George as we knew him;" Page five: The wedding ring drama).

SIR, I noticed in one of your letters regarding George Formby not appearing at Wigan Hippodrome, George did perform at the Hippodrome he was in the Pantomime Babes In The Wood it was about 1932-33. I went to see the show with my mother and father.

I also saw George and Beryl when they attended Westhoughton Carnival about 1936-37. Their car was a white Pachard open tourer. George was wearing a large white flat cap, white jacket and white plus fours. Beryl was dressed in all white.

In January 1953, George and Beryl attended the third round FA Cup replay at Springfield Park when Wigan Athletic played Newcastle Unite before a crowd of 26,000.

George and Beryl spent most of their leisure time on the Norfolk Broads, were they owned two Windbout Class Motor Cruisers they were called Beryl One and Beryl Two.

Hindley Gem,
Name and address supplied

George Formby JUNE 1989 items for sale

A COLLECTION of George Formby memorabilia built up by alleged Sheffield murder victim Rex Blaker will be up for auction next month.

The eccentric law lecturer, found strangled at his home last year, had devoted years to collecting souvenirs of Formby.

His collection will be auctioned on June 7 at the Sheffield salerooms of Eadon Lockwood and Riddle.

Members of the George Formby Society, based in Warrington, are expected to be out in force for the sale.

Mr Blaker's collection includes three ukeleles, autographed sheet music, photographs and records, plus the script from No Limits, the film in which Formby starred as a TT motorcycle rider.

Saleroom manager Arthur Pickering said: "Many of these items have interesting stories attached to them and we are expecting a good turn-out for the sale."

A George Formby member named Fred
Was juggling six balls on his head

A wag in the hall threw an old cannon ball
Now he's just spent the last month in bed.

1961 SISTER ETHEL BUYS FORMBY FURNITURE

By Daily Mail Reporter

GEORGE FORMBY'S sister Ethel borrowed money to keep some of George's furniture in the family yesterday.

Ethel—Mrs. Joseph Corless, whose husband is licensee of the Catherine Hotel, Liverpool—bought a maplewood bedroom suite for £180 and paid £200 for a Jacobean dining-room suite which was hand-carved and

specially designed for George.

Mrs. Corless stood outside the auction marquee on the lawn at Berydene, George's home at Lytham St. Annes, while her husband bid for her.

It was the third and last day of the sale of George's possessions. Said Mrs. Corless: "George and I had very similar tastes in furniture, and we will put these things in our hotel."

Three Cheers For Harry - and Lottie.

He's getting back to his usual self again. At the last meeting he handed in his article for the Newsletter. . . .

Dear Stan, Lottie and me want thank all the members who telephoned and sent Christmas, Get Well and Birthday cards. A special thanks to Joan & Jim Bramwell who were kind enough to bring several hot meals during my illness.

During this period I got behind with my snippets of news so, here goes! What a brave speech Denise gave at the Warrington meeting. In her loss of poor Ashley she had not lost her humour but, a little tear let me down as I will always remember our dear little friend.

I read of Martin Fowell's dream about a Harry Stanford Appreciation Society but Stan Evans would probably say that it was more of a nightmare than a dream.

I was also interested to read that I might get the "Red Card" if I tried to play my 5 string banjo at the new Sale venue. Well, it won't be long before we turn up there so I suggest that you warn the landlord. They'll be more later, I hope, but as Dennis Mitchell would say "Keep it short Harry."

Thanks for your article Harry. It was great to see you back on stage at Warrington. All those new visitors hadn't heard your jokes before so you were on top form.

Tribute for our George

The front page (*Gazette*, October 26) reported that George Formby is at long last having a statue in his memory.

Several years ago the *Gazette's* old "Seasider" column featured my letter about George.

The George Formby Society secretary got in touch with me and invited me to the Imperial Hotel for the annual convention.

It was fun to see several films on the night.

The reason I asked for the statue was because George Formby was the first entertainer in Normandy in 1944.

I asked the late John Landers at a D-Day Normandy Veterans meeting (both of us members) to approach the council.

His reply was "the council thought George had enough accolades".

I sincerely thank Geoffrey Thompson for his effort and I will give to the appeal and hope to be at the ceremony.

GEOFF PAYNE

Rossall Road,
Ansdell

LAUGHTER

Edited by Ken White



"I know I asked you to be a bit more cheerful at breakfast - but, don't overdo it!"

8 Blackpool - We hope that George's light is shining for our dear member, Noel Currey, of the Blackpool Branch. Sylvia was very concerned when Noel was taken to hospital and kept in intensive care for 5 days. However, she now informs me that he has got through the crisis and is now sat up in a wheelchair. We look forward to seeing them back at the meetings in the near future.



Anthony Mason - what's he been up to this month? The night after the Warrington meeting, Anthony went along to entertain the World War Two Society at their Perch Rock Museum in New Brighton. My son, Stuart, daughter-in-law, Jenny, and grandson, David went along with him.

They arrived about 8.30pm but had great difficulty in getting inside the fort "Come out with your hands up" shouted Anthony, "We have you surrounded." Eventually, the doors were opened and our little group moved inside to set up the P.A. System. The performing area, at the side of the bar, is very small, with a low ceiling, and the room soon gets filled with fumes from the smokers. However, the atmosphere is great and they make you very welcome. Anthony sang for about 2 or 3 hours, until his throat was almost giving out. Dave & Janet Hawkins, of Milton Keynes, attempted to get there on the night but unfortunately didn't find the Rock Museum.

The W.W.2 members love George's songs and believe in joining in to make a good night of it. They also provide an experience you will never forget. Anyone who wishes to stay the night will be found a bunk bed. Anyone wishing to go along to entertain is made very welcome. P.S. I understand that while Anthony was being given the guided tour, he fell down the stairs. So be careful.

And Yet **Another Uke For Sale** - Alf Caldwell, Warrington's little ray of sunshine, is selling a Dallas "B" model. You can ring Alf on 01925 417839. The Dallas "B" is a grand little uke to play and it is not too heavy for the beginner. Includes a case.

S. O. S. The Smith Family are looking for words and chords for "You're Everything To Me." If you can help please drop a line to Pete Smith, 104 Allestree Lane, Derby, DE22 2HT.

Great work by Jack & Jim who performed well at Rainhill on the 16th & 17th of April. This was in aid of the St Helens Hospice. They played and sang well but half way through their second song - "Uncle Jim's Mint Balls" - they discovered that they'd lost track of the backing tape and were half a verse in front. All the shouting and prompting from the wings didn't help as they were in a complete state of confusion. Jack gave up singing and left Jim to peddle on alone. The cast were in stitches laughing and the audience enjoyed the confusion better than the song. They got a tremendous applause from the crowd so maybe they should make it part of their act. Carry on Jack & Jim, you did a good job.

The 35th Anniversary of Georges death was commemorated at the South Cheshire Branch on the 29th April when 40 afficianados attended.

Eleven years old Gareth Sumner, our youngest member, made his debut with a fine rendering of 'Lamppost' and Colin Wood similarly broke his duck with a really fine performance of 'Little Ukulele.' Christine was justifiably proud of him, as indeed we all were, and I am sure that both Gareth and Colin will now be keen to add to their repertoires. Well done both of you keep up the good work!

Colin is our Deputy Musical Director and he has taken over from Steve Hassall for the summer months, Steve having Bowling commitments. Steve has done a fine job for the society in building up our excellent sound system. We all should appreciate that it is quite a job setting up all the equipment and playing the tapes and Colin really did a fine job during the evening.

Wilf Salt was back after his long holiday 'Out in the Middle East' and he performed well after nearly a month away from his 'uke'. Garry Luyt donned a Russian hat and sang 'Madam Moscovich'. Garry's main strength, however, is in his melody playing and he really excelled with a version of 'South of the Border'. It was great to have Ian Simon and his family (from Wrexham) with us. Ian is a really good entertainer and when he, Wilf, Steve (vocal) and Jonathan (clarinet) got together with 'I cant stop you from Dreaming' the place was really buzzing. Phil Jones and his three daughters breezed in at ten past ten all the way from Swinton. Phil performed a couple of numbers by popular request (he's a great player) but unfortunately they all had to go at 10.30 thus knocking 37½ seconds off Charles Stewart's record lightning trip to Sale a couple of years back! Phil, however, promised to be back before too long.

Thanks to those who donated gifts for the raffle - no prizes for guessing who brought the Wem Fudge!

Newsletter No 10 was really newsy and 25 copies were sold like hot cakes. Dont forget to send your snippets to Stan.

Warrington Special Meeting

35 years after the most famous ukulele player of all died, Formby's adoring fans are still leaning on that lamp-post and strumming along to his naughty hits



■ **GEORGE FORMBY:** Horsey teeth and a squeaky voice

ON George Formby Night, I met a man who was writing a book about George Formby's houses and cars. Not George's life, but the places he lived in and the vehicles he drove about in while not playing the ukelele. There is, I gathered, a lot to go on. "George," Ken Ratcliffe, author of the future volume said, "had several houses and 21 cars. He was also the owner of 11 motor-cycles. Yet when he died, he left nothing. So where did it all go? Nobody knows."

How many houses? "There are," said Mr Ratcliffe, "several mysteries about those houses. And mysteries about the money. There is supposed to have been £50,000 in a suitcase under a bed. But when he died nobody found it. I'm hoping to clear some of this up in the book."

Mr Ratcliffe, a small, bespectacled man of 54, forced by a stroke into early retirement from the joinery trade, was wearing a sun-burst badge on one lapel and a red ukelele badge on the other.

He is secretary of Sale branch of the George Formby Society, an organisation with 1,000 members in the north west alone. The suncrest badge signified his simultaneous membership of The Sons of the Desert, a society for the collective appreciation of Laurel and Hardy.

"Stan and Ollie are brilliant," Mr Ratcliffe continued, in a lecturer's slightly piping voice, "but I prefer George. I like everything about him. My father took me to see him at Salford Hippodrome when I was five. I've never forgotten it.

One hundred Formby fans were confidently expected to attend the evening's celebrations in the Alliance Sports and Social Club, Warrington.

At least 50 more than that turned up, about 20 armed with ukeleles.

One man, iron grey in his fifties, arrived armed with a rifle. He was wearing a tin hat, and the battle-dress of an infantry sergeant of World War II. The rifle, slung over his shoulder, was of the single-action bolt type, theoretically capable of firing one round at a time, albeit in fast succession.

However, the infantry sergeant admitted, somewhat wistfully I thought, that the rifle had been fixed so it couldn't fire anything at all — not even at a George Formby imitator who might exasperate a fastidious



BY ANDREW GRIMES

audience with a bungled split stroke.

The sergeant was in the company of half-a-dozen other troops, drawn from a group of civilian war-game enthusiasts, who enact weekend battles against Nazi Germany at a fort in New Brighton.

There was a chubby-cheeked

WREN among them. And a WRAC with a full pack on her back. The officer in charge was an American colonel, in smartish Uncle Sam full dress.

"Usually," he told me, with some emphasis, "I play a German. SS, if I can get hold of the right tunic."

IT is not meet that an SS officer, even an ersatz one, should contaminate a remembrance night for a British wartime hero. And remembrance is what this evening was all about, its focus the Lancashire comedian with

horsey teeth, glistening fingers and a voice as squeaky as a blocked mill hooter. The British Legion could not have done a more patriotic job of presentation. On the back wall of the stage, a prominent sepia photograph was framed by an array of Union

Jacks and Stars and Stripes.

It came as almost a surprise that the photograph was not of Her Majesty the Queen, but of George Formby. Why this special fuss? The concert, I learned, was being staged as close as dammit to the 35th anniversary of George's death at the relatively early age of 56. But why in Warrington?

"George," explained Stan Evans, a tall, jovial man of 68, "is buried in Warrington. He was born in Wigan, he lived in Blackpool, but he was raised in Warrington and buried here. You may have passed the grave on the A57. It's shaped like a theatre, a marvellous grave.

"I was breast-fed on George's songs. My father sang all day long and I took after him."

Stan Evans, it turned out, was competing the concert. Semi-retired, he was once big in the tent-making business. It also transpired that he owned the Alliance Sports and Social Club, or rather the building, which is called Evans House.

"It's strange," he continued, "that George died so young. George's mother died in 1981, aged 102. Louie,

his sister, took very ill in 1991, but a cousin died instead. She said, 'I'm all right for another ten years,' and she's still going strong.

"The amazing thing is that George's wife, Beryl, went three months before him. She was a strong lady. George was one of the five highest paid entertainers in the world. Only Clark Gable earned as much, and Clark Gable could not sing.

"All Gable had to do was go on the screen and act. George had a more hectic life. It made him prone to heart attacks."

What, I wondered, was the songs' appeal today?

"Well," said Mr Evans, "you may notice that they are all positive. They say get cracking, and that's positive. In this day and age, we haven't anybody like him, so the hospitals are full. We didn't need hospitals in George's age. He fed the spirit.

"Imagine a song like Auntie Maggie's Remedy. You don't see a doctor. You get out Auntie Maggie's Remedy. Positive, you see. There were radiations from him."

Next Page

Continued

Stan Evans got cracking with the show. He welcomed all the guests and the volunteer artists, describing the battle specialists from New Brighton as "the Second World War Appreciation Society."

One after the other, the George Formby imitators did their turn. Some were cleanin' winders, others guarding the 'Ome Guards' 'Ome, others standin' at the corner of the street to watch a certain lickle lady pass by, yet others celebrating the failed laundryman Mr Wu.

Nearly all the lyrics seemed preoccupied with honeymoon couples and ladies' knickers. For a national icon, George was a lecherous fellow. Not at all the type, surely, to amuse Vera Lynn (who was also impersonated).

An old man wandered into the hall with an elderly spotted dog which, I learned later, had just undergone an hysterectomy.

The old man was a busker from Yorkshire. He got on stage with a large banjo and, in my view, did the best turn of the evening.

He didn't try to imitate George Formby's voice but he caught George Formby's spirit. Afterwards, he stood shouting friendly advice to the younger plink-plonking chaps.

"You must keep in time, you must keep in pitch, you must keep in tune. If you can't, then keep your gas mask on..."



JOE MCCAFFEY



This member's photo was taken many years ago -

Who is it? Here's a few clues:- He's British, plays the uke, has more than one hobby, loves to organise, very capable. Have you guessed it. No Anthony - It is not the Elephant Man!!! Answer next month.



BBC Radio Rang - Hello Stan, We are doing a

broadcast on Friday night and we'd like to interview you, by phone, for our show "Off The Wall." "No problem", says I, "but I suggest that you ring Dennis Lee, who organises the N.Wales Branch, and we could do the interview from there. Then we will have the ukes being played in the background to add a bit of atmosphere to the occasion." "Great idea" he said, and all was arranged.

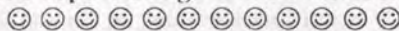
THE BEST LAID PLANS.

A few minutes before I was due to set out, Dennis rang: "We've got a problem Stan. The British Legion have double booked the room and we've had to settle for the Community Hall which is about 300 yards away. Unfortunately it hasn't got a phone." "Don't worry Dennis, I'll bring a car phone. Ask the Legion to tell the BBC to ring on 0468 491149 and it will come direct to the hall." Perfect - or so I thought. The noise of the ukes was so deafening that I thought it wiser to keep the portable phone glued to my ear 'ole for the next couple of hours. Time was close!

Suddenly, the door burst open and a young man shot through. "Come over to the Legion quick, there's been a change of plans and you are due to go on air in the next few seconds. Not in the past 5 years have I run so fast. The 300 yards seemed more like 3 miles as I ran the distance, hotly pursued by about 15 uke banjo players! Never has the village of Penniford seen so much excitement!

The Legion was packed so I had to do the Annika Rice scramble in search of the dangling phone. Eventually I found it perched on the bar next to the huge elbows of the Legion's regulars. The noise of the disco, in the next room, was deafening and when the George Formbys moved in I couldn't hear a word the radio Presenter was saying. "You'll have to shout up," I kept repeating, but unfortunately his voice remained quiet and woolly.

We managed to get a 15 minute plug for the N. Wales Branch and finished with the ukes moving closer to give the listeners a good hearty "Lamp Post" followed by a rousing good cheer. Let's hope it brings in a few members for the area.



More Anagrams From Derek Ball of the Crewe Branch -

All are connected with George. 😊 😊 😊 - Answers on Page 17

- | | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Grub Be In Trowel. | 2. He Do Let Off. | 3. Congo Ere Me Go. |
| 4. Retie To Dog Leg. | 5. Tahiti Siren. | 6. Robot Moll Beet Egg |



Have you any puzzles for the NEWSLETTER?

More From The War Front -

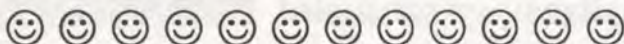
R H Williams writes - In June 1944 I had the pleasure of meeting George & Beryl Formby. I was a young soldier at the time and served in the Infantry Battalion. We had landed in Arromanches, Normandy on D Day, 6th June with 50 TA Division. I can't remember the exact date but it could be a few days later, about the 10th June that they visited us. I remember, a few of us were picked from each Battalion of the Division to see them, not far from the front line. The concert was held in the open air and we sat all around them in shell and bomb craters. George played the ukulele and sang some of his well known songs - Cleaning Windows, Mr Wu, etc.

Later, he and Beryl spoke to some of us and for a brief moment we were able to forget the war. This memory will stay firmly in my mind. Thank you for the opportunity to relate it.

S A Green - In June 1944 I was serving in the Coldstream Guards. On approx June 28th we sailed from Gosport for the Normandy beaches and while waiting to board our ship we learned that George Formby, and his concert party were to travel with us. We boarded an American L.S.T. and set sail. A rough sea started to blow up but nevertheless, George, and party, gave us a show from the bridge. Beryl had to support George to stop him sliding about. As we had to accommodate extra personnel, girl dancers etc. we had to sleep on stretchers on the deck until the storm became really fierce. Then we scrambled for cover.

Come the dawn and we were high and dry on the beach. We trundled ashore with George on the back of one of our tanks. Altogether a very pleasant and memorable experience.

Cpl P R Ayes writes - Sunday 26th September 1943 and here I am writing a nice long letter to my wife. After returning from the New Zealand camp where I had seen George Formby and his wife, Beryl. He is really better on stage than on the screen, so much so, that the crowd of 8,000 Kiwis would have kept him there all night if he hadn't to put another show on for the South Africans. You can imagine what his songs were like not having to worry about odd niceties etc. Also his jokes. I thoroughly enjoyed myself and don't know when I laughed so much last. Among the many songs he sang was one about the Middle East - very funny and need I say, very smutty, and another song entitled: "No Matter How Long A Stocking May Be, The Top Is Always Nearest To The Bottom." Altogether a very nice evening.



Have you a story for the NEWSLETTER?

R G Southen - Yes I can remember him well and the entertainment he gave to the troops during the 2nd World War. I was stationed on the Suez Canal from Aug 43 to Jan 44 and George gave a very long concert in Ismalia on the 30th Sept 43. I enclose a photocopy of a 10 Piarte note which George autographed he'd signed for me after quite a long discussion about a Mandolin Banjo I own. The note is signed with a mauve coloured pencil.

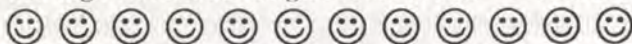


From Tommy Gilloway - I was a young lad serving in the Merchant Navy on board oil tankers in the Russian Convoys coming back from Murmansk - which was a matter of life or death in the Scapa Flow.

It was February 1943, my birthday, and as we lay in the Scapa Flow, a ship came alongside our tanker. We were told that it was an E.N.S.A. ship with entertainers on. My mates and I went on board the ship and I recall it was around 8pm when we got below decks. Other ratings were there, all seated facing a stage, and, to our surprise, George Formby came on to sing to us and tell a few jokes. It was a nice experience seeing him and we thoroughly enjoyed his songs.

After the show, we met George & Beryl and talked to them. Unfortunately I was a bit shy to talk but Beryl did quite a lot of talking.

I must say that, after the stressful times we had gone through, he had brightened our day and brought us back to life. He gave us hope to sail again, back to Russia, amidst the 60 foot high waves and the gale force winds. I'll never forget them.



Send a self photo with your article

We've all seen this photo many times - also the BBC News Snippet on TV or at the cinema. This is the one where George sings to the troops from the back of a farm cart. The following letter is from one of the lads in the photo.

From A C Bryant - Yes I was entertained by George before being taken a prisoner. I have enclosed a copy of a photo which was taken in the farm yard. It was taken while George was singing "Imagine Me On The Maginet Line. I am now 79 years of age and was a P.O,W. for 5 years. During the war my wife was reading the Evening News and she recognised me being entertained by George. We have treasured the photo for 55 years.

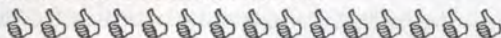


George entertains men of the B.E.F a battalion of Buffs at an impromptu turn in a French farmyard. Even the French officer seemed to enjoy the Lancashire humour. A C Bryant is the third from the right.


D W H Hyde also recalls another time when George performed from a farm yard cart. This was very shortly after D Day. He entertained around 200 men in Ryes, Northern France, for about 2 hours. George & Beryl were doing non-stop entertaining and were dead beat. They had to take 4 hours rest. The unit was the 905 GT RASC which pushed on to Rouen and later the Baltic Coast.

Any Queries For The Newsletter

Just Had A Visit from Warrington's Mike Williams (with his Dallas D) who, for many years, has been a professional artist visiting all the clubs etc. Although he enjoys adding a bit of Formby flavour into his act, he didn't know that we existed, or that he could purchase Tapes and Songbooks to enable him to add more songs to his act. Consequently he has been playing the same two songs for the past 25 years: Lamp Post and Windows. Going away, with a bundle of new songs under his arm, he said "I'll join the GFS as soon as I've mastered this lot." So we might be hearing more from him in the future.



S Holden of 23 Charnwood Rd, Woodley, SK6 1LE is looking for any material relating to "On The Buses" as he is a member of this particular fan club.

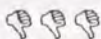
Another Uke Banjo For Sale - Jack Glennon on 0161 370 4226 has a Dallas "D" which he wishes to sell. Extreme good condition with original case. Price £350. 

George's Sister - Louie. It was reported last month that she had been rushed to hospital with suspected heart and liver complaint. Well the latest report is that she is tougher than they thought she was and they expect her to come out shortly. Louie, who is two years and a day younger than George, will be 90 on the 27th of May. Maybe she is trying to out live her mother who died in 1981 at the age of 102. Three Cheers For Louie! 😊 😊 😊

Polyskins- One member rang! "Stan, I am desperate! Send me a Polyskin, and a couple of bridges, by first class post so that I'll get them in the morning" - "No Problem" says I, and off it went, all neatly rolled up like a tube. The following morning the phone rang again, "Where's my Polyskin? I've received the bridges but no skin!" 😞 😞 😞

A few minutes later the phone rang again. "Don't worry Stan. My wife received the rolled up tube and thought it was packing, so she immediately threw it in the bin." The moral of the story is "Never trust your missus with your Polyskin." 😊 😊 😊

I'll bet you cheated. Our thanks to Derek Ball for sending them in.



1. Trouble Brewing.
2. Off The Dole.
3. Come On George.
4. Let George Do It. It's In The Air.
6. Bell Bottom George.

Answers
Anagram

Tips on Improving Your Act -

There is no doubt about it, things have changed in the G.F.S. over the past few years. About 7 years ago it was extremely hard to make much progress with playing as there was no material to work from. No books, no tapes, no CDs, no videos - absolutely



NOTHING!!!! Only the odd song would appear in the Vellum. If you wanted to learn a new one it was a case of having to ask one of the old established members for the words and chords and if they didn't feel in the mood to tell you then it was "tough luck."

At the Blackpool meetings, the few members that attended appeared to have their own small set of songs, which they clung to, and it was often frowned upon if any other member dared to trespass.

Due to the availability of all these items we now have almost a full repertoire of George's songs to practise, and perform, so there is no excuse for sticking to the same few numbers. Dare to be different! Here's a few tips:-

- Tip No.1. Don't stick to the same couple of songs and expect the audience to constantly enjoy listening to them.
- Tip No.2. Ask yourself "Is my act boring?" If so, don't be afraid to let your hair down. Give your act some life.
- Tip No.3. Remember - It is personality that moves an audience - George was oozing with it! You might have the best split stroke in the world but if your personality is lacking then they'll never enjoy your act.
- Tip No.4. Tune your uke before going on stage.
- Tip No.5. Never turn your back on the audience. Look at them and give instructions (to the pianist) through the mike.
- Tip No.6. Don't start your act until there is "silence" from the audience. Learn to control the noise.
- Tip No.7. Don't sing (or mumble) to yourself. Learn to throw out your voice so that it penetrates the whole audience. Don't stand too far away from the mike - or too close.
- Tip No.8. Imagine a little old lady sat on the back row. Sing to her and make sure that she can hear every word "Nice and Clear."
- Tip No.9. Don't worry if you stumble through the words. George's father often slipped up but he turned it into a joke and blamed the band. Remember - It is all for fun - Humour comes in short measures today so "don't be too serious."
- Tip No.10. Also remember - If the audience doesn't respond, then it is your fault - **NOT THEIR'S.** Enjoy Yourself. 😊😊😊😊😊😊😊😊

Send A Self Photo With Your Article

Happy 90th Birthday to Jim Gough - 19

Jim has been a friend of mine for at least 20 years and on the 12th of April a "hush hush party" was held at the Alliance Social Club, Warrington. For two months we had to talk in code and make Jim believe that we were holding a George Formby Meeting, to which he and Ethel had been invited.

On the day, hordes of volunteers arrived early to prepare a huge buffet and Jim & Ethel were collected by car. As they walked through the door, to the tune of "Happy Birthday To You," Jim nearly collapsed with the shock. He didn't have the faintest idea that we had been preparing a party for him. For the next three hours Jim was, deservedly, surrounded by admirers and given a night he will always remember.

One of the highlights of the night was the introduction of 9 year old, wheelchair bound, Stephen Williams. A raffle was held to raise funds to give him a holiday in Disneyland. Thanks were given to the ladies who had worked hard in preparing the buffet, which incidently, was spread out on John Parrott's practise snooker table. I must add that he wasn't playing at the same time!

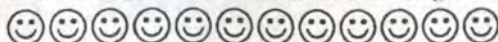
A few members were invited to entertain. Ethel sang a number of Gracie Field's songs and my Son, Stuart, and family, provided disco entertainment (not the heavy stuff). A great night was held by all. Stan Evans. P.S. Can't wait till I'm 90.

Wednesday night and **Big Breakfast** - Channel 4 TV

rang. . . . "Stan, We need a George Formby singer for 7am Friday morning. Can you send someone down?" Immediately a message was left on Greg Croft's answer phone and arrangements were made for the studio to pick him up by car. Friday morning and Greg turns up on TV - looking real smart I must add - singing "Windows" to promote a young man who has set up a company to teach people the art of window cleaning. Poor Greg - after all his effort - was on the box for no more than 5 seconds. Anyway, as Greg said, "I thoroughly enjoyed the day out." Good for you Greg. You looked a toff on the box! I'll bet George was proud of yer.

The World War 2 Society looked dead impressed when Harry graced the stage at the 35th Anniversary at Warrington. He wore his war medals with pride. What the W.W.2 S don't know is that it was probably Harry that started the war in the first place!

Uke Banjo For Sale - An old friend of some 60 years ago, turned up at my house a few weeks ago. He has a Musima Uke Banjo for sale and he wanted to know if I could sell it for him. He bought it for his granddaughter but she preferred to learn the piano instead. It is in Brand New Condition with only about 2 songs on the clock. I suggested £50, which is a bargain for the beginner.



N. West Branch Meetings and Future Dates.

N. Wales Branch - British Legion, Penyfordd (10 miles west of Chester).
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:- May 4th, Jun 1st, Jul 6th, Aug 3rd, Aug 31st, Oct 5th, Nov 2nd, Dec
7th. Adm £1 with Buffet. PLEASE NOTE: 2 MEETINGS IN AUGUST

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. Every 3rd Friday, Ken Ratcliffe 0161 430 8290 Adm 50p

Crewe Branch - Wistaston Memorial Hall - Ring Brian Edge on 01270
69836. Future Dates:- May 24th, June 28th, July 26th, Aug 23rd, Adm 50p

Warrington Branch - Alliance Sports & Social Club Evans House,
Orford Lane, Warrington. SPECIAL MEETINGS ONLY - THANKS FOR
ATTENDING THE 35th ANNIVERSARY - Stan Evans 01925 727102

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.

Deadline for the next issue is the 15th of June -
as George would say - "GET CRACKING"

ReTtEISwEn RuOy TrOpPuS

HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN ALREADY?

