

THE NORTH - WEST

# GEORGE FORMBY

## Newsletter 24

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# Newsletter 24

For two years, with the help of the members, we have produced snippets of news items and sent them out to all the readers. Some say: "I read it from cover to cover and then keep picking it up only to find something that I hadn't previously read." - Wonderful!!!

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**A Word of appreciation from Brian-** As you read these notes, this Newsletter is celebrating its second birthday. It would be inappropriate to let the occasion pass without making special reference, and giving thanks, to the Newsletter Editor, Stan Evans. Stan has done so much over the years, in promoting the continuing popularity of George Formby, that his efforts are impossible to adequately describe. Whilst in his working life Stan was a forthright, hard hitting and successful business man, he is to the George Formby aficionado a kind, thoughtful and generous friend. He is always the same 'old Stan' whatever the time of day and nothing is ever too much trouble to him.

He never fails to do his best to cheer up those who are ill at home or in hospital and he loves children, never failing to encourage them in playing the uke. We all know how hard Stan worked for young Ashley Lynch (who was terminally ill) in an effort to make his last months very happy ones. He is generous to a fault and often can be seen giving youngsters tapes etc., off his stall in order to encourage them.

For N. West branch members Stan gives a huge chunk of his time in producing this excellent newsletter, which not only keeps us all up to date with local news in between issues of the Vellum, but from the sales commission helps branches with their funds. Thanks Stan from everyone for your huge contribution and good luck with Volume Number Three. *Thank you Brian, it is very comforting to know that the work that goes into producing the Newsletter is appreciated. Fortunately I find it very interesting work and look forward to receiving news items from the members. Many Thanks to all.*

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Incidentally - like George, our Newsletter was born under the sign of Gemini which means that it is full of quick thinking chatter. - Sounds about right!

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**Slip up** - The next Sale meeting is on Thurs 19<sup>th</sup> of June and not the 26<sup>th</sup> as published in the last issue. Thereafter every 3<sup>rd</sup> Friday.



## The Formby Story - Part 13 by Stan Evans

There was sadness in Warrington. The town had lost its well known personality and a character who had kept them alive during the most difficult periods. The family had also lost the only breadwinner. It was impossible to believe that such a successful and active man had finally succumbed to the dreaded illness that had haunted him all his life. He put on such a good show that the people thought it was all part of the act. "Little do they know," said George, "that I am dying."

The time of the funeral was a difficult period for Eliza, she was expecting her twelfth child and therefore unable to attend. The child died! From the twelve children only seven survived: George, Louisa, Ella, Mary, Ethel, Frank and Ted.

There are very few family photographs which include George. This is because he was sent away from home to learn the horse racing business. It was hoped that someday he would be able manage the family stables.



The above photo doesn't include George, so maybe the constant separation from his family home, during the early years, left him with a feeling of despair. It has been said that perhaps this is the reason why he gradually developed independence from his family. Many times George attempted to run away from the stables to be with his brothers and sisters. He would occasionally run away and turn up at the Bay Horse Hotel, Warrington (demolished recently) and plead with the landlord, Tommy Roberts, who he called uncle Tommy, to house him for the night and ring his father in the morning. George was frightened of meeting his father until Tommy had cleared the way for him.

On one occasion George ran away from the stables and attempted to board ship at Dublin. His mother heard of the escape and immediately contacted the police, who made an arrest him and took him back to the stables. That night, the ship, The Leinster, was torpedoed and 510 people lost their lives. Continued . . . .

## George Formby Calling - Part Two - That

telling off from Beryl lasted throughout the day, (clever girl, she knew it was only way to keep me from thinking about the evening show.) I remember we patched it up and went on a tour of the shops down Oxford Street. Strangely enough I wanted to buy a bicycle - a thing I hadn't ridden since a kid. To pacify me Beryl bought me one. I - who had always had a passion for cars - wanted a bicycle.

I was allowed to drive it round the shop, and when I saw the assistants and the customers exchanging glances and looking as though they were going to start tapping their foreheads in sympathy, I took it in the street for a spin.



Down Oxford Street I went like an eight year old. That was one of the most glorious rides I'd ever had - it soothed my nerves. At the Command Performance at the Palladium that evening I was one of the calmest people back stage. It was the row with Beryl that had done it (plus the bicycle) - I'd been so worked up that I had no more nerves left in me.

Came the time for my turn. With a kiss from Beryl who was standing in her usual position in the wings. I got to the centre of the stage and went straight into my first song - with my faithful "uke" - without looking beyond the footlights. I felt the warmth of applause and laughter coming over from a marvellous house. It was really wonderful that reception. I then did a thing I never thought I would have the nerve to do. I looked up at the Royal Box and saw the Queen laughing. It was such a friendly, almost homely expression that I thought it was silly ever to have imagined a thing like nerves on a night like this. It was the greatest moment ever.

There is no greater honour than appearing before one's King and Queen and I felt twice privileged because it was my first performance and I was wearing, beneath my lapel, the tie-pin presented to my father by King George in 1913 at his command performance. I thought how proud my dad would have been to have seen me perform before Their Majesties just as he had done in the hey-day of his fame. There was a party after the performance which Beryl and I were going to - we had brought our evening clobber along all ready to change. But we didn't go to that party. We changed our minds and decided that a walk was all we wanted to cap such a wonderful evening.

More Next Month.

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Harry says: The best way to remember your wife's birthday is to forget it once!



# Friend of the stars



● Dorothy Day

**MERSEY** songwriter to the stars Dorothy Day has died, aged 79.

The colourful entertainer penned tunes for the likes of George Formby, Des O'Connor and Max Bygraves.

In addition, she performed successfully on the stage and appeared with Frank Randall and Ken Dodd.

Dorothy, whose birth name was Jenkinson, was still working just four years ago when she wrote a poem about Liverpool which is now archived at the International Library of Poetry.

By Barry Turnbull

Her sister, Hazel Physick, said: "Dorothy had a colourful life and was well known in the '40s and '50s.

"She worked with and wrote songs for some of the big stars. One of them featured in a film made by Flanagan and Allen.

"I am sure a lot of the older people will remember her fondly."

Dorothy, a spinster, had lived in Hoylake for the last 25 years.



● George Formby

Newspaper cutting ? 1971

## Fiancee in Formby will row is dead



**PAT HOWSON**  
*'So much anguish'*

**MISS** Pat Howson, the ex-schoolteacher who inherited a fortune from comedian George Formby, has died in a nursing home, aged 46.

George Formby died in March 1961, only three weeks after getting engaged to Miss Howson. George's wife Beryl died only a few months before the comedian.

Between then and his own death George made three

wills, the last making Miss Howson his heir to his £135,000 fortune.

The will gave her his yacht, two cars, a Georgian mansion at Lea, Lancashire, and a house at Lytham

The Formby family contested it and the fight dragged on for six years.

A settlement was reached under which £5,000 was paid to Mr Formby's mother and

£2,000 each to his three sisters

Later, Miss Howson, who lived at Preston, Lancashire, said that half the estate had gone in death duties and about £20,000 in legal and administrative fees.

She said: 'The will has brought me so much worry, anguish and heartache I sometimes wish I had never heard about it.'

**Werrington Branch** by Derek Ball - We had another good turn out on the 8<sup>th</sup> May and there seems to be a couple of new members joining each month now. Our tuition sessions continue to be popular.

It was great to see Pam & Jonathan Baddeley and John Guy. Brian & Connie Edge did a tour of Stoke before finding their way to Werrington village and Connie again got lost in the back entrance. Brian came up with a couple of new songs and Pam & Jon were on great form with their rendition of Noughts & Crosses - Pam on vocal and Jon on the clarinet. Some of us have problems mastering one instrument but Jon plays, clarinet, piano, electric keyboard and, of course, the uke.

Thirteen year old Stephen Hall made his stage debut with 'Little Stick of Blackpool Rock' and walked off to a thunderous applause. He has only been playing since January but under the direction of Cliff Hine he's come on leaps and bounds. His mother, Lorraine, tells me that he loves George's films and songs and practises playing every day.

Whispering Carl Basford is coming on like a real pro. and our eight year old Rebecca Snow, who is always on stage first for the thrash, has promised to go solo at the next meeting. On a sadder note but Bill Turner, Gary Luyt and Barry Bowler were all under the weather on the night.

By the way Stan. In reply to your query in the last issue, a Boster is Stoke Potters talk for 'A REET GOOD DO.'

*Thank you Derek. Now what I'd like to know is 'What was Connie doing in the back entrance?'* *Many thanks for the computer 'chords' programme.*

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**Harry's** (before the first world war) **Story** which got me into trouble for not printing. - My dad worked as a 'Morning Man' in a pub when they used to open at 6am. Next door was a chip shop where the owner rented out the upstairs room. George Formby Sen. rented it when he appeared at the local St Helens theatre. My dad was moving some empty beer bottles in the back yard before the pub opened at six and he could hear someone coughing in the chip shop yard. He looked over the wall and saw it was George Formby. My dad said, "That's a bad cough you have, I'll go and get you a drop of whisky." Which was very much appreciated by George. My dad took him a drop each morning for the rest of the week.

GF told my dad that he'd always been troubled with his 'Brown Cart Horse' meaning 'Bronchitis' Ah well, I've got that off my chest. If George's father lodged over a chip shop that must be the reason why he is a 'chip off the old block.'

*Ger-off . . . I'm sure I've printed your story before - you old cheat.*



## Mary Makes her Debut at Crewe- Brian Edge.

Anthony Mason (uke & vocals), Jonathan Baddeley (clarinet), Steve Hassall (drums) and Walter Kirkland (bones), performed a rousing finale to the Crewe April meeting with that great number 'You Can't Stop Me From Dreaming'. And they brought the house down. It was great to have Anthony with us again. Apart from his obvious talents on the uke he has a lovely clear voice which enables the audience to hear every word of the lyrics which is important with comic songs. We were very pleased with the sound mix and feel sure that our hard working team are winning through in that respect.



Full marks must go to Carl Basford who has quietly improved his act and considerably widened his repertoire of songs. Carl remembers to add that extra dimension to his act by the use of small 'props' which enhance audience enjoyment considerably. He also tackles numbers which are not often performed, his latest being 'Sunbathing In The Park.'

You've heard lots of reports about the youngest member, Gareth, but this month we are able to report on the debut of our oldest member. Our very own - Mary Atkinson, graced the boards for the first time at Crewe and what a performance she gave. At a very young, and indeed a very attractive, 84 years of age, Mary must surely be one of the oldest active lady uke players in the GFS - and what is more she doesn't sit down to play.

Alan Newton, another up and coming asset to our playing strength, made his debut on the night. His performance of 'Shine' went down very well and everyone was delighted with his solo on the Kazoo - well done Alan.

In fact, all performers were good on the night and the 55 who attended had a great night out.

**CREWE PRACTICE and TUITION NIGHT.** - The next practice night will be on the 17<sup>th</sup> of June at 7.30pm.

*Thanks for your report Brian. Now there wasn't quite as many at the April meeting but this is because the Sale branch held their meeting on the same night. Anyway, it was a grand night.*

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**Les Pearson** rang with a report that George was mentioned several times on TV on Sat 17<sup>th</sup> May. He was mimicked by Les Dawson in "A Tribute To Les" who impersonated George playing the uke and singing "Windows." He was also copied by John Parrot in the TV show "Question Of Sport" when John was shown a snippet of film of a motorcycle rider. He claimed that it looked like George Formby and went on to sing "Windows" and "Nightshirt." GREAT!



# 8 Ukulele star's

## Essex Branch of the GFS -

Just received an invitation from the Allan Todd, the branch secretary, who is asking us to attend their special meeting on the 30<sup>th</sup> of August at the Herongate Football Club, Brentwood. Accommodation can be found or if anyone wishes to take a van, or caravan, it can be sited there.

You can ring Allan on 01371 820120.  
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## Billy Uke

Scott - Was known as Billy Ukulele Scott but he chopped it down to "Uke" when he discovered that the poster printer would make bolder letters if the words were short. Unlike George he didn't produce any records or tapes.



Silver screen racer: George Formby with Florence Desmond in *No Limit*

**QUESTION:** Did music hall star George Formby ride in the TT races?

**GEORGE FORMBY** (real name George Hoy Booth), born in Wigan on May 26, 1904, was a keen motorcyclist whose enthusiasm for two-wheeled travel was exemplified in his first major film, the Ealing comedy *No Limit*. In this tale of a TT rider he refused to let anyone else do his stunts.

He joined Blackpool Home Guard as a dispatch rider in World War II but his love of motorbikes didn't extend to real TT racing.

His father, Edwardian music hall entertainer George Formby Snr, sent his son away at the age of seven to train as a jockey but, after his father's death in 1921 and at his mother Eliza's insistence, George Jnr turned his attention from the stables to the stage, to carry on his father's act.

*Simon Clare, Ladbrokes, London.*

IN THE 1935 film *No Limit* George played a TT competitor who wins against all odds. Travelling from Slagdyke, Lancashire, with a home-built Shuttleworth Snape bike, he beats all the pre-war TT aces on a fictional Rainbow machine.

His co-star, Florence Desmond, urges him on over the famous Snaefell mountain course. My father Jack, who died only last year, was one of several local riders who did stunts for the film and enjoyed temporary stardom as one of those riding against George. It meant pay beyond comprehension for those days.

My late mother and mother-in-law appeared as extras in crowd scenes. *No Limit* used to be shown on the island during every TT Week and still appears occasionally on TV.

A statue of George in racing leathers, playing his renowned ukulele, has recently been erected in Strand Street, Douglas.

*Geoff Cannell,  
Douglas, Isle of Man.*



# racing Limits

THOUGH George Formby never rode in the TT races he did compete in grass track and sand racing in his early years. The Rainbow bike he rode in the film No Limit was in fact a disguised Ariel.

George owned several bikes, from a little James two-stroke to a Vincent Twin. In July 1947, Norton motorcycle company presented him with a 490cc International Norton (reg HVU 111) as a publicity stunt.

George was pictured astride the bike with his wife Beryl sitting side-saddle on the back. Beryl was actually scared stiff of motorbikes and never approved of George riding them.

George had the Norton only ten months before selling it for £250. It now appears at classic bike shows and is probably worth about £5,000.

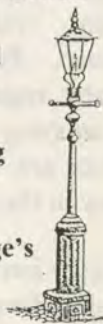
*C. Blacklin, Hesketh Bank, Lancs.*

## In your quiet moments

please spare a few thoughts for Steve Raymond, of the Liverpool Branch, and Noel Currey of the Blackpool Branch. Both are attending hospitals and receiving treatment.

Let us hope and trust that George's light is shining for them both.

Our very best wishes to Doris and Sylvia.



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## Great Night at Liverpool

- Harry was on top form when he sang a load of Plantation songs: "Old Folks at Home" and Stephen Foster's "Massa's In The Cold Cold Ground" - which is a great little song that you've possibly never heard. Unfortunately 1910 was a bad year for jokes as Harry had to explain them all. Anyway he and Lottie had a great night.

Tom Bailey sends his thanks to those who brought raffle prizes along to help raise funds to buy PA Equipment. At the moment the amount raised stands at around £80 and the May contribution was given to Fred & Mike's fund for young Joseph Collins. He specially wishes to thank Charles & Eve Stewart, and Joan Bramwell for the kind contributions.

Also many thanks to Des Redfern for bringing along his portable Sound Unit and for bringing his Aunt Mary who at 83, did an excellent turn "with her little ukulele in her hand" - Wonderful. Many thanks also to Alan Chennery from the Crewe branch. These visits are really appreciated.

Special mention was made to the work that Fred and Mike are doing to help to raise funds to send 11 year old Joseph Collins to Florida to receive healing treatment from the Dolphins. This should be a wonderful achievement for Fred who is working (guided by Mike) on this project as part of his rehabilitation programme. We wish them the best of luck.



# Calling All George Formby Members . . . . .

Kevin Blanchfield is raising funds for the war veterans so we must organise a special meeting during this coming summer. Put some good Formby sound on and it is amazing how the crowds are eager to put money in the bucket.

It is very important that we never forget the old veterans of the two world wars.

We must get the wheels into motion as soon as possible.

## LAND OF HOPE AND GLORY \*\*\*\*\*

### Harry Says . . .

Stan, I think I've just reached the out-age. When you reach Eighty, everything seems to spread out, fall out or wear out. Well Stan, would you call that a knock-out.

*You're right Harry - once you pass 60 it all begins to click:- your back, your knees and your neck! Keep writing in. I'm sure I printed that letter of Harry's!*



# Kevin steps on pedal for poppy marathon

MOST people tackle at least one crazy venture in their lives - and Kevin Blanchfield is about to embark on his .

The 51-year-old is to cycle from London to the Arc de Triomphe in Paris to raise funds for the Poppy Appeal in North Wales.

His aim - and that of 300 other cyclists from all over the UK who will accompany him on the Pedal to Paris event - will be to cover 265 miles in four days.

Their route will take them through the World War I battlefields of the Somme and Oise regions of Picardy.

Money raised through sponsorship will help ex-servicemen who risked their lives in the Falklands, Gulf War, Bosnia, Northern Ireland and other conflicts.

"I am not an experienced cyclist so this is quite a serious challenge for me. It certainly won't be all red wine and

baguette lunches," said Mr Blanchfield, a Royal British Legion field officer for North Wales.

"The Legion here in Wales does a fantastic job supporting ex-servicemen, their dependants and their families, but like all charities we need every penny we can get.

"Each cyclist has been asked to try to raise £250 in sponsorship to cover expenses along the way, but my personal target is in excess of £1,000."

He added: "I would also like other riders to join me on this madcap adventure. It can be strenuous if the weather is hot, so riders taking part should be fairly fit."

Over the last four years the Poppy Appeal has helped more than 8,500 ex-servicemen in North Wales and has paid out more than £90,000 while obtaining more than £1m in pensions and benefits on behalf of those clients.

**□ PEDAL POWER:**  
Kevin Blanchfield of the Royal British Legion gets fit in preparation for his 265-mile ride from London to Paris

Picture: VIC CLEVELÉY

## Watch out for Ken and his ukelele

GRANDFATHER and Ken has set out on a George Formby fan sponsored walk along Ken Smith will strum the Leeds-Liverpool his way through Chor-Canal and will trek ley playing his ukelele from Wigan to Chorley next week in aid of a national children's charity.

He hopes to raise £50,000 for The Sick Children's Trust after being introduced to the work of Eckersley House, the trust's 'home from home' at St James's Hospital,

Leeds. Ken said: "I was a patient at St James's, Leeds, for a short time as a child when families were restricted to one hour of visiting time. I know first hand that kids need a lot of support."



● Ken Smith and his ukelele.

### KEN SMITH

Ken - who is doing a wonderful job raising money for children's hospitals - rang to ask if any of the readers would like to join him on the walk 'with their little ukeleles in their hands.'

If you do you can ring him on 01532 679613 and arrange to meet him at one of the points.

Drop a line if you are working on any charities



## SALE

What a great room they have at the new Sale venue. I was very impressed. The newly decorated room is very snug and ideal for up to about 35 members. A stage is fitted at one end and a drinks bar runs down the side.

It was nice to see Phil (TT Races & Baby) Jones back in the saddle and pleasing to see that he hasn't lost any of his skill with the uke. As usual Cyril Palmer did a fine job in dragging

Harry off the stage after 30 minutes even though he had requests for 32 verses of "Little Brown Jug." Jim Bramwell and Alf Caldwell (Warrington's Little Ray Of Sunshine) teamed up to give us Uncle Joe's Mintballs and the night went with a merry swing. As usual, the door keepers, raffle sellers, and folder uppers, Ann, Ivy, Sheila and Hilda, looked as gorgeous as ever and never failed to give the artists a hearty applause.

— Whoops - and young Alice

One or two problems arose with the sound system but these were easily rectified. Ken Ratcliffe has certainly done a fine job in finding the Woodheys Club.

Incidentally Ken's mother-in-law collects used stamps which are sold to help to buy Guide Dogs for the Blind. If you don't go along to Sale then please send to me and I will see that she receives

# Strumming up a toothy legend



MORALE RAISER: Formby at war

THE SOUTH BANK SHOW  
(ITV, 10.35 pm)

ARMED with a ukelele, saucy songs and a toothy grin George Formby made a major contribution to Britain's wartime morale.

His screen persona — a cheerful, gormless Lancashire lad who somehow always came out on top — struck a chord with the public.

Britain's top male film star from 1937 to 1943, he was also a great performer for the troops.

His brother Ted and sister Ella point out that off screen George was a serious man — but it was his wife Beryl who managed his career.

## Sacked

George once claimed she allowed him just five bob (25p) a day pocket money and certainly she kept a wary eye on his female co-stars.

Coronation Street's Betty Driver recalls how Beryl got her sacked after seeing her rehearsing for an early Formby film.

George's film career declined after the war but he had a West End hit with the musical *Zip Goes A Million*. Weeks after Beryl's death at Christmas 1966 George became engaged to schoolteacher Pat Howson but died of a heart attack three months later, aged 56.

Ted Formby did not approve of Miss Howson but George obviously did — he left her his considerable fortune.

TURNED OUT  
NICE AGAIN



# Great Sounds from Llandudno

What a wonderful long week-end, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> of May, the N. Wales Branch had at Llandudno. Mostyn Street was blocked off for three days during the festival and filled with all sorts of activities.

We had loads of Fun Fairs, Tombola Stalls, Bicycle Acts, Clowns, Town Criers, Buskers, Jazz Bands, Brass Bands, and thousands of people. Our group - all dressed up in straw boater hats and smart waistcoats - included Dennis Lee, Martin Fowell, Des Redfern, Ray Davies, Cliff Royle and last, but certainly not least, Whispering Kevin Blanchfield. They performed three times each day and immediately the first note was struck up the huge crowds would gather round. They were delighted with the sound of six players belting out George's Mr Wu, Blackpool Rock, Windows etc. and many of them attempted to join in. The lads finished their act with Vera Lynn's "We'll Meet Again" and the crowd - which completely blocked the street - gave a huge ovation. They thought it was wonderful and a sound they had never heard before. As the collection box went round, many of them came running to give their contribution and the delight on their faces told us that it had all turned out perfectly.

All credit must go to Dennis Lee for the wonderful organisation, the lads for giving full support with equipment etc. the branch members who played their part, and the players who put on such a great show. They all chipped in with bits of chatter on the mike and made the crowds very welcome. Immediately the players finished, the crowds would disperse and the acts that followed had to play to a mere half dozen. There is no doubt about it: The Formby sound has a lot to offer! Great work!!!! We must do more!!!!

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## The Dieter's Prayer

The Lord is my shepherd, He maketh me lie down and do press-ups. He giveth me sodium free bread. He restoreth my waistline and leadeth me past the fridge and biscuit tins for my own sake.

He maketh me partake of green beans, cabbage and cauliflower - instead of Pot Noodles and pies. He leadeth me past the fish and chip shops and doughnut stalls. Yea though I pass through the toffee shop, I shall not be tempted. For thou art with me.

Thou preparest a diet before me in the fat faces of my enemies. Thou anointest my salad with low calorie dressing. My cup shall not overflow. Surely wholemeal bread and fat free spread will follow me all my life and I shall endure the pains of hunger for ever and ever. Amen.

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Tond Getfor Het Swelternet



## Charles & Eve from Blackpool - 4<sup>th</sup> May 1997.

Stan, Eve has just commented on last night's meeting and how amiable and enjoyable the company was. "We're going back in time."

How nice it is to have a few lovely well behaved kids about, real little people taking it all in, selling raffle tickets and joining in the fun, and that fellow from Warrington was absolutely marvellous with them on stage.



That busy young pro, Anthony Mason must be taking up tap dancing, perhaps a few lessons from George Cheetham will help - anyhow, he had the shoes for it on show. They were given various names like - Co-ordinators, Gigolo Galoshes etc. They certainly improved his playing and he gave us great plonking.

The McSharry family came especially to spend the day in Blackpool and Paul is amongst the upper ranks of our entertainers. We are proud to attract such loving and supportive families . . . so with the benefit of such stalwarts as Jim & Joan, John Taylor, Harry & Lottie, all under the embrace of Alan Middleton we had another great night. Love to Eva, Charles & Eve.

*Thanks Charles for your letter and the newspapers. It was an excellent night at the Wainwright and I thoroughly enjoyed every minute. But wasn't it wonderful? Soon after I gave young Zara the Teddy Bear - or was it a Rabbit? - that I'd won in the raffle - I discovered that it was her birthday. Must have been inspired!*

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## Ethel Guest - Warrington's Gracie Fields

comes out with some comical sayings! She likes John Hickinbottom accompanying her on the piano - "John" she says "He can play with the lid down." Also, she claims, "He can follow the Aldermaston Marchers."

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**S. O. S.** does anyone know the words to the World War Two song? - "When You're Up To Your Neck In Hot Water, Be Like The Kettle and Sing" Please give Stan a ring if you do.

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## Just Received an Invitation from the ESSEX Branch.

Allan Todd, the branch secretary, has asked us to attend their special meeting on the 30<sup>th</sup> of August at the Herongate Football Club, Brentwood. Accommodation can be found and if anyone wishes to take a van, or caravan, it can be sited there. You can ring Allan on 01371 820120.

From **Connie Edge** - I was watching a documentary entitled 'The Village' on BBC2 on the 24<sup>th</sup> April. The programme dealt with all forms of village life and when they got around to the farm listeners heard George singing 'To Be A Farmer's Boy' as the farmer went about his work. Good old George, you can't keep him down!

From **Brian Edge** - Crewe's Harry Boffey visited Crewe's magnificent theatre 'The Lyceum' recently to see an Old Time Music Hall which starred among others ventriloquist Ray Allen with Lord Charles. Harry took his uke along and managed to get an audience with Ray, who after having a play on Harry's uke, autographed the vellum for him.

Peter Skellern and Richard Stilgoe entertained at the Lyceum Theatre, Crewe on the 26<sup>th</sup> April. At one point during the show, whilst Peter was singing a romantic song, Richard produced a ukulele out of the grand piano and in a comic fashion accompanied him on the uke much to the chagrin of the soloist.

*Thanks Connie (best cup of tea in Crewe) & Brian - Keep sending 'em in.*

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**Did You Know** - Of course you didn't! that Beaverbrooks, the jewellers shop in St Anne's Square, Blackpool, is noted for the stars who go there to buy their jewels.

Julie Andrews called in there when she was appearing at the Hippodrome also Tom Finney and Stanley Matthews, the veteran footballers often call in. Once radio star, Al Reed, was a very pleasant customer.

George & Beryl called in on one occasion and George was shown a gold cigarette case. Beryl said, "Oh he doesn't need that, he's got more cigarette cases than you have!" Very tactful was our Beryl.

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**Eccentric Musicians** - Musical genius Arturo Michelangeli would abandon his recital if anyone coughed in the audience? Also, Shura Cherkassky would only play the piano if he had eaten seven grapes and walked on the stage with his left foot first. Australian pianist David Helfgott would hug members of the audience and do walk - abouts undressed.

I wonder if we have any odd-bods in our society? Keep your eyes open and let me know.

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**Harry says:** It's funny how a wife can spot a blonde hair on a chap's coat, yet miss the garage doors!



# HYLDA COMES HOME



**A TRIBUTE to the uncrowned queen of Blackpool comes to the Grand Theatre this weekend — the very place where she broke box office records more than 20 years ago.**

She *Knows You Know* tells the story of the pint-sized Hylda Baker and who better to portray the eccentric comedienne than one of her greatest fans Jean Fergusson.

Jean, better known as Marina in *Last of the Summer Wine*, has spent six years researching Hylda's life and career including the times she broke South Pier records in the 1950s and at the Grand in 1970.

## Play

Now, she has pooled all her information for a one-woman play which runs from Sunday to Tuesday.

Jean said: "About six years ago when I was appearing in pantomime as Marina someone remarked how she reminded her of Hylda Baker which was

• Jean takes to the stage as Hylda Baker (above)

**By NIKKI WILCOCK**

strange because when I was young I loved watching her on television doing her original stand-up routine and often impersonated her.

"Her life was hard to research because nothing was documented but I went via people she worked with and found her niece who lives in Lytham."

During her research Jean discovered many anecdotes including a huge flag Hylda had in the front garden of her Cleveleys home and a yellow and black American car both of which were emblazoned with her catchphrase She

*Knows You Know*. Jean had a hard task deciding which stories to leave out of the play but she intends to include them in a biography of the star.

"I really enjoyed finding out about Hylda's past," she added. "It gave me a chance to get under the skin of a very complex lady who was ahead of her time and had a struggle to make her name in a man's world."

## Routine

The first act of the play sees Hylda alone in her dressing room before her full stand-up routine and Jean believes this gives people a chance to see what she was really like.

"There are plenty of tears and laughter which Hylda felt came together and of course there are a few surprises," said Jean.

"The play has gone down well everywhere and we have had many

standing ovations which makes me feel the audience is cheering for Hylda as well as me.

"She appeared at many of the venues we have played to which adds a nice touch and it will be extra special to come to Blackpool which was her home and where she was so popular."

## Divas' date

**GET Lost in Music** when queens of soul Sister Sledge, and *The Three Degrees* burst into song for cancer victims on June 12 at King George's Hall, Blackburn. Tickets are £12, available on (0161) 877 7867, with proceeds going towards the Marie Currie Cancer Care charity.



## Nicky Martyn has just popped in for a chat.

Nicky was a GFS member many years ago and a friend of one of George's close contacts, Harold Fallows. Harold worked and redesigned many of George's ukes.

Nicky turned professional some many years ago and for a number of years he has been resident comedian, uke player, and compere, working on the Oriano and Canberra for the P & O Cruises. He has worked in America where generally they are not conscious of George, however there are certain areas that do remember him.



He met the Jim Solstram six piece band, in Singapore, and they got round to talking about uke/banjos. Jim said that he had seen Nicky on American TV and referred to him playing "The Window Washer." Nicky said, "Do you mean "When I'm Cleaning Windows?" - "Yes," replied Jim, "only when my dad sang this song he always sang "When I'm washing windows" as that is how they recognised it in America."

Jim then produced a very good quality Martin wooden uke and Nicky played "Washing Windows" for him. The following day, Nicky played, to an audience of around 2,000, to Jim's backing, "When I'm 64" and "Raindrops are falling on my head," which came over very well on the uke.

Nicky related to Harold's tale of when George - who was playing Warrington at the time - Fred Bailey and himself went along to Levi Richardson's Furniture store in Warrington to see a demonstration of uke/banjo playing by Alvin Keech.

### DISAPPEARING UKE

Harold was in the process of repairing George's big Gibson uke when suddenly it disappeared and they searched high and low looking for it. Many years later, when Harold was moving house, it was found down the back of the airing cupboard cylinder. After about 12 years of drying out George claimed that it was the best it had ever sounded.

\*\*\*\*\*

**Harry says: A bed is where one good turn can get all the blankets**



**Just Done a 280 mile Trip** for our old late friend

**Ron Holliday** ..... Ellen rang and asked if we could do a spot at the Skirlington Holiday Camp where they own a caravan and where Ron did a lot of entertaining. They were holding a special meeting to mount a plaque in memory of Ron. "No problem," says I, "We'll be there!"

Anthony Mason, Eva & I set out that morning and arrived about three hours later. We met Mac and Millie McGee on the site and discovered that about 200 of Ron's friends had turned up for the occasion. The club room was full.

Ron, an excellent dancer, had many dancing friends and they started to dance as soon as the music struck up. The presenter had a wonderful collection of old time sing-along tapes, which he played non-stop for about 2 hours.

It was our turn to entertain and Anthony & I opened up with "I Wish I Could Play The Ukulele," (which Ron often played at various charities). I followed with a Jim Reeves number and "Sing Me An Old Fashioned Song" and Anthony & Mac sang a number of George's songs. Mac sang "Match Stalk Men" and we all finished off with "Lamp Post." It all went very well and especially the grand feast that was laid on. Our thanks to Ellen for the invite. Stan Evans.

\*\*\*\*\*

## Have You Ever Had One of Those Days?

When the light at the end of the tunnel is the headlamp from an oncoming train.

When a short cut turns out to be the longest distance

When you agree with a fool and people don't know the difference

When friends come and go but enemies accumulate

When the other line keeps moving faster

When anything you decide to fix costs more and takes longer

When the repairman tells you that he's never seen a model like yours before

When in order to get a loan you have to have the confidence to prove that you don't need it

When you can't afford a get rich scheme

When you've just played leapfrog with a unicorn

When the horse you backed at 10 to 1 was still running at 5 past 3.

\*\*\*\*\*

**Dave Ellis - S. O. S.** at 1 Hazel House, Bromley Rd, Bromley, Kent BR2 0BL, is looking anything on Max Miller the Cheeky Chappie. Please ring him on 0181 464 3666 if you can help him, or drop a line.

\*\*\*\*\*

**Harry says:** He thought that Polyunsaturated was a parrot in a raincoat!



## What's on in the N. West? - George's Birthday. . War Theme Special at Warrington..

There's only 11 World War Veterans left alive in

the country and 3 of them will be with us at the

Alliance Social Club on Friday, 30<sup>th</sup> May.

Ted Rimmer (99) was in service with the Kings

Liverpool Rifles, Leo McCormack (100) was with the

Royal Horse Artillery and Wilf Walworth (99) fought

with the Enniskillen Fusiliers. Also we have members

of the Ex-Naval Association, British Legion, World War Two Society and also

members of the GFS. A group from the Warrington Museum will also be with

us.

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**Also - Wigan Pier on Sunday August 3rd at 1.30pm when we will be entertaining the crowds.**

For details of the above events please ring Stan Evans on 01925 727102.

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**Werrington Branch by Derek Ball - We had another good turn out on the 8<sup>th</sup> May and there seems to be a couple of new members joining each month now. Our tuition sessions continue to be popular.**

It was great to see Pam & Jonathan Baddeley and John Guy. Brian & Connie Edge did a tour of Stoke before finding their way to Werrington village and Connie again got lost in the back entrance. Brian came up with a couple of new songs and Pam & Jon were on great form with their rendition of Noughts & Crosses - Pam on vocal and Jon on the clarinet - Jon plays, clarinet, piano, electric keyboard and the uke . . . . not at the same time, of course.

Thirteen year old Stephen Hall made his stage debut with 'Little Stick of Blackpool Rock' and walked off to a thunderous applause. He has only been playing since January but under the direction of Cliff Hine he's come on leaps and bounds. His mother, Lorraine, tells me that he loves George's films and songs and practises playing every day.

Whispering Carl Basford is coming on like a real pro. and our eight year old Rebecca Snow, who is always on stage first for the thrash, has promised to go solo at the next meeting. On a sadder note but Bill Turner, Gary Luyt and Barry Bowler were all under the weather on the night.

By the way Stan. In reply to your query in the last issue, a Boster is Stoke Potters talk for 'A REET GOOD DO.'

Thank you Derek. Now what I'd like to know is 'What was Connie doing in the back entrance?' Many thanks for the computer 'chords' programme.



## **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: 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:- Thurs 19th June, all the rest will be held on the 3rd Friday. Adm now £1.  
\*\*\*\*\*

**Crewe Branch** Wistaston Memorial Hall - Ring Brian Edge on 01270 69836 Future dates - Fri June 27<sup>th</sup>, Fri July 225<sup>th</sup>. Adm 50p.  
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**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 - Jun 12<sup>th</sup>, July 10<sup>th</sup>, Aug 14<sup>th</sup>, Sept 11<sup>th</sup>, Oct 9<sup>th</sup>, Nov 13<sup>th</sup>, Dec 11<sup>th</sup>.  
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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.  
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**Deadline for next issue - 15th June**

**So as George would say -**

**“Get Cracking”**

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