

THE NORTH - WEST

GEORGE FORMBY Newsletter 35

Vol. 3, No.11
May 1998

THE LONDON PALLADIUM		
OXFORD CIRCUS, W.		
<small>General Theatrical Commission Ltd General Manager MARK OBTHER</small>	<small>TELEPHONE 01273 7272</small>	<small>GENERAL MANAGER GEORGE BLACK General Manager E. F. HULLIBRAND</small>
6.25	TWICE NIGHTLY Commencing May 16th 1938 MATINEES AT 2.30	9.0 WEDNESDAY & THURSDAY
THE FAMOUS BRITISH SCREEN COMEDIAN GEORGE FORMBY AND HIS 'UKE'	SUE RYAN <small>A NEW COMEDY PERSONALITY FROM U.S.A.</small>	VIC OLIVER <small>LONDON'S FAVOURITE AMERICAN COMEDIAN</small>
JOE TERMINI <small>THE SOMNOLENT MELODIST</small>	PAUL REMOS <small>Novel Acrobatic Speciality</small> AND HIS TOY BOYS	LUCAN AND MCSHANE <small>IN A NEW SKETCH "THE STEPWASHER"</small>
ESTELLE AND LEROY	SIXTEEN PALLADIUM GIRLS	
RUSSELL	BILLY T E X <small>WITH IMA ZIGFIELD</small>	MAE WYNN <small>A RENAISSANCE MATINEE</small> AND ZELLA CO.

Specially Produced for
George Formby Fans
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Newsletter No. 35 and we've loads of news for you this month. We'll begin by saying

Happy 40th Birthday

to one of our Stalwart Members
- Steve Hassall.

On the 18th April we will be celebrating his birthday at the Crewe Meeting, along with his family.



Steve, who is a very popular performer wherever he goes, is one of the founder members of the South Cheshire Branch. He always makes a lot of noise (with his drums) and he's always looking for ways to improve our concerts. Steve is responsible for the decor on the stage and what an excellent job he has done.

Huge Success at Nantwich Jazz -

There was a packed house at the Wilbraham Arms when the South Cheshire (Crewe) Society performed at the Jazz & Blues Festival. In their 2 hour non-stop programme, Alan Newton, Alan Chenery, Colin Wood, Darryl Snow, Steve Hassall, Brian Edge, Walter Kirkland, Carl Basford, Dennis Lee and Jon & Pam Baddeley entertained a most enthusiastic audience who chanted throughout and cheered repeatedly for "More."

The chant of "Walter, Walter" for our popular Bones player, echoed throughout the hotel and the 73 year old responded with such enthusiasm that his ligaments will surely be sore the following morning.

All the artists excelled in the electric atmosphere in which it was a delight to perform. We doubt if it has been done before but the crowds were actually dancing in the aisles, singing at the top of their voices and shouting for "MORE."

Brian Edge.

This is great news for the N. West Brian and I understand that the main organiser wanted our members to perform at his hotel but his wife warned him off for fear of being accused of 'picking the cream.' - Great!!!

The Formby Story

Part 25 by Stan Evans

George & Beryl were struggling. She was independent and preferred they should stand on their own feet and not have to rely on the success of George's father. George was still searching for the type of song that would up-date him and help him to break away from his father's droll routines.

One day he was rehearsing with Jack Hylton, the Bolton bandleader, when he was approached by Jack Cottrell the songwriter. George had refused for some time to buy his song about a Chinaman - maybe because it was so different to his father's type of song. However, George, who always liked a bargain, did a deal at a reduced price of £4, - from £5.



Jack Hylton wasn't in the least impressed with this song and told George that if he recorded it he would do the backing for him but preferred that his name was not included on the record label. He didn't want his name to be associated with a bad song. How wrong he was!!! But George & Beryl liked the song. It had the good fast, uke type, rhythm, and, - unlike his father's songs, - that were clean and pure, it contained cheeky, innuendoes that suited his type of humour. It was perfect! But still Jack wasn't impressed.

Although George had ambitions as a comedian, he could never tell a joke. His punch line was pathetic. But singing Chinese Laundry Blues was like telling a story and he enjoyed it. The song had "life," and that's what he wanted. It was also a romantic song about Mr Wu falling in love with a Chinese girl and how his work had gone to pieces. He particularly liked the cheeky bits:- "he's got a naughty eye that flickers, you ought to see him wobble when he's ironing ladies, - blouses." This was like telling a joke in song and George had the innocent face that could get them through the very strict census.

But, - maybe due to Jack Hylton's doubt about the song, - he was still reluctant to take a chance on recording it. So, to compromise, they made a recording, on July 1st 1932, of George singing "Do De O Do," when George sang the vocals, without a uke, to the backing of Jack's band. The "A" side never got off the ground but Chinese Laundry Blues, on the "B" side, was an instant success. This is just what George had been searching for. More Next Month.

Cliff Royle Writes -

HOW TO KNOW WHEN YOU ARE GETTING OLD

1. Everything hurts - What doesn't hurt, doesn't work
2. The gleam in your eye is the sun in your bifocals
3. You feel like the morning after but you haven't been anywhere
4. Your children begin to look middle aged
5. You join a health club but don't go
6. A dripping tap causes an uncontrollable urge
7. You have all the answers but no one asks you the question
8. You look forward to a dull evening
9. You need glasses to find your glasses
10. You turn out the light for economy instead of romance
11. You sit in your rocking chair but can't make it go
12. Your knees buckle but your belt won't
13. Your back goes out more than you do
14. You put your bra on back to front and it fits better
15. Your house is too big but your medicine cupboard isn't big enough
16. You sink your teeth into a steak and they stay there
17. Your birthday cake collapses from the weight of the candles

*** * Sale Meeting** - Please note that the JUNE MEETING will be on Thursday 18th - not the usual Friday.

Judith Townend of Sheffield rang - "Hey Stan" she said, "Do you know that there's a line missing in 'I Went All Hot And Cold' in Song Book 4". Well I went all hot and cold myself when she told me and I couldn't believe that we'd gone three years without anyone spotting the error before. Low and behold she was right! The following line "She said alright, I'll stay the night" is missing from the first verse.

So if anyone is struggling with the song, just drop me a line and I will be pleased to send you the corrected sheet. Thanks for letting me know Judith.

Definitions of Wisdom:-

ADVICE: Something we give to others to see if it works.

BETTING: Putting money on a horse to slow it down.

CHOPIN, FREDERICK: A polish composer and pianist who greatly extended the technical and expressive range of the pianoforte. He also extended the trading hours leading to the introduction of "Late Night Chopin."

DEDUCE: Something you get when you squeeze an orange.

APERITIF: Dentures. **A MOUNTAIN RANGE:** A high altitude cooking stove.

Auctions - I went to a couple of Magic Society Auctions during March. They were quite good and I finished up with a number of items that will certainly have the GFS members bamboozled.

But it reminded me of the very first Magic Auction I went to when I purchased a large box for about 3 quid. It was classed by the auctioneer as a large mixed box of magic tricks. I arrived home, feeling lucky, about midnight and immediately set about emptying the contents of the huge box onto the floor.

Now it was soon apparent that the previous owner was some sort of a mad inventor who never got around to finishing anything off, because not one trick was complete. There were loads of beer bottle tops, a broken torch, a huge coiled up spring, half made tricks without instructions and loads of instructions without tricks, a broken tape player, half a stapler, incomplete sets of playing cards, half a wand and a piece of a house brick. But one particular packet looked exciting. It was a trick called "Disappearing Dog" and it must have worked because when I opened it up there was nothing inside.

STARK RAVING BONKERS

The following morning Eva saw all this junk strewn all over the floor and thought that I'd brought in somebody's dustbin. She was convinced I'd gone absolutely stark raving bonkers. She couldn't believe it! - Now I've come to the conclusion that some women just don't understand! Stan Evans

George & Eliza's Family & Houses

3 Westminster St, Wigan

George born 26th May 1904

Turner St, Wigan

Dickenson St, Wigan

Louisa born 27th May 1906

Warthey House Farm

Ella born July 2nd 1910

Mary born Jan 21st 1912

Hindley House

Frank born 1st April 1913

Ethel Born March 13th 1915

Hill Crest, Warrington

Ted born Oct 5th 1918

"Nora Malone" - Blackpool Evening Gazette 1936 - George claims that this is the song he was shown when he bought his first uke for 50 shillings. He practised the song because it only had two chords. But I think that George means, "Molly Molone" because this only has two chords (D & A7) up to the last line, when E7 is used. George claims that he was like a child with a new toy, then tired of it and left it in a corner. 12 months later he resurrected it, strings broken and the case full of dust.

Wonderful Story - You will recall we recently reported the death of Crewe member, Dave Peerless. At the February Crewe meeting young Gareth Sumner showed me his Dallas "C" uke banjo and, thinking that Dallas ukes are not easily obtainable, I asked him where he purchased it from. He told me that Dave had left it to him in his will, along with a small wooden uke and various other items. He also left him his aeroplane models.

Well, it is really wonderful that Dave has handed the instruments down to someone who - without doubt - will use them to help to keep George's name alive for many more years to come. Young Gareth, with his ever increasing talent, is the ideal young man to take our songs into the future. We need more youngsters like him! And more like Dave who look to the future.

As Gareth said, "His ukes will carry on playing after he has died!" Good thinking Gareth and I only hope that you treasure them throughout your life. You deserve some good luck.

Digital Camera - Taking photographs for the Newsletter has always been a problem because by the time you have used up the roll of films and had then developed, the book has been printed and sold. So I went along to Dixons to purchase digital camera, which will produce instant films that can be plugged straight into the computer and printed off. - Great Idea.

Having purchased the camera the salesman was then keen to supply me with insurance cover for £120, to which I told him it was too expensive and would be cheaper though my house insurance. He then started offer all sorts of deals, like 2 year cover to 3 year, and then to 4 year for the same price. I still refused.

He was so keen to sell his insurance that I finished up with a 3 year cover for £35 and this covers a full "at home" call out service. So, if you intend buying any new electrical goods etc. don't be too eager to accept their opening offers.

Pam Baddeley writes, Come On - Own Up!!!

Who left their uke on the Manchester Airport? Did you see the programme "Airline" on Friday 20th March at 8pm on ITV? The programme took you behind the scenes of Britannia Airways and the commentator finished with a list of items that were left either on the plane or at the airport. Yes, you've got it! One was a ukulele, so could it have been left by a GFS member who sings "It's In The Air?" Good thinking that Pam.. Will the guilty member please own up?

Editor is running short of articles

Uke Cases

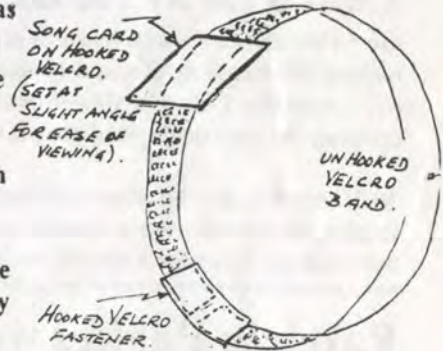
- Last month we recommended that you take care when ordering a Uke Case because one of our members experienced considerable problems in receiving his goods and finally had to issue a writ to obtain his money back. We also recommended that if you required a uke case you should contact Peter Lee on 01535 690441.



Well Peter has kindly sent in a list of the cases that he

makes along with prices. (1) Back to Back (holds two ukes) £75 plus £9.50 pp. (2) Semi Flight £45 + £7.50 pp. (3) Standard Case £30 + £7.50 pp. Peter will dispatch (by Parcel Force) cases about 21 days after he receives the order. The quality of these cases can be recommended.

Cliff Royle - writes to say that he was interested in the article by Alan Newton (April No. 33) on a reminder card which straps to the wrist, and goes on to say that he too finds it difficult to remember (*we hadn't noticed Cliff*) but if he can pick up the first few words of each verse then he has no problems.



Anyway, Cliff has come up with his own, simple to make, reminder board and also sent in a very fine blueprint to explain how to make it.

Firstly one strip of velcro is required (the non-hooked side) sufficient go round the wrist. This is held in position by a short length of hooked velcro. The strip of card is then glued to a short strip of hooked velcro. Alternatively, if you are wearing a woolen pullover you don't need the wrist band.

Great idea Cliff. I noticed you using your new invention at the N. Wales meeting. Where did you learn to draw like that? Have we any more good ideas?

Wigan Rotary

- We have been invited to put on a display and entertain at the Craft & Leisure Exhibition at College Sports Hall, Parsons Walk, Wigan on Bank Holiday Monday, 25th May, - from 10am to 3pm. About five thousand people go through the doors so it could be good publicity. If you are interested give me a ring. Stan Evans.

Happy Birthday - Go to the N.West Meetings and you can guarantee that someone is celebrating a birthday. So below we've given the chords to the song. Maybe next time we will make it more lively with a Happy Birthday thrash :- First in the Key of "G" and then in "D" - with "D" Tuning.



Happy Birthday to you, Happy Birthday to you. Happy Birthday dear



Whatsits, Happy Birthday to you

Learn to Play The Banjo. If any of the readers wish to take up the 5 stringed banjo and learn to play like Harry, then don't start running round looking for banjo music, and tuition material, because I've just bought a load of it. Actually I bought this suitcase full thinking it was for uke banjo and on opening the case discovered that it was for Harry's favourite instrument.

As Harry has proved, time and time again, the banjo is a wonderful instrument to play, and it will create another section towards our N.West band that is slowly developing. Give me a ring if you are interested. Stan Evans.

Patricia Parkes Writes - Dear Stan, Many thanks for the latest Newsletter. Keep up the good work.

Here in Dudley we have a shop which deals in Records and Film Memorabilia. In the window is a framed sheet with a picture of George and his uke on the cover. The song featured is called "Here's A Jolly Good Song" composed by written by Algy Moore. It has George's signature across the front and the asking price is £100. Do you think it is genuine and is it worth £100? Have you heard of the song or composer?

Thanks Pat. It's difficult to say whether the signature is genuine or not without seeing it. George was very generous. He would put his name on anything - including five franc notes during the war for the troops. The cost of £100 is too high. Before 1991 George's signature was sold at the GFS meetings for £5. During the big publicity drive, - when a lot of new members joined, they brought £40 to £45. Today I would imagine that the value is between £15 and £25. Hope this helps.

April Penyffordd Meeting by Cliff Royle.

Dear Stan, An excellent meeting with an almost full house, well supported by the Crewe gang to celebrate - dare I say it - the ?? birthday of Connie Edge. It was nice to see her daughter come along to give her a big surprise. Husband Brian did us all proud by providing an excellent buffet and birthday cake. We welcomed back some old faces and a good number of new visitors too.

We had almost four hours of great entertainment with a few unusual turns: Lesley Lee, Eric Morris and Pam Baddeley showed off their Line Dancing skills; Ray Davies sang rousing songs from the recent past; Glen, from Crewe gave us a couple of numbers on the trumpet; Fred Stevenson and Gareth Sumner did a Duo; Auntie Mary thought she was playing two ukes (at the same time) Stan's Hush Puppy almost escaped; we had "Bananas" sung in French (we think) and there was a good smattering of songs sung by various members from Crewe, Sale and N. Wales.

As usual we had excellent support from the youngsters, Gareth Sumner, Stephen Ensall and Frank Murphy. Not only was Frank's father, Jim, present but also his mother and their latest off-springs; seven month old twins. We start em young in Wales! We also had another young lady, her brother, grandmother and friends from Buckley join. Natasha is very keen, and is actually learning to play on a basic uke that Stan Evans sold to me when I joined the GFS in 1991.

A tape recording was played of a broadcast about our N. Wales branch which went out recently on Radio Wales. Connie - the birthday girl - was one of the stars. Dennis Lee is currently getting a few requests for radio interviews.

"D" FRANCE

Don't forget there are still a few seats left for the trip to France. Rowers are particularly needed.

Please don't get upset if you feel you've not been mentioned. If I go on too long Stan will chop it down - he's like that! Cheers, Cliff Royle.

Thanks Cliff. I remember very well you coming to see me when the Formby Exhibition was on and you bought a uke from me. By the way, - did you pay for it? You don't need to be embarrassed about giving Connie's age away. She carries her age very well, - 35. Keep sending em in Cliff. You are doing a good job.

Cliff has recently had published (by Frodsham Town Council) his booklet "The Frodsham Hundred Challenge" which covers ten different 10 mile country walks all starting and finishing in Frodsham. It includes historical and general points of interest and certificates are available to those completing the course. *Wonderful Cliff. You are a man of many talents.*

We don't get overcrowded at Blackpool but

it's always a great night, and Eve & Charles are pleased to greet you. About 30 members turned up at the April meeting and an excellent night was held by all. The room at the Wainwright Hotel is possibly the best in the N. West for comfort and size. Below are members of our Jim Greeves Fan Club: Elsie Rothwell, Vose Davies, Doreen Partington, Elsie Fish, Hannah Turner, Dorothy Kasparin and John Stables-Jackson. Seven in all but one appears to have escaped. Not to worry we will get her next month.



Here we have three more members who regularly turn up at the Blackpool meetings. Iris Hillman, who enjoys singing and playing the uke. In the centre we have Carol Middleton who is the best Raffle ticket seller in Blackpool: -



No-one gets past Carol!

On the right we have young Paul who has a tremendous gift of being able to pick up and memorise the chords and songs. He is extremely ambitious to play the uke and practises at least 8 hours each day. He will make an excellent entertainer. Keep working on it Paul and some day you could make a brilliant entertainer.

Our thanks to all who make us so welcome. It's a good night out with an appreciative audience.



I only asked if he knew a window cleaner

Blackpool Tuition Night.

Charles & Eve Stewart are going great guns. They have now started a Tuition Night at their home to improve the quality of the Wainwright concerts. Tuesday the 7th April was their opening night and Charles rang to say that they had a nice little group plonking away in harmony. Actually I could hear them in the background. If anyone in the area fancies an evening with the Stewarts, give them a ring on 01253 768097.

Naturally they are limited for space and will give priority to those who are able to support the Blackpool meetings. Wish you loads of success Charles.

Fred Stevenson of Crewe, has had a lot of experience in the entertaining business so we are trying to persuade him to send in a monthly article on some of his experiences. So come on Fred. The world is waiting for you.

Fred attends the Crewe and N. Wales meetings and usually performs using his yodelling "Frank Ifield" voice. He also makes a very good ukulele banjo.

If there is anyone out there who has entertained and possibly met the stars, drop a line to the Newsletter.

Right: Fred with his uke.

Harry Boffey - pictured right has had a lot of experience in the entertainment business so how's about it Harry. The world is your oyster. Let us know of some of the stars that you've met and any other back stage stories. Look forward to hearing from you.

Jim Bramwell & I have just been

invited to do a show for the old folk and patients at the Callands Nursing Home, Warrington, on Wednesday 23rd April. If anyone wants to join in with these meetings they are welcome to come along and entertain. They are usually hard work but good experience. Stan Evans.

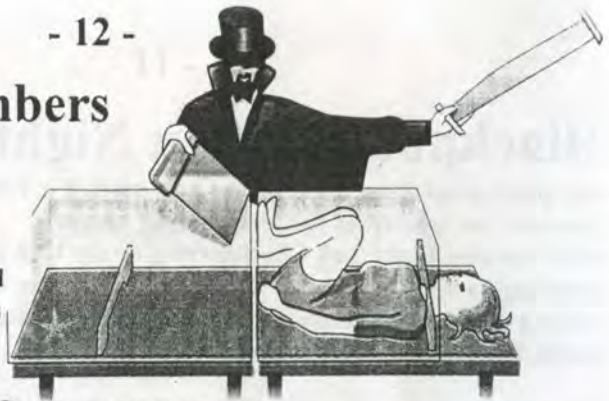


Harry (left) with Dennis Lee

Keep Smiling

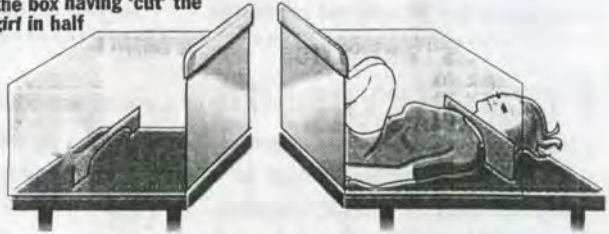
Some GFS Members

were concerned when they saw the show on TV which exposed the magicians tricks. These tricks were showed in great detail and some wondered what the Hooded Magician was gaining from it.



Well, many magic men are pretty sure that the magician is David Copperfield, the American millionaire, who travels all over the world presenting big magic shows. He is aware that there are a lot of magicians around doing these tricks, - as they

④ The magician can now split the box having 'cut' the girl in half



have been doing for the past umpteem years - and possibly feels that the time has come to get rid of some of them. Exposing the tricks means he has killed their act, and at the same time protected himself because he is in a position to create expensive fool proof tricks that no-one can expose.

Now, although ITV thought they were getting one over on the poor magician who, for a hundred years has mystified the world, they have only exposed how David Copperfield cheated the viewers with his own TV shows. They certainly didn't explain how the 80 year old mystic man elevated the lady - in the church hall - without the aid of a fork lift truck. Nor did they explain how the lady sawn in half was able to keep waggling her toes.

Liverpool Beginners Sessions - At the Liverpool

meetings we are giving half hour sessions to help the raw beginners to get started on the uke. Anyone wanting to join in will be advised to get there soon after 8pm.

Wheeltappers & Social Club - Granada Plus on Sky

Tv have just launched another series of nightly shows. Tonight's show featured Max Wall, Morton Frazer's Harmonica Gang and David Whitfield. The Presenter is Bernard Manning and the Chairman is Colin Cromton. Well worth watching.

Don't Forget Your Newsletter

Letter of the Day

Seeing red over Black And White

DESPITE usually being a quiet and easy-going character, after reading Martin Samuel's article "BBC lacks the guts to be funny" (Express, March 20), my blood was boiling.

Who is Martin Samuel to say the Black And White Minstrels are rubbish, and what is wrong with middle-aged men and grandparents? There are more than 10 million of us and we can understand and enjoy these songs.

These songs, together with many more, helped us through far more difficult times than Martin Samuel will ever know.

I am sure I speak for many, many viewers when I say that Easter Monday, when we will see the Black And White Minstrels on television, cannot come soon enough. It will offer some real enjoyment to many millions, without having to resort to bad language.

*Mr AJ Wingate,
Broxbourne, Hertfordshire*

OFFERING ENJOYMENT TO MILLIONS: One of the original Black And White Minstrels



Perhaps we should target the TV Companies asking them to put some of the old Music Hall shows on for us.

There is very little on the box worth watching and I'm sure that Sky TV will respond if we ask. Maybe we should send a petition round to the members.

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Do You remember the old Black and White Minstrel Shows on TV. I thought they were really great. All those wonderful old songs that we were brought up on. Did anyone make a tape of the show on Easter Monday? If so, I'd like to borrow it. *♫ You are my honeysuckle I am the bee - Wonderful!!!!*



March Meeting at Crewe by Brian Edge.

We all went home after the March Concert at Wistaston thoroughly satisfied that our faithful audience had had a really good night's entertainment. It is obvious that all the artistes work hard on their songs and in consequence their performances improve each meeting.

Young Becky Snow gave by far her best performance to date with a rarely performed George Formby song, "The Mad March Hare." Becky's dad, Darryl, tackled an equally rare and difficult number "It Could Be" and left the stage clearly delighted with his performance and with the accolade he received.

We were very happy to welcome Alan & Hilda Southworth and their friends Dick & Vera Eaves from Preston and it was good to hear that they enjoyed the concert very much. Alan performed "Football Pools" and then got the audience going with "Lottery Song."

A welcome also went out to a prospective new uke player Miss Vicky Perez, a gymnast, who trained to George Formby song as they have a regular beat. George is obviously good for her as she became the All Round Special Olympic Champion of Great Britain and was the first British gymnast to represent Great Britain at the World Special Olympics in the United States. Vicky has won many Olympic Gold Medals and if she puts the same effort into practising on her very nice Dallas "D" uke she'll soon be our champion.

We missed Arthur & Mary Newton who were at a wedding and our joint M.C. Carl Basford was in Amsterdam supposedly looking up tulips! Well many may believe him but in the words of George's song, "You Can't Fool Me!"

Glenys Huntington gave us a splendid recital on the trumpet, first a bluesy number followed by a jazzy "Down By The Riverside" - Really great stuff! Glenys also joined in with "Dr Jazz" which always goes down well with the audience. How nice to see Gareth & Joyce Sumner. Gareth played "Windows" in his usual accomplished style and was accompanied by Fred Stevenson.

And what about the dog that Stan Evans magically produced from the bag? Wasn't it great? Well I will let you into a little secret, that wasn't Stan talking, it was the dog, Max! It's a Ventriloquist!

Thank you Brian. I've just thought of a GF song that would go down very well with Glenys and her trumpet. "Tan Tan Tivvy Tally Ho" would be ideal! And what about "Biceps Muscles & Brawn" for Vicky?

Max is very pleased that you liked his act. He is running round the office, dead excited because of his instant success. But I must warn you that Gilbert will be coming to the next meeting and he is quite a handful. Warn the members will you.

Mini Disk Players - The N. West members are certainly getting "With It" lately because quite a number are investing in the little Mini Disk Players. These small disks - about 2" square, hold as many as 50 backing tapes so it saves the job of carrying cases of cassettes to the meetings.

Crewe & N. Wales are certainly leading the field with Des Redford, Alan Chenery, Jonathan Baddeley, Colin Wood, Dennis Lee, and now the Crewe Branch have bought one to use on stage.

If you are thinking of purchasing a mini disk player make sure that you search around for the best price. At the major stores they have various prices, - between £250 and £300. But the keenest price is at Richer Sounds who have branches at Liverpool, Stockport and Birmingham. Their prices are £169 for the pocket sized machine and £199 for the table model.

Future Events - As usual, during the Summer period we get invited to various charities, fetes etc. and this year is no exception. . . .

April 12th, Sunday, Nantwich Jazz Festival, Wilbraham Arms, 7pm

May 25th Bank Hol Mon, Wigan Rotary Craft Fair, Parsons Walk, Wigan 10am

July 4th (Sat) Penketh Carnival, 1.30pm - Marquee & Generator supplied.

Date of Wigan Pier to be arranged.

Dorothy Wayne - "*George Formby would have been nothing without me*" - "I made George Formby!" - Well I for one wasn't in the least impressed with Dorothy Wayne's impersonation of Beryl in her "One-woman Show," which was based on the tail end of George & Beryl's life. Granted there may have been discord at the end but this is due to the fact that George had lost the support of his wife. Beryl was suffering from Leukemia and George assumed - wrongly - that she'd simply turned to drink. Now George may have been a brilliant entertainer but he couldn't handle responsibility. He ran 200 miles to avoid it and poor Beryl died while he was away entertaining.

It's easy making these statements 37 years after they are dead and I'm quite aware of where she got her information from, but I can assure you that she is wrong. Beryl's voice was trained and refined. She most certainly didn't have the rough, earthy gravel type of voice that Dorothy Wayne used in her impressions, especially during her illness.

"D" Day trip to France. We still have a few seats available so if anyone is interested please ring either Dennis Lee on 01244 544799 or Stan Evans on 01925 727102.

Profile on Billy Uke Scott

Singer/composer and ukulele player. Born Sunderland, 1923. On radio Billy would always finish with, "And finally, to prove that melody can be played on a ukulele. . . ." He would then go into an intricate uke solo where he did indeed prove that melody could be played on the much abused instrument. He was just superb. He began at the Empire, Newcastle in 1936 and from then on his boyish, full of fun personality and brilliant musicianship enlivened Variety bills everywhere. He always featured his own songs and some good 'uns he had too.



Bill was regarded as the best uke melody player in the country, along with Harry Nesbit of Max & Harry Nesbit fame. He would always finish his act with a medley of good old songs like "Keep The Home Fires Burning" and "It's A Long Long Trail of Winding." At the GFS Stourbridge meeting, some few years back, you could hear a pin drop while Bill was playing. He was every bit the professional. Unfortunately Bill never made any recording to be passed down.

One particular song of Bill's sums up the life of the Variety Professional perfectly. . . .

Travelling round in a small revue. Learn the game like the troopers do.

'Til you've caught every train from Crewe. You go on with your show.

Once it's over and you're feeling grand. Had them eating out of your hand
If you didn't you blame the band. And go on with the show.

In his very early days Bill was taken under the wing of the great Max Miller when Bill wrote several songs for him. Some of his songs were "Down By The Old Turnstile, The Guest House, Learning To Play The Piano, and The Village Pantomime." All good banjo uke type of songs.

When variety finished Bill retired from the stage and became an agent for a few years. Later he put it around that he would like to work on stage again. To his amazement he wasn't forgotten. He played summer seasons, pantos, one-night stands, the lot. A few years back a Water Rats Lodge meeting was being held at Manchester. Bill turned up and took the Lodge by storm. He did his show biz parodies of famous songs. All updated and just brilliant, Mike Craig recorded them for the Water Rats. Bill, who lived at Southport is a member of the GFS, is now living on a narrow boat. It's a crying shame in the words of his song "He's only singing for one."

Do you think entertainment is dead?

Evening Post, Thursday, October 27, 1994

Not in the N. West!

By **STEVE JARVIS**

HERE'S something that could wipe the smile off your face.

The great Northern sense of humour that kept us smiling through our troubles is dying.

Once upon a time, the region had a giggle of comics such as Gracie Fields, Hylda Baker and George Formby.

But according to Jeffrey Richards, professor of cultural history at Lancaster University, there are no distinctly Northern young comedians to replace them.

In fact, he reckons the only place that good old-fashioned Northern humour survives is on the box — or on Coronation Street to be exact.

The Street is the last representation of the industrial north from which Lancashire's stars of stage and screen drew their inspiration.

Prof Richards said: "Lancashire stars grew out of industrial Lancashire — the Lancashire of cotton mills and coal mines, a Lancashire where a sense of humour was needed to survive because conditions were so grim.

"But the whole industrial world has been swept away and the Lancashire humour has become a kind of cliché and parodied. That kind of Lancashire humour has vanished as we have become more and more suburban and less distinctive.

"The only place where it survives is Coronation Street which in itself represents a world which has gone. If Gracie had been alive today, she would now have been in Coronation

Street, probably running the bar.

"In many ways she was similar to Betty Driver, who plays barmaid Betty Turpin in the soap, who is the classic embodiment of Lancashire characteristics."

So what are the typical Lancashire characteristics? According to the professor they are directness, honesty, good-heartedness, plain speaking, and not standing for any pretention or humbug.

Prof Richards added: "All these characteristics were embodied by Gracie Fields — she was the pre-eminent incarnation of a Lancashire woman. And she became a legend in her own lifetime because people recognised something universal to Lancashire women."

Other Lancashire stars taken to the nation's hearts include Wigan-born George Formby and Morecambe-born actress Thora Hird. Both represented the typical Lancashire charm, whereas the act of Morecambe-born comedian Eric Morecambe was rooted in all aspects of showbiz and showed little signs of northern-ness.

The last great comedian of the old Lancashire tradition is Les Dawson, says Prof Richards.

But whereas George and Gracie represented the good and wholesome side of everything Lancashire, Wigan-born comic Frank Randle stood for insubordination and did not fare so well in the nation's affections.

The professor's new book, *Stars In Our Eyes*, priced £3.50 and published by Lancashire County Books, also includes details on stars such as Al Read, and Norman Evans and the rise of Mancunian films.

Blackpool Gazette 30th October 1943, sent in by Charles Stewart.

£160 for Middle East Tour -George & Beryl Formby will visit Fleetwood Town Hall tomorrow to hand over £210 which they have raised for the Fleetwood Fishing Industry Benevolent Fund. Of this £160 represents the payment paid to them for the Middle East Tour. *(A lot of money then in 1943)*

For Bob Drinkwater

who likes anything on the Wooden Ukulele (from an old uke tuition book). Roy Smeck is known as the "Wizard of the strings", not only for his fine musicianship, but also because of the many different sounds he extracts from the ukulele, Spanish guitar, banjo and other plectrum instruments.



**Roy
Smeck**

Roy moved to New York and played in Paul Specht's Hotel Alamac Orchestra. Then he started in vaudeville as a single act and has played everywhere since. He made 14 moving picture shorts and recorded over 500 phonograph records. Many manufacturers feature Roy's name on their instruments and in addition, they are for sale in music shops chosen by him.

Roy has appeared with great names like Vincent Lopez, Kate Smith and Rudy Vallee. During World War 2 he entertained the Armed Forces and made many trips around the U. S. A. playing for various military and naval units. He has written two songs: "When Ukulele Luke Plays His Uke" and "Ukulele Polka." It is indeed a privilege and honour to present you with instructions by the World's Greatest Ukulele Player, Roy Smeck.



Blackpool Gazette July 5th, 1943 - Sent in by Charles Stewart.

It's A Good Job George Had A Quick Brain -

Only George's presence of mind saved him from a serious accident when acting scenes at Fleetwood in a speedboat for his new picture, "Bell Bottom George," when he chose to lose his trousers rather than his foot.

George was driving the motorboat on Saturday for exterior scenes for the film, produced by Marcel Varnel, when the bottom of the leg of his uniform trousers caught in the open spinning shaft. The whirling shaft dragged his foot and his trouser leg into its spin, and in the next second would have crushed his foot. George dragged his foot out of his shoe and left it to its fate, pulling at the same time with all his might on the trouser leg. With a fine tearing rip the leg of the trousers parted company just above the knee, and the lower portion joined the shoe in the mechanism, which jammed.

Alone in the boat, George bound his foot which had been skinned before the shoe came off, and then got the engine clear and running again. When he landed on the quay the unit was amazed to see George hobbling along with apparently shorts on one leg. The tear was so clean that it looked as though he had cut the cloth with a pair of scissors.

Yesterday, George, limping slightly, carried on as usual, but ashore he hoped that next time he wouldn't be "caught at sea."

I Often Get Strange Phone Calls and none more so than the one I've just received from Janet Hawkins, in full voice:-

♪ "I love to squeeze bananas ♪
I love to squeeze ripe plums ♪
But when I'm feeling very sad
♪ I love to squeeze my mum." ♪

Janet does good work tending to the needs of the old folk in a Resident's Home. They'd just had a visit from a couple of entertainers who put a show on for them. They explain to the audience that they are travelling through the country and dress the part and sing a song for each major town they go through. The show lasts about one hour. Guess what song they sang as they travelled through Blackpool:- "With My Little Stick Of Blackpool Rock."

Some Publicity - Dennis Lee and I have just done a broadcast on Radio Merseyside to publicise the Llandudo meeting and also the Liverpool branch. They greeted us warmly with George singing "Riding In The T.T. Races" and we sang, "I Wish I Could Play The Ukulele." Went down well!

Hope To See You All At Llandudno

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: - Apr 4th, May 2nd, Jun 6th, July 4th, NOTE - AUGUST 22nd, NO SEPTEMBER MEETING, Oct 3rd, Nov 7th, Dec 5th. 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 Alice Cronshaw on 0161 727 9829 or Cyril Palmer on 0161 748 6550. Adm £1. NOTE CHANGE OF DATE FOR JUNE ONLY - THURS 18th.

Crewe Branch Wistaston Memorial Hall - Ring Brian Edge on 01270 69836 Future dates - 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. 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 May.

So as George would say -

"Get Cracking"

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