

THE NORTH - WEST

# GEORGE FORMBY

## Newsletter 33

Vol. 3, No.9  
March 1998



Specially Produced for  
George Formby Fans  
by Stan Evans, The Hollies, 19 Hall Nook, Penketh, Warrington,  
Cheshire WA5 2HN

**Tel or Fax 01925 727102**

# Welcome to Newsletter No.33 and we

begin with the sad news that two of our dear Members have passed on to higher life. Noel Currey of the Blackpool Branch had been ill for some time.

Noel's wife, Sylvia, wishes to thank all the members who shared concern during his illness and for the great entertainment they received since Noel first saw those happy group of men on TV plonking away on their ukes. When they came to Blackpool, on holiday, they made enquiries and Noel bought a uke. Since then they have enjoyed many lovely meetings. Our thoughts go out to dear Sylvia.



\*\*\*\*\*

## RIP David Edward Peerless by Derek Ball

It is with great sadness that we report the death of our very dear friend, David "Banjo" Peerless. Dave has been a staunch member of the Staffordshire Knot Ukulele Society from day one. He was born in London in 1925 and during the war he served with the Sherwood Foresters. It was at this time that he met his future wife, Irene.



They married in 1941 and moved back to London where they had a son, David Jnr. Tragedy struck in 1992 when Irene died and again the following year, 1993 when his son died. David then moved back into the Stoke area and bought a house at Tittensor where he threw himself into a whole range of activities, including Line Dancing, Bowls, Sequence Dancing and many church and social activities.

He was very talented and could turn his hand to anything, including repairing and setting up ukes for people (for which he would never accept payment) to painting the most beautiful water-colours. He was an accomplished musician and could play banjo, ukulele, guitar, organ and concertina, and surprisingly, he was mostly self taught. At one time he was a member of the Aston Banjo Club and played in a banjo band.

He will be greatly missed by all his mates at the Staffs Knot and especially by the boys of the Friday club. Cheerio Dave and GOD BLESS

\*\*\*\*\*

### You Are Doing Well For The Newsletter!

# The Formby Story

Part 22 by Stan Evans

George & Beryl were married at the Wigan Registrar Office but there is confusion regarding when they were married and the events leading up to it.

George's sister, Ella, on The South Bank Show, claimed that because George was under 21, he and Beryl had to appeal to George's mother for consent to marry. This means that the marriage was planned before hand. But George reported in the Warrington Examiner, - that week, "The idea that I would get wed entered my head on Friday night. I suppose I must have gone a bit mad. I decided all of a sudden to go and propose to her. So I went. Before I saw her in the early hours of the morning I had not mentioned marriage to her, but somehow I don't think she was quite taken by surprise."



But the mystery deepened further when Mrs Jean Brannighan, of Darwen, claimed that her grandfather, Arthur Mellor, helped George & Beryl to elope when he drove his pony and trap to Beryl's house and supplied the ladder for her to escape down. This again means that the wedding was planned.

The Warrington Examiner newspaper also claimed that they were married on Saturday September 13<sup>th</sup> - not Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> as George and several newspapers have claimed. Either George was confused or he used Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> as a joke.

Again, George's report in the Examiner claimed that, after his Warrington Royal Court Theatre show - on Friday 12<sup>th</sup>, he travelled to Darwen and after discussing the marriage with her parents they set off to Wigan and were married at 10am on the Saturday morning. However, the Ray Seaton/Alan Randall Biography claims that George was told to go home and they would discuss the matter later. A few days later he returned with a special licence and they were married without any mention to George's mother. After a short honeymoon George returned home with his bride but Beryl waited in the car while he went inside. According to Frank, George's brother, the news of this to his mother opened a gulf between George and his family which widened over the years.

Well we are not sure of which version is correct but to clear up any misunderstandings regarding the date. George & Beryl were definitely married at the Wigan Registrar's Office on Saturday morning September 13<sup>th</sup> followed by a church wedding two months later. More next month.

## I've Been To Spain - Barry Bowler

Dear Stan, In the middle month of 1995 I was involved in a long distance charity cycling trip through France and Spain leaving France at St Jean Pied - de - Part, climbed the pyrenees then cycled down the other side to a place called Roncesvathes. It was here that I was introduced to the fantastic sound of the uke.



As I approached the village a roar like that of a football ground filled the air, with lots of cheering and clapping, as I got closer it became clear what it was all about. A chap was standing on a rock, surrounded by a hundred or so people, and he was playing the wooden uke - he was a virtuoso. I was mesmerised and found myself clapping in rhythm to his playing. He sang "Windows." It was there and then when I decided - "I must get a uke!"

In 1996 I got one and joined the GFS and now I am a member of the Crewe and Werrington branches. In 1997 I was in Spain again, this time with my wife, for the Christmas and New Year's holiday. We stayed at a very large hotel complex with a very large swimming pool at the base. All the rooms had balconies that faced on to the pool, very reminiscent of a Roman amphitheatre.

New Year's day came and we were sitting on our balcony enjoying the sun, and most of the occupants were doing the same. I estimated that there were 200 or so Spanish and a similar number of British. They were laughing, singing etc. I had brought my small soprano wooden uke with me, so out it came and I immediately struck up with George's "Lancashire Toreador." Well! I have never experienced such a time before and I will be very lucky if I ever do again. The Spanish went wild, clapping flamenco style and shouting "O'Lay in time with the strumming. The British? Well, talk about a football crowd for enthusiasm, they were singing their heads off (it was amazing how many knew the words or part of them). I tell you Stan, it was the performance of a lifetime and with the amphitheatre effect the acoustics were perfect. George would have loved it and by jingo I have never played or sung better.

For the remainder of the holiday I could not buy a drink for myself. The British talked about George Formby and their memories of him and Beryl, and the Spanish, every time they met me they clapped flamenco style. Yes!!! I been to Spain and I'll go there again, and again, with a bevy of GF songs. O'Lay.

*Thanks Barry. Nice story and I'm pleased that it went very well for you. It would be great if we organised a trip to Spain - with about 30 uke banjo players we could give them a good blasting during their siesta time. They'd love that! O'Lay*

\*\*\*\*\*

# Music Hall - More and more variety is being added to our N. West 5

meetings! Both Crewe and Peniffordd are leading the way with various non-Formby acts and it is going down very well - excellent!!!

On the Crewe stage we see a variety of different acts including a small Jazz Band, a touch of light operetta singing, a dancing (mechanical puppies) show, magic (actually miracles) a touch of Vera Lynn's war songs, and comedians etc. And other branches are following the same pattern as I've noticed on the Essex Branch "Lamp Post" magazine that about 60% of their latest programme was non-George. At Penyffordd we heard Gracie Field's "I Took My Harp (Uke) to a Party" and it went down very well. Just what the doctor ordered!

Now this is good for the society! Over the past couple of years interest in George has been gradually going through a depression and memberships have taken a nose dive. The membership reached its peak soon after the Warrington Exhibition and since then we haven't had any publicity worth speaking about.

So now is the time for change. Adding variety to our concert programme will help capture a far bigger audience. BUT - It is essential that we keep George & Beryl at the forefront! It is their show and all other acts etc. are invited along as their guests. Stan Evans.

\*\*\*\*\*

## Sam Bass Writes -

I sat listening to an old Merseyside local radio broadcast, which I greatly enjoyed - 1981 I think - and it interviewed the king of the ukulele, that's for sure, Billy Uke Scott. My mind wondered back as if only yesterday - the year 1964 - and I was playing a week at The Cabaret Club, in Barnsley along with Sid & Eddie before becoming Little & Large.

I'd been on stage, when the compare came round to my dressing room to tell me that there's a fellow outside who wanted to meet me - "He's standing by the bar, he could be an agent and he says that he plays the uke. He also wants to buy you a drink" My mind quickly thought 'Could it be Billy Uke Scott?, I'd been singing his song "Twenty Again" for many years in a ridiculous key - has he come for some commission or maybe he's disgusted at my interpretation. That night I didn't sing it in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half just to be safe.

Anyway, all was well and how nice it was when he explained that he had just called round to see me and have a chat.

*Thanks Sam. I'll tell you one thing! It's a good job that it wasn't Beryl calling round to see you about using George's songs. Billy's a nice man. I'm sure he wouldn't be offended. Keep sending the anecdotes in Sam.*

\*\*\*\*\*

## "D" Day Trip to France June 5<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> - Few Seats Left

**Music Hall** - At the Crewe meeting Sam Bass gave me a Music Hall tape which was recorded way back in 1968 on the BBC Radio. What a wonderful tape it is and what great talent they had in those days. They were really excellent every one of them! The show was broadcast from the Garrick Playhouse Theatre, Altrincham and Billy Scott Coomber was the Chairman. Top of the bill was Reg (Confidentially) Dixon who replaced George when he took ill during the London "Zip Goes A Million" show.

Sam opened up the show with "Back On The Farm" - "Hindoo Man" - "Goodnight Little Fellow" and "Lamp Post." But what amazed me was the voice! He actually sounded just like George with equal attack. - Great!!!

Another great artist on the bill was Billy Matchett who sang one of the old favourites, "I'm Going Back To Imazas (Him as as the pub next door) a terrific song. Thanks a lot Sam, once again you have brought back old memories.

\*\*\*\*\*

Just stumbled across an old Josef Locke LP and one of the tracks was a nice little song called "How Little We Know." Now it's been many years since I heard this wonderful song and I remember at the time thinking that the words had a great meaning to "Life" Josef sings it exceptionally well, as usual. See what you think about the words.

## How Little We Know

We laugh, we cry, we live, we die, and when we're gone the world goes on  
 We love, we hate, we learn too late, as more we are, how little we know  
 We heal, we touch, we talk too much of things we have no knowledge of  
 We see, we feel, yet cannot see how small we are, how little we know  
 See how the time goes passing by, we don't know how, we don't know why  
 We reach so high and fall so low, the more we learn the less we know  
 Too soon the time to go will come, too late the will to carry on  
 And so we leave the work undone, how small we are, how little we know

\*\*\*\*\*

**Alan Southworth** singing "Delivering The Morning Milk" reminded me of one of the GFS members who was a milkman. After one particular Blackpool meeting he landed home at the early hours of the morning but instead of going to bed he shot down to the dairy to get a very early start. This, he thought, would enable him to finish early to get a full day's sleep. At around 3am - he was delivering to a house where there was a very noisy party going on. He was just bending down, putting the milk bottles on the doorstep, when the door suddenly opened and a drunken women, who was leaving, stood in front of him. She said "You're a bit late! Have you brought a bottle?"

# Werrington Branch by Derek Ball

7

It's been a month of bad news for the Staffs Knot Society. Dave Peerless, died earlier this month and Sam Bass has been ill with his throat. Also Darrel Snow, with pleurisy, has been unable to attend. Darrel drives the car so we were seven members short. John Guy has also been under the weather so he was unable to make it to the last meeting. - plus car trouble.

However we were pleased to welcome two new members from Kidsgrove, Aubrey & Frank Burndred. Aubrey on piano accordion and Frank on mandolin gave us a couple of great numbers. Derrick Jones brought along eight year old Simon Owen and fourteen year old Stephen Hall, along with one of his friends. We do seem to attract quite a number of youngsters at Werrington and they're all doing fantastically well. Its funny how ukulele playing bridges the age gap.

As usual, our friends from Wistaston came along to support us and we hear that Alan Chennery is learning a GF song that has never been recorded, so we look forward to hearing that at the next meeting.

Mick Jones has promised to learn "Uncle Joe's Mint Balls" if we can get the chords for him. Must have a word with Jim Bramwell! That's all for now folks. See you all at the next meeting. Derek.

*Thanks Derek, Your meeting is coming along very well. Jim has moved on from "Mint Balls" to "Murrows" so I'm sure that he'll be pleased to pass on the chords. Pleased that your Fax machine is now in operation. Keep sending em in.*

\*\*\*\*\*

## North Wales Branch by Cliff Royle.

Again a well attended meeting of about fifty people, with the usual extension support of the "mob" from Crewe adorned by "posh" waistcoats. We have an additional item of decoration on the stage: a life size portrait of George, created by Brian Wright.

After the ladies duet and entertainment by the young men, Gareth Sumner and Stephen Ensall, played with great confidence. MC, Jim Knight kept us in order and Cliff Royle told us about the years he worked in the same building as L. S. Lowry in Manchester, after which he went on to play "Matchstalk Men" Stan Evans performed his usual miracle; - one day I must sort out how he does these and probably find out from whom he gets the ladies garters.

Don't forget the "DO" at St George's Hotel, Llandudno on Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> April, from 12.30 to midnight.

*Thanks Cliff. I'm not telling you how I got the ladies garter because that's another miracle! The meeting was one of the best ever and Brian Wright has made an excellent job of the painting. We have so many talented people in the society. Yet another miracle!!!*

**Charlie Chester** - As you probably know, Charlie played the uke, and after his death, we wondered what would happen to his stage props etc.

Well, information was received that items belonging to the estate were sold by auction at the Nottingham Racecourse on December 3<sup>rd</sup>. The uke (lot No. 149) is a pre-war Harmony "Roy Smeck" Concert model, circa 1930 - made in the USA. Charlie used the uke in the Royal Command Performance 1948.



The instrument was bought by Ray Bernard who appeared on radio with Charlie in "Hometown Saturday Night" at Didsbury Studios. He shared a dressing room with him which left him with nice memories.

Among the items sold were:- Charlie's stage hats - A three breasted bra - Exploding book - A wooden leg (used for throwing into the orchestra pit) - Poems by Charlie - A racing game devised by Charlie - Autographs of George & Beryl Formby, Will Hay, Sandy Powell, Alan Jones, Howard Keel, Anna Neagle, and Ted Broadrib. Plus many other items.

\*\*\*\*\*

**Liverpool** - Best night ever and for the first time we actually had more in the audience than we had in the trash. It was Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> (we also had 13 in the thrash) and for the first 20 minutes everything appeared to go wrong with the new sound Karioké machine. It kept whistling at us! However, all went well later and a good night was held by all. It was great to see Len Phillips back on the scene and he's not lost any of his charm - the old cheat was miming to a man singing a song and Len was moving his lips in the hope that we thought that he was singing. You're a rum lad Len!

\*\*\*\*\*



"I hate these committee meetings!"

## LATE NEWS

### Wigan & George

Jeffrey Formby Booth has written to report that the Wigan Council have agreed to the GFS having a plaque set up near the site where George was born - 3 Westminster St. It is hoped that it will be arranged for May 31<sup>st</sup>. GFS member, Gerry Mawdsley, of Westhoughton, has negotiated with the Council. More news as it comes in.

Thanks Jeff.



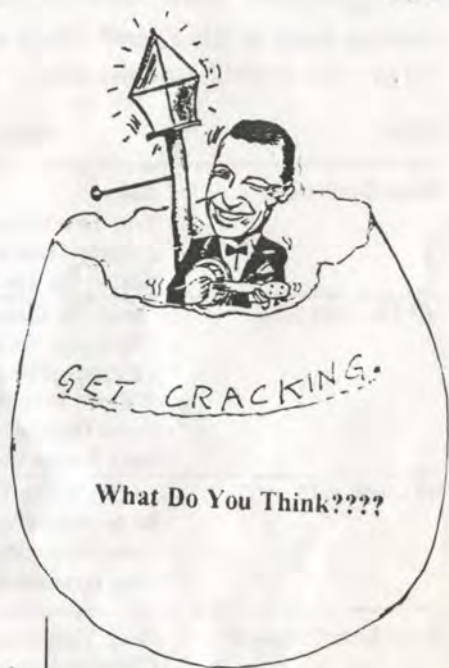
## Poetry by an old lady in a geriatric hospital

What do you see nurses, what do you see  
What are you thinking when you look at me:  
A crabbit old woman who's not very wise  
Uncertain of habit, with far away eyes  
Who dribbles her food and makes no reply  
When you say out loud, "I do wish you'd try"  
Who seems not to notice the things that you do  
And forever is losing a stocking or shoe  
Who unresisting or not, let's you do as you will  
With bathing and feeding so lifeless and still  
Is that what you're thinking, is that what you see  
Then open your eyes nurse, you are looking at me

I'll tell you who I am as I sit here so still  
As I use at your bidding and eat at your will  
I'm a small child of ten with a father and mother  
Brothers and sisters, who love one another  
A young girl of sixteen with wings on her feet  
And a wonderful brain that no-one can beat  
A bride soon at twenty - my heart gives a leap  
Remembering the vows that I promised to keep  
At twenty-five now I have young of my own  
Who need me to build a secure, happy home  
A woman of thirty, my young now grow fast  
Bound to each other with ties that should last  
At forty, my sons now grow and soon will be gone  
But my man stays beside me to see I don't mourn  
At fifty, once more babies play round my knee  
Again we know children, my loved one and me

Dark days are upon me, my husband is dead  
I look at the future and shudder with dread  
For my young are all busy rearing young of their own  
And I think of the years and the love that I've known  
I'm an old woman now and nature is cruel  
'Tis her jest to make old age look like a fool  
The body it crumbles, grace and vigour depart  
There is now a stone where I once had a heart  
But inside this old carcass a young girl still dwells  
And now and again my battered heart swells  
I remember the joys, and also the pain  
As I lie here each day, again and again

So open your eyes nurse, open and see  
Not a crabbit old woman, look closer  
See - Me!!



What Do You Think????

## Our Cliff

After a swinging time in the  
Frodsham Market, Cliff Royle,  
our N.Wales star reporter, tries  
his hand at drawing cartoons.

Well, what do you think? Will  
he make another Joe McCaffrey  
or do you advise him not to give  
up his day job?

\*\*\*\*\*

## Nantwich - Jazz Festival.

After the great success with  
last year's event, the Crewe  
branch have been invited to  
perform again this coming  
Easter Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> April.

There is a leaflet available  
and further information can  
be obtained from Brian Edge  
on 01270 69836.

**Request** from Alan Chenery who wants to know which songs George sang in his films? Well we can do better than that Alan, we'll give you the ukes as well! - and the year! Here we go!

FILM	SONG	UKE USED
Boots Boots 1934	Baby	Bentone Wooden
	Why Don't Women Like Me	" "
	I Could Make a Good Living	" "
	Sitting On The Ice/ Ice Rink	" "
Off The Dole 1935	Surely No Harm In A Kiss	No uke
	I'm Going /Stick/ My Mother	Bentone uke
	I Promised/Home/Nine O'Clock	Baby Gibson UB
	I/ Don't Want Goods/Maul Em	Will Van Allen
	Little Ukulele	Baby Gibson UB3
No Limit 1935	Isn't Love a Very Funny Thing	No uke
	Riding in the TT Races	Keech Wooden
	In A Little Wigan Garden	" "
	Your Way - My Way	No Uke
Ring Around/ Rainbow		" "
Keep/Seats Please 1936	Keep Your Seats Please	Abbott
	Cleaning Windows	Big wooden uke
Feather Your Nest 1937	When We Feather Our Nest	Ludwig
	I'm as Happy as a Sandboy	No uke
	Leaning On A Lamp Post	Ludwig
Keep Fit 1937	Keep Fit	No uke
	I Don't Like	Abbott Monarch
	Biceps Muscles and Brawn	" "
I See Ice 1938	In My Little Snapshot Album	Baby Gibson UB3
	Noughts and Crosses	No Uke
	Mother What'll I Do Now	Abbott Monarch
It's In The Air 1938	Our Sergeant Major	Baby Gibson UB3
	They Can't Fool Me	Abbott Monarch
	It's In The Air	John Grey
Come On George 1939	I Couldn't Let The Stable Down	Abbott Monarch
	Pardon Me	No uke
	I'm Making Headway Now	Abbott Monarch
	Goodnight Little Fellow	" "
Trouble Brewing 1939	I Can Tell It By My Horoscope	Baby Gibson UB3
	Hitting The High Spots	Abbott Monarch
	Fanlight Fanny	Baby Gibson UB3



CONTINUED . . .

Let George Do It 1940	Grandad's Flannelette Nightshirt	Abbott Monarch	11
	Mr Wu's A Window Cleaner	" "	
	Count Your Blessings	" "	
	Oh Don't The Wind Blow Cold	" "	
Spare A Copper 1940	Ukulele Man	Abbott Monarch	
	On The Beat	" "	
	I Wish I Was Back On The Farm Because I'm Shy	Baby Gibson UB3 No Uke	
Turned Out Nice Again 1941	You're Everything To Me	No Uke	
	Auntie Maggie's Remedy	Dallas "D"	
	You Can't Go Wrong In These Emperor of Lancashire	" " No Uke	
South American George 1941	Swing Mama	Dallas "D"	
	Barmaid At The Rose & Crown	Ludwig	
	La Donna Mobile	No uke	
	I Played on My Spanish Guitar I'd Do It With A Smile	4 string guitar Wooden uke	
Much Too Shy 1942	Andy The Handy Man	Ludwig	
	They Laughed/ I Started/ Play	" "	
	Talking To The Moon About You	" "	
	Delivering The Morning Milk	No uke	
Get Cracking 1943	Get Cracking	Ludwig	
	Home Guard Blues	" "	
	Under The Blasted Oak	" "	
Bell Bottom George 1944	It Serves You Right	Ludwig	
	Swim Little Fish	No Uke	
	If I Had A Girl Like You	" "	
	Bell Bottom George	Ludwig	
He Snoops To Conquer 1944	Hill Billy Willie	Guitar	
	Unconditional Surrender	No uke	
	Photo In The Press	Dallas "D"	
I Didn't Do It 1945	She's Got Two Of Everything	Dallas "D"	
	Daring Young Man	Baby Gibson	
	I'd Like A Dream Like That	" "	
George In Civvy St 1946	Mad March Hare	No Uke	
	We've Been A Long Time Gone	Abbott Monarch	
	It Could Be	No uke	
	I/Christened With a Horse Shoe	" "	
	You Don't Need A License	Abbott Monarch	

\*\*\*\*\*  
**Don't Forget Your Newsletter.**

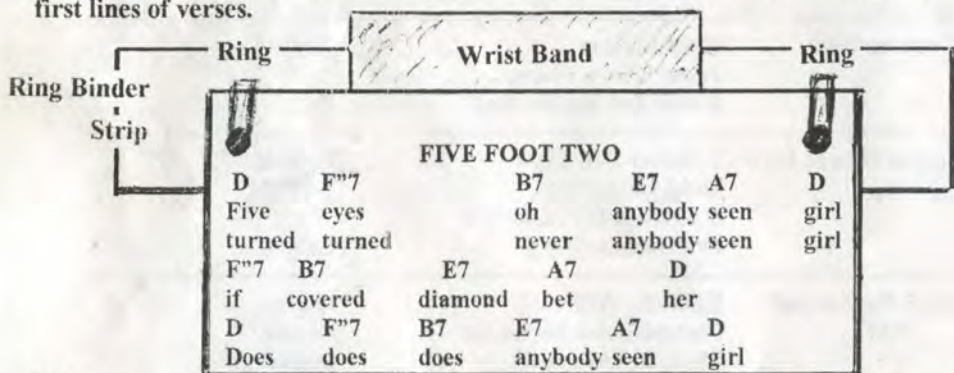
## Great Idea by Alan Newton of Crewe. - Reminder Cards

Now it is surprising how us owld uns - once we've passed 35 have great difficulty in remembering the words and chords of a song and many times we have to rely on the music stand for a prop. Well Alan has come up with a great idea that anyone can make for a few pence and it is so easy to make.

- First you need:-
1. A wrist-band (approx 2 to 3 inches wide) - the type that tennis players wear.
  2. The metal strip from an old ring binder -with double rings to hold papers (not the lever arch type).
  3. A number of card strips about 5" x 2".
  4. An office paper punch (or use a thick nail)

Now the cards are not long enough to hold the full song but you can write the chords down or first line words. After you've written out the words, or chords, slip the wrist-band over the metal strip and then clip on the cards. Slide the band over the wrist and you are prepared to sing your first song. For the second song you simply turn to the next card and nobody is any wiser that you are wearing it.

Below is an example of how you could write out your card:- Just write in the words where there is a chord change. Or you could write in window chords or first lines of verses.



What a great little idea. Thanks Alan. Have we any more brain-waves?

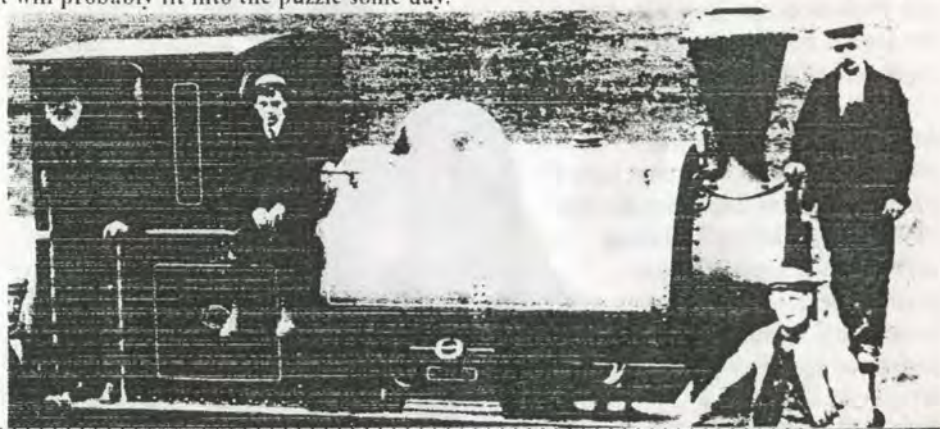
\*\*\*\*\*

## And More On "Bananas"

- The members are going bananas on "Bananas," cos hardly a month passes that I don't receive something on the popular fruit. Derek Ball writes to say that banana skins contain a substance called BUFOTENINE, which is quite a powerful aphrodisiac. It seems that all you have to do is to stew a handful of banana skins, sieve the resultant liquid and turn it into a thin soup which can then be served hot or cold. Is there anyone here willing to try it? *Thanks Derek. If we don't see you next month we'll know what you've been up to.*

**Julian Pilling** sent in a photo which his reliable friend claims - shows George's grandfather, standing inside a railway engine. The photo was taken when they were building a reservoir at Hebden Bridge, Yorks.

Thanks Julian. Is he Eliza's father, who was a horse drawn cab driver in Wigan or is he Frank Lawler who wasn't married to Sarah Jane Booth. Anyway we mustn't reject it as it will probably fit into the puzzle some day.



## Save our George - Brian Wright

of the Wales Branch has done an excellent job in painting George. It lights up the side of the Penyffordd British Legion stage brilliantly. Unfortunately he's left out the lamp post that George was leaning against and poor George is in danger of toppling over. So come on Brian before we have a disaster. Prop a little lamp post under his arm - there's just enough space.

Looks Great Though. You've done a fine Job!!!

\*\*\*\*\*



**Why Do** classical music players give the name of the tune they are about to play and then follow with the key they intend playing it in? - Like "Rachmaninoff's Prelude in F" Major" for example. Why do they do this? Well it's not as if the audience intend bringing their own instruments along for a "thrash" is it? And as long as he knows what key he's playing it in why should he tell everybody else? I don't suppose they're bothered what key he is playing it in.

You don't hear George Formby announcing that he will be playing "Little Stick Of Blackpool Rock" in "C" or "Auntie Maggie's Remedy" in "D," do you? They just get on with the job. Drop a line if you know why.

\*\*\*\*\*

**Don't Forget the "D" Day Trip to France.**

## Bob Drinkwater

on 01384 395918 is interested on anything on Wooden Ukes. He also likes to collect them so if you have one for sale please give him a ring. He always get a kick when he hears the sound of the wooden uke.

Anyway Bob, I've not got a wooden uke for sale but what about a nice picture of Doris day from the film "I'll See You In My Dreams." I'm sure that the sight of Doris - even if she doesn't know her A7s from her E minors - will excite you just as much. But don't let your Beryl catch you.



\*\*\*\*\*

## Our Young Players.

Looking through the old Vellums a few days ago I came across what was possibly the best picture of all that showed how the youngsters, a few years ago, thoroughly enjoyed George and his songs. Eleven year old Peter Thomas had discovered George and his songs and, at the Stourbridge meeting, he posed for the Express & Star news reporter. The uke banjo he is playing was given, by George, to the late Bolton Wanderers and England footballer Ray Westwood.

Ray's son, Alan, brought the uke to the meeting and explained that his father and George met frequently and on one occasion George gave him the John Grey uke. It has since been stored for many years in the attic.

It's a great shame but we appear to have lost these youngsters.



# Carl Basford Celebrates Birthday at Crewe. 15

Our dapper and faithful friend from Chesterton celebrated his 60<sup>th</sup> Birthday at the Crewe, January Concert. Carl and his wife, Cynthia, sponsored the 'bun fight' and what a tremendous night it was from the time Connie wheeled in Carl's birthday cake to the time the last of the 29 artists left the stage at 11.30pm.

Going back to Carl's cake, wasn't it lovely? Quite a work of art, the architect (and that's got to be the right term) being our own Hazel Stamp. She is certainly a very talented lady in being able to produce such a creation. What's more the 82 who attended agreed it tasted very good too!

Well Carl enjoyed the evening as much as anyone even though he was well occupied in programme arranging most of the night as a part of his new role as joint M.C. with Alan Chenery. Alan made an excellent effort as 'Front Man' and for the February meeting it will be Carl on stage introducing the artists.

We had heard a few whispers from the audience, at previous concerts, that the artists faces were in shadow. Well we addressed this point and the overall effect was much improved. The sound balance was great on the night which is down to some good work by Colin Wood.

There were a number of high spots for me during the concert: Don Chalkley made his stage debut with "Thanks Mr Roosevelt" And didn't he do well? Also I was very proud of Dave Price's performance of "Red River Valley" Dave sang and played with confidence. His performance has improved dramatically over the past two or three months which proves that Dave has been practising hard.

85 year old Matthew Kelly was wonderful too. He has also worked hard on his practise and it is really paying off. All three attend the Crewe Branch practise sessions. Colin Wood's rendering of "I'm Saving Up For Sally" was his best ever performance to date.

And wasn't it great to see Martin and Sonia Fowell again? We really thought we had lost them both. On the quiet Sonia is a pretty good player - did you notice her playing along? It was a great bonus for us to have friends from Sale, N Wales and Werrington branches. Finally it was good to have John Wilton from Bolton who attended for the first time. John was clearly fascinated by the uke and hopes to attend our practise sessions. Brian Edge.

\*\*\*\*\*

**Don't Forget!** - The next Peniffordd meeting - Friday March 6<sup>th</sup> - will be held at the Community Hall which is about 100 yards from the British Legion. They don't sell drinks there but the BL don't mind you taking a drink over as long as you return the glasses. We always enjoy the meetings in the hall.

\*\*\*\*\*

# Yvonne Clarke tells us how a

## cheeky grin is good for the vocals -

When the photographer says, 'Say Cheese' he could charge a little extra for this sound advice for your vocal career. Smiling can help your singing. No, really. Some people are blessed with good facial bone structure and, as I mentioned before, some can pay to have their faces rebuilt, but in the main we have to work with what we're given.

**S.O.S**  
Derek Ball from  
anyone got Has  
information on any  
Lucan (Old Mother  
Riley). No problem  
Derek, we'll have  
something in the next  
issue.

Most of you are aware that to create a good, audible vocal sound we need to open our mouths a little more exaggeratedly than we would in normal speech. But for some of us that may not be enough.

If you are not one of the lucky ones with high cheek bones - which are not only photogenic but also a great asset to a singer - you may have to make an extra effort at times to actually raise the flesh that covers the cheekbones to assist a note that needs particular depth and clarity. Practise in front of a mirror to an 'ah' or 'ee' sound, with your face in a relaxed position, and listen carefully to the note produced.

### CHEEKY GRIN

Now try it with a false, cheeky grin - listen to the same sound and hear how much more volume and clarity there is to it. If you don't notice a difference, you ain't doing it right. Should you have time to plonk yourself in front of the box to watch a little opera, just note how some opera singers contort their faces into a false (not always a pretty sight) allowing them to really project the sound, and so wham you back in your seats.

I don't advocate you should abandon your mean and angry look, but just occasionally you may find this technique brilliant for a bit of extra volume and projection on certain notes. Club singers can develop it into a relaxed smile-you'll feel stupid but your audience will think you're dead friendly.

*Great advice this! So don't forget, if you want to project your voice louder you've got to put on a cheeky grin, distort your face and then belt it out.*

\*\*\*\*\*

## Uke Wanted.

Young Stephen Ensall is doing very well on the stage, so his dad, Brian, has decided to buy him a better uke/banjo.

If you've got one for sale which gives out a good sound and is light enough for a youngster to hold, then give Brian a ring on 01244 534653.

\*\*\*\*\*

## Still a few seats available for the "D" Day Trip - June 5<sup>th</sup>

**Received** a phone call from Andrew Holden of London who was making enquires on whether George ever played the Wigan Ritz Theatre. He knew that he had played the Wigan Hippodrome but was doubtful on if he'd played the Ritz. Jim Bramwell claimed that the Ritz is a cinema and not a theatre and as far as he is aware it has always been a cinema. Do you know any different?

Andrew, who is doing research for a book, also said that Ronnie Kean, who was a brilliant sax player with the Ronnie Scott group, claimed that George was a master with his style of playing.

#### **BUDDY HOLLY**

Andrew has studied Buddy Holly and claims that his grinning, strumming, rotation and syncopation reminded him very much of George Formby.

\*\*\*\*\*

**Jeffrey (Formby) Booth rang.** He has been in touch with the grandson of William Hamilton who was the young horse racing boy who ran away from the stables, with young George, in Dublin. They were caught by the police when boarding ship. He claims that they spent a night in jail. More news as it comes in.

\*\*\*\*\*

**The Lost Chord** - Are you having trouble finding that strange chord? If so have a chat with Arthur Newton who is the "Master Of Chords" at Crewe. Arthur will do his best to help you. - Brian.

\*\*\*\*\*

**Colin Wood thanks Geoff Shone** - I would like to record a very special "Thank You" to Geoff Shone of the N. Wales branch for his timely gesture in donating an audio tape storage box to the South Cheshire (Crewe) branch.

I wonder how Geoff could have known that our two storage boxes were full to overflowing and that we were having to leave some of our backing tapes at home. Thanks again Geoff, it certainly proves what a wonderful inter-branch relationship we enjoy. Colin Wood. *Thanks Colin.*

\*\*\*\*\*

**Poser for you handed in at Crewe.** A Spaniard left a message:- Si Senor, dardago. Forte lorrez alinero. Demant lorrez, demar trux. Fulla cous annenz andux. What was the message?? Answer on page 19.

\*\*\*\*\*

**Have you any (get your brain going) posers for the Newsletter?**



# 18 From Pop to Classics

Way back in 1991 - due the success of the Warrington Exhibition - we received a lot of correspondence in the post and one in particular comes to mind. Angela Scott was asking for help for her young 10 year old son, Thomas, who was struggling to play the ukulele like George. We contacted the family, from Failsworth, and Angela and Philip brought along young Thomas and his brother, Jonathan, who was studying the piano.

Shortly after, they were invited to appear with us on TV and on two occasions Jonathan accompanied us, on piano, at the Granada and BBC TV Studios.

Well, like all the other youngsters from that period, they have dropped off attending the N. West meetings, but this is because they have been dedicating their time studying for bigger things. Jonathan, on piano, is attending the Royal Northern College of Music and he's hoping to become the top Young Musician of the Year. More than 500 entered the competition. He is also giving piano recitals and hoping one day to be a concert pianist.

Thomas, who is still as outgoing as ever, has many talents. He gives piano recitals around the country, and is a fine trumpeter. He is writing songs, of the popular variety, and also getting into the recording business with himself playing all the instruments and providing the vocals. He still plays the uke and has livened up many a school concert with a quick George Formby number to round off the evening.

Angela writes to say that being in the GFS has really helped them both. They both appreciated the opportunity to appear on TV and they mixed with some of the nicest people.

Well, we in the GFS wish them tons of success and hope that someday they will earn their fortune through their musical talents. George will be very pleased with the success story.

\*\*\*\*\*

**Cliff Royle** has sent in the following notice:- Cangen Gogledd Cymru o Gymdeithas George Formby. Croeso I chwaraewyr dysgwyr ac ymwelyt. Bob dydd Gwener cyntaf y mis @ 7.45pm. Clwb y Brydeinig, Penyffordd, Mynediad: 50c. Am wybodaeth bellach ffoniwch 01244 544799.

At first I thought there was something wrong with his typewriter until I realised that it is an advert in the "What's On in N. Wales" booklet publicising the Penyffordd meeting.

*Very good Cliff. This computer spell checker wouldn't stop "ding, dinging!"*

# Spotlight on Max Bygraves

19

Max was born in Rotherhithe in 1922, the second of six children. His father was a former professional boxer who worked in the London docks. They lived on 8/4d (42 pence) in a two roomed council flat. As a boy, Max - born Walter William - won prizes in school choir contests. Later he sang at the Merry Fiddlers in Dagenham for 10 shillings (50p) a night.



A year before the outbreak of war, aged 16, he joined the RAF as a fitter. It was there that he was nicknamed "Max" because of his Max Miller impressions. Due to his entertainment talent he spent the entire war period doing camp concerts. His Commanding Officer was Rex Harrison, who was then unknown. He met his wife of 54 years, Blossom, who was in the RAF and after the war they planned to leave England for Australia. He had his trade as a joiner and at the time the government were offering a £10 assisted passage. But on the day they were going to Australia House, they got a letter for an audition at the BBC. He got onto the radio in the Middle East Merry Go Round and the impresario Jack Payne booked him. On July 16<sup>th</sup> 1946 he opened in Sheffield at the Moss Empire on a tour of the best variety theatres in the country.

Four years later he appeared at the London Palladium and within a year he was the star. For 14 years he was virtually resident there. When he supported Judy Garland she invited him to open for her in New York.

Max will always be remembered for his Singalongs which have been a great success over the past 25 years. His mother loved music - always playing the radio full blast - and one day he called on her and found that the radio was silent. She explained that she was no longer interested in the type of music they were playing. Max asked his pianist to back him, at the recording studio, while he put a few old songs on a tape for his mother. They started with, Red Red Robin and Bill Bailey and the producer thought it was a great idea. They produced records of the Singsongs and at one point there were three albums in the Top 20 and four in the Top 30. Max and Blossom have lived Bournemouth for almost 30 years and have a house in Australia.

Like many other stars, Max plays the ukulele and in 1958 he recorded and published "My Ukulele" (I Love To Play)

\*\*\*\*\*

**The answer to the Spaniard's message is - Si Senor, dardago. Forte lorrez alinero. Demant lorrez, demar trux. Fulla cous annenz andux.**

Means: See Senor, There they go. Forty lorries all in a row. Them aren't lorries, them are trucks. Full of cows and hens and ducks.

# N. West 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** - Wainwright, Hornby Rd, B/pool - Every 1st Sat. in the month - Tel Eve Stewart on 01253 768097 - Future Dates: - Mar 7<sup>th</sup>, Apr 4<sup>th</sup>, May 2<sup>nd</sup>, Jun 6<sup>th</sup>. 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 - Sat 28<sup>th</sup> Mar, Sat 18<sup>th</sup> Apr, Fri 29<sup>th</sup> May, Sat 27<sup>th</sup> June, Fri 24<sup>th</sup> July, Fri 28<sup>th</sup> Aug, Sat 26<sup>th</sup> Sep, Fri 23<sup>rd</sup> Oct, Fri 27<sup>th</sup> Nov, Fri 18<sup>th</sup> Dec. Adm 50p. Get there early for a seat.

\*\*\*\*\*

**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.

\*\*\*\*\*

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 Mar.

So as George would say -

**“Get Cracking”**

**Support Your Newsletter**

\*\*\*\*\*



**Gone to Spain!!!** Next month your Editor is spending a week with the Alliance Social Club Pensioners in Benidorm so please send your copy in as soon as poss. Very much appreciated. We are away from 17<sup>th</sup> March to the 24<sup>th</sup>.