

THE NORTH - WEST

# GEORGE FORMBY

## Newsletter 22

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Specially Produced for the  
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## Welcome to Newsletter No.22.

It's very hard to believe that we will soon be 2 years old.

So what have we got this month?

Well the Spring & Summer seasons are just beginning so we have plenty of bookings for outside events - Nantwich - Llandudno - Wigan Pier - Penketh, and we are holding a Special at Warrington for George's 93rd Birthday. Great for the Formby members.

We have the Spotlight this month on Geoff Shone and his band, and a couple of nice articles from John Guy.

All the N. West Branches have had excellent meetings, this last month, with the exception of Sale who have now moved premises due to a severe increase in rent at the Brooklands Leisure Centre.

So now you can read on . . .

**Craig Tinsley** - Just had a flying visit from Warrington's Bobby Dazzler "Craig Tinsley" who informs me that he is dashing off at 4am in the morning to go to Sandringham Castle to play the uke for the Queens visit. We'll try to get a full report.

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**Me & My Uke By George** - I'm often asked what I like most about life and the answer is! Well I like to believe that my success on the stage has brought me lots of friends, a good deal of money and a lot of publicity. The fame is appreciated and the money helps me to do a lot of things I wish to do - not always for myself, I must add.

Publicity is a penalty for being famous and must be put up with. Some of it I like but some of it is embarrassing. My career gave me a lot of popularity and there are times when the response from the audience has brought a lump to my throat. Sometimes unable to keep the tears from my eyes. Of course, it wouldn't do for George Formby to be on stage with streams of water running down his face. I reckon you know what I mean.

People often say "You are a born comedian!" but it has taken me a good many years to find it out. I had every reason to have comedians blood as my father, the original George Formby, was one of the most famous in the country.

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**Have You Forgotten It? What! - The Newsletter**

# The Formby Story - Part 11

George Formby Senior tells more of his own story:-  
Bad luck followed, but my wife, who, to this day,  
works with me, did her best to cheer me up, and  
incidentally, earned something from her dressmaking.



George kicks off at the Wigan v Hunslet rugby match Dec 7 1912.

Then luck came my way and after several small engagements, George Robey recommended me to the management of a Newcastle pantomime, and I got my first big salary - £35 a week.

When I came to London I opened at the Tivoli with "One Of The Boys" and "The Wigan Sprinter." Though a native of Ashton under Lyne, I figured as "A Lad Fra Wigan"

The news reporter carries on the story:- George Formby (senior) was Lancashire's own comedian and his fame was national. Probably no-one knew him better than Mr E H Granville of St Martins, London. who found him and secured his first contract in London. "I discovered him in 1902" said Mr Granville, "He was then playing at Leeds and, realising he was one of our coming comedians, booked him his first engagement in London at the Royal Music Hall, Canning Town, at a salary of £3 a week. He rose to fame, absolutely top of the bill, and our last contract was for £350 a week. In the agregate he has broken more records than any other artist in the variety halls."

The comedian used to recall the notable story of a command performance at Knowsley Hall where the King & Queen were on a visit to Lord Derby. Formby's habit of addressing the conductor by his Christian name is famous and on this occasion the conductor was George Baker of Liverpool. Immediately behind George Baker sat the King, and when Formby appeared he said, in his usual Lancashire way "Hullo George!" A shiver went down everyones spine for it was evident they thought the remark was intended for the King. Formby realised it too and was uneasy for the rest of his turn, because he had no chance of covering up the unconscious error by a gag.

He raised great sums for charitable purposes, particularly during the war. He never tired of paying tribute to his wife, "My dear wife and pal" he called her. "She is worth her weight in gold - and a million doctors - only Eliza knows how to get me right"

The town of Wigan adopted George as their own. Whenever he hit the high spots he would say, "This is a great honour for me and for Wigan." *Possibly this is the reason why George senior has been honoured at Wigan Pier. More next month.*

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In the next installment we report the death of George Formby Senior.

## The Stars are Shining at Crewe!!!

What a great February meeting we had. This meeting is very well organised and we are always sure of a hearty welcome. Unfortunately Brian and Connie Edge were unable to make it due to Brian's mother taking ill and in need of care. However, the night went with a swing and everyone thoroughly enjoyed themselves.. It was estimated that around 70 in total turned up and 22 of them took the stage for a "grand thrash."

Newcomers to the Crewe meeting, Charles & Eve Stewart, and Warrington's little ray of sunshine, Alf Caldwell, made a surprise visit and they were given the usual grand reception by the members.

Mind you - Jim Bramwell looked a bit dismayed when Alf got up before him and sang his "Uncle Joe's Mintballs." However, Jim has quite a repertoire so he soon whipped another backing tape from his case.

Harry Stanford gave us another treat with his 70 year old jokes (complete with explanations) and thrilled us with his high speed deliverance of songs on his uke. Great Harry - you're looking younger every week!

Dennis & Lesley Lee looked sunburnt after their holiday abroad - but Jon Baddeley went pale when he had one of the greatest disappointments of his life: He has searched every book shop and car boot in the country looking for a copy of "The George Formby Complete." Little did he realise that the very book he was looking for was on sale (in the late Ron Holliday's collection) at the rear of the hall. Unfortunately he missed it by 2 minutes. Has anyone got a copy to spare? If so, please ring Jon on 01782 680587.

Once again, Stan Evans confused the members with an excellent "Motorway Sign" mind reading act and everyone was completely agog with amazement. In fact, they were shouting praises of "Ee Bah Gum, I've Seen A Miracle" even before the performance was completed. The Archbishop of Canterbury popped in three times to see what was going on! Low and behold, however, we shall never know how these miracles are performed!

The members at Crewe are certainly improving each month and it really is an excellent night. All for 50p. Unbelievable!!! Brian & Connie wish to thank all who stepped in during time of need.

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**Just had a visit** from Colin Ball. He is producing "The Wigan Story" on slides for the purpose of giving talks with the "Royale" slide projector that he also manufactures. He wanted to borrow some bits & pieces including any old 78s with George Formby Senior singing about Wigan. Will keep you informed.

# Newspaper Cutting - 30. 11. 1938. - So George Formby 5

can't pass a shop which has one of the gayer sort of jumpers in the window without buying it! And he loves milk - drinks it out of the tankard.

Such, at least were the revelations his wife Mrs Beryl Formby, made to the wireless public in a merry little broadcast last night. I listened and chuckled with the rest of them. But, Mrs Formby,, what about those cars?

For if George has a singular prejudice for jumpers and tankards of milk, he has a grand passion for motor-cars, and is never, I know, happier than when he is deep in a car's entrails.

Why, from what I hear, they have to sometimes to restrain him by force or he would be in every motor showroom in the street. For he loves cars, devotes every leisure hour to acquiring an inordinate amount of oil and grease on his hands, his face and everywhere else while he concerns himself with the mysteries of the internal combustion engine.

All of which, presumably, is a sequel to the days when this charming, unspoilt star of the films was a motor-cycle fan. He was in his time a daring motor-cyclist, and one of the fastest in his realm. They had no need to engage understudies for the big shots in "No Limit" the crazy motor-cycle saga. George preferred to play them himself.

*Thanks to Charles Stewart for sending the article in. Actually the reporter got the last paragraph wrong. Stunt riders - as they now call them - were used in "No Limit". The insurance company, and Monty Banks, wouldn't allow George to have a bash himself. The first scene - when George crashes through the garden hedge - is played by a stunt rider.*

## \*\*\*\*\* Have A Laugh . . .

Army recruit: You can't take me for the army, I'm shortsighted!

Army MO: Don't worry, we'll put you at the front!

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Doctor: I've got some bad news and some very bad news - which do you want first?

Patient: I'll have the bad news first.

Doctor: You've only got an hour to live!

Patient: And what's the very bad news?

Doctor: My watch has stopped!

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Cowboy went to the Policemans Fancy Dress Ball, dressed as a 'bag of crisps,' and he was charged for rustling!

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## Don't be miserable all your life - have a day off.

**BBC Radio 2** - Wed. 12th March and I've just been listening to Ed Stewart on Radio 2. Now I didn't quite get the gist of what it was all about but he introduced an orchestra of players who might have been getting together for some sort of charity.

What interested me was that he introduced Eric Clapton on "Ukulele" and Eric strummed a few chords on a wooden uke.

Now I wondered if maybe Eric took an interest in the uke when George Harrison introduced Anthony Mason to him - who knows? When you get a big name like Eric Clapton playing the uke it can only be good for the GFS. It might become a popular instrument again.

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**For Sale . . .** On behalf of the late Ron Holliday's wife, Ellen, I have for sale several items which belonged to Ron:- All proceeds go to Ellen.

Phil Cartwright Abbott copy Uke Banjo in immaculate condition and very good sound - £375 or nearest offer. Top quality case.

Several home taped videos including several taken at the Leeds Branch and also a quantity of home produced audio tapes of the Blackpool meetings. Stan Evans

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**Where Have They Gone????** About 5 years ago we had about 50 to 60 regular and keen young members in the society. Youngsters like Alan Yates of Fleetwood, Christian Lee of North Wales, Peter Thomas of Mablethorpe, Lyndon Garvey and the Middleton family of Warrington, Kieran Marshall of Runcorn, Michael Davies of Blackpool, Adam Tempest of Wigan, and Jenny Cronshaw of Swinton. One popular little fellow was 5 year old Michael Davies of Blackpool, who played the spoons at the age of 3 and went on to play and sing George's songs on TV.

We had loads of kids! But where are they now and why have they stopped coming to the meetings?

These youngsters were G R E A T!!! and they picked up all the skills of fingering the uke quicker than we older ones could open a uke case. It was a pleasure to watch them perform on stage.

It would be very pleasing to know that George's songs will still be around in another 20 or 30 years time but unless the youngsters are encouraged then I'm afraid that we can say goodbye to them.

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**Forget the NEWSLETTER and I'll send \*#\*#\*#\*#\* Harry Round**

**North Wales Branch** - Our latest meeting at Penyffordd proved once again to be a huge success with more than 50 people in attendance. This coupled to the fact that we had no less than 22 players made for an extremely busy concert which went on until past 11.30pm. We even had to cut short the final Group Thrash!

Chris & Denise Wood came from Crewe and Chris made his debut on the banjo. Well done Chris, and remember that you've overcome the worst hurdle now! A local first-timer by the name of Bernie Jones, also entertained us on the banjo and I feel sure he'll be visiting us again also.

We must always strive to make new members welcome and go out of our way to befriend them. After all, it's not much fun attending a 3 hour concert and sitting alone, is it? If we see a new face we should approach them and if necessary, encourage them to sit with us or with other members. George & Beryl would wish it this way.

Raffle prizes are always greatly appreciated so please bring one along. It helps to pay our rent - many thanks.

#### GEORGE'S EASTER BONNET PARADE

Our next meeting is on Friday 4th April. It will be a theme evening entitled "George's Easter Bonnet Parade" and there'll be prizes for those wearing what are adjudged to have the most novel hats to do with GF. So come on and get your thinking caps on. See you there - Dennis.

*Thank you Dennis. Good idea about the Easter Parade. It'll be a good night like the Christmas Parade! So come on you North Walingtons "Get Cracking" - get it? (get cracking - Easter eggs?) - forget it! See you there!*

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#### Anagrams by Derek Ball - Crewe

All are anagrams of George's Leading Ladies.

- |                       |                       |                      |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Sold modern fence. | 2. Ply all rich vets. | 3. How is it George. |
| 4. Kid took wrap.     | 5. A sly hawk.        | 6. Old wry pal       |

Answers on page 19.

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**Nowt** to do with George but I've just received a copy of an old song called Wigan Pier. It was registered for copyright in 1922 by Francis, Day & Hunter. The chorus goes:

Wigan Pier, Wigan Pier, that's the favourite beauty spot of Lancashire.

Bright and breezy, you can stroll, by the C. O. A. L. - Coal

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**Don't Forget the Special at Warrington May 30th**  
For George's Birthday

## How George Saw Himself On Screen

If ever there was a young man unspoilt by fame it is George Formby. There is not an ounce of conceit in him! I was talking to him at his home in Little Singleton - "Beryldene" and Beryl had to summon him out of the garage. "He's never happier, I know, than when he is in the garage, his head buried in the bonnet of the car and a great quantity of oil all over him."

We were soon talking about his latest picture "Trouble Brewing" and we had not been talking about it longer than a couple of minutes when he made a confession. "A month or two ago, when they were showing it in Blackpool for the first time, I walked into the Odeon and nobody recognised me. They'd House Full notices outside. Not" said George with a hoarse little chuckle, "that I objected to that, you know. - Why should I?"

### HE STOOD AT THE BACK

"Well," he said, "they said at the box office that I could stand at the back, so there I was left. I stood at the back. And do you know? It was the first time I'd seen the film. It's a fact! I'd been shown the rushes at the studio but never the complete film. I happened to be out of the country when they had the trade show."

Nobody suspected his presence at the back of the circle. They laughed such a lot at times they were nearly rolling in the aisles. He said, "It gives you a queer sort of sensation to see yourself in a film. Business is so good that I suppose it is a good film. But everytime I see myself on screen I say to myself. George my lad - you could have done something there which you didn't do. You missed something else there!

That, I am told, is the truth! Mrs Formby confirmed it. "There is no stricter critic of his own films than George himself," she said. He always seems to think that he could have done better than he has done."

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**Steve Holden** on 0161 335 0617 is selling his collection of Lps, Annuals and Film Scripts. There is a range from Tony Hancock, George Formby, Fawltly Towewrs, Benny Hill, Goon Show, Victor Borge and many more. He is selling these items or he will consider exchanging them for video copies of "On The Buses" or "Likely Lads."

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**What a nice Surprise!!!** At the Penyfford meeting Reg Mendellsohn presented me with a "Banana" for my collection. Very nice Reg. Very kind of you - quite a surprise. Stan Evans.



# A Really Great Night at Liverpool - 9

was wonderful seeing a full house! All the seaside towns turned up:- Dennis Lee from N.Wales, Eve & Charles from Blackpool, John Taylor from Morecambe, Steve & Doris Raymond from Southport, and then: Des Redford from Crewe, Jim & Joan from Haydock, Harry & Lottie from Earlestown, Ged Jennet from Widnes - and many more. It was a wonderful night.

Top of the bill Harry Stanford, as usual, did a 2 hour spot! He was dragged off after the first 20 minutes but continued to come on stage in Jimmy Cricket fashion - "and there's more." Anyway, we are pleased that the 85 year old is in fine fettle! Good for you Harry!

We are pleased that George's light has been shining for Steve Raymond. Due to health problems he hasn't been able to attend the meetings, however, at the last meeting Steve was up on stage helping Doris with a few numbers. Doris is desperately in need of backing tapes. Can anyone help?

Incidentally, talking about George's light. Harry complained that I am always mentioning that George's light is shining for him and Lottie, but when Eva & I visited them, at Christmas, their living room light blew and they had to get an electrician to fix it. Well I don't know the answer to that one Harry. As usual you've got me stumped!



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## Another "Mr Bones"

By Brian Edge . . .

Walter Kirkland - Crewe's "Mr Bones" turns up at the meetings and, if requested he will do a George Cheetham with his Clappers (as we always called them). He sounds great!

Walter, Chairman of the local Parkinson's Disease Society, is encouraging Cyclists of all ages to "Pedal for Parkinson" on Sunday 6th April to raise money for vital research to help the 120,000 sufferers in the UK. Walter is seen here with President Ray Stafford riding pillion.

Well Walter, we wish you plenty of luck with the event and hope you collect loads of money. It's a worthy cause!



### 1979 Newspaper Cutting (No Name) - John Guy.

## A Century Turns Out Nice for George's Truest Fan!

His toothy grin and saucy songs were like a ray of sunshine through some of Britain's darkest years. And in one tiny terraced house the happiness that George Formby brought to millions lives on.



Mrs Booth yesterday

A hundred years old today, George's mother Eliza Booth still launches into his best-known songs and repeats his cheeky patter. A telegram from the Queen will evoke a million memories for the silver-haired old lady who herself once rubbed shoulders with royalty and saw her ukulele plucking Lancashire lad become the king of comics.

Now memories are still all she has left. Her son's £135,000 fortune went to his fiancée Pat Howson after his death 17 years ago, all except for £5,000 Mrs Booth won from the contested will. Her collection of all his scratchy old 78s disappeared from her former home. Even his cherished O.B.E., of which she is so proud, is only a replica.

She could be bitter, sad, and resentful as she sits in the jaded gentility of her front room in Wilderspool Causeway, Warrington.

But you could not find a happier centenarian, a spirited and still mobile woman who, though blind and virtually deaf, still tidies the house, and climbs the 25 stairs unaided by her companion and daughter, Louise.

"Memories - there's nothing nicer", she said, "And I don't think there is anyone alive with more - happier - ones than me. George's still with me day and night. I feel as though I can still sit alone here and talk to him. I can see him and hear him. There is never half an hour in the day when he is out of my mind. He was such a wonderful son, so kind, so amusing. That's how I spend my days, with my reminiscences. He would have been so pleased for me now, getting a message from the Queen".

Mrs Booth is spending her birthday at home, having her many cards read to her son Frankie.

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**Sale Meeting - Don't forget to visit them** in the new Woodheys Club Venue - see details on back page. Ken & Anne, Alice and all the others work hard to keep the meeting alive so they need your support.

### Willie Waterbucket

On one occasion, when George was walking to the theatre, a small stray dog began to follow him. George took him along to the theatre and told him to stay in the dressing room while he performed. The dog, however, had other ideas and half way through George's act he walked onto the stage and sat at George's side. This brought the house down and after this George always had a love for small dogs and considered them to be lucky for him.



***The Bachelors.*** . . . We had a grand night at the Warrington Alliance Club on the 28th of Feb but there was a lot of confusion. Des Redford, Alf Caldwell - Warrington's little ray of sunshine - and I, were asked to give a half hour spot to support The Bachelors, but when we arrived they thought that they were giving a half hour spot to support us. We are only amateurs and therefore not capable of entertaining a packed audience for something like 2 hours, the Bachelors, however, are a professional group with tons of experience behind them.

To make matters worse they planed doing their spot and then dismantling all their P.A. equipment. This would leave us without a sound system.

After discussion it was agreed - much to our relief - that they would host the show for the night and introduce us as guests. Thank goodness we sorted that one out otherwise we would never be able to show our faces again in the Alliance club.



The Bachelors disbanded some years ago but recently, John Stokes, one of the originals, decided to re-form the group. They sounded really excellent. They are doing the Summer Season in Blackpool and also they are supporting Jimmy Cricket's bill at the Southport Theatre on Wednesdays - 3rd, 10th, 17th, 24th, and 31st of August. The tickets are £8 and £7 and consessions are available.

We went to see Jimmy Cricket in Cinderella recently and he, with supporting cast, put on an excellent show. It's worth a visit if you get the chance.

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**Don't Forget The Newsletter**

# Where's Our Jack? -

Several members have asked this question over the past couple of months but the answer is - We Don't Know! We haven't seen him anything of him and we get no reply when we ring his number.

George Cheetham was concerned because Jack has been calling on him every week for the past few years and he thought it strange that he had heard nothing from him. I called at his house but he wasn't at home.

It's a mystery - perhaps he's won the lottery and left the country or maybe he's started courting - who knows?



**Jack Skelland**

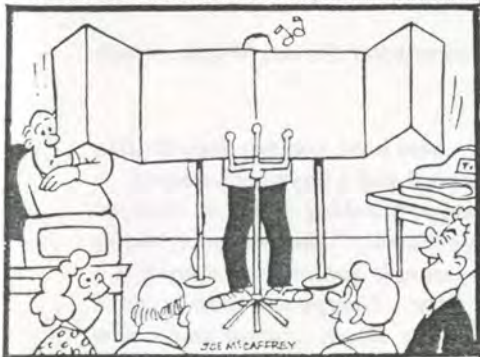
*Lottie Stanford and Joan Bramwell enjoying George's songs at Liverpool*



Lottie must have 'nerves of steel' listening to all them 70 year old jokes for over 50 years. Never mind Knighting Cliff Richards and Paul McCartney - what about Lottie!

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## Living on



**Bah Gum - Ged's got a big repertoire!**



**Wigan Metro leisure services department has not forgotten George Formby and the spirit of music hall which he represented. ☉**

**George Formby**, who was sufficiently superstitious to wear a mascot beneath his dress suit, a diamond and sapphire pin presented to his father by King George V when he played at a private party given by Lord Dergy in 1913, has a home in Little Singleton and an affection for this part of the world.

"I love Blackpool" he said when I asked him why he lived so far from the studios in London.

#### HE CALLED IT BERLYDENE

Only the other day he completed the purchase of his new home, 5 miles from the centre of Blackpool. "Garthallen" was its name. "Eh" said George, "that'll never do" He has called it "Beryldene" instead. Beryl is the name of his wife.

Beryl would be in the Palladium stalls last night when George sang one song - his second - which was one of the best of the entire evening - Chinese Laundry Blues.

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Blackpool Gazette 7th July 1934.

**George Wasn't too Happy** with Broadcasting as the song is already stale by the time he arrives at a town to sing it. However, he also realises that a broadcast can bring pleasure to many people who could not, for various reasons, see his act on the stage. He himself enjoys the "In Town Tonight" item best, but likes dance music. He thinks that Jack Hylton doesn't broadcast nearly enough. George still retains his interest in horse racing as he has a horse which has won two races this year.

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**Jon Baddeley** writes . . . Dear Stan, Recently Pam & I Stayed at Painton and I gave a turn in the hotel. The audience thoroughly enjoyed George's songs and throughout the remainder of the holiday different people came up to us and spoke about their memories of George.

One chap said that he knew George lived in Westminster Street, Wigan, which was situated where the rugby ground is now.

Through the Newsletter could you confirm this? Also have you any information as to the house number, since I believe that numbers 3 and 6 have been quoted.

*Right, thanks Jon. On the BBC TV documentary "Looking Back At George" which is now titled "The Life & Times of George Formby" the presenter, Garry Marsh' George's arch enemy in some of his films, wrongly quotes "And there it is. . Number 6" as the camera was panned over to the door. George was born at No. 3 Westminster Street which has been demolished. The Rugby ground and a new highway is on the site.*

**Wigan Pier - 2nd Year! . . .** The Wigan Pier staff got good feed back after we entertained there last year so they have invited us back again. This time it is for two days - Saturday & Sunday, 2nd and 3rd of August.

#### TIME TO BE CONFIRMED

The crowds also enjoyed us belting out George's songs and responded by throwing £116 into the George Formby collection bucket. This went to Alder Hey Childrens Hospital.

We had extremely good vibes at the Wigan Pier ground and the excellent weather conditions made it a truly enjoyable day.

So, make a note in your diary: **AUGUST 2nd & 3rd at Wigan Pier.**

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**GF on Radio** - It was a brief message only but apparently on Thursday night - 20th Feb, on Radio Cumbria, they were debating the life of George. Did anyone tape it?

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**Llandudno - Big Day - 19th April.** As reported in the last issue we are holding a special at the Risoro Hotel, Clemant St, Llandudno and the concert will run from 12 noon.

#### HOTEL ACCOMODATION

Anyone requiring hotel phone numbers should ring the Tourist Board on 01492 574005 and they will organise accomodation for you. Any other information can be obtained from Dennis Lee on 01244 544799. See you there.

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## Thanks from Eve & Charles Stewart

Dear Stan, Thank you for steering us to another wonderful outing amongst Formby friends at Crewe, and thanks to Eva for her warm hospitality. It's a longish journey in an evening to get from Blackpool to Crewe, but the rewards are worth it. It was a great evening of varied and enthusiastic entertainment.

The group thrash at the end was really something special . . . where do they all come from? You are certainly generating the true Formby spirit of fun and friendliness!

Jonathan and Pam Baddeley made everyone welcome and Jonathan did an excellent job both as MC and entertainer. It's a very relaxing venue with an attractive stage and first-class equipment. Sorry we missed Brian & Connie Edge. Thanks for the pleasure of your company. Chas & Eve.

# 16 *Spotlight on Geoff Shone - N. Wales*

In the last issue I gave a mention to some of the talented players we have in the N. West and how it would be wonderful to have our own backing group.

One particular member is Geoff Shone of the N. Wales Branch. Geoff was born in London in 1946 and moved to Penyffordd, North Wales, in 1950. This was the village where his father and grandfather were born. He has always had a flare for music and at the age of 14 bought his first drum kit. He formed a skiffle group with three of his pals and played at different dance halls around the Buckley, Mold and Chester areas. They named the group "J.B.Bishop and the Curates and carried their gear round the venues in an old hearse.

**BACKED THE STARS** Geoff, later went on to be a club drummer for Hughes Entertainments and backed such stars as Ken Dodd, Freddie Starr, Ruby Murray, Ken Goodwin, and many more. In 1977 he backed Alan Randall on stage at Manchester.



Geoff said, "Over the years I have been amazed at the number of artists who used a uke in their act. It is more popular than we are aware." Although he plays the drums in a local dance band he has always had the desire to master the uke/banjo. Three years ago his prayers were answered. His brother, who works for HTV Television, rang him to tell him that he had just interviewed Dennis & Christian Lee on TV News and they would be playing their ukes that evening. After watching the spot he rang Dennis and had a good 2 hour chat. Geoff and his wife, Dolwyn, have become very firm members of the N. Wales branch and also good friends of Dennis & Lesley. He is amazed at the friendliness of the members of the GFS both at local meetings and at Blackpool.

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**Jon Baddeley's Joke** - Harry has taken up the Violin and he is learning "I've Got You Under My Chin."

**Nantwich** - Don't forget the JAZZ - 29th, 30th and 31st March Easter Week-end at Nantwich. Our lads (and ladies we hope) will be performing at The Lamb Hotel, Hospital St, at 2pm to 3pm on Sunday the 30th March. Ring Brian Edge 01270 69836 for details or come along and join in.

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**Important!!!** Please note error in the last issue. The next Sale meeting is on the 25th April and not the 17th as published!

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**GFS Members are Tough!!!** The room at the Wintergardens was extremely cold for the March meeting but the members, wrapped in overcoats, braved the icy bitter draughts. Apparently engineers had been called out to adjust the heating system but unfortunately the cold breeze persisted in blowing through the entire hall. The room next door, however, was boiling hot and members complained that it was unbearable.

It was noticed that no-one sang "Sitting On The Ice In The Icerink."

Apart from the cold conditions it was an enjoyable meeting and the members, as usual, thoroughly enjoyed listening to George's songs. One delightful couple, who we met in the cafe, and who joined a month previous, praised George and said, "Joining the GFS is the best thing we ever did."

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**Bill Hilton** - Bob Drinkwater has just rung to tell me that 85 year old Bill Hilton, of the London Branch, and the Ukulele Society of GB, has just died. Although in his 80s, Bill was an excellent player of melodies on the wooden uke. Brother Ronald, known as the Industrial Monk, left a message to say that he will be attending the funeral.

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**Bob** also reported that every Sunday, at 11am, there is a programme on TV on 'Leisure' and what different people do in their leisure time. On March 2nd, the programme concentrated on the Ukulele. The Ukulele Orchestra made a brief appearance on the show, which was quite good, the rest, however, was disappointing as it consisted of BBC staff miming on the ukes. Did anyone tape this as I would like to see the show. Stan Evans

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**Town Crier - Oyez Oyez.** If ever you go to Sapcote in Leicester, you must look up Joe David. He is the Town Crier and he is also a uke playing member of the George Formby Society. For many years Joe was the Town Crier at H.M. Tower of London and he often held sessions at the Tower with other GFS members. He often rings up asking backing tapes etc.



# George's Grey Hat -

The light trilby hat worn by George Formby is becoming as famous in the film-studio world as the hat and cane of Charlie Chaplin. For eight pictures George has worn the same grey hat which, perched lightly on his head and with upturned brim, has become as significant as his uke.



George bought this hat in Manchestewr for 10 shillings (50p), wore it in "No Limit" for the first time, and has never used any other in his subsequent pictures. Although it is most carefully dry-cleaned after each picture and kept in a steel box in the studio wardrobe, the marks of damage sustained "in action" are beginning to show.

There's an ugly hole in the brim where it was nailed to the wall. The hat band has parted company where it was grabbed hold of by angry pursuers, and the crown is wearing thin through numerous falls of sand, snow and water and objects of various weights that have dropped from above.

Any stranger to the studio would argue, if they saw George and his wife Beryl in the projection theatre, that they were not on speaking terms, because there is always a vacant tip-up seat between them. Closer observations would reveal that the trilby hat occupies the middle seat and has done so ever since the first Formby film was made at Ealing. In the studio restaurant, too, the hat has a chair set aside for it in the corner which is permanently reserved for the popular pair at mealtimes.

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## Special at Warrington - Friday 30th May

In memory of George - who would have been 93 years of age on the 26th of May - we are holding a special meeting at the Alliance Club. Invitations will go out to all the old members who have dropped off over the past couple of years. All are welcome. Please bring a prize for the raffle and your uke.

Adm £1 - includes a sandwich - or two.

The Group Thrash will Bash on at pm so don't be late.

For details ring Stan Evans - 01925 727102.

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**SONGBOOKS** - Ring Songbooks Unlimited on 1-800-641-9797 for details of Easy Play Songbooks on 3 chords. Each book has about 100 old songs - £20 inc. pp. Most songs include guitar chords so ignore the 2 left-hand strings and play the 4 on the right. Not all easy chords so transposing is required.

# HILL CREST - Let's Have It Right!

As all N. W. Newsletter & GF Society Vellum readers will know Stan Evans has, for some time, been actively working to try to find a suitable sponsor for George's early home, in Stockton Heath, with a view to it becoming a local place of interest dedicated to the Formby family.

We hope that Stan will not consider it too pedantic of us to point out that the residence was named Hill Crest - not Hillcrest as stated several times in the Newsletter - Vellum article and also the local press write ups.

Whatever the house is called today one cannot get away from the fact that in 1923 it was called Hill Crest (two words). The South Cheshire Society, courtesy of Barry Bowler, have the electric bell push which was made especially for George Formby Senior. This shows "Hill" on one line and "Crest" on another.

Also, in Summer 1993 Vellum page 27, one can read a contract which is signed George Formby Junior, Comedian, Hill Crest, Stockton Heath and one would think that he knew the name of his own house. Brian Edge and Barry Bowler.

*Congratulations to Brian and Barry. They have spotted the deliberate mistake and therefore won a six month holiday each in the Bahamas. Now I will switch my search from a Hill Crest sponsor to someone who will fund the 6 month holiday. What about Dennis Lee - he's loaded! Thanks for writing in.*

## What a lovely little

instrument the ukulele is. Unlike the guitar it is small and compact and you can almost fit it into your pocket. It's a great little instrument to take along to a party to do a spot of entertaining. Everybody should learn to play one.

Just look at the smiling faces of Laurel & Hardy. They look great and the ukulele they are holding completes the picture.



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## Don't Forget The Newsletter

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Answers to Anagrams by Derek Ball.

1. Florence Desmond.
2. Phyllis Calvert.
3. Gogie Withers
4. Pat Kirkwood.
5. Kay Walsh.
6. Polly Ward

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# 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: 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 meetings Thurs April 25th, Thurs 26th June. 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 - For George's Birthday 30th May.

**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 - April 15th

So as George would say -

**“Get Cracking”**

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