

THE NORTH - WEST

GEORGE FORMBY

Newsletter 20

Vol. 2, No.8
Feb 1997



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

Welcome to Newsletter No. 20 and

A Happy New Year to all. What sort of a Christmas did you have? Over the past months I've been helping the Over 60s Ladies Social Club by calling out their bingo numbers each Thursday afternoon. On Christmas Eve the Secretary presented me with a box about 12" x 4" x 4" and I naturally assumed it was a bottle of whisky - or something similar. I told her that I would open it at midnight, when the rest of the house had retired, and give a toast to the club.

Midnight came, I prepared a few sandwiches and slipped my favourite video tape - Ken Dodd - into the machine. Opened the box, hoping to give a toast to the club, only to find that the contents were a set of glasses. Stan Evans.

Anyway - What have got this month?

Well, as promised, we've got more news on the Hollywood film chiefs in Blackpool, A profile on Martin Fowell, a report on George teaching Ray Allen (Ventriloquist) to play the uke, news from Bob Drinkwater, and of a new Ukulele Meeting opening up in Stoke. You'll find it better than watching TV. So Read On . . .

Just Been Speaking to **Len Philips** - Poor Len's still in the wars with his injury. You will remember that, to deter burglars, he set a few traps at the back of his house. Unfortunately he fell in one of his own traps and landed on his arm. He is still suffering from pain but he is exercising as often as possible in the hope that he can get back to playing his uke.

John Broadhead looked extremely well at the December Sale meeting. For many months he has looked terribly thin and drawn, which we feared was possibly illness. However he is now filling out and looking great.

I asked him his secret and he told me that he went on a crash diet of salads: Lettuce, Tomatoes, Cucumber etc. and the fat fell off him. He is now starting to eat normal foods and it is helping him to fill out. Good for you John. 😊😊😊👍👍👍

"What do you want for breakfast" said the waiter - picking his nose.
"A hard boiled egg and a banana, 'cos you can't stick your fingers in those."

My Auntie Maggie, by mistake. Put senna pods in her currant cake
The only advice that we could make, was **"Skip to the loo my darling."**

Ode To Kevin Blanchfield by Helen Steiner Rice

A George Formby member in Wales, was quietly reciting some tales
The forecast that day, said "Storms on the way, followed by thunderous gales."

The Formby Story - Part 10 - by Stan Evans.

Still on George Formby Senior

George, a hero of the music hall, was determined to make a fortune before his life ran out. All his theatrical years he had worked hard at making a successful career for himself, and the axe could fall at any time.

For years he knew that he was sinking steadily and that the next theatre performance might be his last. Eliza stuck by his side to either protect or encourage him.

There was no doubt that George made use of his ailment in his machinery of fun. And because of his continuous attempts to hide the imminent tragedy, by humorous suggestions, he won the admiration of all who heard him. His popular saying "I'm coughing well tonight" was copied throughout the country.



He was honoured with a Command Performance before the King & Queen at Knowsley, when Lord Derby entertained their majesties in 1913. After the performance the stars of the show gathered at the North Western Hotel, Liverpool but there was one star missing. George was in bed. Eliza saw to that.

George owned racehorses, invested in cinemas and enjoyed supporting the Warrington rugby team at the Wilderspool ground, which is a reasonable walk from his home. He was ever willing to support good causes and during his life time, he and Eliza made many thousands of pounds for various charities.

George was sued in court for breaking a theatre contract worth £175 per week. His council's answer was that he was dying from consumption and had accepted a much better contract in order to make the best use of his time left to him for the benefit of his family. Although George had captured the hearts of the whole country, Lancashire loved him above all other stars. He was their favourite and his sayings: "I'll have to go home fer me rubbing bottle" and "Ah'll cough thi fer a shillin" was remembered many years later. Continued next month.

Any information you have on GF Senior will be gratefully appreciated

Derek Ball . . . Heard at the December (Crewe) Meeting.

When Stan plays his uke he's quite lyrical
 He plays songs that are serious and sillycal
 But when he does tricks, with cards, ropes and sticks
 Then we all shout "Good Evans, it's a miracle."

Thank you Derek, but I must remind you that since we've gone on the Internet we've updated the patter to "Bah Gum, it's a miracle." But we'll carry on!!!

A fellow named Brian from Crewe, said "I know just what I will do
 I'll play my uke sideways, in streets, roads and byways,
 Bah Gum, that'll cause a to-do!" Bum Bum.



Keep Smiling

WE'LL GET OUR OWN BACK!

A poet named young Derek Ball
 Was reciting his verse in a hall
 The audience of four, made a dash for the door
 Now no-one can hear him at all. Bum Bum

Brian Edge adds . . . A snippet from Bill Pertwee's excellent book "Stars In Battledress," concerning Eric Howe.

"Eric, known as the George Formby of Lamsdorf, was captured outside Brussels in 1940 and became an inmate of Stalag V111B. He certainly made his mark in the camp with his ukulele and such was his repertoire of Formby songs even the German guards called him "George!" Well done Eric wherever you may be.

UKE ARN'T BELIEVE IT

Des Redfern's video camera has recently developed a fault which baffled the repairers. After much head scratching the engineer telephoned Des and asked him whether he had had the camera anywhere near the sound of the mandolin or the ukulele? When Des confirmed that he had, the caller replied "well that's solved that - it'll cost £90 plus vat!" They are lethal things these ukuleles.

Now I just can't accept that Brian, but I did notice that Des was cameratising Harry playing his five string banjo. Now that could have caused it! We'll carry on . .

The Crewe Branch has purchased a new cassette player complete with a speed control and Colin Wood tried it out for the first time at the December meeting. . . . We are now able to get our backing tapes spot on with the uke. Everyone is therefore requested to tune up their ukes before the meeting preferably with a electronic tuner. (or someone will let you use theirs). We should be 'all systems go.'

Will the culprit who swiped my vegetarian nosh up - which had posters plastered all over it - please own up. If you can't trust a George Formby fan who can you trust?

And thank you for the article on Eric Howe. Eric wrote to me way back in 1991 so I've included it in this issue for you. Also his address if you wish to contact him. I found him to be a very active man with loads of energy for writing letters.

Continued - From Eric Howe ex. P O W. see above.

I was a prisoner of war for 5 years and better known at that time as George Formby by most of the 38,000 POWs. This was because I wrote sheet music and created sketches. One of my songs was to the tune of Cleaning Windows and it went like this.

Now I was taken prisoner, about 40 years ago
They bungled us all in Stalag, amid the ice and snow

Now it's a place that don't suit me, back home in Blighty I'd rather be
Supping red hot cups of tea, which we don't get in Stalag

The cleaning party swept the floor, they scoffed the spuds and soup galore
Then came back and asked for more, Those gannets out in Stalag.

And so it goes on for about 20 verses. It's nice to become a member of the GFS (new member) and to know that George played a part in helping the lads to keep their sanity and humour.

The National Association of Ex-Prisoners of War (Notts Branch) is anxious to contact any British servicemen taken prisoner during the war. Especially the European area including Italy and Norway. Also the work parties of E711 - Aischwitz Camp (Compensation appeal) who are wanted for a TV documentary 1991 - 92. Only 15 have been found alive.

The President Ex-POW Association, Mr Eric Howe, 39 Read Ave, Beeston, Notts.
So there you have it Brian. Eric is doing a wonderful job.

Harry and Lottie . . .

Eva and I called to see them on Christmas Eve and we were knocking on the door for a few minutes before Harry answered. He had a duster in his hand and explained that he was doing the household chores - likely story. Lottie enjoys feeding the birds and has thousands of them paying her a visit. Before leaving, Harry gave us a few jokes and a couple of renditions on his Banjo. He played "Silent Night" and the birds were chirping away merrily.

Don't Forget The Newsletter - or else . .

From Bromley Whitaker

Dear Stan, I made a chance remark at Blackpool and you kindly asked me to send the story in as it may be of interest to the N.West members.

I was brought up in Blackpool and 11 years of age at the outbreak of the war. I also have a clear memory of George Formby and his interest in boxing. In the winter months, (Friday nights I think) we had many boxing nights at the Tower Circus, between 1937 and 1944. I hardly missed one. Standard was very high, without getting to the National Championships, but we saw many fine boxers on their way up, or down, in their careers.

Considering that George was a nationally famous star, it was amazing how many times he honoured us with his presence in the ringside seats. These were the posh seats, which cost £5 - my dad and I paid 2 shillings (10 pence). As a little lad who saw George on films, and on the stage, starring in the summer shows, it had a great impact on me. But we got used to seeing him there, almost like a friend. He enjoyed the fights.

During the war the town was filled with the R.A.F men doing some form of training. They all cheered him when he came into the hall. On the big nights, or Xmas, the MC would ask George to step into the ring and take a bow. This he did, and I remember on several occasions him giving us a turn. Some of the words I didn't understand and others I had to pretend to my dad that I didn't understand them. I also remember him singing words to "Bless em All" which I am sure never appeared in print. George must have learnt these when he entertained the troops abroad.

Hoping this is OK for the Newsletter Stan. I have other memories of pre-war Blackpool as I lived in a boarding house very near to Hornby Rd.

Thank you Bromley for the article. By all means let us have your articles. Anything on George and Blackpool is always very welcome. George was a keen fight fan. He was known for slipping a fiver to the odd 'up and comer' who put on a good show.

Just Received a Phone Call from Albert Longmore.

In his teenage years Albert, who lives here in Warrington, was a pal of George's and he went to the Harrison's Little Theatre to see George in his first show - 1921. He told us that George, who tried to take over his father's act, was a complete flop and everybody said, "Not as good as his father." He also told us that some of George's pals were thrown out for ridiculing him.

Albert, who will be 96 on March 6th, told me that he is looking forward to reaching 100 years of age but he has notified Buckingham Palace not to send a letter from the Queen - send the money instead. *Good for you Albert. We hope you receive both.*

Blackpool Meeting - January 4th

It almost turned out a failure - The weather and the roads were very icy and we were lucky that anyone turned up at all. However about 25 braved the freeze up and we had a grand, but quiet, night.

Unfortunately, Alan Middleton, our compare, was suffering with a heavy cold, Charles Stewart struggled on with something similar and Jim was missing the other half of his act - Jack - who must have been getting over the Christmas festivities.

Most of the regulars were missing. Harry & Lottie couldn't make it - he was probably rehearsing and digging out another load of old jokes for the next meeting.

Only five artists were available, however we had some fun and, as usual, a grand feast was served up by the ladies.

Charles was concerned that he had only brought a skeleton PA System instead of lugging the full set of heavy equipment. There was no need to worry, the small amplifier was perfect for the job and there were times when we had to turn the volume down.

It really is a great night!!! Where else can anyone get a full night's entertainment, a feast fit for a king, and a wonderful welcome at the door. All for £1. Stan Evans

Must Get Prepared . . . Just imagine turning up at a

George Formby meeting and you are the only artist there. It's enough to make you sweat buckets!!! It's possible! Especially during these frosty cold winter nights.

Well, we must prepare ourselves with enough material to do the full night if necessary. It's a good training ground, especially for the young members, who possibly would like to make a living out of entertaining.

Here's a few tips:- (1) Don't crash on with one song after another otherwise you will blow a gasket and tire yourself out. (2) Start with a casual talk to the audience and joke about the fact that you are the only artist to have turned up. (3) Have a few jokes ready to tell. If you are hopeless at telling jokes then tell the audience just how bad you are. If they don't laugh at the joke then they'll laugh at the way you tell 'em. Remember, George's father was an expert at getting the crowds laughing at his own disability - ill health. (4) After about 5 minutes of casual chatter, sing your first song. (5) Save your voice as much as possible with sing - alongs and the audience joining in. Like a good Boy Scout, Be Prepared.

DON'T FORGET THE NEWSLETTER

Blackpool - In the last issue it was reported that American film producers were casting their eyes over Blackpool with a view to promoting Lancashire humour. Charles Stewart, our Blackpool reporter, has come up with a report from the Gazette. . . .

November 26th 1996

Hollywood Hits the Resort

Movies Top Men Look At Coast

Four top Hollywood producers were focusing on Blackpool today in a tour of the N. West. The film chiefs were taking in Blackpool Tower and its famous ballroom as part of their tour, which also included a helicopter ride down the coast and an old-time ride on the East Lancs Railway.

The Lancashire Film and Television Office has helped sponsor the trip, which is showing the American film industry the kind of locations on offer. The Blackpool tourism department estimates more than 250 separate TV and film productions have been made in the resort. They will eventually be seen by around 750 million viewers representing massive free advertising for the town.

Tourism spokesman, Mike Chadwick said: "We are a successful location for filming. The town works very well for film and TV with everyone playing a part to make crews welcome." Last month, Blackpool was invaded by Bollywood - India's answer to Hollywood. Next year Blackpool is the centre of a major new British film production with filming due to start on a venture in May. David Nelson, head of the Lancashire Film and Television Office, said "We are delighted to have the opportunity to show these producers the wonderful and classic locations in Lancashire. We have the busiest production centre outside London. It is very important to demonstrate to them what we have to offer and convince its representatives that film production is easier here and more economical than the capital.

GEORGE FORMBY

George played a big part in Blackpool so it is very important that we get our act together, work hard on George's songs and polish up our performance. There is no doubt that, if Hollywood is interested in Blackpool, they will certainly be interested in George's supporters.

It was reported that George turned up on a tribute to Thora Hird which was a TV showing of an old "This Is Your Life" programme, with Eamonn Andrews. George was brought on and introduced as the star who gave Thora her first step up the ladder. Perhaps she was cleaning windows as well.



What a wonderful town **Blackpool** is!!! The place is buzzing with entertainment and you don't have to go far to find it. I remember as a child staying in Albert Road in a boarding house with my mother and father. In those days the usual holiday was one week. They were called Wakes weeks, when each of the Lancashire towns would take their turn in closing the factories down and spending a week in their favourite resort. Warrington's was always at the end of July and in those days we had no charter flights abroad.

We had no TV in those days and everyone socialised with each other. At night we would all sit on the front door step and talk to the passers by as they walked past. All was very friendly.

One night, I remember it well, It was a light night and Albert Road was busy with people coming back from their night out. We talked to many people as they passed by. Suddenly, from no-where, a drunk came walking down the street. He was almost leg-less as he struggled to stick to the pavement. He bumped into the lamp post and slithered down it to the ground. He got up and had another go at the lamp post. The crowds were beginning to laugh because he was determined that the lamp post shouldn't be there and he was trying to push it out of his way. He would stagger away from the lamp post and then decide to go back and have another go at it. This went on for some twenty minutes and the crowds, although in stitches laughing at his antics, were undecided on whether to help him to his lodgings or bring the police. He was, however, very good entertainment and the crowds didn't want to spoil the fun.

Finally, after a bout of throwing himself at the lamp post, talking to it and telling it to shift out of the way, he raised himself up, turned to his audience, and gave a professional bow. Much to the relief of the crowd the man was completely sober but just wanted to put on a show for his audience. That is Blackpool!! Stan Evans

Richard Whiteley- presenter of "Countdown" on TV, opened the show by mentioning that a previous contestant had won when he got a 7 letter word "Banjocd." He went on to say that he was on good "Form - by."

While we were keeping the flag flying at the Blackpool Monthly Meeting did anyone see "It'll Be All Right on the Night" on ITV (Sat , Jan 4th). Fred MacMurrey - remember him, one of our old great stars, was playing a wooden ukulele, to Bob Hope, and singing "I'll See You In My Dreams." Usually these actors mime to the playing of an instrument but I'm pleased to report that Fred, an old favourite, was actually playing all the right chords. Stan Evans.

Have You FORGOTTEN What????

George taught Ray Allan to play ☺☺☺ 👍👍👍

Ray A
Lord

VENTRILOQUIST Ray Allen gave me a wry smile and said: "I'm dead". It was his way of replying to those people who think he has gone out of show business as they have not seen him on television for some time.

We were speaking in his dressing room at the North Wales Theatre, Llandudno, where he is appearing in the Palace of Varieties show throughout the summer.

He was critical of television bosses for not putting on variety shows. He said: "The powers that be at the BBC and ITV don't like variety."

"I've appeared on the Des O'Connor show several times but I can't keep doing that. What people want and what they get has nothing to do with it. The people in power give us what they want. There are very few theatres today and no clubs where variety can be seen.

"I wouldn't go into show business if I were young today. It was precarious when I came in, but then we had variety theatre, radio, TV and cabaret. Even the London Palladium does not put on variety any more."

I asked him if there were any young ventriloquists about these days. "There's a very good one who will be seen this month in a television show called *The Big Big Talent Show* which will run for nine weeks. He said he learned ventriloquism by reading my book on it.

"Assuming that everyone thinks he's wonderful, when will they see him again on TV? Today the bosses are obsessed with soaps and quiz shows."

*'I wouldn't
go into show
business
if I were
young today'*



"The audiences are surprised when I burst into song and play my banjo uke. At 14, I saved money from my paper-round and bought a uke. The great George Formby was appearing at the local theatre and on the first night I saw him and asked him to autograph my uke. I also showed him my tutor book and he said 'Eee lad, that's no good'. He then invited me to see him between shows and taught me how to play."

Crewe's December meeting was a very colourful affair with a number of members turning up in costume. Father Christmas was great and Mummy Christmas was even better!

As all of our North Wales friends and those from the Potteries were unable to get to last months party due to heavy snow it was decided to continue the party spirit at the December meeting. The buffet supper was provided by a number of our lady members to whom our sincere thanks must go. Sixty -five turned up for the event and everything went well apart from the strange disappearance of Stan Evans' supper which almost caused chaos! We never solved the mystery. Could it have been another of Stan's miracles?

The North West Newsletter grows in popularity and 44 copies were sold at the meeting. The thanks of the branch go to all who buy copies as the sales commission we get from Stan helps to offset the rent. Apart from that it is a jolly good read for 50p. Stan has now produced 20 editions and we thank him for all the work he has done in producing this grand little magazine which gives plenty of stories about George and loads of Branch News. Dont forget to send Stan any snippets you find which you think may to of interest to readers.

Was'n't it was nice to see Eva Evans at Crewe? Just twelve months ago she was so ill so its great to see her looking so well again.

What a varied programme we had. Derek Ball again excelled with his monologue "Christmas Day in the Cookhouse" and Derrick Jones (his first time on stage) performed a super mime which had everyone rolling in the aisles. His deadpan expression and perfect timing had many wondering whether he really was miming at all! I personally wouldn't like to bet on it! It was great to welcome Dean Spencer and his Dad all the way from Leicester. Dean is a polished performer and it was great to have him with us and indeed we would be delighted to see him again anytime. Joyce West, a Jazz Singer, accompanied by Jonathan on the piano added an unique touch to the proceedings. Dave Peerless also trod the boards for the first time at Crewe and Denis Lee gave a super rendering of "You Can't Love Two Girls at the Same Time". On that matter it is understood that Kevin is going to have a quiet word (if such is possible) with Denis in order to explain certain techniques unknown to those of Denis's generation!

Albert Seaborn Writes

A Huge Explosion at Ashton -u-Lyne - 16th June 1917.

A massive explosion occurred when a fire started in a munitions factory in a thickly populated part of the town. The damage caused was widespread, over 40 people lost their lives and over 100 were seriously injured.

The factory produced a high explosive T.N.T. and two nearby gasometers were burnt out. For miles around the blast was heard. Windows were shattered in many houses and mills in adjoining towns. Two of my uncles, arriving in town, on leave from the trenches in France, thought that a German Zeppelin had caused the damage.

GEORGE FORMBY (senior)

At the Theatre Royal in Ashton Road, George Formby, who was born in Ashton, appeared in a special matinee performance, the proceeds of which were to be given to the bereaved families. The Theatre Royal (long since demolished) stood almost apposite the Empire Theatre where 17 years later I saw the pantomime "Babes In The Wood" starring, of course, George Formby junior and his wife, Beryl.

The Empire Theatre still stands but is re-named the Tameside Hippodrome. *Thank you Albert for your interesting article. We are always pleased to receive any items on the local theatres. Especially where George or his father have played.*

From **Val Morris** - Crewe Branch

Whilst listening to the Pam Ayres Programme on Radio 2, Sunday 22nd December, I was delighted to hear her introduce a record by George, with a good resume of his life and career, including a reference to the acrimonious litigation regarding the Will. Pam also mentioned George's skill and his inimitable style of playing. The record she played was "Sitting On The Ice In The Ice rink."

I am a fan of Pam's and have heard her make a number of complimentary remarks about George on past programmes. She also said that her mother owns and plays a uke, but it had quite defeated Pam's attempts to learn to play.

Thank you Val. I am a fan of Pam's myself. So clean and pleasant - wonderful. We'll drop her a line.

If it takes a man a week, to walk a fortnight. How long will it take an elephant - with boxing gloves - to pick a plum out of a jar of treacle?

ANSWER:- A three inch banana.

Don't FORGET What??????

From a Yarmouth Newspaper - no date given.

Norfolk is Formby's second home!

Of all the show personalities who have come to this county over the years, few have been taken so deep into the hearts of Norfolk people as George Formby. And George has made Norfolk a second home, for, since 1947, he has spent every summer here, sometimes staying for as long as six months in a year.

And now he is delighting all and sundry by spending a summer on a Norfolk stage with his own show at Yarmouth's Windmill Theatre. Such is George's love of the Norfolk Broads that I was surprised to learn - and amused at his way of telling it - that he at first rebelled at the idea of coming here at all.

"We had always done a lot of cruising in the Mediterranean and that sort of thing, and Beryl" - he nodded towards his wife - "who had been reading about England's waterways, suggested, 'Why not go to the Norfolk Broads for a summer holiday?'"

"To that I said 'What? Sailing up and down - rivers? not likely!'" But in 1947 George & Beryl came to Wroxham for a few days and were at once captured by the magic of Broadland. "I had expected to find tiny little boats, not big 'uns like a 38 foot cruiser I saw across the river," George told me.

George Formby is a delightful character, amusing and unassuming. "I never had any schooling." He confessed to me. "What I've learnt I've picked up as I got older. I left home at eight to become a jockey and had my first mount in a race when I was 10. That's a record no one will beat now." But George grew too big for a jockey and took up the stage.

He has very definite views on the present set-up of British show business. "All that is left now is summer season and panto." He said "There is no variety and many theatres have closed down. If they reopened I do not know where they would get their variety, for the modern youngsters coming up have not had the experience.

"They make one record, it's boosted up, and there's a new star for you. He may sound brilliant on that record but put him on a stage and he is lost. And I don't know where they will find their comedians. I am sorry to say the modern idea of a comedian is not what I call a comedian. They are light entertainers.

George & Beryl have been married for 35 years. Beryl came from a family of preachers. "I've really moved from the sublime to the ridiculous," she said. And whenever George is on the stage, she is waiting in the wings or in his dressing room. She is more than his wife. She is his secretary, his dresser, his general factotum, and also his inspiration.

Well I never knew that Beryl came from a family of preachers - her parents kept a pub.

I'm very pleased to report that Bob Drinkwater, of Stourbridge, has been appointed Secretary of The Ukulele Society Of Great Britain. The society has about 100 members and they meet twice yearly at Digswell, which is about 30 or 40 miles this side of London and just off the M1.

They try to encourage members to play the Wooden Ukulele at their meetings and, if possible, stick to the melody playing. However, they have several members who are also in the GFS so they have a mixture of ukulele playing and banjo/uke. Anyone wishing to join can ring Bob on 01384 395918

Bob Drinkwater
of Stourbridge, writes ...
(I hope he's in a good mood, Beryl)

Dear Stan, A news item in one of our local papers caught my eye, I thought you might like it for your mag. It proves that George Formby existed outside Warrington *(cheek)*.

I went to this opening with my brother George, it was a wonderful evening and I remember it well. The Danilo Cinema was about 100 yards from where I lived in Brierley Hill High Street. My father ran a successful drapery business with his brother. It was a large shop, employing seven or eight staff, and I was well into playing the uke.

Brierley Hill was noted for being the headquarters of the Marsh & Baxters empire and also the home of Ray Westwood, the Bolton Wanderers and England footballer, who I understand is about to be filmed for a biography on his life.

Paul Robeson came to the Danilo the following year as an honoured guest of the Brierley Hill Choral Society. My mother - who had been a professional singer - and brother, were in the society and my sister sold programmes. These are wonderful memories of a bye-gone age. Bob Drinkwater. *Thank you Bob.*

*Largest
Luxury
Cinema* **DANILO** *Brierley
Hill*

BRIERLEY HILL'S BIGGEST AND BRIGHTEST SHOW.

GRAND OPENING

MONDAY, DECEMBER 21st, at 7 p.m.

BY THE (Hours Open 4.30 p.m.)

RIGHT HON. The EARL of DUDLEY

M.C., D.L.

Musical Items by the Band of

6th Battalion South Staffordshire Regiment

(by kind permission of Lieut. Colonel T. H. Hitchford-Jones M.C., T.D.)

Personal Appearance of the Celebrated Stage and Film Star.

GEORGE FORMBY

(by kind permission of Tom Arnold)

FROM THE BIRMINGHAM THEATRE ROYAL PANTOMIME.

Also **BERYL FORMBY.**

(Polly Perkins, the Girl Next Door, at the Birmingham Theatre Royal Pantomime).

Monday's Entire Proceeds will be devoted to the Guest Hospital, Dudley, Brierley Hill and District Nursing Association, Corbett Hospital, Stourbridge, and the "Express and Star" Imax Fund.

SPECIAL FILM PROGRAMME.

HERBERT MARSHALL and ANN HARDING

IN

The LADY CONSENTS

Bill Turner helps to run a Ukulele Meeting at the Werrington (near Stoke) Village Hall and he has invited members along to give support. They are held every second Thursday in the month and future meetings will be on Jan 9th, Feb 13th, Mar 13th, Apr 10th, May 8th and Jun 12th. Tuition lessons will also be given. You can ring Bill on 01782 304858. Best of luck with the meeting Bill.

Bill writes . . . Dear Stan, Thank you for the application forms for the GFS. As you know, Jan 9th will be the first meeting of our new society under the name of The Staffordshire Knot Ukulele Society. Of course we are starting in a small way, with about a dozen members, but with announcements on Radio Stoke and in our local Sentinel Newspaper - plus affiliation to the GFS, we hope, to increase our numbers. We will appreciate any assistance to get this project off the ground.

Thank you Bill. We will be pleased to give as much help as possible. It is always a pleasure to hear of a new branch starting up. Best of luck with it.

Sale Meeting - Secretary Ken Ratcliffe wishes A Happy New Year to all and also wishes to thank all who attended or played a part in the Christmas meeting. A special thanks to Cyril Palmer who brought his new equipment. It was very well received - well done Cyril.

Three days before the meeting we discovered that the club steward couldn't cater for our party due to having other commitments so we had no alternative but to set to and supply our own buffet. All thanks must go to Alice Cronshaw, Ann Ratcliffe, Ivy my mother in law and Sheila Palmer for getting stuck in and doing a fine job. Many thanks for the raffle prizes which help considerably towards the funds.

PLEASE NOTE - that from January onward we will have to charge £1 due to the increased room charges.

Thank you Ken for the report. The cost of £1 for a night's entertainment is very reasonable so no-one will complain. To help your funds you could take advantage of the 20 pence commission on each of the Newsletters sold. It adds up over 12 months and more members will buy them if they know that the branch is benefiting.

Great Disappearing Trick at Penyffordd.

The Group Thrash was in good swing at Penyffordd when two of the players - Brian Edge and Martin Fowell - suddenly disappeared out of sight. Was it another miracle? No! - They had fallen off the back of the stage and no-one knows how they did it. Apart from a bit of damage, to Brian's uke bridge, all was well.

KEEP SMILING --- and they'll lock you up!

The Sun Newspaper - read . . . **STAR WOMEN REVEAL THEIR DESERT ISLAND LUXURIES** - If you were cast adrift on a desert island, what's the one luxury you could not live without. Barbara Windsor couldn't survive without her hairpiece while Cilla Black needed her Mona Lisa (does she mean a painting or is it her pet cat?) Princess Margaret asked for a piano and Esther Rantzen had to have her bath salts.

However, sensible Rachael Heyhoe Flint claims that she would be lost without her ukulele. Before you ask, "Who is Rachael Heyhoe Flint" she is the captain of the England ladies cricket team and what a happy, fun loving woman she is. She often appears on TV panel games. **Must drop her a line.**

Yours Magazine by Les Ryan. December 1996. **Our Window Cleaner** fancies himself as a Witty George Formby but to me he's a pane in the glass. My wife likes him and maintains that he's worth his money for entertainment value alone. My Bond Street roses do not share the same admiration for him. He often plonks his ladder into their tender roots and later knocks their little heads off.

I once suggested he could remove the two bottom rungs of the ladder to avoid damage - he doesn't use them anyway. He promptly retorted: "Ah, but two rungs don't make a right." Yes, he's quick. He once spent one minute and 50 seconds in my front garden - it cost me £2. I reminded him that at £60 an hour, he'd probably missed his vocation with Severn Trent Water Board.

When my wife recently opened the door to pay him, he expressed surprise. Your dad usually pays," he said. No wonder she likes him. Shortly after Christmas he appeared sporting a brand new yellow plastic bucket with chamois to match. "What else did you get in your stocking?" I joked, "Just a ladder," he replied.

"What part of the north do you come from?" he asked my wife. She said: "Newcastle on Tyne." "I was up there three weeks ago," he said. "You must have quite a round," I interrupted. "No, no, I was on holiday!" he explained. And so the battle of wits continues. He reminded me that he'd been cleaning my windows for almost 10 years. I couldn't resist: "You'll be changing your water then." For once he was silent. Shouldering his ladder, he walked away, deliberately leaving my gate wide open. He's nosey too. Like George Formby he peers into my box-room window to read what's in my typewriter. "Are you always nosey?" I asked. "I was just admiring your new telephone," he lied, adding, "Anyway, there's no 'e' in 'lightning'."

I sometimes wish he'd just stand back to admire his work - and come down to earth with a bump. But - like some of my windows - he'd be sadly missed.

Another song on Dennis Lee's list for our entertainment group. This song caused problems at Liverpool when we were filmed for TV. Here's how it should be played.

CLEANING WINDOWS - TUNE TO G. C. E. A.



I go window cleaning to earn an honest bob. For a nosey-parker it's an interesting



job. Now it's a job that just suits me, a window cleaner you will be, if you could



see what I can see. When I'm cleaning windows. Honeymooning couples too, you



should see them bill and coo. You'd be surprised at things they do. When I'm



cleaning windows. In my profession I work hard, but I'll never stop. I'll climb this



blinking ladder till I get right to the top. The blushing bride, she looks divine, the



bridegroom he is doing fine, I'd rather have his job than mine. When I'm cleaning



windows.

The chambermaid sweet names I call, It's a wonder I don't fall, my mind's not on my work at all. When I'm cleaning windows. I know a fellow, such a swell, he has a thirst, it's plain to tell. I've seen him drink his bath as well. When I'm cleaning windows. In my profession . . .

Pyjamas lying side by side, ladies nighties I have spied, I've often seen what goes inside. When I'm cleaning windows. Uke solo.

There's a famous talkie queen, looks a flapper on the screen, she's more like eighty than eighteen. When I'm cleaning windows. She pulls her hair all down behind, then pulls down her - never mind, after that pulls down the blind. When I'm cleaning windows. In my profession. .

At eight o'clock a girl she wakes, at five past eight a bath she takes, at ten past eight the ladder breaks. When I'm cleaning windows. Short uke solo.

We Were Survivors (Those born before 1940) 😊😊

We were born before television, before penicillin, polio shots, frozen food, Xerox, plastic, contact lenses, radar, credit cards, split atoms, laser beams, ball point pens, dishwashers, tumble driers, electric blankets, central heating, drip dry clothes and videos.

We got married first and then lived together. We thought 'fast food' was what was eaten during Lent, a 'Big Mac' was an oversized raincoat. We had no 'day care centres' and disposable nappies. We never heard of FM Radio, tape decks, electric typewriters, artificial hearts, word processors, yoghurt or a young man wearing ear rings. A chip was a piece of wood or fried potato, hardware meant 'nuts and bolts' and the word 'software didn't exist.

Made in Japan meant you were buying junk. In our day smoking a cigarette was fashionable, while 'grass was something to be mown, and 'coke' was kept in the coal shed. A 'joint was a piece of meat for Sunday's dinner and 'Rock Music' was a mother's lullaby. Eldorado was an ice cream and a 'gay person' was the life and soul of the party.

We who were born before 1940 must be a hardy bunch when you think of the way in which the world has changed and the adjustments we have had to make. No wonder we are so confused and there is a generation gap today . . . BUT - By The Grace Of God . . . We Have Survived - HALLELUIAH!!!

The above was FAXED in (something else we didn't have) by John Taylor of Morecambe. Thank you John. 😊😊😊 👍👍👍

**LOOK TO THIS DAY
 YESTERDAY IS ALREADY A DREAM
 AND TOMORROW IS ONLY A VISION.
 BUT TODAY, WELL LIVED, MAKES
 EVERY YESTERDAY A DREAM OF
 HAPPINESS AND EVERY TOMORROW
 A VISION OF HOPE**

You've FORGOTTEN What???

Spotlight on - Martin Fowell - N. Wales.

Martin is a very keen member of the N.Wales branch of the GFS who rarely misses a meeting. He worked for British Gas for 32 years and has now retired but runs his own Gas business. He was the Mayor of his home town of Prestatyn during 1983 - 84 and was Chairman for 5 years. He enjoys his workshop and a spot of Fly Fishing.

Born in 1938, Martin has always enjoyed the sound of the uke/banjo and during his teen years met a friend who played one. He learnt a few songs but, due to lack of teachers, he put the uke away. Many years later, about 1970, he discovered that there was a George Formby Society and joined for about three years. Unfortunately it consisted of a small band of players but none who were prepared to teach.



Many years later he met Dennis Lee and Chris Moody and they decided to launch a N. Wales branch. He is pleased that he introduced Gordon Markendale, who makes wonderful uke/banjoes, to the ranks of the GFS and is also delighted that he and Sonia have made some very good friends through the society. It has enabled them to establish friends also in France and Belgium.

Just received a report from **Bill Turner** (See page 15)

Dear Stan, I feel I have to write to tell you of the Inaugural Meeting of the Staffordshire Knot Ukulele Society. It was fantastic!!! People came from all over the place: Crewe, Nantwich, and all around. Someone did a head count and told me that at least three dozen attended and we had numerous telephone enquiries.



We received first class publicity from our local newspaper, the Evening Sentinel, and Derek Ball and I spent over an hour on air at Radio Stoke, with presenter, Barbara Adams, who is an avid Formby fan. We had a great time singing and playing the uke and we are all very excited with our new venture.

Thank you Bill for the report. I am very pleased that your first meeting went down well and you were pleased with the result. Thanks also for the invitation to your meeting but unfortunately it almost clashes with our Liverpool meeting and some of us can't get passes for two nights on the trot. However, if you hold a special night we'll arrange for a load to come over. It's really great to know that George's songs are spreading through these meetings.

How many times must I tell you - Don't Forget

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, B/pool - Every 1st Sat.
in the month - Tel Eve Stewart, 01253 768097 - Future Dates:- Jan 4th, Feb
1st, Mar 8th, Apr 5th, May 3rd, Jun 7th, Jul 5th, Aug 2nd, Sep 6th, Sept 27, (NO
MEETING IN OCTOBER) Adm £1 with Buffet. All are made welcome

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

Sale Branch - 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 - Brian Edge on 01270 69836.
Future Dates:- Jan 28th, Feb 27th, Mar 27th, Apr 25th. Adm 50p.

Warrington Branch - Alliance Sports & Social Club Evans House,
Orford Lane, Warrington. - Stan Evans 01925 727102 Special Meetings Only.

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.

Deadline for next issue - 15th February

So as George would say -

“GET CRACKING”

ReTtEISwEn RuOy TrOpPuS

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

