

THE NORTH - WEST

# GEORGE FORMBY

## Newsletter 21

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Specially Produced for the  
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## **Bah Gum** We've Reached Newsletter No. 21 . . . .

### **And what have we got this month?**

Well a new N. West Branch has opened up at Werrington, nr Stoke, and already they are receiving good publicity.

We've got news of an exciting Easter Jazz Week-end to be held in Nantwich, and a One-Day-Special at The Riboro Hotel, Clement Ave, Llandudno, Apr. 19th

One a sad note: We've a tribute to Ron Holliday who sadly passed away - some will have met Ron when he visited us for the Holland trip and for the Warrington Exhibition. Of course, he often attended the Blackpool meetings.

The postman has been busier than ever this month so now you can read on . . .

### **Great Easter Weekend for Crewe . . .**

Nantwich, nr Crewe, is offering a great weekend of JAZZ over the 29th, 30th and 31st of March, and for this they have booked a grand array of talented players. . . . George Melly and his Footwarmers will be there and The Wabash Jazzmen, Snakey Jake Johnson, Gravy Train, The Malbank Blues Quartet, Ken Jackson Tribute Band, The Mambos, Shades of Django Trio, Derek Harrisaon Trio, Salt City Jazzmen, The Mambos, Cutty Sark Jive Band, Apex Jazz Band, Ken Freeman on Piano, Terry Butters Band, Mad Dog, Katie Ainscough Quintet, Dead Skunk Band, The Best of British including big names like Kenny Baker, Don Lusher, Jack Parnell, and THE GEORGE FORMBY SOUTH CHESHIRE UKULELE SOCIETY (Crewe) plus - try saying this when you are drunk - Art, Bart and Fargo.

All this will be taking place in the Civic Hall and various pubs: Malbank Hotel, Frog & Ferret, Wilbraham Arms, The Union, The Crown, Ye Olde Vaults, Lamb Hotel, The Vine Inn, Bowling Green and The Railway Hotel. Nantwich is a very old town with attractive buildings dating from the Norman times. It'll be a great day out if only to view the town.

Tickets for George Melly and also The Best Of British are priced at £10, but all daytime pub and hotel sessions are free. At night there will be a nominal charge which will be donated to the Meningitis Research Foundation. Any further information can be obtained on 01270 610983 or for tickets 625283.

The Crewe Branch, supported by other N.West branches, will perform at The Lamb Inn, Hospital St, Nantwich town centre, on Sun 30th Mar. 2pm to 3pm.

Chap went into the Post Office for a Dog Licence. "What's the name?" asked the man behind the counter. Rover! he replied.



George Formby senior tells his own story: "And not having to think hard I can remember the most miserable a childhood as ever to the lot of man creature.

Unfortunately my parents allowed me to go my way, and in a manner I was absolutely uncared for. When I could be kidded to go to school I showed no sign of brilliance, and

at the age of eight left altogether, having reached that high position of bottom in the second standard. But I didn't go into business. Oh no! I had other ideas. With somewhat false ideas in my head, I joined the 'Lads,' eventually becoming their ring leader. It was a tough experience for a boy and bitterly hard. Then, a far advanced twelve year old, I was taken in hand and apprenticed to 'moulding' in an iron foundry. The change, however, was too much for me, and I soon tired with the work. I'll confess to conning another lad into the 'busking' business. Amongst other things we sang at public-houses, sometimes managing to get in at the 'free and easies' in tap rooms, and so earned a doubtful sort of sum, trusting to luck and the generosity of our patrons for our daily bread. My partner had a pretty good voice, I did my best in sentimental songs. One was 'Remember I'm His Mother,' a real tear drawer.

At seventeen my voice broke and I was compelled to return to work. I didn't like it, but I managed to get a job at a local factory at first, and then at a bakehouse, where I had to turn up at four o'clock in the morning in order to get dough ready for the other men who came on at six. That was at Nelson. and as I was living at Burnley, did the three miles tramp every morning. My wages were 18 shillings (90p) a week.

## A WIGAN ROMANCE

Eventually I went back to Ashton and worked the 'free and easies' and at a public house on Fridays and Saturdays. Then came my first rise in life. I got a forty weeks tour with Dr Brodie at thirty shillings a week and travelling expenses. And so I went on drifting into combinations at different halls, writing my own stuff, and getting the reputation of Dan Leno. It was while working at Wigan that I met Liza, my dear wife and pal. That week I was on, perhaps, two pounds, which turned out to be ten shillings, with the result that Liza's father took pity on me and gave me my Sunday dinner. But he had a bad opinion of 'pros.' This wasn't improved when at the end of the week I ran away with his daughter and got married.



George making a recording, encouraged by the famous Luisa Tetrazzini, the Italian opera singer. The horn is wrapped with tape to reduce resonance.



## Ron Holliday of

**Doncaster . . .** I reported two months ago that Ron was gravely ill in hospital. With the deepest of regret, Ron passed away on the 29th of January.

What a wonderful man he was. He was the most humble person I have ever met and a lesson to us all. He played, apart from the banjo uke, a 12 stringed ukulele and had a huge repertoire of old ballad songs, like "Sally", "Hurt", "After All These Years", "Who's Sorry Now" and a wonderful catchy song that he wrote himself: "If Only I Could Play The Uke Like Formby."



Ron wasn't only a gentleman, in fact he was a gentleman's gentleman and a credit to the George Formby Society. Every Thursday morning, without fail, he would rise at 7am and see that all the old ladies dust bins were taken to the gate. After they were emptied he would return them back to the houses.

Only about 3 or 4 weeks before he died he rang to ask if I could help him with a charity show. Usually he had done the show alone but he was now concerned that he wasn't strong enough to do it. Ron was not in the least selfish and always considered others before himself. He was an excellent dancer who treated his lady partners with the greatest of respect. The ladies appreciated this and would eagerly await their turn to dance with him. He was never short of a partner. Ron Holliday was a "one off" - there will never be another like him.

On Thursday, 6th February, a service was held at St Marys Church, Stainforth, and later he was cremated at the Doncaster Crematorium. God Bless His Soul.

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### GOODNIGHT LITTLE FELLOW

Just received a thank you letter from Ron's eldest son, John, he was very pleased that "Goodnight Little Fellow" was played in the church service and went on to explain that, "dad sang the song to my brothers and myself each night when we were young - but it didn't end there. I also did the same for my sons, (now aged 20 and 17) and there's every likelihood that they may do the same for their children in due course. Well if they don't, I will!!"

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# More Jazz from John & Doris Myerscough . . .

Dear Stan, As we have mentioned Doris and I have, during the past six months, become interested in another branch of music. As you know we are already GFS members and for the last 3 years have been members of the Organ Societies of Warrington and St Helens.

Now we have a 3rd interest - Dixieland Jazz. This is played by 6 or 7 piece bands - usually 4 rhythm section and 3 brass (trombone, trumpet and clarinet) A guitarist is usually included in the rhythm section and we have found that most of them include George Formby as one of their favourites.

After a recent venue in Liverpool's Dock area we heard "Little Stick Of Blackpool Rock" and also "Grandad's Flannelette Nightshirt" during the programme. This particular Jazz Group we were watching and listening to were called the Merseysippi Jazz Band and they were led by Ken Baldwin - the guitarist who played the two Formby numbers. Ken knows that we are GFS members and is prepared to include Formby songs any night we request them.

There are at least 8 groups in and around Wigan, Warrington and Liverpool and we will let you know the next time the event is on at the Firgrove Hotel, Warrington. Come with us and you'll enjoy it.

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**The Friends & Neighbours** company is owned by another Stan Evans and sometimes this causes considerable confusion in the Warrington area. He organises pensioners trips to such places as Blackpool and promotes variety shows in and around Warrington. He also entertains with a few George Formby songs and his uke banjo - What a coincidence you may say.

Well I can always tell when he has had a trip on or done a show somewhere as my phone starts getting busy with very concerned callers. The main cry is, "Where's me wheelchair" or "I left me handbag on the coach." Sometimes they don't believe me when I tell them that they've got the wrong Stan Evans. One lady, who thought I was trying to keep her handbag, got quite irate.

A couple of years ago the nurses from an old folks home rang to ask if Anthony and I would put on a show. When we turned up we found that they had also engaged a pianist through the other Stan Evans. Fortunately he knew the Formby numbers so we did a show between us.

Stan rang last week to tell me that he had just been highly praised for putting a grand charity show for a young boy. He didn't like telling them that they had the wrong Stan Evans so he took all the praises. I wonder why I get all the complaints

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# Big Day Out at Llandudno - 19th April

Dennis Lee has just dropped a line. He is organising a One Day Special at the Risboro Hotel, Clement Avenue, Llandudno. GFS Members are invited free (£1 for visitors per session) and the concert will be held from 12 noon to midnight, with a break for dinner). B & B can be arranged from £15 upwards.

The ballroom booked for the show is first class with bar facilities etc. Press, TV and Radio are being contacted and the event is being published by the Business Tourism Unit.

So come and step back in time with a day out at old Victorian Llandudno.

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## Spotlight on Jim Knight - N. Wales

Jim has always enjoyed musical instruments, in particular Keyboards and Ukuleles. His first was the Accordion, which he later decided to drop in favour of the Keyboard. The sound of the Ukulele, however, was always his first love.

He discovered the GFS through a chance meeting with Bernard Young in 1982 and immediately joined. Unfortunately, due to work commitment he was unable to attend the Blackpool meetings, and the fact that there were no other members in the Wrexhan area, so he let his membership lapse.

Many years later he came across an advertisement in the local newspaper asking for interested parties to form a N. Wales Branch. This led him to the home of Dennis & Leslie Lee where he received a warm and cordial welcome. Since then he has become a dedicated and stalwart member of the Penyffordd Branch and thoroughly enjoys getting up on stage to entertain.



At the N. Wales Christmas Party Night Jim showed that he is quite talented with the various sketches he performed and showed his expertise with the uke.

If you have anything interesting to say on your life then drop a few lines and include a self photo

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007 always stayed in bed! He was an under cover agent!

From **Bill Turner** of the newly formed **Staffordshire Knot Society** (Now a branch of the George Formby Society).

Dear Stan, I wish to pay a small tribute to my old friend the late John Knight who sadly passed away recently. John was a long time member of the George Formby Society and had many friends. He had a tremendous store house of knowledge and he was always willing to help with a problem.



**John with George's sister, Louie, at the Warrington Exhibition**

What a proud man he was when he received his new grand daughter and also of the achievements of his son, Mark. Barbara, John's wife, is a fine lady and she is coping well with the situation. We are very pleased that she has an interest in our newly formed society.

There is much that we can write about John but members already know of him. He will be sadly missed by us all.

*Thank you Bill. I always found John to be extremely reliable. At the Blackpool meetings, if ever he promised do send something to me, I could guarantee that it would arrive within a few days. John was a very concerned member for the GFS.*

*God Bless Him.*

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**New Venue for Sale Meeting** - Sale Branch will now hold meetings at The Woodheys Club, 299 Washway Rd, Sale, from Friday 21st Mar.

The club lies on the Manchester to Altrincham A56 (main road through Sale). From the M63 at junction 7, turn right towards Altrincham and go past Marsland Rd (which leads to the previous venue) for about a half mile. On the left you will see 2 pairs of Stone Gate Posts. Take the second pair signed "299" and there you are. Please note that all the meetings will NOT be held on Fridays. The following meeting, for example, will be held on Thurs. 17th April.



I'll Bet **Stan Evans** didn't know!!!!!! - Daily Telegraph 23/1/97

Sir, The cry 'E-bah-gum' is said to have been uttered in Zimbabwe by a Lancashire midwife who delivered the country's President, His delighted father at once named the boy Ebagum.

Unfortunately the name became reversed in the proclamation and thus established the now-known name of Mugabe. Lancastrians should be proud of their heritage

Bill Horner, Midhurst Sussex. Thanks again to Brian Edge.

*Thanks Brian. But I wonder where E-bah-gum originated from? Must drop a line to the Editor of the Really Lancashire Magazine, Bob Dobson. He will know.*

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**S. O. S. from Brian Edge** . . . Dear Stan, Can I make an appeal through the North West Newsletter? Colin Wood and myself have helped lots of newcomers to get their old ukes in working order so they can start to learn to play. We started off with a box of bits and pieces, such things as old tension hooks and nuts which have been taken off old instruments, old friction pegs, tail pieces etc etc. Now our box is empty and we are faced with having to buy expensive bits which, when available, often costs as much as the old uke is worth.

Could I ask those who may have such bits in their uke cases, which are no longer required if we could have them? We will refund postage of course. Please send any contributions, however small, to me where they will be gratefully received.

Brian Edge, 48 Woodside Ave, Crewe CW2 8AN.

*Thanks again Brian. Also any old ukes that are beyond repair will be appreciated.*

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**Just Received** a little order for a George Formby Catalogue from Alan Martell Publishers, and a foot note was penned in at the bottom. "Alan Martell was Equity Deputy in Emile Littlers panto, London Palace Theatre, 1956 - 57, starring George Formby as Dick Whittington.

Dick Playle, of the Music Hall Society, had written an article for the "Call Boy" magazine and included my name as an enthusiast on George. He also mentioned the Catalogue and this resulted in about half a dozen orders coming in. It's nice to know that George's fans are not forgotten.

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**Another Rumble from Bob Drinkwater** - Stan!!!!

You got it wrong in the last issue of the Newsletter. The Ukulele Society of Great Britain has 200 members not 100!!!!!!

*Sorry Bob, Terribly sorry, I won't do it again - honest. I'll ring you up before going to print in future. (Is he OK now Beryl? - How on earth do you put up with him?)*

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**Have you written to your NEWSLETTER?**



**Jeffrey Formby Booth** rang . . . . . Stan You'll never believe it! Louie, (George's sister) has made a wonderful recovery and she is now walking about and chatting to everybody. Wonderful.

A few weeks ago we were notified by Brinsworth Hall - Home for Retired Artists - that Louie was close to death and it was decided not to give her treatment. Anyway she is now as fit as ever. She's a tough nut to crack is our Louie.

#### GEORGE'S "E" Model UKE

I have something else to report. The Dallas "E" uke banjo that belonged to George and my father, Frank, has now been sold to Bob Norton. As you are aware, I never play it and we considered that it was going to a safe home.

*Thanks for the report Jeff. We are pleased that Louie is back with us again. There is a nice little story about the Formbys. GF Senior, your Grandfather, died in 1921. George died in 1961, and Eliza, your Grandmother, died in 1981 (at the age of 102). During 1991 - while the Warrington Exhibition was on - Louie took ill and she was very worried that the dreaded "one" had come round and it was her turn to pop her clogs. Anyway, her cousin Eugene - who lived in Wigan - died instead so Louie perked up and said, "Now I'm alright for another 10 years." Wonderful!*

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**10th Feb** and the phone has been red-hot this last two days. The newspapers are desperate to know about the church where George was christened. (See centre pages).

Apparently St Josephs Church, in Wigan, is about to be pulled down unless someone can come up with a reason why it should be saved. There is much concern from a section of Wiganers who feel that the Church has too much history to be pulled down. One claim to its fame is that our George was christened there in 1904.

The newspapers, in desperation, asked if I would publicly condemn any proposals to destroy the building, but, like I said, "It is a difficult situation as I'm not sure of where George was christened." It might be discovered, years later, that George wasn't christened there and I would have egg on my face - no fear!

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The **Crewe Branch** members have done an excellent job in smartening up the stage at the Wistaston Memorial Hall. They've purchased several pieces of multi coloured (slashed) curtains and hung them across the rear of the stage. It really has brightened up what was a drab area. Worth a visit if only to look at the curtains.

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Chap went into a bank to cash a cheque. "Any form of identification?" asked the bank clerk. He took a mirror from his pocket and said, "Yes, that's me!"



# Fab Four who sum up Lancashire's comedy



**THORA HIRD:** Born in 1913 in Morecambe. Her father managed the Central Pier and she began her stage career at the Royalty Theatre. Even when young, she was cast as old women.

She won a Bafta award working with Alan Bennett and was made a Dame in 1993.

Prof Jeffrey Richards said: "Thora Hird, although primarily a character actress rather than a comedienne, shared to the full the Lancashire qualities of Hylda Baker and Gracie Fields.

"She has become a virtual fixture on television playing a classic Northern matriach."



**GEORGE FORMBY:** Born in Wigan and trained as a jockey before his mother launched him on the stage, following in his late father's footsteps. Became the biggest British box office star from 1937 to 1943.

Prof Richards said: "There was an innocence about George that was essentially child-like, which explains why he was as popular with children as with adults. He even put his tongue out at pursuers on occasion.

"George was able to embody simultaneously Lancashire, the working classes, the people and the nation."



**HYLDA BAKER:** Born in Farnworth, near Bolton in 1908. Daughter of a comedian, she made her stage debut at the age of ten and liberally used catchphrases such as "She knows, you know" and "Be soon, I said, be soon".

She successfully transferred from stage to screen in the Nearest And Dearest sit-com which ran from 1968 to 1972.

Prof Richards highlighted her "well-rounded malapropisms, and air of cocky defiance. She was the archetype of the ever-so-slightly snobbish gossip."



**GRACIE FIELDS:** Known to the world as Our Gracie. Born above a chip shop in Rochdale, she was the top British female star at the cinema box office from 1936 to 1943.

Prof Richards said: "She was more than just a film and stage star. She was a phenomenon who became a national symbol.

"She was neither beautiful nor, in her cinematic heyday, youthful and paradoxically this endeared her more to audiences.

"She was deliberately transformed from a raw, unrefined mill girl into a glamourised theatrical grand dame."



**N. Wales** - Well, what a meeting we had in February! It happened on my birthday (an event I keep quiet about these days) so I was surprised when people were giving me birthday greetings on arrival. I thought "Eh yup, there's something suspicious here." Needless to say, my wife, Lesley had been ringing round to canvas support for the meeting. I was particularly pleased because during the run up to the meeting I thought that being February it might be poorly attended. Over 50 people came! Thanks to each and every one of you.

We were delighted to welcome Eve & Charles Stewart. Charles entertained us later - Great. Stan Evans and Kevin Blanchfield did a mini version of "The Comedians" and it went down very well. Doris & John Myerscough and friends came along and we were surprised when John gave Stanley Holloway's "Albert & The Lion." I believe that he has something else up his sleeve for the next meeting.

What would we do without our Crewe friends? Young Gareth did us proud and amazed us with the progress he is making. 6 year old Frank Murphy sang "I'm Going to Alabama With A Banjo On My Knee" and I reckon his dad will soon be joining him. We were pleased to see Jim & Joan Bramwell and Harry Stanford opened the show with his 3 hour, one-man act - fortunately we managed to drag him off after 25 minutes. We had to prise his fingers off the strings. Poor Lottie, she has something to put up with.

Very pleased to see you all. It was a grand night and thanks to you all.

*Thanks for your report Dennis. The two youngsters are coming along well. What a grand name is "Frank Murphy" That name could go far on the stage. Frank Murphy, it rolls off the tongue and echoes with experience! Great!!!*

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**Just been watching "Bentley" on BBC2**

**TV** which is a real life series of country happenings in the village of Bentley. Half way through the show the voice of George pops up in the background singing "Hitting The High Spots Now." It's quite a good programme and well worth watching.

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Postman: The dog at No.7 has bitten my leg

Neighbour: Did you put something on it?

Postman: No! He enjoyed it as it was!

# Fans rap plans to of last links with

CONTROVERSIAL proposals to demolish George Formby's old church in Wigan have been submitted to planners 18 months after a dwindling congregation and shortage of priests forced it to close.

But the Liverpool Roman Catholic Archdiocese, which wants rid of the redundant St Joseph's buildings on Caroline Street, could be in for a fight.

Fans of George Formby have hit out at proposals to sever another link with the entertainer, who is said to have regularly attended the church as a child, complaining he is already under-appreciated in his home town.

Stan Evans, editor of the North West George Formby newsletter, said: "George Formby attended St Joseph's School and the church and there is a rumour that he was also Christened there. We would be glad to hear from anyone who knows for sure.

"But with these Formby connections it would be a great shame to knock the church down. There is little enough recognition for this major Wigan-born star as it is."

## Nightclub

St Joseph's church was officially closed in October 1995, just as it was awarded Grade II listed building status.

Built when a Methodist chapel on the site was acquired and replaced by the Catholic church in 1871, it is about the only remaining historical building in the Wallgate area, harking back to the days when the church was surrounded by back-to-back homes.

But the church became increasingly isolated as light industry and shops replaced the homes, causing attendances to gradually fall.

In 1964, the church was absorbed into the parish of St Jude and became a Chapel of Ease, a little sister church to the main parish building.

Eventually the decision was taken to close it. The archdiocese says it would have preferred to keep the place open if it were still thriving but church leaders would rather see it demolished than it be turned into commer-

## Star's childhood church may be demolished

By CHARLES GRAHAM



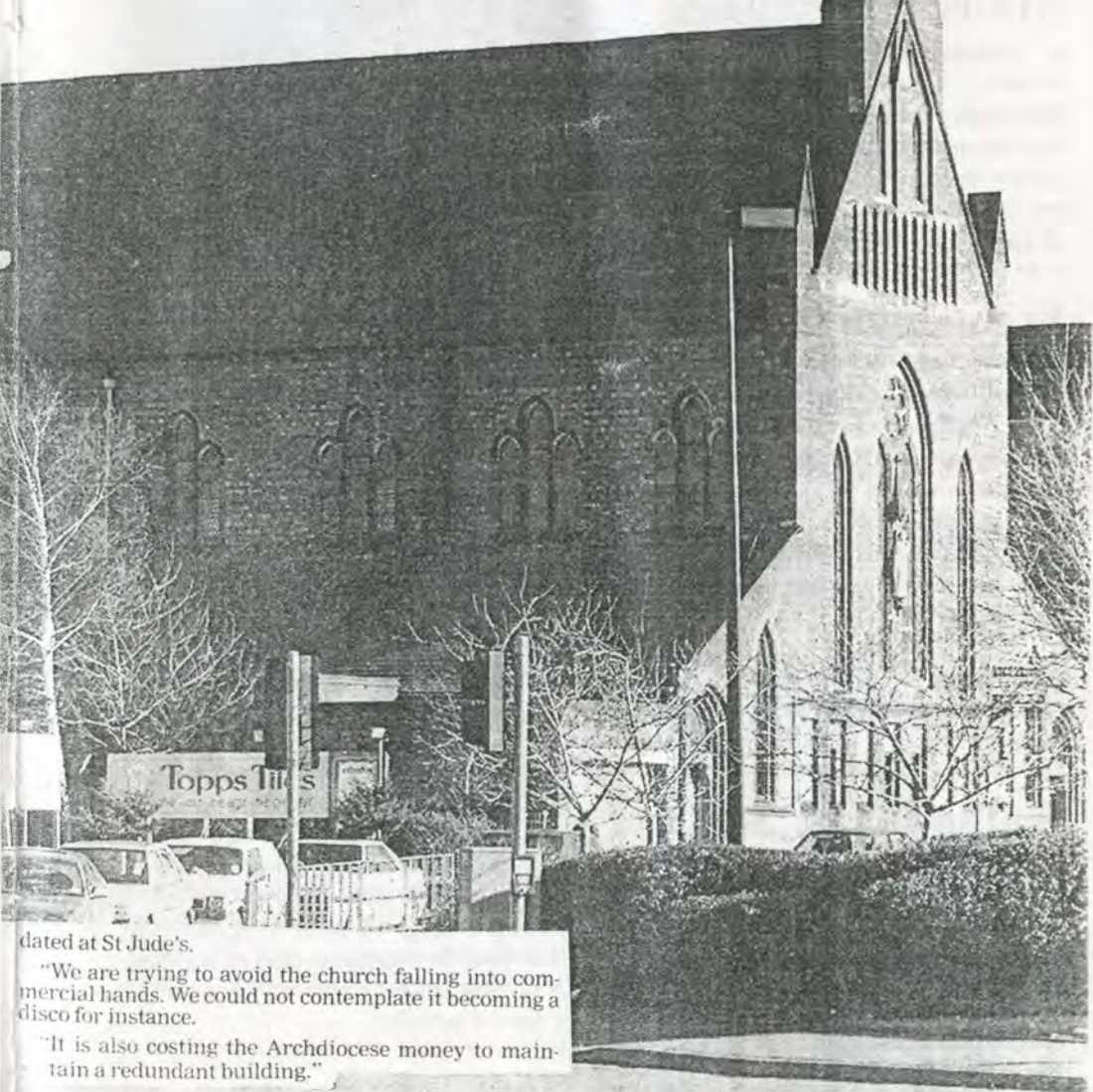
cial buildings or even a nightclub.

Fr Pat McNally, St Jude's parish priest, said: "Our priority is to demolish the building.

"Of course we would have loved to have seen it thriving in future but the church had become increasingly isolated from homes, there is a shortage of clergy and because there are fewer masses these days the services which were held at St Joseph's can now be accommo-



# to raze 'one in Formby'



dated at St Jude's.

"We are trying to avoid the church falling into commercial hands. We could not contemplate it becoming a disco for instance.

"It is also costing the Archdiocese money to maintain a redundant building."



**Barry Bowler** - Crewe Branch - has heard that a composer named May Singhi Breen wrote a song called The Ukulele Lady and wants to know if anyone has got a copy of it. If so, give the Newsletter a ring. Many Thanks. *I will certainly dig out the old song sheets Barry and let you know if I find it.*

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**Young Gareth Sumner** - Crewe Branch again - has just received the school Headmaster's Award for entertaining at school with his uke. *Good for you Gareth. You are coming along very well with your playing.*

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## Malcolm Palmer

is determined to draw huge crowds to the Stourbridge Meetings. In fact it looks as if he has taken to busking in the town centre to draw them in. Good for you Malcolm. We are proud of you. Keep Strummin

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## From John Guy...

John enclosed an old newspaper cutting which claimed that Dr. Otto Wallen, who had been a practitioner in Hucknell for over 28 years, was a film actor and stage instrumentalist. He was also an accomplished ukulele player, and, he taught George Formby how to play the uke.



Malcolm runs the Stourbridge meeting

He brought a ukulele back from New York after visiting the states and taught George the rudiments of the instruments. "And" he claims, "George never looked back after that." *So now you know!*

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**Staffordshire Sentinel** - Saturday 25th Jan 1997, reports on Charlie Basterfield of Tunstall, middleweight boxer, nicknamed 'Charlie Knock' in view of his powerful punch. Like many other young fit men Charlie was called up for the second world war and was tragically blown up whilst serving in North Africa. His sister, Nancy Copestick recalls that Charlie sometimes had as many as three fights a week and was once given £5 by George Formby who watched one of his fights in Ireland. Thanks to Brian Edge for the article.

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# All The Way from Crewe . . . Brian Edge 15

Jim and Joan Bramwell had their hats and coats on ready to come to the Crewe January meeting when they discovered that they could not find their front gate for fog! They were so disappointed and telephoned their apologies along with those of Harry and Lottie Stanford who travel with them.

Stan Evans did get through in spite of taking the wrong turning. On this occasion Anthony Mason couldnt be blamed as he wasnt in the car! Notwithstanding the weather no less than fifty turned up to enjoy a very enjoyable evening.

Jonathan Baddeley our M.C. as usual got the meeting off to a prompt start at 7.45pm and maintained continuity throughout. There is nothing better than a concert with zip. It is clear from the quality of performances that all our artistes are improving month by month.

Barry and Gary went out of their way to put on a good show resplendent in college blazers and straw boaters. They looked grand. Their entrance to the stage was proceeded by a fanfare fit for any heavyweight boxing champion. It was also clear from their performance that they had been working hard on their act. Presentation on stage is really so important and we all should try our best to add a little extra colour to the proceedings in one way or another for the benefit of our faithful non playing supporters. We owe it to them to put on the best show possible.

Bill Turner of the newly formed George Formby branch at Werrington made his debut on stage at Crewe and announced the new society which is called the Staffordshire Knot Ukulele Society.

Stan Evans performed an enjoyable medley of songs followed another of his magic miracles. This one featuring a large clock which was suspended by a chord around his neck. The trouble with Stan like all magicians he wont tell us how he does 'em!

Another welcome newcomer to the thrash was Alan Newton. A musician, who I have followed for nearly 25 years. Alan is resident trombonist in the Salt City Jazz Band. He is keen to come whenever he can. He's even promised to bring his trombone along. And whilst on the subject wasn't Walter Kirkland great on the bones? The bones are a perfect match for the uke as we well know from George Cheetham's contributions to the Blackpool Conventions for so many years. So performers please note Walter always has his (wooden) bones with him so do please remember to invite him on stage if you would like him to back your numbers. B.E.

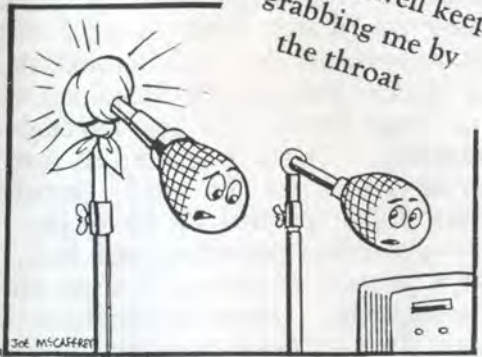


# A Few G & B Snippets . . .

**Mrs G Hazlewood writes . . . . .**

Re. memories of George & Beryl Formby, I have a friend in an old peoples home in Blackpool. She and her sister worked as cashiers and cloakroom attendants and her husband travelled all over the country with George & Beryl. When he was appearing at the Blackpool theatres they would stay at my friend's house. They knew many of the big stars who played Blackpool.

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**T F Durston writes . . .** I recall that George & Beryl gave a one-night stand performance at St Julian's roller skating rink, Malta in the summer of 1943. It's not much information but best of luck.

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**Mr J Holland writes . . .** I saw George & Beryl in the Middle East but cannot remember exactly where - possibly Egypt. I remember him saying that the reason why he came was to get his knees brown. We all enjoyed the show.

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**N F Willson writes . . .** I was entertained by George & Beryl a few days after the initial landings at Reggio Di Calabria in September 1943.

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**Peter D Brooke Professional Magician writes . . .**

Dear Stan, I recall I saw George in Boots Boots on its first circuit of the cinemas. During the 30s I saw George at the Odeon, Leeds, doing a spot between films and outside the cinema (I remember so clearly) he was billed as "the country's 2nd greatest comedian." I've always wondered who the 1st was!

I saw George & Beryl at the Leeds Empire in the Pantomime Dick Whittington, December 1939 and I would say: (A) Comic singer, an idol of the fans. (B) Situation comedy, with Beryl, pretty good! (C) Stand up comic, suspect not so good.

*Thank you Peter for the snippet. George couldn't deliver a stand-up joke to save his life. His punch lines were very weak and even his attempts to practise these on his close friends went down like lead balloons. The Londoners always considered Max Miller to be No. 1 although he didn't go down so well in the north. Likewise, they couldn't inderstand our Frank Randle in London.*

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**Bad News! - Val Doonican's gone off his rocker!**



**There was a Wonderful** programme on Channel 4 TV on Tuesday the 4th Feb. It was called "Seriously Funny" and it emphasised on the fact that laughter is a good tonic for illness.

One part showed a couple of clowns visiting the Childrens Hospital and entertaining the kids. One of them played a small wooden uke and sang simple little songs to them. They explained that because childrens hospitals were usually filled with a serious atmosphere, the ailment would normally be considered - by the family and patient - to be worse than it really was. The clowns performed with simplicity. blowing bubbles, magic tricks, playing the uke etc. to help the child to laugh at the situation. This gave them strength to help them to overcome their illness. **WONDERFUL - LET'S HAVE MORE OF THIS.**

The wooden uke is a great little instrument and every child is intrigued when you play them a simple little song. "Bananas" is ideal as they can easily relate to it.

So let's dig out a few more simple little ditties. If anyone has got any please send them in for the Newsletter.

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**There's Nowt Worse than growing old** and becoming an old moaner and grumbler. So cheer yourself up. Have a go at writing a comical poem and send it in to the Newsletter.

"There's a terrible smell in Dingly Dell"  
Said the shepherd - watching his flocks  
"Don't blame me" said Farmer McGee  
"The Pixies are washing their socks." bum bum.

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**Tongue Twister For You** say it quickly . . .

"Ken Dodd's Dad's Dog's Dead"

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**Did You Know??** that Ken Dodd is actually in the Guinness Book Of Records. *No I didn't - please carry on.* Well Ken has broken all records for telling the most jokes - non-stop. Over 1500 jokes in three and a half hours. *Well I am dumfounded - you never fail to amaze me!*

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**Local Butcher's Just Died** - *didn't leave a sausage!*

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**Paddy** died in his sleep. He doesn't know he's dead yet!  
If he wakes up and finds out - It'll kill him!



**Up Date. on "Hillcrest"** I've received quite a number of enquiries from George's fans asking about "Hillcrest," the Warrington home of the Formby family, where George lived from the age of 12.

Well, over the past couple of months I've sown quite a lot of seed in the North-west area, on Radio, Press and TV - in the hope that someone might be interested in buying the home to create a Formby Museum. At this stage no-one has come forward but it would be a golden opportunity. Especially for the GFS.

The Warrington Exhibition, which attracted 37, 500 visitors, proved that George is still a draw, but the exhibition has got to be worked with GF entertainment. Just sticking up a load of photos and a few items of memorabilia will not work. Entertainment is more than 50% of the attraction. Will keep you up-dated on any progress.

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**Eve & Charles Stewart** were delighted, at Penyffordd - They say in Lancashire that "You can meet gradely folk anywhere." Well we met the gradeliest bunch you'll ever come across at the British Legion, Penyffordd, on Friday 7th Feb. We were enveloped in warmth and friendliness and the enthusiastic entertainers were a joy to watch.

All credit to Dennis & Leslie Lee - and workers - for getting North-Wales so successfully off the ground . . . there were a few obstacles at the beginning, but they've sorted out a very comfortable meeting place. It is now a "Must" on the visiting list!

It was a wonderful first night for Eve & I and we look forward to the next time. *Thank you both for the article. It was a great night at Peniffordd and they drew their biggest crowd ever.*

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**Backing Group** - The talent at the North-West meetings is improving rapidly, but, how I wish we were able to form a first class backing group. This would be great for our meetings.

We have several members who are capable of forming a group:- Jeff Shone and Steve Hassal play drums, Jonathon Baddeley on clarinet, Anthony Mason on keyboard, Walter Kirkland on the bones, Jim Knight is adaptable and Alan Newton, of the Salt City Jazz Band, has promised to bring his trombone. I'll bet we've got more talent out there somewhere! Wouldn't it be great if they got together. This would really give a boost to George in the N. West. Stan Evans

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**They've** set up a new hospital where the wealthy can go for body transplants! It'll cost you an arm and a leg!



**Bob Drinkwater Writes . . .** I never had a lesson in my life!!! I've heard that line repeated many times and usually by the cocksure kids of today. They are, of course, referring to the days of when they first played the ukulele or more likely the banjo uke. For sometime, there has been the existence of two wonderful clubs, The George Formby and The Ukulele Societies. They are always well attended and include many first class players who are always willing to help the novices and beginners. By joining these societies the boys and girls of today have an instant passport to learning to play the instruments. Watching the styles and techniques of the good players is wonderful instruction.

The only consolation us old timers had, way back, was the fact that we could go to the theatre and watch our hero perform in the flesh. Take it from me George Formby's performance on stage was breathtaking.

It's worth mentioning that I learned to play the uke by listening to George's "Window Cleaner" on a Regal Zonophone record that I bought in Brierley Hill market in 1936 (I still have it). It took ages. I got the hang of the split stroke but played it, backward. Fortunately through sheer persistence, and experiment, I got it right. But what I would have given for an hour or so at a George Formby meeting in those far off days.



I still play a lot, and still learning, and good luck to all the boys and girls who have recently taken up the uke - you have a friend for life. Let's have less of the granny about never having had a lesson. You were being taught from the moment you set foot inside a George Formby meeting.

*Thank you Bob for your letter. Now I am completely confused! What's all this in the last paragraph about your granny? Is it something us N. West lot don't know about?*

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**Liverpool** - Harry Stanford had a good night at the February meeting. He was asked to get up twice and encouraged to stay on as long as he wished. If he'd brought his five stringed banjo he'd have received the greatest applause ever. Was this a triumph for the 85 year old genius, who is normally dragged off after 30 minutes, and kept off for the rest of the night, or was it another great come-back by the Earlestown ex-super star who had them laughing in the aisles 5 years ago? No! It wasn't! Only 4 entertainers turned up so it was a case of Harry or Nowt! Anyway, Harry was on great form - as usual - and he has now added another 20 minutes to his act with explanations of his 70 year old jokes. He went down well with the crowd who shouted for more.



# N. West Branch Meetings and Future Dates

**North Wales Branch** - British Legion, Penyffordd (10 miles from Chester) Every first Fri in the Month. Tel Dennis Lee on 01244 544799 Adm 50p

**Blackpool Branch** - Wainwright, Hornby Rd, B/pool - Every 1st Sat. in the month - Tel Eve Stewart on 01253 768097 - Future Dates: Mar 8th, Apr 5th, May 3rd, Jun 7th, Jul 5th, Aug 9nd, Sep 6th, Sep 27th (NOTE DATE CHANGES IN AUG. AND SEPT. - NONE IN OCT. Adm £1 with Buffet. All are welcome.

**Liverpool Branch** - Broadgreen Conservative Club - Every 2nd Friday in the month - Ring Tom Bailey on 0151 228 9769

**Sale Branch (New Venue)** - Woodheys Club, 299 Washway Rd, Sale - Usually every 3rd Friday but subject to date change - Ring Ken Ratcliffe on 0161 430 8290. Next meeting Thursday April 17th. Adm now £1.

**Crewe Branch** Wistaston Memorial Hall - Ring Brian Edge on 01270 69836 Future dates - Mar 27th, Apr 25th Adm 50p.

**Warrington** Alliance Sports & Social Centre, Evans House, Orford Lane, Warrington - Stan Evans on 01925 727102 - SPECIAL MEETINGS ONLY.

**Werrington Branch** (Near Stoke) at the Werrington Village Hall - Every 2nd Thursday in the month, Ring Bill Turner on 01782 304858. Future dates - Mar 13th, Apr 10th, May 8th, Jun 12th.

To receive the N. West Newsletter by post please send a cheque for 50p + 25p pp. (or £2.25 for 3 months) payable to Stan Evans - Address on front cover. Branch organisers can order a minimum lot of 10 copies for £3 plus 60p postage and you are welcome to sell them to help raise branch funds.

Deadline for next issue - 15th March

So as George would say -

“Get Cracking”

Support Your Newsletter



A little song entitled:-

“Get off the gas stove Nellie - You're too old to ride the range.”