

THE NORTH - WEST

# GEORGE FORMBY

## Newsletter 37

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Specially Produced for  
George Formby Fans

by Stan Evans, The Hollies, 19 Hall Nook, Penketh, Warrington,  
Cheshire WA5 2HN

**Tel or Fax 01925 727102**

**Newsletter No. 37** and we are now 3 years old. It is unbelievable how the articles keep coming in but the enthusiastic readers keep sending them in.

**So what have we got this month?** Well we've got a running commentary on the very successful D Day trip to France and already people are ringing to ask about the next one in 1999. Details of which will be given shortly.

We've got a report on the unveiling of the George Formby Plaque at Wigan.

#### DISHING UP THE DIRT?

And from Charles Stewart we have a damning report in the Blackpool Gazette that top writer, David Bret, is trying to destroy the George Formby icon and damage the GFS. The Wigan Reporter and the Sunday Mail have also been critical of George, while the Manchester Evening News heading reads "Gormless George Honoured At Last."

We have the usual reports from the meetings so. . . . Read On . . . .

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**Sunday Mail** - Tom Bailey rang, "Hey Stan, take a look in the Sunday Mail Supplement. Billy Sloan is having a right go at George in his column." I picked up a copy and there it was. It was with reference to the recent showing, on TV, of the Home Guard activities during the war which George featured in.

*"George Formby's voice was deadly, so were his songs and that's why the Nazis failed to invade British soil. In fact, when Rudolph Hess crash landed near Scotland he missed his target. He was on a Kamikazi mission aimed at Formby's house." And, "George Formby's voice makes Ashley, from Coronation Street, sound like Lee Marvin." And "Hitler's troops were scared off by George Formby's singing."*

Well I faxed the usual stuff to Billy Sloane:- Hey, watch it or you'll have 500 uke banjos banging away outside your bedroom window . . . . and within a couple of hours he was on the phone: . .

"Sorry Stan, I didn't mean it re. George! I actually love him but it was just a joke. In fact I watched the first half of 'No Limit' recently and enjoyed it thoroughly. Unfortunately I had to leave so I didn't see the end of the film." But we've had a good laugh at your letter in the office, 500 uke banjo hey?"

Apologies accepted Billy as long as you put an apology in the next issue. There'll be a copy of "No Limit" in the next post. So we've won another fan.



# The Formby Story

Part 27 by Stan Evans

George's first film, "Boots Boots" was an instant success with the public and they showed it by filling the cinema seats. The film also gave Beryl the opportunity to show off her dancing skills when she danced to "Chinese Laundry Blues." It is understood that the film cost £3,000. 00 to produce and took £30,000. 00 at the box office.



Betty Driver, of Coronation Street fame, who was a young girl in "Boots Boots" (her name is in the credits) claimed that Beryl, angrily, had her taken off the set and thrown out of the picture. However, she wrote to the Vellum in 1991 with a different story:- "I first met George when I was 12 years of age. He came round to see me in the local Repertory Theatre where I was working and I realised then what a wonderful man he was. . . . . *I used to get on very well with Beryl.* If it hadn't been for Beryl he wouldn't have had anything as he was generous to the extreme. She had to have a tight rein on him all the time and therefore suffered a bad reputation for it."

John E Blakeley was pleased with "Boots Boots" so he immediately set about arranging production of "Off The Dole" which was again built around George. It had a very simple plot which involved George turning up at the Dole Office only to be told that he is "off the dole." He then takes up the job of private detective working for his uncle. The film was released one year after Boots Boots and cost £8,000. 00 to produce.

In the film George sings, "If You Don't Want The Goods Don't Maul Em", "With My Little Ukulele In My Hand", "I'm Going To Stick To My Mother", "I Promised To Be Home By Nine O'Clock", and with Beryl, "Isn't Love A Very Funny Thing", and "Surely There's No Harm In A Kiss".

Basil Dean, the film producer, wasn't impressed with the quality of Boots Boots and Off The Dole and felt that the low budget film was only suitable for the North Country audiences. However he was very impressed with George as a comedy star of the future.

He needed a simple story line that help would launch George into big time films and as he was keen on motorcycles, chose Walter Greenwood's "No Limit", which was based on the T.T. Races. It was perfect and the ideal vehicle for George. He then needed a big star to play opposite him and who could help to launch him into big time films. Who could be better than Florence Desmond, a well known variety artist and impersonator. The film was made by Associated Talking Pictures under the direction of Monty Banks. More Next Month.

## "D" Day Trip - You missed a real treat! - by Stan Evans

It was a most wonderful trip packed with fun, laughter and brilliant sunshine all the way. As soon as we got on the coach the ukes came out and it was an "All-along sing-along." Joe, the Springfield driver, wondered what was happening when about 10 ukes struck up with "I Remember George." He then realised why the other drivers hadn't volunteered to take the trip. However, after the first few hours he was tapping his foot and getting into the Formby mood.



Lesley & Dennis Lee

The party of 39 consisted of:- Mary Atkinson, Alan & Pat Chenery, Tony Cosgrove, Craig Tinsley, Betty Cox, Joan Dooer, Tom & Nora Meredith, Brian & Connie Edge, Stan & Eva Evans, Denis & Olwen Gale, Eileen Hansbury, Dennis & Lesley Lee, Jim Murphy, Alan & Mary Newton, Charlie Penman, John Taylor, Bill Pope, Cliff & Margaret Royle, Harry Stanford, John & Maureen Taylor, Bill & Ivy Turner, Alan & Liz Whittaker, Colin & Christine Wood, Paul & Gill Woodhead and Anthony Mason.

The sleeping arrangements on the reclining chairs were dreadful with some spending the night walking the floor. But once we landed at Caen, - at 6.10am, it was fun all the way again. Our first port of call was at the Centre International de Sejour for a breakfast - arranged by Kevin Blanchfield, who did a wonderful job! He waited for us to arrive and immediately got down on both knees to apologise because the Centre had run out of Ham and Eggs. This left us with a choice of brown or white dry bread. With the sparse decor and bare tables it was like a scene from "Oliver Twist" and at any time we expected Mr Bumble to bounce in with, "No! you can't have more bread!"



John Taylor senior, Connie Edge  
Craig Tinsley and Christine Wood

We were too early to book into our Ibis Hotel so we travelled to Bayeux to attend the D Day Ceremony at the Bayeux British Cemetery. This was organised by the British Legion and I must say that it was a most moving experience. Seeing all these graves leaves you with thoughts of "What an awful waste of life," and I personally had to leave the scene to gather control again. There are thousands of graves and the ages of the troops who lie there range from 17 to around 35 years. Many thousands died as they stepped off the boats.



Full credit must go to the dedicated work that is put into the maintenance of the graves. The Graves Commission do a really excellent job and yet we hear very little from them regarding funds etc. All the graves are in perfectly straight lines with rich lawns and very well tended flower beds. It is indeed a credit to them.



War veteran Bill Turner

We were very pleased with the accommodation. After a few hours sleep and a quick hose down we went along to the Maison de Quartier Venoix to put on a show for the British Legion, - Again organised by Kevin, - (he's a lad is Kevin!)

But what a wonderful audience he hand-picked for us. They are a great lot these British Legion Veterans and they thoroughly enjoyed our show. The room was packed with around 150 ladies and gents and, being the right age group, they responded very well. We had a grand hall, a wonderful stage, and dressing room facilities at the rear. All the artists kept to the rule of staying in the room until called and the show went like a dream, - well almost. Kevin bounced in every five minutes with "Keep that noise down you lot." He's a right bully!



War veteran Harry Stanford

Because they were not particularly Formby fans we attempted to put on as much variety as possible. This consisted of Formby players singing non-Formby singalongs, a touch of the Al Jolson's, a bit of magic, Max the soft Dog and of course, all the Formby favourites. Out in the Middle East went down very well and the audience joined in with keen enthusiasm. I'm sure that if we'd asked them to stand on their heads they would have done it! The show ended at around 10pm and we went back to our digs.

Dennis Lee, who was just about getting ready to switch into third gear, wasn't in the mood for retiring to bed, so he bundled the happy trippers over to the local pub where he asked if we could play a few songs. The French landlord and his wife had no idea of what he was talking about so they just nodded their heads. Suddenly, it was as if all hell had broke loose for the landlord as he heard this strange noise vibrating through his lounge. I went to order a couple of drinks and he couldn't hear a word I was saying. The look on his face told me that he was far from happy with these strange aliens that had invaded his space. Within a few minutes people were gathering round the front of the pub to see what was



Our merry band of D Day Trippers

going on and we invited them in. A large group that ventured over the doorstep was from the local College of Music and one of them wanted to learn to play the uke. They were all enjoying the sound and some sent in requests. We gave them everything we had, Lamp Post, Windows, Rock, Wu, Licence, Bananas, Night-shirt, and they kept shouting for more. The landlord began to show a little enthusiasm when he saw that the room was full to capacity and the people who were standing outside were actually dancing in the street.

Anthony Mason, who was on top form, silenced them all with The William Tell Overture and you could hear a pin drop as they listened intently to every note. They cried for more. But the room was really alive with electric when the French and English joined together with the French National Anthem, "Marseillaise" to Anthony's playing. It was like a scene from Casablanca and at any time Humphrey Bogart and Sydney Greenstreet could have walked in. Without doubt, it was the best Formby night ever and 'Joe the coach driver', after a grand night and a few pints, looked as if he'd never make it back to the hotel.

Come the early hours of the morning and as we were leaving the pub the happy landlord said: "We are closed tomorrow night but if you ring this number we will open up for you."

#### SUNDAY MORNING

It was arranged that we board the coach by 10.30am for a trip to the American Cemetery with calls en route to Jim Murphy's uncle's grave, the Bayeux Tapestry and Arromanches. However, due to Joe and Anthony's rough night they both had to be dragged from their beds. We set off an hour late.

Our first call was the much publicised Pegasus Bridge which was the first to be liberated after D Day. The area was crowded with people so Dennis marched his



merry men - and women - down to entertain them. Allet, the lady proprietor, was so delighted that she invited the whole bus crew into her café for free coffees, and she was very pleased to meet war veteran Harry. Dennis got them organised playing a few songs to the customers and also paid a singing visit to the café on the opposite side.



Allet was 4 years old when the bridge was liberated and her mother and father, - who were tipped off about the allied invasion - were the owners of the café then. She told us to make sure that we came to see her next year for the 55 Year Remembrance as she is holding a special occasion.

Ex navy veteran Harry was an instant success especially when Dennis notified the locals that he was responsible for bombing Caen during D Day. The young French girls gathered round him and treated him like a hero as he showed them his array of war medals. The local girls asked him for his address. - It's true!

From Pegasus Bridge we travelled to Arrowmanches where some of the party visited the war museum. Others went to see the All Round Cinema Screen which was extremely interesting. The audience stands in the centre of the all round cinema and the film is projected on the 360 degree screen. It is a very moving experience that gives the impression you are fighting in the war.

After the visit to the Bayeux Tapestry we returned back to the hotel for a quick wash and brush up before visiting our local pub for a second session. As promised, the landlord opened the doors specially for us and the crowds flooded in as soon as the uke banjos started. This time the landlord was really pleased with the extra custom and as soon as he plucked up courage he was on the floor singing with us.

#### MONDAY MORNING

We all had to be out of bed by 5.30am and ready for boarding the coach by 6.30. The boat set sail at 8am and again we had a pleasant trip. Dennis and his band commandeered the stage (which was usual filled by a pop group) and we made em have it again irrespective of whether they liked it or not. Some (mainly motor racing enthusiasts) were too tired to applaud. We arrived back in Portsmouth only to be met with cold wet weather and a cup of tea at Little Chef for £1.95. But we thoroughly enjoyed the trip and look forward to going again.

## NEXT YEAR?

Arrangements are being made to book a similar trip for the 55th Anniversary of the D Day Landings. It was suggested that the trip should be at least 4 or 5 days to give us time to settle in and enjoy the tours.

### CREDIT

Our thanks go to Dennis Lee who worked extremely hard in planning the trip. It was a pleasure to work with you Dennis.



Margaret Royle after the late nights.

## Overheard at Meeting

Conversation between society member and lady selling raffle tickets:

Lady: Tickets?

Member: How much are they?

Lady: 50p per strip!

Member: Well here's a pound for you to keep your clothes on!

It's true,- and it wasn't Jim Bramwell

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**Vic Webley** - who is known as Clipboard George the family comedian, sent in a nice little story.

Regardless of how much experience you've had in entertainment it takes years to become firmly established. But about 15 years ago I had no thoughts of doing anything in entertainment at all. I worked in the cinema and theatre and sometimes did odd jobs after these places were closed down.

On one occasion I was signing on in Birmingham (where no-one knew me at the time) and while I was stood at the desk a man walked towards me and started speaking to me. I will always remember him because he had a long beard and was dressed in very old fashioned clothing.

The young man at the desk told him to clear off and explained to me that the person was a bit of a nuisance who said the weirdest things. The man walked away but as he passed me he told me that someday I would work with Little & Large. I agreed with the young man at the desk because there was no way that I would have the opportunity to work with these two stars.

Many years went by and I spent around £2,000 trying to earn some money in entertainment. I found that living in Liverpool didn't work out too well so I moved to Fleetwood which is close to Blackpool. I signed on at the Employment



Office and they found me a job at the Pleasure Beach in Blackpool.

The management read of my experience and explained that they had a better job than working on the pleasure park, and I could start the following morning if I wanted the job. I turned up the following morning to find that I was working back stage for Little & Large. Totally unbelievable!!! These two have given me many references since.

Thank you Vic for the nice little story. Working with these two I'll bet you've got a number of stories to offer.

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## Talking about Little & Large

I have a nice little story to tell. Way back around 1962, soon after the Warrington Exhibition, I received a phone call from Belfast TV. They wanted to know about George, and the exhibition, and could I come over to Northern Ireland and bring a young member? Arrangement were made with Ray & Rita Marshall for the four of us (including young 9 year old Kieran) to go over there on a flight the studio had arranged.

What a friendly lot they are. The customs people, - who are usually miserable over here, quizzed us about where in Belfast we were going and when they found that we were to appear with KELLY, - a very well known presenter over there, they wouldn't let us through the doors unless we sang a song for them. After the song they wished us good luck and said that they will watch the show. Such pleasant people!

A taxi and chauffeur, and hotel rooms, were laid on for us and the driver guided us through every step. Always by our side.

The following day we were taken to the studio where Kieran appeared with Alan Randall singing Lamp Post. After the song we were joined on the set by Sid Little & Eddie Large who joined in the fun. Sid, who had brought his uke banjo along, went into Windows to prove that he could play the uke, and we finished the spot with an "Altogether Now" singing and playing "Knees Up Mother Brown."

Now, usually when we do these TV shows we finish up in the Green Room where we are invited to a cup of coffee (in a plastic cup) and probably a couple of biscuits. But not in Belfast. We had a Green Room full of Brandy, Sherry, Gin, Whisky, Sandwiches etc. and you were welcome to tuck in. There were soft drinks for Kieran so a good time was held by all.

A couple of hours later we were back at the airport and the staff were treating us like personalities. A few days later we received videos and photos in the post from Belfast, which was most unexpected. They are all very wonderful people.

**Pam Baddeley Writes:-** From May 9th Jonathan has certainly not felt up "In The Air" but "Down In The Dumps" with lumbago. On Wed May 20th he had a phone call from Mary Fox of Radio Stoke asking him to go on the Alison Greatbatch Show on Sat 23rd. He wasn't in a position to literally jump at the chance but agreed and couldn't wait to tell me when I arrived home from work.

Saturday arrived and we set off to Hanley for the 10.30am broadcast. We arrived 20 minutes early and Jonathan was asked to go on straight away. No script, no nerves, just a couple of phone numbers in case he had the opportunity to plug the local meetings and the plaque ceremony in Wigan.

Jonathan takes up the story:- Knowing that Alison Greatbatch was a Formby fan was a great help. She said: I'll play Cleaning Windows and then we'll have a chat. She switched her mike on and announced, "Now I've got a treat for you. First we'll have the Maestro, then the would-be Maestro, who are both as good as each other, but if it wasn't for the first man my second guest wouldn't have been on at all. Opportunities to plug the society and local meetings came thick and fast as I gave them news of the Plaque unveiling, plus, of course, the 'Trip to France.' Alison mentioned George's 94th birthday, - May 26th, and asked about his popularity and why I was so interested in an artist who's heyday was before I was born.

I'm pleased that I was able to mention Walter Longshaw (Sale member) and pay tribute to his song-writing skills. This was followed by Walter's song "Lancashire Lad and His Uke. Incidentally they don't have a mini-disk player at Radio Stoke. We talked about the age range of the members and about the D Day Trip, followed by George's exploits during World War Two.

I was asked to introduce a song of my choice from the 'Formby At War' CD so I chose 'Mr Wu's an Air Raid Warden Now' which in my opinion, is George at his best with a live audience. I was just ready to leave when Alison said, "perhaps one day we could work on a George Formby Special for Radio Stoke, and maybe in 6 years time we could celebrate George's Centenary."

Two days late Jonathan had a phone call from Tony Wadsworth and arrangements were made for him to appear on radio on Friday June 5th, around 10.30pm, - when the D Day trippers are heading for Portsmouth. Jonathan finishes by saying "The media is still very interested in George Formby so it is up to the members to grasp any opportunities that come their way."

*Thank you Pam & Jon. Keep us up to date with the news.*

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***Two ukes for sale*** - John Grey with case £65 and Melody Uke £70 no case  
ring Dennis Lee on 01244 544799.



## Sale Meeting by Alice Cronshaw

At the May meeting I presented Ken and Ann Ratcliffe, and Ivy, with a Thank You present for all the wonderful work they have done as Treasurer and Secretary. They've now retired but intend coming to the meetings and Ivy will continue to take the money on the door. I would like to thank Stan for standing in as Compere for the night, - a great job was done! Also Alan Southworth and Dick for help



Alice, Ken, Ann and Ivy. They are very thoughtful at Sale

with the sound system. A wonderful job was done by all. Many thanks to all who support the Sale meetings. We need you! Alice Cronshaw, Chairperson. *Many thanks Alice. I rather enjoyed doing my little bit as compere and grumbling at everybody to keep quiet. It was a great meeting. Sorry for the quality of the photo.*

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### Mystery!!!

Some years ago we received a letter from Frank Muir who was asking for anything on George. Some months later, soon after the letter was finally passed down the line, I wrote to Frank asking for anything he could add to the Vellum. He replied stating that he had never had any involvement with George and therefore nothing to offer.

Alan Newton has now handed in a Daily Mail, article (11/5/98) claiming that, according to the 'Dictionary of National Biographies' Frank had written a biography on George. Now I'm sure they've got it wrong somewhere otherwise we'd have heard about it. Unless you know better. Drop a line if you do.

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### Ray Davies of N. Wales.

We are pleased to report that Ray Davies and his wife, Dawn, have just received their first, long awaited baby (a boy) and they are both over the moon about it. Morgan Rees Davies, who was born on Thursday 28th May, weighed in with the heavyweights at 10lbs 4ounces.

Very pleased for you all Ray. George was born on the 26th May.

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### Les Pearson rang

- Stan, two programmes have been on TV recently that have opened up with George singing? On Saturday the 6th June, on BBC 2 there was a tribute for Russel Harty who died 10 years ago. He was a fine TV presenter and also a Lancashire lad. The programme opened up with George singing "You Can't Keep A Growing Lad Down."

Also on Monday 8th June, there was a documentary on the Home Guard on Channel 4. This opened up with George singing "I'm Guarding The Home Of The Home Guard."

Les, who works on various market stalls, also told me that he drives some of the other stall holders potty with George Formby songs. However some customers enjoy them and come back for more.

*Thank you Les. Keep sending em in. We are pleased that the hospital visit is over*

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**Kevin Bridgewater** writes - Dear Stan, Re. the Karaoke Tapes with the uke player playing to Lamp Post and Windows, which was reported in the last issue. It could be Alan Randall as some of the Prism Leisure tapes (English Pub Sing-a-long) were issued on Video with Alan leaning on a lamp post on the back of the sleeve. Hope this helps.

*Thanks Kevin, I'll ask Alan about this when he's back in the country. Whoever it was did an excellent job on the uke.*

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**Brian Edge** rang - About 70 people attended the unveiling of the George Formby plaque which is situated close to George's birthplace. The red velvet curtain, with gold poles, were opened by the deputy mayor and mayoress of Wigan at 12 noon on Sunday 31st May. Manchester Evening News reporters took many pictures.

Later the crowd moved to the Grand Hotel where a concert was held in the basement. The concert was opened by the deputy mayor who sang, Blackpool Rock, I Like To Hike and The Lancashire Toreador which was well received by the members. He claimed that, when a boy, he learnt these songs from George's records and has remembered them since.

People came from North, South, East and West and each and everyone enjoyed the concert.

*Many thanks Brian.*

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**An optimist** is someone who finds opportunity in every difficulty, while a pessimist is one who finds difficulty in every opportunity.

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**Charles Stewart** was Reet Chuffed when Tony Marshall and Ken Smith, both of Leeds, turned up at the Wainwright monthly meeting. "Just what we wanted on the night" said Charles. "Thanks a lot lads."



# George plays a part in soccer spectacular

From Tom Bailey



By Jason Teasdale

WORLD Cup fans can see George Formby play for England and Diana Ross wear the USA strip this week... but only in Kirkby.

The unlikely pair are just two of the cultural icons given a sporting make-over in a series of 12 banners outside the town's shops.

Football lovers at the art project The Centre for Words hit on the match-winning idea of bringing some of the France 98 fun back to Merseyside.

The arts project, based at the Kirkby Unemployed Centre, gives the community an outlet for its creative skills with the help of experienced artists.

## Aim

Mark Ward, one of those behind the centre, said: "It is a community-run project for people to come along with their own ideas."

The centre's aim is to get people more interested in the arts and Mark said the World Cup was too good an opportunity to miss. The artwork has been designed and painted by young and old - each banner showing a different nation and hero.

On Saturday the artists will be giving "red cards" to shoppers - each with a poem from somewhere in the world.

- Get sporty... George Formby (England) and writer Paulo Coelho (Brazil)

**At the Crewe Meeting** I thought, "Isn't it wonderful that we have great meetings like these. We have a family show, enjoyed by women and children, who all play a part, and, most importantly, "THERE IS NO VULGARITY - AND WE MUST KEEP IT THAT WAY!!!

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**Tommy Cooper** - It's nice to see that the Post Office have honoured Tommy with an issue of stamps. Back in 91 we made enquiries regarding George and they claimed that they don't issue stamps which include dead stars. We are very pleased that Tommy made it.

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**Mick Johnson** rang - He is the owner of one of George's boats, - named "Beryl" and due to the fact that he hasn't had the time to use it lately intends to sell it. However he would like the boat to go to a GF enthusiast so he is giving us the first offer.

Details are:- Mahogany wooden day Broads cruiser with original interior. Approximately 21 feet long with soft top and a Morris Marine inboard engine. This boat was built specially for George by Woods of Potter Heigham in Norfolk in the 1950s.

Mick, who has owned the boat for 8 years, has had the bottom of the boat re-corked, anti foul and painted. You can ring him on 0181 505 1986.

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**Thank You from Sam Bass** (after his experience in hospital). Just a quick line to thank you all for your support with regards to the Horrendous Iceberg I collided with recently, and the aftermath, - with I'm still reeling from. I was so looking forward to seeing you all at Crewe on the 29th of May but just lately I appeared to have taken 3 steps forward and 2 steps back, - it's been a bit of a rough week but at the moment, not too bad.

I've just had an offer to do summer work but apparently they don't know of the situation - sad really but I've had enough of the bizz. It was always hard work although I always enjoyed it and would do the same over again given the chance. Sending you all my love, Sam Bass.

*Thanks Sam. Now come on, we want to see you out and about and down at the Crewe meeting. Where there's a will and all that you know. They'll be delighted if you could make a visit. Keep smiling. Look forward to seeing you and John again.*

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## Crewe Meeting by Brian Edge

- Press & Radio coverage resulted in a number of new faces at the Crewe May Concert. The 90 who attended enjoyed another varied and entertaining concert. It was good to welcome for the first time, Elaine and Tony Kenny and Paul, Trevor Colley and his partner also Mrs Challiner and her friends.

M.C. Alan Chenery and his assistant Carl Basford worked extremely hard in planning and presenting the show. Colin Wood did much hard work behind the scenes improving the sound system.

### THE WAY OF PROGRESS

In addition he has now transferred our entire tape library onto Sony Mini-discs which means that instead of lugging two heavy cases of tapes to each meeting he can now bring our entire library of musical accompaniments (over 150) in his waistcoat pocket! What is more there will be no more rewinding of tapes, just press the button and the music to any song will commence instantly. Quite incredible! When performers receive their tapes back from Colin in future, they will find they have a green sticker affixed bearing a mini-disc reference. e.g. A24. This means mini-disc A - track 24. This reference is all that Colin will require in future at Crewe. However, tapes will still be required at other branches until something is worked out.

Both Mary Atkinson and Connie flew the flag high on the mast by giving splendid individual performances and young Paul Kenny got up for the first time and sang "Sergeant Major" which must have been quite an ordeal for him but he performed very well.

Janice Bentley performed an amusing Benny Hill monologue and followed with a virtuoso singing performance. In all a very classy act which we were pleased to have on our stage. Come again Janice. Darryl & Becky Snow gave a first rendering at Crewe of the lovely duet "Ordinary People" from George's musical, "Zip Goes A Million." Needless to say every artiste gave a good performance.

Thanks to everyone who donated nice prizes for our monthly raffle and indeed those who supported our fund raising event by buying tickets, and finally thanks for the help in clearing the hall after the concert, every little helps, however small. The next Practise Night will be held on Tuesday 14th July.

### D Day Trip Ferry

- Did Any Of The Trippers notice who, when looking for a toilet saw a door marked "Prive" thought it meant Privvy and ended up in the broom cupboard. Brian Edge.

*Thanks Brian. I remember the sill at the bottom of the toilet door being dangerous. I tripped and fell into the toilet and then a woman (who took the wrong door) fell in behind me. We both had a shock! I then walked out and fell over it again.*

**Werrington Meeting** by Derek Ball - Sam Bass and John were hoping to get to the meeting but, after the hospital experience, Sam wasn't quite ready for it. However John claims that he is making steady progress and the doctor is pleased.

We were happy to welcome Anne & Kevin again this month and another two new members, Brian Pierce and Ted Mallin were brought along by John Guy. They both did a turn.

Eight year old Simon Owen got up on stage for the very first time to sing a duet with Dave Price. He won't be long before he is able to strum on his own. Well done Simon.

Connie Edge battled with a sore throat but still managed give us a couple of great songs and Walter (Bones) Kirkland gave us a song on his uke.

Janice Bentley did a war time monologue and a Joyce Grenville number, aided and abetted by Mat Kelly. Becky Snow performed a mime from South Pacific and Peter Gratton did his usual sterling job of making us laugh, - I'm sure he could have earned a living on the stage as a comedian - he's great! Who said variety's dead? It certainly isn't at Werrington.

*Many thanks Derek. I see you've got the Fax working OK now.*

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**Just had** a nice visit from the **Eastwoods**. Walt tells me that Andy is progressing very well studying music at Oxford College and also writing his own songs. Andy has borrowed the masters of the 1988 to 1994 Vellums so that he can have the copies bound in book form.

The reason I've mentioned this is because others may want to borrow them for similar use. If you do please let me know. Stan.

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**Brian Edge** reports - Bill Turner and Harry Stanford wore their war medals with pride at the Remembrance Service at the British War Cemetery at Bayeux on the morning of the 6th June.  
*They did Brian, and it must have brought back wonderful, yet tragic memories for them both.*

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**Disappointment** - After a wonderful long week-end in France, with no vandalism whatsoever, and everyone so friendly, and joining in the fun. We hear of the English thugs who went over there to create another war. They are so terribly sad! Also the weather in France was wonderful. The hot sun



shone down on us all the time we were there. At Portsmouth, however, it was cold (in June) and pouring down with rain. What have we done to deserve this?

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**Alan Newton** writes - Just a "Thank You" for all your efforts and time spent to make the Trip to France so enjoyable. We now have happy memories of our break together and the places we saw, the good hotel, the many uke performances on the coach, the ferry, Saturday night concert, the local bar and all those special occasions like Pegasus Bridge an Arromanches in the sunshine.

For future trips it has been suggested that we try the Isle Of Man because of the association with George & Beryl. It could be arranged for T.T. week but if the hotels are busy then some other time. Alan.

*Thank you Alan for your letter. We have discussed T.T. week on the Isle Of Man, which is a great idea, but have been warned to steer clear of T.T week. This is because the hotels are fully booked and also the round the clock noise from the revving of the engines. However, we could make enquiries for some special event. Way back around 93 I did write to them asking if they would sponsor us to be present at the unveiling of George's statue, but unfortunately we had no reply.*

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**Dennis Lee** - It has been rumoured that he is taking up breeding canaries but I've advised him to stick to his ukulele and his brilliant organising. He does enough twittering.

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**Denis Gale** writes - Dear Stan, What a fabulous time we had on the D Day Trip.

My father and I went backstage at the Bolton Lido to see George and Beryl after the show on Friday 27th October 1944. I remember it like it was yesterday. Beryl introduced us in a most charming and friendly way and George asked if I would like to strum one of his ukes! After I did this George was kind enough to say, "I think you've got the touch!" I left in a daze, feeling about 10 feet tall. It was a great thrill for a 10 year old boy. Denis.

*Thanks Denis and also for the copies of the theatre programme. I will try to slot these into one of the issues. Many thanks. We are arranging another D Day trip.*

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**Brian rang** - It was an excellent trip with only two things missing.

(1) A small step to get on and off the coach and (2) A George Formby Society banner. No problem Brian. A step will be provided on the next trip and the GEORGE FORMBY flag will be flying now that we have tested the water. Fortunately Craig & Tony did fly the Union Jack in the rear window and I'm pleased that the French didn't think we were football supporters.

# Controversial author's biography will lift the BOOK WILL STAR'S GO

**A MAJOR row is set to break out over a no-holds-barred biography of Wigan singing legend George Formby.**

Best-selling biographer David Bret is planning to dish the dirt on the screen star in his latest book.

Bret has already outraged fans of stars like Gracie Fields, Maurice Chevalier, Marlene Dietrich and Freddie Mercury with his warts-and-all claims about their lives.

And his new book on Formby, to be published by Robson Books next year, will horrify fans of the ukelele-playing star.

Mr Bret claims the 'gormless grin' hid a dark side and that George was an 'egocentric womaniser.'

He reckons his wife-manager Beryl was a

'cow' who also had affairs and that together the pair may have creamed cash from charity shows.

But Formby devotee

Ken Lucas said: "How dare this man sully George's name. Behind that gormless grin was a heart of gold. His wife Beryl did dominate the relationship and take over his

business affairs, but that was because of his lack of education and she thought he would be vulnerable to unscrupulous impresarios.

"He was a plain and ordinary Lancashire lad

and that was part of his appeal. There are always people ready to make a quick buck out of staining the name of performers."



**WAS George as gormless as he looked?**

Mr Bret also describes sing-a-like fans as 'pathetic.'

He says: "Fans fall into two categories: those who want to know the truth about their heroes and others who put them on

pedestals and - in Formby's case - moon around playing plinky plonky ukeleles and wearing wide grins. That's not only odd - it's pathetic."

He is appealing for

warts-and-all memories of the man - which may not go down to well with his fans all around the world.

Mr Bret, who mostly targets dead celebrities "because it's less dodgy to write about someone who's not alive," has made some powerful enemies.

## Condemned

His Maria Callas book was condemned by Italian film director Franco Zeffirelli and Marlene Dietrich's daughter threatened to sue him over the book he wrote about her mother.

Last month George Formby was honoured in Wigan when a plaque was erected close to his birthplace.

**"Plinky Plonky Ukuleles and wearing broad grins."**

**"It's not only odd, it's pathetic!"**



lid on the secret life of Wigan's most famous son

# L BLACKEN DOD NAME

**David Bret** has certainly put the cat amongst the pigeons with a report of his new book about George & Beryl. It was "Let's have a go at George & Beryl" month and my phone was super active with calls from various newspapers. Even David himself rang to say:- "It is not true! - I didn't say that!" And just when we thought that we had Wigan backing George, the Wigan Reporter newspaper had to splash huge headlines over the front page. Well whether it's true or not I personally don't give two hoots what they write. We've heard it all before and the good names of G & B will never be destroyed. Trying to kill off G & B would be like campaigning against Fish & Chips, Taxi Cabs, or Little Sticks of Blackpool Rock. They'd never win! George was a legend and Beryl put him there. All the bad publicity in the world will never destroy that!

## THE BRET PACK...

David Bret has written bestselling biographies for Robson Books about Edith Piaf, Maurice Chevalier, Marlene Dietrich, Mistinquet, Gracie Fields, Tallulah Bankhead, Freddie Mercury, Maria Callas, Morissey, Rudolph Valentino and Errol Flynn. He plans another on the Brit Girls. Italian film director Franco Zeffirelli hated his book on opera diva Callas. Former ballet star Moira Shearer binned his Valentino book - then washed her hands. Dietrich's daughter saw red when he published taped conversations with the star who became his friend. Maurice Chevalier's family didn't like ooh-la-la revelations of a love letter to an English soldier. And Gracie Fields' family were upset by the authorised biography. Most of the best-selling biographies have been published by Robson Books. Mr Bret invites people with memories of George or Beryl Formby to write to him c/o Robson Books, 5-6 Clipstone Street, London, W1P 8LE.



**David Bret ...  
claims  
Formby was  
an egocentric**



# 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: - 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.

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

**So as George would say -**

**"Get Cracking"**

**Support Your Newsletter**

