

THE NORTH - WEST

GEORGE FORMBY Newsletter 31

Vol. 3, No.7
January 1998



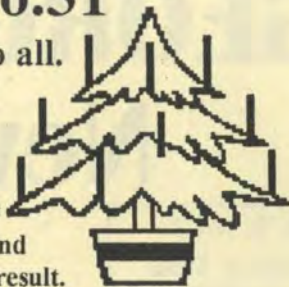
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Welcome to Newsletter No.31

A Merry Christmas & Happy New Year to all.

We are doing extremely well at the N. West Meetings and attendance is generally growing.



NEWSLETTERS 1-24. In the last issue

we reported that Brian Edge had instructed Remploy to bind the first two years copies and that I was waiting to see the result.

Well, at the Penyffordd Meeting I was delighted when the finished result turned up on my table. It was excellent!!! The first 24 issues were bound and covered with a deep red book case, with the words "North West Newsletters - in gold - stamped in. In fact, the job was so good that I couldn't believe that I had produced them. As you are aware, the Newsletters are produced with the aid of a simple photocopier but once they are bound they look real quality. I was completely "Gobsmacked" (which is a word that Derek Ball can't lay claim to) when I saw it, and consequently intend instructing Remploy to do the same job for my own copies. Colin Wood has also had his copies bound and he is delighted with the result.

Christmas Specials - Throughout the North-west we have held special Christmas meetings, which are improving each year. Penyffordd put on an excellent meeting with loads of Fancy Dress appropriate to George. It was fun all the way. The Blackpool Wainwright room was very well decorated and we finished the night with a number of Christmas Carols. Crewe will be holding their meeting on the 18th of December and Sale will be hold theirs on the following night, - 19th December.

Blackpool Evening Gazette 29th June 1944

NEW FORMBY FILM

By Charles Stewart

George Formby has this week completed making a new picture after eight weeks hard work, and is now back at his Singleton home with Beryl.

Entitled "He Snoops To Conquer" the film deals with town planning. George becomes the chairman of an urban council and presides over its meetings, which provide abundant scope for George's mannerisms and wittiness. He prepares an amusing questionnaire for householders and interposes such queries as, "Have you five inches of water in your bath," and "What kind of a house do you want?" He gets some forcible replies when he visits a number of houses.

Many Thanks To All Who Have Contributed to This Issue

The Formby Story by Stan Evans

George was now practising playing the uke but not taking it as serious as he should have been. He still hadn't wakened up the fact that this particular instrument, - along with Beryl, would be his soul mate for the rest of his life. This was because of his lack of experience in show business and because the only songs he worked on belonged to his father. These songs didn't suit the uke!



It was fortunate that his father was experienced in making records as this inspired George to follow the same pattern. On February 6th 1924 he made his first recording "Rolling Round Piccadilly" but this was rejected by HMV. This was a bad start to his recording career so perhaps at this stage he considered himself a failure compared with his successful father. Perhaps also, this may have inspired him to find a mate who could handle his affairs and guide him like his mother had done his father.

For a short period he courted a young girl who lived in his home village of Stockton Heath but George realised that this partnership wouldn't further his career so he broke the courtship off. This particular young lady may have been hurt by George's action as she remained in Stockton Heath, a spinster.

BERYL INGHAM

Beryl and her sister, May, had been performing a tap dance act which was billed as "The Two Violets" and on one occasion they were appearing on the same bill as George. He was in a black & white minstrel group.

George took a fancy to Beryl so each time he passed her he would attempt to break into conversation with her. The sisters had been brought up to beware of strangers so she would immediately give him the cold shoulder. She expressed that she didn't like him, or his father's old clothes, and she most certainly didn't like his act. Beryl was also engaged to be married to Joe Kenyon, a variety agent, who was also a friend of George's. But in Beryl he could see someone with the same drive and determination as his mother so he couldn't get her out of his mind.

Due to being sent away from home, at the age of seven, George had missed out on family life and a mother figure was what he desired. He needed someone who could take all the responsibility from his life and leave him to purely entertain. In Beryl he saw that very person and the fact that she was three years older suited him fine. More Next Month.

You've not sent a letter in yet - Have you fell out with me?

Great Party Night at Crewe - Brian Edge

It was great to have Dickie (on keyboard) & Dennis Mitchell with us at our November Concert. Whilst Dickie's taped music is heard at almost every meeting it was a special treat to have him with us live. Dennis Mitchell, the GFS Chairman commented on the warmth that he felt as he entered the hall and this was particularly rewarding as this is what we are trying to achieve. There was a great response to the request to get dressed up. Waistcoats and bow ties were in abundance, Chris Metcalf collected the money in a Bum Bailiff's Black Bowler hat, Joyce Sumner was sweet in her Victorian outfit complete with white mob cap and young Gareth resplendent in racing silks and black knee boots, went on to confuse Dickie Speake by singing "Windows" when Dickie expected him to sing "I Couldn't Let The Stable Down!"

Mary Newton dressed as a Formby song "Down On The Farm" whilst her husband Arthur, came as the one and only, "Mr Wu." Arthur ended up being serenaded by Dickie who sang a Billy Uke Scott number about a Ragtime Mandarin. Alan Newton, my partner in the Privet & Hedge duo, looked very smart in his dress tailed suit. Fred Stevenson and Bill Turner came in boaters and smart deck chair striped jackets.

Ivy Turner looked lovely in her Pearly Queen outfit, the hat was particularly beautiful. Barbara Ball was very smart in her black dress with boa complete with boater hat whilst Derek was dressed as a Zoo-keeper to go with his elephant monologue. Mary Atkinson was dressed in a U.S. army uniform and was alleged to be looking for a G.I. as she needed some new nylons!!! (do you remember those days) Des Redfern wore a policeman's outfit which fitted him a treat and which complimented his excellent rendition of "On The Beat."

Arnold Osborne, well what can you say about Arnold? He never fails to come up with something different - he had the biggest tie in the room. Carl Basford was another who baffled Dickie by dressing in a great outfit featuring plus fours and then went on to sing something totally different! Connie Edge wore her Victorian costume with fur tippet and yours truly a First World War Army Lieutenant outfit complete with Second World War Ribbons. A point which did not go unnoticed. Many of those present, however, asked if I was in the Geheimstaatspolizei (Gestapo)!! Charming folk - such warmth.

The night was full of surprises for me! It seemed that as it was my 65th birthday the following day that it was included in Pamela Baddeley's celebrations. They produced a great big cake iced for both of us. I was then lured onto the stage by the M.C. to help Pamela with a song and ended up singing "Down On The

It's your turn to write to the Newsletter

Farm" alongside Connie, my daughter and her husband Steven. It seems they had been practising for weeks!

It was good to see Chris Wood and Denise again. Chris looked extremely smart in her army uniform. The twins Lianne & Jonathon were on stage for the first time and we hope to see more of them in the future. Frank Murphy excelled again with a difficult piece, "Out In The Middle East." He brought the house down. We had many acts to fit in on the night so apologies to anyone who was disappointed. As the night went on Dennis Taylor, the President of the GFS, paid us a visit along with Peter Pollard. Everyone went home. Thanks Pam for sharing your special night with me.

This has been a rather long report and I have overrun my space allocation, if you haven't been mentioned I'm afraid Stan must have edited your bit out!

Oh No I Haven't - But I must congratulate you Brian on your outfit, you looked very smart! There was quite a buzz going round on who you looked like and some thought there a good resemblance to Adolf Hitler. Of course I didn't agree because Adolf was only about 5'6" tall. Whoever it was you did him justice! Jim Bramwell & I went dressed as Civilians but nobody noticed. It was a good night!

Anthony Mason

I've played Blackpool Tower recently accompanied by the Wurlitzer - forgotten who was playing but whoever he was - I think it was an "He" - or was it a "She" anyway, whoever it was they were very good. I played two - or was it three - 20 minute minutes spots (or it could have been 25) anyway it was well received and they all liked it as well. Over the past weeks I've been rehearsing with the Ged Hone Jazz Band and we should have a CD in the shops for Christmas - Hopefully - Half has been recorded already so it won't long to record the other three quarters.



Contents:- Five Formby numbers - Baby, Fanlight Fanny, Lamp Post, Windows, and Blackpool Rock. Other songs are - Ukulele Lady, Putting On The Ritz, Mr Sandman, I'll See You In My Dreams, Home In Pasadena, Hard Hearted Hannah, Happy Feet, Happy Days are Here Again, Everything Stops For Tea, Jolson Medley, Dinah, Sweet Sue and Sweet Georgia Brown Medley, Five Foot Two and Somebody Stole My Gal Medley, Crazy Words and Button Up Your Overcoat. If I Had A Talking Picture Of You. It'll be in the shops soon.

The band consists of Double Bass, Clarinet, Trumpet, Rhythm Guitar and me on Vocal & Uke. Due to the band leader having health problems we had to postpone the trip to Japan. *I'll Bet the Japs are pleased!!!!*

Any gossip or tittle-tattle - send it to the Newsletter

A Bit of Fun from Sam Bass -

'Oh Elephant why do you blush so pink?' said the wiskery melon 'Oh why?'

'Oh' said the elephant, 'what do you think?'

I'M SHY HAIRY MELON, I'M SHY'

"The magistrate found the offence was grave, the case had him revolted

The chocolate raisin was a knave and the peanut was assaulted"

Crewe - Improved Stage Lighting - As

reported in last month's Newsletter the Memorial Hall Committee at Wistaston had agreed to install better stage lighting for us. Well the work was done just before the November meeting and we were all very pleased with the results. The job cost a total of £450 and as we were one of the main users of the stage lighting the Committee asked us for a donation of £75 towards the cost. This was a very reasonable request in the circumstances and the money has now been donated to the Hall.

S. O. S. from Doreen Crosby who sings some

wonderful songs at the Sale Meeting - "I'm Looking For A Man" is one of her favourites. Well she's not attended for a few months so it was a pleasure to hear from her. Now she came up with a query that I couldn't answer but I'm sure that someone will. . . . Do you remember radio's Mr Murgatroyd and Mr Winterbottom? Well we know that they were played by Tommy Handley and Ronald Frankau, but who played who?

So come on you oldies - get your thinking caps on and give me a ring on 01925 727102 with the answer.

The Newsletter is good for queries and we almost always receive a reply. My request for recent songs brought replies from three readers and I was extremely pleased. If you have a query about songs etc. let me have it.

Warrington has another claim to fame. For the N. Wales December Meeting, Dennis Lee rang to ask if I would collect his order for meat pies from Yates Greer who are in our market. "No Problem" says I and off we went to collect them. Now I don't eat meat but apparently they tasted delicious and several have called to say that they were the best meat pies they had ever tasted. So if you want a good tasty feed come to Warrington.

N. Wales Branch - by Cliff Royle

Our Christmas Party was attended by about 50 members and friends and all enjoyed an excellent buffet. The room had been tastefully decorated for the festivities by the British Legion, - additional adornments provided by Lesley Lee (and I don't mean her skimpy "Keep Fit" rig out. Dennis Lee introduced us to the new mike that was installed half way down the hall which made real improvements to the proceedings.

The "Mob" from Crewe again supported us in their usual friendly way and the Fancy Dress parade was very well supported: the theme being "George Formby." The winners were Young Frank Murphy, Auntie Mary (who showed us what she is made of) and Carl Basford.

There were some good turns, including duos and triplets, with one or two appearing on stage for the first time including Alan Whittaker, dressed as Mr Wu. The Ladies from Crewe, Connie and Auntie Mary, did us proud, and the performances of young Stephen Hensall and his father were terrific. We have a real "up and comer" in Stephen.

LLANDUDNO MEETING

Please don't forget the Llandudno "do" on April 25th. Dennis Lee hopes to fill a hotel with overnight guests on the Saturday so that we can have an all night session following the concert. This all depends on us filling the hotel. Cost is £25 for B/B. Please let Dennis know if you wish to stay on. He has put a lot of effort into making it a success so please support him.

AL JOLSON

Margaret & I recently attended an Al Jolson Stile concert in Winsford with Tom Meredith and his wife Norah. We were surprised to find we were sitting behind a number of "Formby Fans."

Thank you Cliff for the report. I was delighted when young Stephen actually sung for the very first time. Up to now he has been too embarrassed to take the plunge but now he'll never look back.

And what about Auntie Mary - "Saucy fast cat" (as George would have said) - dressed as "The Barmaid At The Rose And Crown?" She played the part so well that I didn't recognise her at first.

S. O. S. - Did Anyone Record The "Collectors Lot" which was screened on Channel 4 on Tuesday 9th December. It featured a man who was "Bananas" about anything to do with Bananas. He collected anything and everything to do with the fruit. A Banana Fanatic! Any information please?

Happy Players - All my readers, who play the

uke banjo, appear to be Happy People! Dick Walker, of Accrington, is a typical example! He has recently been in hospital with a heart condition and still house-bound, his wife has accidentally thrown his uke tuition book in the dustbin (I wonder if it was an accident) and consequently he can't play his uke, but he writes a very pleasant letter to me and completes it with a drawing of a Wally Cronshaw type of Happy Face.

Good for you Dick, Do you think your wife was dropping a hint? Keep your eye on your uke.



Blackpool Evening Gazette 6th February 1942.

Comedian George Formby is to spend the summer in Blackpool. Having made a remarkable recovery from the throat trouble which for a fortnight has engaged the attention of London specialists, George has now been able to confirm a provisional agreement to appear in this season's revue at the Opera House.

This will be the comedian's fourth season on the Fylde coast. Following a summer as resident comedian at the Palace Varieties, he was the star of "King Fun" at the Opera House in 1936, and again at the Opera House the following year, he led the revels of Mr Jack Taylor's "King Cheer."



Before his illness began I spoke to George about the proposed season at the Opera House, and although at that time, there was still one or two minor details to be settled, he told me, "I'll be coming all right. Nothing can stop me. You don't know how I'm looking forward to being in Blackpool again."

A few days later Mr Formby was taken ill. He had to leave the Manchester pantomime and be attended by specialists in London. They were doubtful about the Blackpool season. Would George be fit in time?

But George settled that yesterday. "Fit!" he said, "Why lad, I'm as fit as you are. It's just this husky croak I've got to get rid of. I haven't dared to sing for two weeks. The doctors say that if I don't make it in seven weeks it'll be too bad. So for the present I can only play my uke."

Thanks to Charles Stewart for the article.

S. O. S. Alan Whittaker has just phoned. Has anyone got any Keech

... .. He must need a tension rod. Ring him on 01492 543408

Today's Music Unpleasant Experience!!!

The grandchildren, and their friends, dominate our home with modern music blasting from every corner of the house. I Recently heard the most horrible sound coming from the bedroom and naturally thought that one of the friends had possible eaten too much and was being terribly sick. I dashed upstairs expecting to see someone with his head in a bucket, only to find that they had left the CD player on. It was a group called "Radio Head" and apparently they are all the rage with a type of noise called "Indie Music." Believe me. It is dreadful and completely opposite to G F music.

More From Charles Stewart - Charles must spend half

his time searching through the old Evening Gazette newspapers - here's another two reports from him . . .

JUNE 6th 1941 - One of his latest films is called "Spare A Copper" said George. That is all he can spare after paying income tax! "Three weeks recent variety brought George £3,000, and I'll get £75 out of it," says George. Two pictures a year bring him more than £20,000 and every thing else he does is rated at 19shillings and six pence in the £1 tax. "I'm lucky to save the odd tanner," He told me.

MAY 17th 1941 - George & Beryl were featured in a radio programme "The Formby's At Home" on Wednesday evening.

There was no reference to 'Beryldene' their home at Little Singleton, but an intimate drawing room atmosphere was created and, as they discussed the famous comedian's films from his first success, "No Limit" to the latest production, gramophone records of songs in the films were played.



"OK then - you play your ukulele
until Neighbours comes on"

Great Shame!!

I understand that many of the young top players have not joined the GFS this year as they feel that they are no longer getting benefit from it. Well this is a great pity as these players have gained (TV, Radio, Press etc) over the years so now is the time when they should be putting something back.

More on Bill Logan GFS first President

William (Bill) Logan, retired motor dealer, of Carlisle, and founder of the George Formby Society

SOME years ago, business in these parts had some very much larger than life characters, whose exploits created a lot of welcome colour on the local scene.

They began with little, but their natural ability to sell the product brought them great success, respect and affection.

Such a person was Bill Logan, who has died, in his early 70s, after a short illness.

He sold cars to ordinary people and to others with famous names, in Carlisle, Lockerbie and London.

He sold cars to theatrical people, many of whom were his good friends as well as customers, and he founded, in 1961, the internationally-known George Formby Society.

For Mr Logan was a devotee and friend of the Black-

pool comic and singer, with the prominent front teeth and the famous ukulele. Many ukuleles, actually, and most of them ended up in the Logan collection in Carlisle, at one time or another.

He was president of the George Formby Society for many years and, at his Carlisle Crematorium funeral, his beloved grandchildren, Robbie and Sally, sent him a wreath in the shape of a ukulele.

He did, of course, play the instrument himself and, like most other things he did, he did it very well. An authority on George Formby, he supplied memorabilia to many museums and exhibitions.



● **BILL LOGAN:** Founded the George Formby Society

The Formby connection was part of Bill's great interest in the variety theatre. He sold cars to comedian Jimmy Jewell; he knew well such popular entertainers as Hilda Baker and Jimmy Logan (no relation), and he supplied Rolls Royces and Bentleys to members of the London theatre community.

He was a fervent admirer of the light opera tenor, the late Richard Tauber, and he actually met the great man through a lifetime's interest in the stage.

He used to spend holidays at Great Yarmouth, then as now famous for its seaside shows, and he even met his former wife when she was appearing at Her Majesty's Theatre, in Carlisle. She was a singer and dancer whose stage name was Joy Anton.

On joining the GFS in 1985 I discovered that poor Bill had more enemies than friends in the society. The controversy appeared to revolve around the fact that he had instructed

the members not to bid against him at the Formby auction, which was held soon after George's death, as he would be bidding on behalf of the society. Bill used his own cash to buy the items which included eight of George's ukes.

Soon after the auction he was challenged regarding the ownership of the ukes and he stated that they were his. This caused quite bitter resentment which was still festering years later.

The fact is that the GFS didn't have cash to buy them and if Bill hadn't used his cash then they may have gone to an outsider and possibly we may never have seen them again. At least we did have access to them even if we didn't own them.

Soon after his death I received a phone call from one of the members claiming that Bill

had never even met George Formby but always had the desire to meet him. Charles Stewart was a great friend of Bill's and claims that the society has never run smoother than when Bill was President "He was a Benign Dictator" says Charles, "but everybody knew where they stood. We didn't need committee meetings in those days." Well, whoever was right, or wrong, it's too late to argue about it now.



George Formby

British, 1904-61, entertainer

Formby was one of the most popular British entertainers of the century. His father, George Sr, was a brilliant music-hall comic whose records reveal an intuitive understanding of the medium. The younger Formby began hesitantly by copying his father's material but, under the guidance of his formidable wife Beryl, developed an act based around an image that suggested a knowing naïf. His songs usually had a slightly surreal streak of vulgarity but there was a cheeky eloquence about the likes of *When I'm Cleaning Windows* that helped him reach a wider audience. His records usually close with a bristling chorus on the ukelele, and Formby is still revered by other players for his ferocious playing. He moved smoothly from music hall to radio to films, and made 16 features in a dozen years, always playing a variation on the same gormless



character who won through in the end. His fans still attend showings of his films, and whip out ukeleles to join in when he starts strumming. **RC**
 Keyword: *When I'm Cleaning Windows* (1936)



From the Sunday Times Supplement and headed "Makers of Music."

Old Folk Day Centres can be hard work! -

Jim Bramwell and I did a couple of Christmas Parties recently and it was hard to raise even a titter. We started with a couple of GF songs and then Jim let rip with his latest batch of jokes. Unfortunately, the only two laughing were Jim and I. However, professionalism brought him through it all very well.

The second party only had 20 in the crowd and we struggled to get some response. They were determined not to co-operate and some sat with glum faces. Finally we managed to get a few on their feet dancing and they were beginning to enjoy the show.

Jim thought we'd "Cracked It" so he broke loose with his latest collection of jokes. He was half way through when suddenly the coach arrived, gathered them all up and took them away. Anyway Jim, I enjoyed your jokes!

Sogging Night at Werrington Xmas Do.

Tables groaning with grub and tea flowing like champagne, - the Ladies did a sterling job. Janice Bentley charmed us with her singing and Matt Kelly gave a selection on the old Joanna (piano). Bill Turner pranced on stage with "gay" abandon as Scarlet Pimple to sing about the jobs he's had - John Guy was Wagging his Magic Wand and Derrick Jones had em in hysterics with Murphy's Sick Note. Connie Edge did her turn with "Hitting The High Spots Now."

Poor Des Redfern - dressed as a copper - got pipped to the post when someone (Derek gave me the name) nipped in before him and sang "On The Beat." 9 year old Becky Snow did a grand little tap dance and young Stephen Hall was on form again. Jon & Brian confused them all with a mucked about version of "Red Sails In The Sunset." Perhaps it should have been "Blue Sails in the Moonlight."

Peter (Sachmo) Burrows did an excellent impersonation and rendition of "Wonderful World" and later he was "Swimmin With The Wimmin" backed by three Dolly Birds, alias, Ivy Turner, Joan Whitcut and Gladys Powell. We even had an Hawaiian interlude with Hughie (Honolulu) Scarrett on guitar. In fact we had so many turns that a certain party hadn't time to tell his ice cube joke.

The next meeting in on the 8th Jan. when we will also be holding the A.G.M.

Derek Ball.

P.S. I sent 24 pages in to Stan for this report so if your name hasn't been mentioned you can blame the Editor. *Thank you Derek - I threw the other 23 pages in the bin!*

Reports like the above give the impression that we are going "Music Hall" - Why not? - George and his father were part of it!!!!

Spotlight on Al Read - Al, who was the manager of his father's Meat Pie business, enjoyed making comedy type "after dinner speeches" but for years he searched for stories that would improve his performance.

He arrived home from work one night to find that his wife had asked a local decorator - Albert Wilkinson of Blackpool - to call round to give an estimate for a small bedroom to be decorated. A few minutes later there was a knock on the door and what Al experienced over the next few minutes was to change his life completely.

Albert Wilkinson stood at the door, a forceful little chap, bow legged, flat cap, thumb in his waistcoat pocket, smoking a fag backwards - up his sleeve! Albert met him with "Aarderdo - I understand you want your house decorating through from top to bottom." He then gave estimates to have the garage demolished and the whole house rebuilt for a price of £850, which in 1950 was a lot of money.

The following Christmas he held a Dinner Party for his meat pie trade customers and went into the story of Albert Wilkinson. The captive audience were in stitches with laughter and a BBC Radio producer, Bowker Andrews, called in to see what they were laughing at. He was so impressed that he engaged him for regular half hour radio shows.

Albert Wilkinson took on many characters after that and Al became famous. He badly needed a story line and Albert provided it. His popular catch phrase was "Right Monkey" which, at the time was repeated by almost the entire country.



Comedian. Born Salford, 1909. Al was a great radio comic. He created, or rather caricatured the characters we all meet in everyday life: the wife in the kitchen, the 'know-all' decorator, football fan/car park attendant, and the embarrassing small son. He achieved national institution fame via his Sunday lunchtime Al Read shows but, sad to say, he was a bit disappointing on-stage. As with *The Goons*, we all had our own ideas as to how the characters looked and, when I saw him 'live', they weren't mine. It was best to leave them in our imaginations. Happily, at the insistence of that loving chronicler of comedians and comedy, MIKE CRAIG*, the BBC have reissued a bunch of Al Read shows. Get them and relish a master of the medium. Al died in 1987.

From **Texas USA - Dr Frank Autry** writes -

Dear Stan, I was in the RCAF (pilot) during WW2 and met George & Beryl in 1940. Sent back to hospital in New Brunswick in 42. That was where I saw nearly all of his films while awaiting medical discharge. Finally sent home to Texas about a year later.

I've tried for years to to get some Formby records: even while in London in 66 tried to find used ones at several shops, but no luck. Fortunately I sent a few home in 1940 and I still have these - including some of GF Senior.

If I'd known where George was buried I would have visited the grave while I was there in 66.

Thanks for your letter Frank. I understand that you have now received the Formby Library of Cassettes and you are very pleased with them. Wonderful!!!

It's nice to hear from Formby fans abroad.

Talking about Formby Fans Abroad - *The GFS could consider looking for sponsorship - maybe a Lottery Grant - to finance a touring group of Formby Players. A tour of countries like Australia or Canada could be arranged through Radio Stations. Depending on the quality of the players it will go down very well. Just imagine Anthony Mason, John Shreeve, Steve Hassall and Martin Harrison invading the USA. These lads would certainly make an impact and we could expect a lot of new members to join us from abroad.*

GPO - I praise the Post Office to the high heavens for the way they give a first class service with their deliveries. When I produced the Vellum for the GFS I always used second class postage, to save costs, and never once did they fail to deliver. Most of the mail was received within two days and many were received within 24 hours.

However, over the past 3 weeks I've had to put claims in for three separate packets that were lost in the post, and this is most unusual. The claims department however, are extremely considerate and even though the packets were sent by second class mail they still allowed refunds. Good Service!!!

S. O. S. - Just Received a phone call from Dave Ward. He has a Reel To Reel Tape of George entertaining in the London Underground during the bombing raids and we need to borrow a reel to reel player to check them out. Has anyone got one to loan for a week or two?

Be Confident!! There is no doubt about it the quality of the shows at the N. West meetings is improving rapidly. At the Warrington Special we only had about two performers who went on stage and acted like amateurs. The rest put on a show like semi-professionals - oozing confidence.

However, we still have a small number of players who apologise for various reasons before starting their act. . . . "Not been practising lately" is a popular excuse, or, "Not picked the uke up since the last meeting." Another common complaint is: "Had a sore throat lately - not been able to sing."

But the most popular one is, "You'll have to help me out as I may not remember the words." Well we must get out of this habit. It is understandable with beginners but too many use these excuses every time they go on stage.

The point is that the audience have come along to see and listen to a good show. They are not interested in excuses!

Apologies - Wrong Dates in last issue. The dates given for the Crewe meetings (on the back cover of the December issue) were given incorrectly. These were the dates for the Uke Practise and not for the meetings. If anyone wants to take notes of the Crewe Uke Practise Nights they are:- Mon 6th Jan, Tues 3rd Feb, Tues 17th Mar, Mon 20th Apr, Tue 19th May, Mon 8th June, Tues 14th July, Mon 18th Aug. Meetings are in the same hall.

Great Night at Sale - It was a wonderful Red/White & Blue Night at Sale and we were pleased that some of the old members turned up. Ken Ratcliffe and his staff made a good job of decorating the room and everybody contributed to an excellent evening.

We were very pleased to see Margaret Moran back on form again after a long break. She has a lovely voice and her "Land Of Hope & Glory" went down very well with us all.

Seeing the old war time posters up in the room took me back a few years. "Walls Have Ears" meant 'don't talk to anyone about movement of troops etc. that you may have seen'. Winston Churchill peering down at us made us feel as if we had to put on a good show.

The Spice Girls, who sit on the door sung their hearts out and made it a tip-top night. Great Work Ken, Anne, Cyril etc. and all the helpers. Keep It Going.

George Formby and the West End...

THE LANCASHIRE LAD TELLS HIS OWN STORY

"George," my friends warned me, "They'll break your heart," They were talking of my plans to star in a West End show. And their advice was "Don't!" They told me to stick to the illuminations on the Blackpool front and leave the bright lights of London to somebody else. They had a bash at Emile Littler too, who was risking £40,000 to put on "Zip Goes A Million" at the Palace Theatre.

"Have you gone barmy?" they asked him. George was all right for Warrington and Wigan, Bolton and Blackpool, but in the theatre where Ivor Novello played - never. Yes they were shocked, and I don't blame them. Fancy me and my ukulele on the stage where Ivor Novello knelt before the altar with a rose in his hand! Audiences wept on his first nights - and the wise boys of the West End they would weep on mine too. I couldn't help thinking perhaps they were right after all. I had steered clear of the West End all my life just because I couldn't imagine a simple north country lad being a hit in the domain of Noel Coward, Jack Buchanan and Sir Lawrence Olivier. But the Dismal Jimmies who delight in prophesying a flop were wrong, and I was wrong because "Zip Goes A Million" has broken every record the Palace ever had. And I learned something I never knew before - that what goes for Blackpool goes for London's West End too. George Formby.

Thanks to Charles Stewart for the article. Now I am surprised that George had any doubts regarding cracking London. His father played London regularly and thought very little of it. He treated London just like any other town.

At the N.Wales Meeting Arthur Newton told me the story of how the writer of "Leaning On A Lamp Post" got his name - "Noel Gay."

Reg Armitage, who played the organ for St Anne's Church, Wakefield, enjoyed writing "Lamp Post" type songs but he was very concerned that the church authorities might not approve of what he was doing, so he kept it quiet. To solve the problem he needed a *Nom de plume* - which, for the benefit of Derek Ball and those foreigners from Stafford - means "another name to write under."

Well one day he was on his way to the BBC Studios - to sign a contract - when he saw a large placard which advertised a play by Noel Coward and starred Maisie Gay. Reg added the two names "Noel and Gay" together and from that moment Noel Gay was born. Wonderful Arthur - Have we any more stories like that?

Houdini - Oct 31st is National Magic Day commemorating the death of Harry Houdini in 1926. Although his secrets were revealed in papers, after his death, the 3,988 documents did not explain everything - notably his miraculous escape from a Russian prison van made of iron. The son of an Hungarian Rabbi, Houdini began as a trapeze artist, but later became world renowned as a death-defying magician. He claimed his final trick would be to communicate with his wife after his death.

Collectors Lot - Channel 4 TV 26/11/97

A number of phone calls came in after the show and I must agree with their comments regarding a couple of claims made by the show's presenter which was supported by GFS founder member John Walley.

George was far from illiterate! Due to being taken away from home, at 7, to be trained as a jockey, he received little education, but he had an extremely fast brain that could absorb all that was necessary to further his career. His brain earned him the title of "top entertainer" and "highest earner" so he can hardly be called "illiterate."

However, my concern is the claim that Beryl was a "harridan", which, in most dictionaries, means "bad tempered, haggard old woman, vixen." Beryl most certainly wasn't any of these and we only need to look at the great charity work she did for the fighting forces abroad, and at home, to confirm this.

She was a determined, honest, straight forward and shrewd woman who was capable of quickly weighing up situations. She devoted all her efforts to promoting George as the perfect image and kept him respectable throughout his entire career. To achieve this she was prepared to suffer all the brick-bats herself and her constant cry was "I don't care what they think about me as long as they love George." This is hardly the work of "an old hag."

During my early days in the GFS it appeared to be the general opinion that George would have reached far greater heights without Beryl. This is nonsense! Beryl was the little woman who stood by George's side, prepared to do battle with anyone - film directors etc. - who thought they knew what was best for him. Never once did she let either George or his fans down. She was a woman manager in what was basically "a mans world" and consequently the media had many a field day condemning her. He would never have reached the top without her without her and the members of the George Formby Society should learn to appreciate this. Without Beryl's efforts there would be no GFS today.

During the war years she could easily have stayed at home and relaxed comfortably but she chose to be with George at the war fronts. She played a part in all of the concerts and thrived on taking responsibility.

Irrespective of what was reported after Beryl's death, George was completely lost without her and this is why he tried desperately to fill her position. She was the power behind the throne and no-one could ever fill her place. September 9th (her birthday) should be known within the GFS as "Beryl's Day and we should praise her efforts to the high heavens!"

Don't forget the NEWSLETTER

Pam Baddeley Writes - Dear Stan Please enclose the following in your next Newsletter - *No problem Pam, carry on -*

I would like to thank everyone for the wonderful concert at Crewe on the 25th November. Also, a "thank you" to everyone for the presents, cards, and kind birthday wishes. I cannot think of a better way to celebrate a special occasion. I am pleased that Brian enjoyed his Birthday Surprise too. We are extremely fortunate at the Crewe branch to have Brian & Connie at the helm. They put in hours of work behind the scenes between meetings as well as during them. My thanks to them both on behalf of everyone at Crewe for their dedication and brilliant organisation. Long may it continue. Love to all, Pam Baddeley.

Thank you Pam. It was like a sketch from Laurel & Hardy on the night. There was loads of "Cloak & Dagger" stuff flying around with Brian thinking that the event was for you, while the rest of the organisation were arranging for him - who's birthday was on the following day - to receive a big surprise just before the break. Everybody was doing the rounds secretly bringing birthday cards from under their coats to be signed, and with the parting words, "Don't tell Brian" or "Don't let Pam see you."

Now I was asked not to sell any Newsletters (which reported Brian's surprise) until it was announced, so I informed my everyone that I'd forgotten them but they would be here in about 45 minutes by special taxi.

A few seconds later, however, the plans were changed and, at the opening, Brian received his surprise. I then had to inform my customers that the Newsletters had arrived, to which I heard one of the members say, "Bah Gum - that was another quick miracle from Warrington! - Did he fly?" It was a great night Pam and thanks for your letter. Bah Gum!

Another Banana - At the N.Wales Meeting I was presented with another Banana although, due to the excellent fancy dress rig-outs I can't for the life of me remember who handed it in. Anyway, it was a letter heading produced by Cearns & Brown of Runcorn and their symbol was a flying banana.



And Another **Banana** for **Jim Bramwell** - Jim's done the rounds several times over with his "Uncle Joe's Mintballs" but he's now got another song equally as good, - "The Marrow Song" which Bernard Cribbins sang in Music Hall. Well, Bernard has just popped up again with another one for Jim, - "I've Never Seen A Straight Banana." Has anyone got the words?

Sale are holding their Special Christmas Party Night on Friday 19th December. They claim that "The Spice Girls" will be there but I rather feel that it will be "The Glamorous Saucy Girls" who sit on the door.

A Few Easy Christmas Carols ¹⁹



Silent Night, Holy Night, all is calm, all is bright. Round yon Virgin,



mother and Child. Holy Infant so tender and mild. Sleep in Heavenly peace,



sleep in heavenly peace.



Away in a manger no crib for a bed, the little Lord Jesus lay down His



sweet head. The stars in the sky looked down where He lay. The little Lord



Jesus asleep in the hay. The cattle are lowing the poor Baby wakes, but little



Lord Jesus no crying he makes. I love Thee Lord Jesus, look down from the



sky and stay by my cradle till morning is nigh.



Good King Wenceslas looked out on a feast of Stephen



When the snow lay round about, deep and crisp and even



Brightly shone the moon that night though the frost was cru-el



When a poor man came in sight gathering winter fu-el

Have an Entertaining New Year

N. West Meetings and Future Dates

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

Blackpool - Wainwright, Hornby Rd, B/pool - Every 1st Sat. in the month - Tel Eve Stewart on 01253 768097 - Future Dates: - 6th Dec. Adm £1 with Buffet. All are made very - very - very welcome.

Liverpool - Broadgreen Conservative Club - Every 2nd Friday in the month - Ring Tom Bailey on 0151 289 1711 **Players Urgently Wanted**

Sale - Woodheys Club, 299 Washway Rd, Sale - Dates are now settled - Every 3rd Friday - Ring Ken Ratcliffe on 0161 430 8290. Adm £1

Crewe Branch Wistaston Memorial Hall - Ring Brian Edge on 01270 69836 Future dates - Thur 18th Dec, Fri 23rd Jan, Sat 21st Feb, Sat 28th Mar, Sat 18th Apr, Fri 29th May, Sat 27th June, Fri 24th July, Fri 28th Aug, Sat 26th Sep, Fri 23rd Oct, Fri 27th Nov, Fri 18th Dec. 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 - Dec 11th.

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. Organisers can order a minimum lot of 10 copies for £3 plus 60p postage and you are welcome to sell them to help raise funds.

Deadline for next issue - 18th Nov.

So as George would say -

“Get Cracking”

Support Your Newsletter

Have A Wonderful New Year

