

THE NORTH - WEST

# GEORGE FORMBY Newsletter 19

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Jan 1997



*A Merry Christmas  
and*

*A Happy New Year*

Specially Produced for the  
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# Welcome to Newsletter No. 19

and it is impossible to believe that we have been going for so many months. So what have we got this month?

Due to the readers sending in the much appreciated articles we have another punch-packed edition. . . . Again Charles Stewart has sent in a quantity of old newspaper cuttings from the Blackpool Gazette and John Guy turned up at my door with a huge bundle.

We have a very interesting article on Hylda Baker and a story of how George took over the show when Arthur Askey took ill on stage.

We have two very funny stories from Jack Sharp and a local fish man, and we have another instalment on the life of George Formby senior.

Please Read On and enjoy your Newsletter. Don't forget to send an article.

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**Latest on John Guy** - John told me that he has had five serious heart attacks and, although the doctors have told him that they could have been fatal, he is still grafting away. I asked him his secret and he told me. "Stan," he said, "I am in the process of making myself a harp and I don't think they'll take me before it is finished. In which case I may never finish it."

*Good for you John. We hope you never finish it.*

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**Still on John Guy** - This chap - (notice I didn't say GUY!) must have the heart of a lion! I'd just finished doing a report on how ill he was, for the Vellum, and he is on the phone asking if he can come to my house to collect our old wood burner. The following day he turned up and within a few minutes he had the heavy lump (not the missus) in the back of his car and he was off back home to Birmingham. I don't know how he does it! It must be all that Birmingham fresh air.

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**Uke For Sale** - Jack Glennon rang. He is selling an Abbott copy uke banjo, Gold Plated, with luxury case . . . £450. Ring 0161 370 4226.

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**Many Thanks to all who have  
contributed to this edition.**

## The Formby Story - Part 9

Still on George Formby Senior. . . .

We explained in earlier editions that Eliza, George's wife, took on the task of travelling round the theatres with her husband to look after his welfare and to cool him down with ice or cold water which calmed the inflammation in his chest. This was between parts of his act on stage, and usually after he had sung one or two of his songs. After he was cooled down he would appear on stage again in a different attire. It would seem that he named the suit after the particular song he sang while he was wearing it.

The following story was given to me by Louisa, young George's sister:- One particular suit of clothing was a Bowler Hat, Large Coat with big Buttons, Concertina Trousers, Old Boots on the wrong feet, a Walking Stick and a Moustache. The name of the song, and the suit, in this particular case was: "One Of The Boys," which was one of his popular favourites.



Charlie Chaplin, who was sixteen years of age at the time, took a liking to George's act and asked him if he could borrow the song, and the suit, for a particular occasion. George replied with: "Yes you can borrow them but, as they are part of my act, you can sing one verse only of the song." Charlie however, ignored George's instruction and sung the whole song, which angered George slightly. He replied with "You might as well take the song, and the suit, and keep them." Which he did! Charlie took the character to America and made his fortune from George's original act. The only parts of clothing he didn't accept were his old boots, which were too small for him to wear.

From a list compiled by Kevin Daly and Rex Blaker, George Formby senior made 108 recordings of his songs, the most popular one being "Standing At The Corner Of The Street." Little did he know that in future years, his son's top song, "Leaning On A Lamp Post" would be a similar type of song.

More Next Month

**Out and About** - On a couple of occasions I've heard that there could be big things happening around Lancashire and especially Blackpool. It appears that some of the trend could be changing from the swanky American films to the down to earth Lancashire humour, and big American companies, who love British entertainment, and our green grass, might be investing huge sums into promotion. It is reported that finance is to be invested into Blackpool for a clean-up campaign.



This could pave the way for George Formby, Gracie Fields and Frank Randle type entertainers so it is important that we get our acts together and well polished up. We will keep you informed of any progress. Keep practising - Lancashire Nights should go down well.

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## You will all remember **Stephen Williams**

who we collected for to send him on a holiday Disney World. Well he's had his treat and thoroughly enjoyed meeting Mickey Mouse, but what a disaster trying to get there. First the Airline Excaliber went bust, and a loss of £200, and then, if that wasn't enough, the Travel Agents also went bust. You can imagine how Grandad felt having to dash around the agents trying to get new bookings. At this stage they were convinced that they would never get there.



And then - they found that Stephen's motorised wheelchair had been damaged on the plane. The main control arm had been snapped off and Stephen was unable to use it. For two days he had to rest while it was repaired by the American airline company. But from then on it was a great holiday for Stephen. He whizzed round on his super souped up wheelchair, at about 300 miles an hour, and met Mickey Mouse, Minnie, and all the Disney characters. He had a great time and the Disney staff gave him top priority to save him waiting in the queues. Stephen also had a great day in the luxury swimming pool. He found it a great aid to be able to move around in the water. Alas, back on the way home again and they ran into more problems. Due to thick fog they had to land at Gander airport and wait there for 12 hours.

All thanks go to the members of GFS N. West area, John and Paula Hickinbottom, and their party of entertainers, friends of Jim Gough, members of the New Brighton World War Two Society, and others who took part in raising funds to provide a grand holiday for the young lad. There were many disasters but Stephen wasn't aware of them. This will be a holiday he will remember for the rest of his life. Our thanks to all.

# Another Great Night at Penyffordd 5

Christmas came early to the North Wales Branch with a Gala Fancy Dress party on the 6<sup>th</sup> December. Our compere, Dennis Lee, sported a natty line in a Santa Claus outfit, courtesy of Oxfam. This exclusive creation, which looked like a cross between a prison mail bag and a Tesco bin liner ballooned rather alarmingly below the waist! But maybe that was Dennis! There were some other splendid costumes notably from Brian Edge who entered as a Snowman and exited as a puddle. Young Kate Simon as a Christmas Tree with its own lights, won the junior prize. After Brian had settled back with his winning bottle of whisky, and the Simon's family scoffing young Kate's prize, we were treated to a festival of entertainment from the huge number of players who had turned up.



Of particular note were the contributions by Jonathan Baddeley, Anthony Mason, Steve Hassal and our own Ray Davies. The standard of performance is now quite outstanding, and many of the members brought a special Christmas element to their performance. Jim Knight's drunk was so convincing that we all believed he had been at Brian's whisky. A vintage Jolson performance came from Tom Meredith and our only problem was fitting in the number of players in the time available.

At half time we were treated to a magnificent spread which had been put together by the members and their wives and special thanks to Lesley Lee for the organisation.

For the first time, Dennis Lee relinquished the role of compare to Kevin Blanchfield who had the distinct advantage that he didn't need to use the mike.

We were delighted that members had travelled from some very great distances to be with us on the evening (I think the furthest was from Derby) and they all received a warm welcome.

Our next meeting will be on Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> Jan 1997 at RBL Penyffordd and all are welcome. Why don't you bring along the left overs from your Christmas celebrations? The sign in the club said, "If You Are An Alcoholic And Need Help - Ring This Number." It turned out to be the Off-Licence.

A Happy Christmas and a Prosperous New Year. Kevin Blanchfield - Apprentice Compare with a long way to go - the further the better.

*Thank you Kevin. My star player for the night was - without doubt - Ian Simon. He played exceptionally well and I was amazed how he had improved. However, I thought you were great as stand in compare. But, I did hear that you'd only been doing the job for two minutes before you had a strike on your hands. Good compares should develop the tact and finesse of a midwife. Keep sending 'em in.*

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Have you Forgotten the "NEWSLETTER?" ☺☺☺

Lancashire Evening Post Tuesday March 7<sup>th</sup> 1961

## George died on day wedding ring was bought

George Formby's long and sometimes frightening battle with ill-health came to an abrupt and tragic end, late yesterday afternoon, just as he was saying goodbye to his fiancé, Miss Pat Howson, of Penwortham, after one of his daily visits to St Joseph's Hospital, Preston.

Only a few hours before, the hospital bulletin had confirmed his good progress from a heart attack which had brought him in only 12 days before. At lunch time he was "full of beans." Then, as Miss Howson was leaving, George collapsed. Miss Howson called the sister, and the Matron, Sister Winefride was sent for. Dr Michael Geake, who was visiting the hospital, was also called to George's private room, but in a few minutes the 56 year old comedian died peacefully.

As he died, a last blessing was given by Fr T Lakeland, SJ, who was in the community house at the time and who hurried to the ward on hearing of the collapse. Miss Howson was taken home by car - on the day they had bought their wedding ring, for they had planned to marry quietly as soon as George was well.

George had a severe coronary thrombosis and though he had appeared to make a good recovery after being admitted in a dangerous condition, his progress, as so often happens in serious heart cases, had flattered to deceive. Though George's cheerful grin had rarely been absent, his health had been watched with great anxiety at the hospital.

At his bedside was a picture of Pat and himself, their approaching marriage had become the focal point of his life. His home at St Annes was being sold and he had bought White Lodge, a mansion at Lea, near Preston, with furnishings and carpets. He planned to settle there after his marriage. George had already begun to make roots in Preston. He had joined the County Catholic Club and had spent several evenings there.

### HIGH SPIRITS

Miss Howson said last night "When I went to see George I had never seen him looking better. He was in high spirits. We had been chatting for half an hour about our plans for the future when I noticed a sudden change. Reverend Mother Ignatius, head of the hospital community, said "He was a simple kindly man, a very loveable character, and we all became very fond of him. He always had a cheerful word for us, he was just an unassuming Lancashire man. Since his heart attack at her home on February 22<sup>nd</sup>, Miss Howson had been his only visitor and telegrams of good wishes have poured into the hospital every day.

By strange coincidence, George's last few days had a link with his short schooldays for the sisters who taught him his catechism, when he was a boy at Billinge, Wigan, were of the same order who had nursed him at St Joseph's - The Sisters of Charity of Our Lady of Mercy.

## Funny Tale from Jack Sharp. 😊😊😊 👍👍👍 😊😊😊

As you are probably aware, Jack is a Professional Busker and a very talented uke player with a vast repertoire of songs. For many years he has stood many streets and market places with his small amplifier, his uke and his opened up case. People that know him will ask for requests and Jack always obliges.

A couple of weeks ago he was playing outside Keighley Market where they have a strict rule on pigeons. They ask the people not to feed them as it encourages them to foul the streets. As Jack was playing a few numbers this lady was throwing food down to the pigeons and Jack stopped his performance to give her a stern telling off over his loud speaker. "YOU MUST NOT FEED THE PIGEONS!" said Jack, and the lady fired back at him with a load of abuse. "I have been feeding these pigeons for six years and I've also put money in your box. But I won't put money in again," she said, and she walked away towards the market quite disgruntled.

Jack carried on and was playing away merrily when the same lady appeared again, but this time she was carrying a load of smelly banana skins and half rotted fish heads, which she dumped in Jack's case. Jack immediately grabbed one of the fish heads and chased after her. Unfortunately she shot through the market quick and Jack lost her in the crowd.

Jack told me that he can't get rid of the smell of the fish heads out of his case and he appears to be attracting all the cats in the area. The moral of this story is:- Don't neglect the pigeons. 😊😊😊 👍👍👍 😊😊😊 - or else . . .

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A Few **Anagrams** for you. No peeking at the answers on page 19.  
All are George's songs - so GET CRACKING.

- |                                  |                             |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Days thread house hants.      | 10. Drying moan a gnu       |
| 2. By ba                         | 11. Deodood                 |
| 3. Jan yobbo                     | 12. Can Shep roar more life |
| 4. A chair stated Dan more brown | 13. Nanny fight Alf         |
| 5. Love borne tie it             | 14. Fairy grid infan        |
| 6. Get bloor get bloom           | 15. Crack get gin           |
| 7. Bless Mella                   | 16. Hood man in             |
| 8. Nobody lend Exeter double     | 17. Shore croop             |
| 9. Crows gong ate tin hen        | 18. Rag shoe blue mud       |

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## Something else I Couldn't Believe!!!!

Kevin Blanchfield, of the Penyffordd Branch, is to peace and quiet what Cyril Smith is to Hang Gliding. He's a one-man football crowd! Well, I couldn't believe it when he got up on stage and sang "Silent Night."

**Nothing to do with George** but a local fish man told me a wonderful story. It was when he first started his business and was learning the trade.

On his fish round he had a very good customer. She was a huge lady - about 25 stone - who had a very loud voice and who would greet him by shouting from one end the avenue to the other. Jokingly he said, "every time she opened her mouth her face disappeared," - but her husband was a very quiet, henpecked and wimpish type who never spoke.

One day he was greeted by her husband who told him that he didn't want any fish because his wife had died. This, he thought, was sad because she bought an awful lot of fish from him and always bought the left over fish that nobody else wanted.

The following week he was met by the very excited husband. He was carrying his wife's ashes around and showing everybody what she looked like. As he walked to the back of the van, and removed the lid from the urn, the wind blew the top layer of the ashes into the back of the fish man's van and covered his fish. He was very annoyed with the little man and told him in no uncertain terms what he thought of him. He then went home to wash the ashes from his produce as he couldn't afford to waste the goods.

Back on his round again he was attending to a distinguished looking gentleman who served himself with a pot of prawns. Unfortunately this pot had escaped the washing and he asked what the spots of dust were on the top of the pot. He replied with, "Don't worry about that, they have been stored underneath the mackerel." The man went away quite satisfied. Sounds like a sketch from one of George's films.

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**Granada TV** - You'll be pleased to know that a programme on Formby Houses is being produced for the coming year. All the information has been supplied on Hillcrest, Warrington. The Berydenes at Blackpool and Singleton, Hindley House, Wroxham (George's holiday home), Malvern House, Lancaster Rd, Barton and Mere Corner. If possible we are trying to arrange the filming of a Formby group playing at one of the houses. More news later as it comes in. G R E A T.

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**In Warrington** we've had a considerable amount of publicity in the media recently and most of it has been connected with the Formby house (Hillcrest) which is for sale. We've had three lots of TV filming, two spots on radio, and several news reports in the newspapers. There is strong feeling that Hillcrest might be the ideal place to hold a permanent Formby exhibition and the reason for the publicity was to get the reaction from public. Up to now all appear to be in favour and we have had no objections to the idea. Will keep you up to date.



The Stage and Television Today May 27<sup>th</sup> 1963

## Tommy Rogers - Local boy making good

round the Merseyside clubs these days is 14 years old Tommy Rogers. Tommy, a smart operator on the uke, does not have to rely on Hit Parade material to wow his audiences. He seems to prefer the old time favourites and sings George Formby numbers and other evergreens too with all the verve of a teenager plus the confidence of a veteran. Liverpool born Tommy could well turn out to be yet another of the city's shining stars.



## I Bet You Didn't Know - I'll bet you thought that

Jimmy Clitheroe, who hails from the town of Clitheroe, actually took his name from his place of birth. Well, he didn't! In fact, his real name is Jimmy Clitheroe.

The Stage magazine writes: Jimmy gained a wealth of experience working with such stalwart comedians as Jimmy James, Al Read, George Formby and Frank Randle. He has appeared so many times in Blackpool that he has now decided to live in the resort. Like may stars he is besieged with requests for photos of himself. He enjoys sending them out, but also likes to keep his own gallery of fans, and always asks for a photo in return. A glance at his pin-up parade reveals that adults as well as children of all ages are among his loyal fans - 10,000 of them being members of his fan club.



G F S Members will know that Jimmy played alongside George in the film "Much Too Shy."

Blackpool Evening Gazette June 14<sup>th</sup> 1941

## Queen Mary's Guests - In order to give a Royal Command

to troops at a village hall, George Formby, with Beryl, dashed from Portsmouth yesterday. Queen Mary entertained George & Beryl to tea at her country home before the show which she had arranged, and later saw Formby's latest film, "Spare A Copper."

George told Queen Mary how he was hoping to raise £30,000 for relief in blitzed areas. After giving a subscription, she handed him a George 111 silver cream jug, a Georgian tea strainer, and a silver and agate needle case to auction for his fund.

**The Rise and Fall of Hilda Baker** - Many would say Hilda Baker was the funniest woman on the Blackpool stage in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century! This tiny and dynamic comedienne had been on the stage for 35 years before she hit the big-time in Blackpool summer shows. Her variety sketch with the tall, speechless Cynthia, and her catch phrase "She knows y' know," is one of the strongest memories from the days of variety.



Hilda Baker: As millions remember her with Jimmy Jewel in Granada TV's Nearest and Dearest

She had a dark side. This short, dumpy, unattractive star had an appetite for young men. Some theatre staff, and artists, were disgusted at her dressing room activities and showed it by avoiding her socially. Regarded in the business as neurotic and explosive, her personal unhappiness led, inevitably, to excessive drinking and she spent her later years being cared for by the Entertainment Artists Benevolent Fund.

Hilda Baker was born in Farnworth, near Bolton, in 1909, and was on the stage at the age of 10. In the 1920s she found a niche in revue, where a funny girl could shine. There was little acceptance of a woman as a stand up-comic in variety. She toured for years in second rate shows before breaking away, making her first Blackpool solo appearance at the Feldman's Theatre at Easter, 1933, getting a mention in the Gazette as "the entertaining Lancashire comedy lass." In Sept. 1937,

she appeared at the old Palace Theatre, Blackpool, for a week in which the Mills Brothers, a top American vocal act, were the stars. On the supporting bill with Hylda were the young Bernard Delfont and his Japanese girl dance partner, Toko.

With her own revue company, the Cynthia sketch was first seen in Blackpool at Feldman's in April 1940, in an all-woman show titled "Meet The Girls." So the Cynthia part, later played by a succession of men in drag, was first played by a girl.

In the declining years of variety, the Hilda Baker career gained a much-needed lift in a February 1953, with visit to the Queens Theatre. Hylda left town with a contract to appear with Max Bygraves in Jack Taylor's summer show at the Blackpool Hippodrome where she was in her element in comedy sketches.

Then James Brennan booked her for his 1955 Queens season show with Joan Regan and Ken Platt. A few weeks before it opened, Hilda made a big impact with her Cynthia sketch with BBC's-The Good Old Days. It seemed the entire population was parroting 'she knows you know', Hilda's catch phrase about the seemingly dumb Cynthia, and for the next four years the comedienne was in the money, including headline spots in three further Blackpool headline shows. She bought a house in Thornton Gate, Cleveleys, and furnished it with dreadful lack of taste. A flagpole flew a purple pennant and the doorbell chimed eight bars of come back to Sorrento.

But the constant exposure on TV and Radio brought a sudden end to life at the top. By 1959 the bookings had evaporated and she suffered a spell of Pneumonia. Ever the battler, Hylda sold up at Cleveleys and went looking for acting jobs. She was excellent as a seedy abortionist in the kitchen sink film drama, "Saturday Night and Sunday Morning," starring Albert Finney.

She was in several TV plays, including Nell Dunn's 'Up The Junction' and toured as the slaggy mother in the stage version of Shelagh Delaney's - "A Taste Of Honey," she was even in a couple of short lived west end musicals and had a character part in the film version of "Oliver." Hylda returned to Blackpool to star in a Grand Theatre summer season farce, "What A Joy Ride," in 1964, and as the pickle factory owner Nellie Pledge in the Granada sit-com "Nearest and Dearest" opposite Jimmy Jewel. A stage version broke records in the Grand Theatre in 1970. She was back the following year, but Jimmy Jewel refused another season in the company of a woman he couldn't stand. After a modest success in another TV sitcom "Not On Your Nellie," her career misted away and she died in care in 1986. It had been a long, hard haul for the sad little comedienne who's 55 year career wore the masks of 'comedy and tragedy' in equal measure. Actress Jean Fergusson (Marina in "Last of the Summer Wine"), has written and performed a "warts and all" tribute to Hylda Baker and did the Cynthia sketch unaccompanied, in the Grand Theatres

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Don't Forget The Newsletter - ☺☺☺☺ - Bah Gum

1950  
1960  
1970

Blackpool Evening Gazette August 31<sup>st</sup> 1940

# Laughed While In Pain

Arthur Askey in Stage Drama

## Beaten By Illness at Last : George Formby Fills Gap

There will be a new name in capital letters on the bills announcing the last six days of "The Show of 1940" outside the Blackpool Opera House next week. Where Arthur Askey has been, will be "George Formby."

Behind this shuffle in the star cast is the story of a comedian who for weeks has been defying illness, and of another comedian who has come to the rescue of the theatre he loves.

The audiences at the Opera House have never suspected it, but for a month and longer Arthur Askey, the comic of "Band Wagon" fame has been a sick man. A doctor was consulted. Treatment was prescribed, and he was told that a rest was essential. He refused to take a rest. Slowly the illness has reduced his strength, every day assuming greater severity.

"It's not serious" he said to an Evening Gazette reporter. There's only another week and a half to go before the season ends, then I can have a rest - and a rest, so the doctor says, will cure me. I can go on for these last few days.

### DOCTOR'S ULTIMATUM

Yesterday he should have been present at the launch of the Blackpool Lifeboat. For the first time since he came to these parts he had to break an engagement. A few hours later the doctor delivered his ultimatum, "Unless you leave the show tomorrow night" he said "It's probable the you'll collapse - and then it will be serious.

So in the end Arthur Askey had to admit defeat, although it is certain that he will be in action again, and as fit as ever in two or three weeks. That left the Opera House management facing a major problem for the last week of the summer show. They had to find a star of the first magnitude at 48 hours notice. They telephoned an address in Little Singleton, "Beryldene," where George and Beryl live. They outlined their dilemma to George. "Could you do anything about it?"

### GEORGE SAYS "YES"

George's answer was, "I'll do anything I can." In less than a couple of minutes he had to play in the show for its final week. The consequence of this promise will be a non-stop week for him without parallel in his career. "My word" he said "but I'll not have a minute left over. I'd reserved next week for several charity engagements. I can't let these people down. And I'm dashed if I'll let the Opera House down either for I've great affection for that theatre and all the folk managing it. So what? So this is what'll happen."

### NO SPARE TIME - This Will Be a Dickens Of a Week!

I'm at Llandudno tomorrow night, I should have gone today, instead I will have to remain at home and prepare material for the Opera House. I'll have to go tomorrow and come back by road during the night, for they'll be rehearsing at the Opera House on Monday.

Now on Tuesday I'm opening a mile of pennies at Cleveleys. Wednesday - that'll be a dickens of a day, for I've promised to appear as Henry Hall's guest star at the Palace, and that'll mean that I shall have a matinee in the Opera House in the afternoon, a couple of shows there at night and a couple of appearances at the Palace in between."

#### NEW FILM

"On Thursday I've to go to Manchester for a consultation about my new film. On Friday I'm out of town nearly all day for two concerts in Munitions Factories. And on Saturday I shall be at another Munitions Factory for another couple of shows, and one of them, a lunch time concert between 12-30 and 1-00, is to be broadcast."

That will end the week but George will still be engaged nearly every minute. "I'm a Home Guard now," he said, "I can't forsake them, I'll be out on patrol or observation, on Sunday."

#### THE CHANGE OVER

Today, in the Opera House offices, they are designing new bills for the last week of "The Show of 1940." Mr Clement Butson, joint entertainment's manager of the Tower and Wintergardens put it in a sentence. Big Hearted Arthur has had to go out," he said, "But Big Hearted George has come in."

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**Dave & Janet Hawkins** write - 😊😊👍👍👍😊😊

Dear Stan, Re. the article in the last issue on the demand for a model on Stan Laurel - sorry, Mr George Formby.

We do agree it would be great to have a life size model of George however if the branches were not able to afford £400 for this, then settle for the 36" high model. It would be great to be welcomed, not only by the members who actually organise the branch meetings, but by George himself leaning against his lamp post. This would be an extra special welcome for all the members that attend the meetings.

*Thank you both. Very nice to hear from you in Milton Keynes. We will have to get down to ordering a small model to see what the quality is like. How is poor old Cliff Richard (Janet is his keenest fan) going on? Is he singing Granddad's Flannelette Nightshirt yet - Or Auntie Maggie's Remedy? He'll never make the big-time if he doesn't get some decent songs. Why don't you have a word with him? Best Wishes.*

## The Sun is Shining on Liverpool!!!

The Liverpool Branch is certainly starting to take off. The last two meetings have been extra special with loads of enthusiasm from the members. Some younger members have expressed a wish to add some professionalism into the meetings and to create a first class entertainment group that can be called on to put on a good show. For this we are now launching fund raisers to buy P. A. Equipment for the Branch.

The Liverpool venue is very easy to find as it lies 2 minutes distance from the M62, Knotty Ash slip road. Look forward to seeing you there.

**Some of you will have met**

**Jim Gough** - he attended the

Warrington meetings with our Ethel Guest, who sang as Gracie Fields. Some of the members also came to his 90 (surprise) Birthday Party at the Alliance club last April. I can still remember the shocked look on Jim's face as he entered the room and all his friends were waiting to greet him.



Well we are sad to report that dear Jim has died. He went into hospital to have new knee caps fitted and the operation was successful. Unfortunately, after the operation he caught pneumonia and never recovered.

Jim has had a full life. As a young boy he preferred to chop firewood in his shed rather than play out with the boys. They poked fun at this but he had the last laugh when he built up his small wood chopping business and bought a large van to deliver all sorts of household needs around the houses. He also remembers chauffeuring Ken Dodd across Warrington from one club to another. At the age of 90 he still drove his car and was always willing to help anyone who needed it.

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**I Don't Believe It!!!!**

- Harry Stanford - the man who doesn't know what time is when he is on stage - actually won an Egg Timer in the Crewe Raffle. The audience laughed and Harry with lightening repartee quipped

"O.K. The Yolks on me folks! 😊😊😊 👍👍👍 😊😊😊"

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**George Formby - A Gesture We'll Never Forget!**

My father played in the orchestra at the old Palace Theatre in Blackpool, where George often appeared.

George had announced his intention of going to the Far East to entertain the troops and Dad mentioned that his son, my brother, was stationed in Bombay.

George said that my brother must contact him and we thought no more about this until we received a letter from my brother some months later. He'd introduced himself to George and he and his wife, Beryl, invited him to have Christmas dinner with them and attend a small party. It's a gesture my brother has never forgotten and did so much to make a young soldier feel less cut off from friends and family at home. J Norman, Blackpool (sent in by John Guy)

# They're a Tough Lot at Crewe!!!! 15

It takes a lot to stop a George Formby meeting taking place. Not even the bombing of Warrington some years back made one iota of difference to the attendance there, but when I had received 26 apologies for absence due to heavy snow before lunchtime on the day of our Second Anniversary Meeting I began to get a little concerned! Well, as the forty eight who managed to get here know 'IT TURNED OUT NICE AGAIN DIDN'T IT?' The dauntless Smith family yet again battled through, even after being warned of the atrocious conditions in the Potteries. Tom Meredith (Al Jolson) our special guest, determined not to let us down, travelled in very difficult conditions from Birkenhead - a splendid effort, and of course such a splendid performance! A special thanks from us all Tommy. After all the trauma it was a great night. The new stage slash curtains, made possible by the ingenuity and enthusiasm of Colin Wood, looked great and they will really brighten up our future concerts. It has to be said that the success of this society over the past twelve months is entirely due to great all round team work. Thanks has to be given to our Auditor and Master of Ceremonies Jonathan Baddeley who has done a super job for us throughout the year; to Colin Wood who has looked after and indeed improved our sound system; to Derek Ball for the artwork he has produced for us; to Steve Hassall for going out and buying a drum kit for exclusive use at our meetings - wonderful; to Des Redfern for the loan of equipment and for being our Video Man; to Pete Healey and Tom Peddie for collecting the subs and selling the draw tickets; and to Tom for his endless generosity to the society; to Alan Chenery for the loan of equipment; to Mrs Hazel Stamps for making the society Banner; to Stan Evans for producing this excellent magazine each month and for donating no less than £61 to us in sales commission during the year; to all those who entertain us, particularly those who travel long distances, and not forgetting all our non-playing members who are so important to us; and last but not by any means least, to Connie Edge, Barbara Ball, Jenny Smith,, Pamela Baddeley and Christine Wood for all their hard work providing us with refreshments each month and for washing up afterwards - wonderful! I am sure you will all agree that we have a great team here at Crewe!

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I'll Bet You've Forgotten the "Sweetlernt" 😊😊😊😊

Blackpool Evening Gazette April 4<sup>th</sup> 1942

**Ukulele Going To Sea** - Somewhere on the high seas a young man who before the war stood in a commissionaire's uniform, outside the Wintergarden's, at Blackpool, will soon be playing a ukulele sent to him by George Formby.

As reported in the Evening Gazette, on Saturday, George and Beryl presented three ukuleles to the Red Cross and St John in an interlude in the production of the new film "Much Too Shy," at Elstree.

One of the ukuleles is to be sent to a prison camp in Italy, another to a camp in Germany, and the third to a sailor who was once a Blackpool commissionaire.

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Blackpool Evening Gazette January 3<sup>rd</sup> 1941

**In George Formby's** dressing room at the Blackpool Opera House are a pair of brown boots. Nobody would call them elegant. They are worn and patched. They have been soled and heeled so often that they almost rank as the Boot Repairer's despair. Yet if George lost them he would be desolate. "How it began I can't remember" he said when I met him yesterday afternoon, and, noticing these boots, expressed the opinion that they might have been good boots once, but that, their best days were past.

"No" said George, "It's a long time ago that I came into possession of these boots. These were the last pair that my father ever wore on a stage. When he died I took them as a sort of legacy from him and the first time I played in a pantomime I wore them. Ever since they have been his pantomime mascot.

#### PROUD TO WEAR THEM.

"The first pantomime was a success," he recalled. "I took it as a sort of omen and I'll never appear in a pantomime without these olds boots of Dad's." And he never has, either - always he has worn them in the first scene every night - from his days of his apprenticeship, to the footlights, to these present days when his name is in capital letters on the bills.

In the first scene, in "Dick Whittington" in Blackpool, he walks on in them and not until the curtain has fallen on the act will he take them off. They were canvas once upon a time. He has had them encased in leather to preserve them. And he will never be parted from them. "A little superstition?" he reflects, "Probably it is - and yet, come to think of it, it was a grand man who wore 'em first, and I ought to be proud to be wearing 'em after him.

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Don't Forget The Newsletter - ☺☺☺☺ - Or Else . .



Here's a **Good little Party Piece** for someone to learn and perform . . . . . It goes down very well at any gathering but you must learn to slur your words and perform like a drunkard. John Myerscough performed it years ago and he always got a good round of applause. The article was sent in by John Guy.



## CLEARING OUT THE VICAR'S CELLAR

As I was clearing out the vicar's cellar I found twelve bottles of whisky. I asked him where I should put them and he told me to pour every drop of the demon stuff down the sink. I said I would do this and proceeded with the unpleasant task.

I took the cork out of the first bottle and poured the contents down the sink, with the exception of one glass which I drank.

I extracted the cork from the second bottle and did likewise with the exception of one glass which I also drank.

I then withdrew the cork from the third bottle and emptied the good old booze down the sink except one glass which I drank.

I pulled the cork from the fourth bottle and poured the contents down the glass which I drank.

I pulled the cork from the next bottle and drank one glass of it and poured the rest down the glass.

I pulled the glass out of the next glass and poured the cork down the bottle.

I then pulled the next cork out of the glass and poured the glass down the cork and drank the glass

Then I corked the glass out of the glass, bottled the drink and drank the pour.

When I emptied everything - everything - all of it, I steadied the house with one hand and counted the bottles and corks, and glasses with the other, which were 29.

To be sure, I counted again, when they came by and I had seventy-four. As the house came by I counted them again and finally I had all the houses and corks and glasses and corks counted except one house and one bottle, which I drank

*Have you any Party Pieces worth publishing? Let's have em.*

**Now here's something for the budding uke/banjo maker.** As you are aware Abbott's made the best British uke/banjo ever to be sold and George had great respect for those that he owned. Some years ago Jack Abbott, son of the Abbott family, retired from manufacturing them and sold all his equipment to John Guy. Since then John has produced a number of models and sold them to various members of the GFS.



Well John has now decided to hang up his tools and wishes to sell out to anyone who fancies taking up the job of making uke/banjoes. Anyone interested can ring John on 0121 515 3894.

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A Snippet from the book **“Memories of Hindley”**

**GEORGE FORMBY . . .** My mother went to St Benedict's School at the same time as George Formby Junior. She described him as “the daftest kid she'd ever met.” My grandfather at the time, was a farmer at Halls Lane Farm, Hindley Green and he had a brush with George Formby Senior, who was an entertainer, but not as well known as his son was to become. GF Sen. had a valuable horse and he asked my father if he would stable and look after it, while he was on tour in America (a theatrical tour I believe). He was away far longer than anticipated and my grandfather had no idea where he was. He hadn't even sent the cheques that he promised for the horse's maintenance.

Alas the horse became ill and my grandfather sent for the vet. The vet said the horse had some incurable disease and would have to be put down. My grandfather didn't like the idea of putting the horse down without the owner's consent, so he sent frantic letters to various parts of America trying to trace him. He got no reply, the horse got worse and the vet said that it would have to be put down to save further suffering. My grandfather had no alternative but to agree and the horse was put down.

When George Snr. eventually returned he was furious and threatened to take my grandfather to court. However, the vet told him that the horse had been perfectly well looked after, along with my grandfather's horses and that it was nobody's fault that the horse had fallen prey to illness. That was the end of the dealings with George Formby. Incidentally, he did pay his debts and the vet's fee.

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**Jeffrey Formby Booth** rang to report that George's sister, Louisa, now 90, is nearing the end of her days. The doctors have decided not to continue with any treatment. Another sister, Ella, in America, had a stroke and it was thought that she was passing over. However she rallied and is now much better.

**From Dennis Lee** - Further to our aim to create an entertainment group, in the N. West, Dennis has submitted another song for all to learn.

**We'll Meet Again** - Uke Tuned in "D"

We'll meet again don't know where don't know when. But I know we'll meet again  
 some sunny day. Keep smiling through just like you always do, till the blues skies  
 drive the dark clouds far away. And won't you please say hello to the folks that I  
 know, tell them I won't be long. They'll be happy to know that when you saw me  
 go I was singing this song. We'll meet again don't know where don't know when,  
 but I know we'll meet again some sunny day

NOTE - Once through and then SOLO from to , then resume singing to the end

**APOLOGY** for an error in the last issue:- As you can see above, "We'll Meet Again" is in the Key of "G" not "D," and "Little Ukulele" is played with the uke tuned to "D" not "C" as given. *Thank you Dennis. It is essential that we iron out all these problems before the next TV show.. Here is the corrected list -*

"D" Tuning - Chinese Laundry Blues - We'll Meet Again, first chord G

"D" " I Remember George - Little Ukulele, first chord D

"C" " Cleaning Windows - Blackpool Rock, first chord C

"C" " Lamp Post - Bless 'em All, first chord C

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|---------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 18. Home guard blues      | 8. Blue eyed blonde next door    |
| 17. Horroscope            | 7. Bless em all                  |
| 16. Hindoo Man            | 6. Bell Bottom George            |
| 15. Get Cracking          | 5. Believe it or not             |
| 14. Frigid air Fanny      | 4. Barmaid at the Rose and Crown |
| 13. Fanlight Fanny        | 3. Banjo Boy                     |
| 12. Emperor of Lancashire | 2. Baby                          |
| 11. Do de o do            | 1. As the hours and the days     |
- ANSWERS TO ANAGRAMS -

## **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  
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**Blackpool Branch** - Wainwright Club, Hornby Rd, B/pool - Every 1st  
Sat. in the month - Tel Eve Stewart, 01253 768097 - Future Dates:- Jan 4<sup>th</sup>,  
Feb 1<sup>st</sup>, Mar 8<sup>th</sup>, Apr 5<sup>th</sup>, May 3<sup>rd</sup>, Jun 7<sup>th</sup>, Jul 5<sup>th</sup>, Aug 2<sup>nd</sup>, Sep 6<sup>th</sup>, Sept 27,  
(NO MEETING IN OCTOBER) Adm £1 with Buffet. All are made welcome  
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**Liverpool Branch** - Broadgreen Conservative Club - Every Second  
Friday in the month. Ring Tom Bailey on 0151 228 9769 Adm 50p  
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**Sale Branch** - (NEW VENUE) Brooklands Sports Club, George's Rd, off  
Marsland Rd, Sale. Every 3rd Friday, Ken Ratcliffe 0161 430 8290 Adm 50p  
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**Crewe Branch** - Wistaston Memorial Hall - Brian Edge on 01270 69836.  
Future Dates:- Jan 28<sup>th</sup>, Feb 27<sup>th</sup>, Mar 27<sup>th</sup>, Apr 25<sup>th</sup> Adm 50p  
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**Warrington Branch** - Alliance Sports & Social Club Evans House,  
Orford Lane, Warrington. - Stan Evans 01925 727102 Special Meetings Only.  
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For 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.

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**Deadline for next issue - 15th December**

So as George would say -

**“GET CRACKING”**

**ReTtElSwEn RuOy TrOpPuS**

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**A little song entitled:- Don't go down the coal mine daddy  
There's plenty of slack in your pants**

