

THE NORTH - WEST

GEORGE FORMBY

Newsletter 39

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Specially Produced for
George Formby Fans

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Welcome to Newsletter No. 39 and what

have we got this month? Well we've certainly got proof that George & Beryl were looking down on us at our Wigan Pier Concert. And we've got details of George & Beryl's Dining Room Suite which is for sale.

Ken Lucas sent in details of a racing greyhound that runs under the name of George Formby, and Jon & Pam Baddeley tell us about the Town Criers Competition which was held in Stoke on Trent. We have proof from George's Suitcase that he and Beryl were not mean with their songwriters. And we announce a great day out at Warrington - not to be missed! So read on . .

Sale Meeting by Alice Cronshaw.

The July meeting was a really great night and what a wonderful surprise when Harry Stanford walked in - thanks to Joan & Jim Bramwell - it was lovely to see him again. Des Redford gave us a good number with "Swing Mama" and of course Brian & Connie Edge made a wonderful team.

Les Pearson gave us a few jokes and we were delighted that Cliff Royle and Margaret could be with us. Tony & Paul Kenny came for the first time - Paul has enough energy to do the show on his own - and Stan & Cyril did a good job in completing the show. Auntie Mary, as usual, was on top form, as always. It was a wonderful night and we look forward to meeting you all at the August meeting. Thanks to the supporters and those who contributed to the raffle. It all helps. Many thanks Alice. It was a great night and I'm very pleased that more members are coming along.

Brian Harrison of Penyffordd,

who is a great transport enthusiast, has pined all his life to become a Tram Driver at a seaside resort. Well he is now beginning a Tram Driving Course - on Sept 27th - at the National Tramway Museum in Derby and he is looking forward to qualifying.



He said that if he does pass all his exams he will treat us all to a free ride at Blackpool, so let's hope he passes. Have your ukes ready for the event.

Front Cover: - This is George's most popular photo. It is taken from his last film, "George In Civvy Street" and he is singing "You Don't Need A Licence For That." In the next issue we will give you a very interesting story sent in by the band's pianist.

The Formby Story

Part 29 by Stan Evans

The film, "No Limit" turned out to be the most popular of all George's films and even today - 63 years later - there is still demand for the video. During the Warrington GF Exhibition in 1991, crowds of racing enthusiasts came over from the Isle of Man and asked for the song "Riding In The TT Races" to be sung. They claimed that, although it is a comedy film, it is the only full feature film ever to be made that they can relate

to. Many times they told us that the various motor cycle groups and societies have great respect for George and appreciate the publicity the film has given them. To them he was a kind of hero. He and Norman Wisdom are considered the two most popular names on the isle so this is why they have life size monuments of the two comedians sited in the Douglas shopping centre.



For those who haven't seen the film it is a story of a Lancashire chimney sweep's assistant who builds his own motorcycle (Shuttleworth Special) from various bike parts. He borrows money to go over to the Isle of Man to compete in the TT Races but unfortunately during the trials his brakes fail and he is unable to slow the bike down. However, this enables him to win easily and goes on to win the final race.

Nearing the end of the film, he is leading the field when he runs out of petrol and has to push the bike to the finishing line. George, who was heavily clad in motorcycle leathers, on a hot summer's day, ran out of energy and was near to fainting. Monty Banks, the director, wasn't satisfied with the shots so George had several attempts at perfecting the finish. On the 15th attempt he collapsed through exhaustion and this was the shot that Monty used.

The late Ray Seaton writes: "No limit" established George as a film comedian and Basil Dean was keen to follow it with another picture as soon as possible. He invited Florence Desmond to lunch at the Savoy and astonished her by suggesting that there was a role for her in another Formby picture. She was furious and reminded him of how miserable she had been during the making of "No Limit." She said, "Another experience like that? Not likely."

Basil Dean apparently sweet-talked her into partnering George in the next film, "Keep Your Seats Please" but she found that she was no happier in this film than she was in the last. She claimed that she seemed to spend most of the time running across the screen saying, "But George." More Next Month.

George & Beryl's Dining Room Suite

We've had some unusual items offered to us before, - in fact, somewhere in the archives we have George & Beryl's Curtains - but nothing as huge as this before.

Mrs Webb, on 01200 442139 has offered to sell us George & Beryl's Dining Room Suite which was bought by her grandfather at the 1961 auction sale, after George's death.



I found it in the sales catalogue - Lot No. 975:- The Superior Quality Heavily Carved Dark Oak Dining Room Suite by Goodalls of Manchester. The Sideboard, 6' wide, with 2 centre drawers, 1 lined for cutlery and two end cupboards, I fitted cellarette, (is it a trolley?) with plain panel under shelf.

Also a Draw Leaf Extending Dining Table 5' x 3'3" extending to 8' with heated pads and a Set of 8 Dining (leather) Chairs, with loose seats covered in brown hide. The whole is on heavy bulbous supports.

So if you want to own some of George's furniture give Mrs Webb a ring.

A Sobering Thought from John Taylor

Take a bucket and fill it with water
Put your hand in it up to your wrist
Take it out, and the hole that's remaining
Is the measure that you will be missed

You may splash all you like as you enter
You may stir up the water galore
But stop, and you'll see in a minute
That it looks quite the same as before

The moral of this quaint example
Is to do just the best that you can
Be proud of yourself but remember
There is no indispensable man!

Thanks John.

S.O.S
The St Barnados Charity shop in the Warrington town centre are looking for one or more GF players to play outside their shop for a special occasion on Saturday 5th September.
I told them that it clashes with Blackpool but would ask around because some might welcome doing a couple of hours busking for the experience. Let me know if you are interested.

Granddaughter has just rung. She has just bought a record of Alan Randal singing two Mr Wu songs: "Chinese Take Away Blues" and "Is A Traffic Warden Now" How much??? 50p.

GEORGE CHEETHAM - The address given in the last issue is incorrect - AGAIN - because George has now moved back to the previous address that he gave me:- Warden Controlled Home, 253 to 255 Seymour Grove, Trafford Park, Manchester M16 0DS. He hasn't got a telephone but a message can be passed on to ask him to ring you back. The number is 0161 881 9380. So stop moving about George.

What A Nice Surprise:- Just received in the post a parcel of newspaper cuttings from Joe Taylor of Newcastle upon Tyne.

Joe (a Wigan lad) writes:- I met one of your members, Muriel Laidler in our chemist shop here in Gosforth and one of the assistants persuaded her to give us a tune and song on her ukulele, which she rather reluctantly proceeded to do. She was quite a brilliant performer but the expression on the chemist's face as he came in from the prescription room, suggested that he felt there was a time and a place, etc. but he said nothing. I think that secretly he was, like us all, full of admiration for her virtuosity. Shortly after that she moved down South somewhere. I hope she is in good health. Please send me one of your Newsletters. *No problem Joe and thanks for the cuttings. The last time I saw Muriel at the Wintergardens, she was in fine health and as bubbly as ever.*

Ken Lucas of Wigan has sent in news of a Greyhound that is breaking all records.

Mike & Denise Hopkins, of Wigan, own four greyhounds and they have named them: George Formby (or Mr Wu), George Harrison, George Orwell and George Benson. But the top dog is our George who has now reached national championship standard. So there you have it!

Keep your eyes open for George Formby, or Mr Wu, in the greyhound racing news. More as it comes in.



Countdown - This popular Channel 4 TV Show held their 30th Anniversary in July and the presenter, Richard Whiteley, announced that they were unable to sing "Happy Birthday To You" unless they paid a license fee.

I'd have thought that it was out of copyright by now and part of the public domain. However it mustn't be and whoever wrote it must be doing well on royalties. Assuming it has been recorded on CD, tape etc. If anyone has got a commercial copy, perhaps you'll let us know who the composer is.

Wigan Pier Sunday August 2nd.

Blessed by George & Beryl.

George & Beryl were certainly looking down on their members at our annual one day event. Almost every day this year the entire country has been overshadowed with rain clouds and many outside festivals have been fated through bad weather. But the sun shone gloriously for the whole afternoon and everybody took advantage to get sun-burnt. The blazing hot sun was unbelievable.

Usually we draw quite a large crowd around us at Wigan Pier, but this year, due to the endless down pours of rain, we expected to be playing without an audience.

We had George's nephew, Jeffrey Booth, and his wife Christine, who came from Milton Keynes, and other members travelled from as far as 150 miles away, Leeds, Christchurch, North Wales, Crewe, Warrington, Blackpool, Carlisle and Sale, to support us.

ALMOST A DISASTER

On arriving at Wigan Pier we found that something had gone wrong. Due to building work the event had never been arranged and no-one had informed us. They gave the date of August 2nd but none of the WP staff knew who had given the information. Our merry band of troubadours were all set to perform but had no stage to perform on or audience to sing to. For the first hour our gang was wandering around aimlessly and nobody knew what was happening.

TURNED OUT NICE AGAIN

However, Wigan Pier manager, Liz Bates, performed a miracle when she arranged for us to set up stall at the front of the Orwell Pub. Electric cables were quickly laid on and chairs were brought outside for the gathering crowds. Where the crowds came from we don't know, but they certainly started rolling up. And we were certainly blessed by someone from up above because it turned out to be the best day of the year for sunshine. George's songs: Leaning On A Lamp Post, Auntie Maggie's Remedy, Little Stick Of Blackpool Rock, Cleaning Windows, Mr Wu, Riding In The TT Races, Grandad's Flannelette Nightshirt etc. never sounded better and the crowds were shouting for more. Collections were made for the Alder Hey Childrens Hospital and £85 was raised.

Having been Blessed was confirmed when Monday brought more heavy down pours of rain, which lasted the whole day long. It was a MIRACLE!!!!

Our thanks to all who came to give support:- HOPE WE HAVEN'T MISSED ANYONE OUT - Tony Marshall, Nick Saunders, Tony Thornton, Andy Eastwood & Family, Charles & Eve Stewart, Jim & Joan Bramwell, Cyril & Sheila Palmer, Leslie Lee, Geoff & Dolwen Shone, Jon & Pam Baddeley, Alan & Hilda

Southworth, Dave & Janet Hawkins, John Taylor & Family, Paul Kenny & Family, Carl Basford, Fred Stevenson, Gareth Sumner and family, Colin Wood, Alan Chenery, Jim Murphy & family, Roy Fielden, Alan Newton, Ashley & family (from Crewe) and last but certainly not the least, the young lad himself Dennis Lee who, with great calm, did a wonderful job in supplying the equipment and putting the whole thing together. You were great Dennis!!!!

Please note that there are no plans for Wigan Pier next year but we will certainly be holding something in its place. More news later. - It'll be even better!

Vote for Alan!!! - The AGM will be held at the Wintergardens on Sunday 6th Sept. when GFS members can go along to vote for members to be elected on to the committee. Usually Sunday morning around 10am.



Although the N. West is the most active Formby area, - with 5 branches, we have only two members on the committee: Dennis Lee of N. Wales, and Alan Middleton of Blackpool. Unfortunately Alan Middleton has decided not to stand next year so this leaves Dennis as our only representative.

However Alan Chenery of Crewe has offered to stand as a committee member and asked if we would give him our support. Tony Thornton, GFS Editor, is also on the committee but he lives too far north (Carlisle) to attend our meetings.

SO - We want all the N. West, fully paid up GFS members, to go along to the Wintergardens and give support to our Alan.

Lets Be More Professional - The N. West have the basics to make fine concert groups but we must improve our programmes. Wigan Pier was great at the beginning because we had the Concert Script to perform, but after this we went slightly to pieces. Later it was almost chaos.

But as Dennis says: "It's difficult trying to set out a programme when you don't know who, or how many, will turn up, - or if they are prepared to do a solo spot, and, if so, what songs they want to sing."

Brian claims that another problem is that the Concert Script calls for constant change of ukes from C" to "D", which is not always practical because in many cases the only place to store the spare uke is on the floor. As was Wigan Pier.

Amidst all the hustle & bustle of setting up, we finished up with the Tape Player and Mini Disk Player in a position where it wasn't easily accessible. - So these are some of the problems that we must sort out.

P.A. EQUIPMENT - We should teach a few members how to set up and operate the sound system so that they can step in if necessary. Or at least assist.

UKE TUNINGS - The problem started at Blackpool when Thrashes were played to "D" tuning. This was followed by the backing tapes being produced to the same "D" tuning. So we need to look at these with a view to changing as many songs as possible from "D" tuning to "C" tuning. "Windows" and "Blackpool Rock" certainly need to be changed because nobody can reach the high notes.

CAPOS - I don't understand why more players don't use them. They are easy to fit: Simply set the tuning to G C E A ("C" tuning) and then for "D" tuning, fit the capo to the 2nd fret. This saves changing the uke. Guitar players use them often.

CONCERT SCRIPTS - After printing 50 copies, and giving them to potential concert players, we found that some had lost their copies. Perhaps we should loan them out in future - to be returned. - Like George's father did!

Lastly we must get down to some uniformity in clothing.

Crewe Practise Nights - The September Practise night will be held on Tuesday the 15th in the main hall from 7pm. I am, however, finding difficulty at the moment getting hall bookings for October and November for practises so more news later on this - Brian Edge.

Records For Sale - A job lot of 13 surplus George Formby 78rpm records - £30. Brian Edge on 01270 569836
If you have anything to sell let us know.

S.O.S. - Hylda Baker Eber Carter is looking for a video copy of Hylda Baker in the feature film, "Nearest & Dearest." If anyone can help would you please give him a ring on 01902 401560 or write to:- 81 Chapel St, Bilston, WV14 0PH.

Les Pearson reports that they are honouring Gracie Fields with a plaque in Rochdale and two special charity events on October 24th. At the Rochdale Town Hall there will be a "Dinner and Show" and a "Lunch and Show" and the entertainment will be provided by Norman Wisdom and John

Inman. The price will be around £38 for each show. More details from Barbara Lloyd on 01706 864319, or the Rochdale Tourist Office. Thanks Les.

From Jon Baddeley - On 25th July the 1998 British Championships for Town Criers was held in Stoke on Trent. Our postman is the Town Crier for Biddulph and many months ago we were asked to perform a tribute to George Formby as part of the evening's entertainment. Hoping not to drop any clangers we readily accepted and our 40 minute show seemed to be very well received.

The audience consisted of about 25 contestants, their supporters, plus dignitaries and it was great to be involved in a national event. Resisting the urge to sing "Ring Your Little Bell" we embarked on our regular programme of popular favourites as well as one or two that the audience may not have heard before.



We knew that the Town Crier would be in good voice and that one member of the GFS - Joe David, who is the London Tower Town Crier, would be amongst us. Wherever we go the music of our hero will always bring memories. They say that nostalgia is a thing of the past. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Many thanks Pam & Jon for your article. Incidentally, Joe sent me a card about two years ago. He has moved from London Tower to one of the towns not far from Stoke. For the life of me I can't remember the name of the town. If anyone comes across Joe would you please ask him to drop a line.

Is it true that Kevin Blanchfield won the County Criers Competition?

Thanks from Harry - Soon after losing Lottie, Harry decided to take the trip to France with us. He was well taken care of and he enjoyed the company. Several photos were taken of him and he was very pleased when he received them.

Harry writes: I would like to say "Thank You" to the ladies for the lovely photoes. It was very kind of them. I think they were two sisters but I certainly appreciated the way they took care of me when I felt lost and lonely. I don't know how to repay them. The large photo of Allet and myself was a big surprise and I will treasure it with the others. Thank you all and as the old saying goes: "A Friend In Need Is A Friend Indeed." Sincerely Yours, Harry.

Birmingham Radio have just rung. They want someone to sing like George for a Window Advert. "None better than Anthony Mason I told 'em."

Why walking Doddy's dog was no laughing matter

SOUTHPORT is a resort that's long held a reputation for being a little bit up-market, a kind of Blackpool for toffs.

It's where *Coronation Street's* Annie Walker used to head for when she wanted a break that was a cut above the rest. Not so much fish and chips as halibut and french fries!

But did you know that miracles regularly take place there?

That's what Phil King will tell you anyway. He calls it Lazarus Town!

Crutches

Phil, known as "Mr Southport", retired recently after 21 years as the resort's chief tourism officer.

And he reckons the place must have mystical powers — if the items that are left behind by visitors are anything to go by.

"There are more zimmer frames, crutches

and walking sticks left here than anywhere on Earth," he said.

"We get stacks of them, more than any other items of lost property. There are so many that every couple of years we have a big sale, made up of nothing else.

"No-one ever claims them you see. We can only conclude that folk

arrive with them, but feel so restored and revitalised by their visit, that they can go home without them.

"Truth is that the sales raise so much money that the council's coffers are swelled greatly, and the money goes back into paying for the amenities our visitors benefit from," he said.

"We used to get false

teeth by the score. That's not so much the case these days. I think they must fit better.

"We used to keep a big sack full of them.

"One day, a chap came in to say he'd lost his, and had we found any. We showed him the bag — and he proceeded to try out a dozen sets before he found ones that he said might be his, but were comfortable enough anyway!"

Phil (58) leaves his post after seeing many changes in the town. One aspect has almost died out — the tyrannical seaside landlady.

He said, "They're a dying breed, but not gone completely. I won't name names, but we have one or two 'characters'.

"It's not like it used to be. Landladies of old turfed you out of your lodgings at 9.30 am with the command barking in your ears, 'And don't

come back before five!'.

"They'd charge extra for everything, salt and pepper — even for a plug for the bath."

One part of the job Phil will miss most is booking the star turns for the resort's theatre.

"I've met all the top stars from here and America," he said.

Book

"I remember Tommy Cooper coming to do a Sunday night show. He talked to so many people after the show, he was still here on Tuesday — and that's true.

"As he left the theatre, he thanked the stage-door keeper and as he pressed something crinkly into the man's top pocket, he said, 'Have a drink on me'.

"Later, the doorman fished out of his pocket ... an old tea bag!

"Ken Dodd has been a regular visitor, too. He

After 21 years as tourism chief, 'Mr Southport' Phil King is leaving with many magic memories



Ken Dodd's show lasted four hours.

always brings his dog, which is called Doodle because it's a poodle.

"One night, I went backstage to say hello, as I always do, and he handed me Doodle's lead, with Doodle attached. 'Look after him for me while I'm on, will you?' he asked.

"Well, anyone who has ever been to one of Doddy's shows know they aren't brief.

"I ended up walking Doodle around Southport for four hours!"

Phil goes into retirement knowing that his wife, Maureen, won't be seeing too much more of him.

He's been asked to write a book about his seaside memories, he

wants to do some broadcasting, and a hotel group has asked him to do some PR work.

"I'm giving up one job and taking on six!" he laughed.

Martin Harrison

It only seems a couple of years back since Martin was a 12 year old learning to

play the uke at Sale. Well I just heard that he has become engaged to Rose. We wish them happiness.



More From George's Suitcase - Some years back

George's sister, Louie, said that she wasn't sure of the address where she was born. She understood it was at No. 3 Westminster St, Wigan, but it had been suggested that it may have been in Turner St, which is close by Westminster St. Unfortunately she had no proof of this and no-one appears to have any information on the family living at Turner St . . . but in George's Suitcase we have:-

Song contracts written on GF senior letter headings with the address 27 Turner Street, off Greenhough St, Wigan, and the dates are Sept 7th, 12th and 15th 1906 which is 4 months after Louie was born, - May 27th 1906. So maybe she was born there?

George senior moved soon after to Walthew House Farm, Wigan (where the Heinz factory now stands) where on the 23rd March 1910, he purchased from Hedges Hope of 10 Longfield St, Wigan, a song: "I Can Do It Again If I Try" for 10 shillings, on condition they each receive 50% of the publishers proceeds.

George senior also bought songs from the big writers: On Sept 4th 1910 he received a letter from Frank Leo of Richmond, writer of over 1400 successful songs. It was suggested that George would have a particular song for free and Frank Leo to receive all the publishing money plus royalties. Frank Leo however, preferred receiving £5 for the song and George would receive one third of the royalties.

George & Beryl Were Not Mean! - The media report that George didn't like putting his hand in his pocket. Well, if his business dealings were anything to go by he certainly wasn't mean!

They appear to have bought every song that was offered to them. From April 1940 to March 1941 they spent £252. 9. 0. (a lot of money then) on songs that were mostly never used. Here are a few of them with prices and royalty rights . . .

Apr 19th 1940	Every Inch A Thrill	(All Rights) £5. 5. 0.
May 15th	You've Got Something There	(All Rights) £16. 0. 0.
Jul 30th	On The Beat. and Ukulele Man	(37 ½ %)
Aug 16th	It Might Have Been A Great Deal Worse	(All Rights) £8. 0. 0.
Aug 19th	She's Making A Habit Of It Now	(All Rights) £5. 5. 0.
Oct 1st	The Home Guard	(All Rights) £7. 0. 0.
Oct 1st	Auntie Maggie's Remedy	(All Rights) £7. 0. 0.

Where no price is given it means that the song was purchased by the film company and not by G & B.

And in 1956 G & B were still busy working - The following is a letter from Beryl to W Semken Esq of Bartlett and Gluckstein, 199 Piccadilly, London W1. They were the solicitors defending George against Byron Films Ltd who were suing him for breach of film contract. - More on this in a later issue.

RE BYRON FILMS LTD 24th May 1956

Dear Mr Semken, We thank you for your letter of the 17th May. We are on the boat on the Norfolk Broads at the moment, so therefore all the letters have to be forwarded. I note you wish to know where we will be during the time the case may come up for hearing so I enclose herewith a list of towns we will be playing.

July	9	London rehearsing
	16	Devonshire Park Theatre
	23	Pavilion, Bournemouth
	30	" "
Aug	6	Bank Holiday, Streatham Hill Theatre
	13	Kings Theatre, Southsea
	20	Hippodrome, Bristol
	27	Theatre Royal, Exeter
Sept	3	Hippodrome, Golders Green, London
	10	Hippodrome, Brighton
	17	" "
	24	Theatre Royal, Hanley
Oct	1	Garrick Theatre, Southport
	8	Kings Theatre, Edinburgh
	15	His Majesties Theatre, Aberdeen
	22	Kings Theatre, Glasgow
	29	Theatre Royal, Newcastle on Tyne
Nov	5	Royal Court Theatre, Liverpool
	12	Home- Resting
	19	" "
	26	" " then leave for London to start rehearsing for the

Palace Theatre London Panto. I trust I've given all the information you require. Anything else you would like to know I will send it along. Beryl Formby. *More from George's Suitcase next month. Hope you find them interesting*



"Sacre Bleu! - the George Formby members are not coming to France next year. They're going to Southern Ireland instead"

Bill Turner reports (sorry I couldn't fit it all in Bill) At the August Staffordshire Knot meeting - when, according to our Treasurer Derek Jones, about 40 turned up - Sam Bass walked in to a standing ovation. Although he couldn't talk (due to his recent operation) he chatted to everyone through his note book and pen. Bill & Gladys Powell attended for the first time. Our Comedian, Peter Gratton had em rolling in the aisles. Derek Ball (some say good old Derek) did an excellent job of M/C. Our thanks to all who gave support.

Thanks Bill. I like your comment at the bottom of the page: "There are no Strangers in our Society - only friends who have not yet met. Very good Bill.

Formby Talk & Song - Dennis Lee and I gave a "Talk & Song" for about 40 members of the St Joseph Community Centre, Penketh, recently and during part of the talk I explained that, due to the fact that both GF senior and GF junior were famous stars, people would try to obtain personal items from the family, which left some of them with an ever watchful eye on all who visited them.

During the interval a lady came over to tell me that she lived in South Africa for many years and during this time she was a neighbour to Ethel Formby, George's sister. She also confirmed my statement regarding possessiveness when she said that it was a problem with Ethel, who was suspicious of many who visited her.

Editor is fighting a Losing Battle!!!

Everywhere you go today you hear men being referred to as GUYS. Even the GFS - where members are soaked in old 1930s English tradition - you will hear the horrible word GUY being used.

Even the greatest of British stalwarts, - some who would lay down their lives for old England - have all succumbed to the use of the horrible word. I'm talking about the cream of the country when I say Brian Edge, Dennis Lee, Cyril Palmer, Cliff Royle, Charles Stewart, Anthony Mason, Ken Smith from Leeds, our fish man, the chap in the chip shop, my son in law, the post man, all the members in our Alliance Social Club, the news readers on TV, football and boxing commentators, etc. they are all at it! In fact, the only remaining CHAP in the country who doesn't say GUY is myself and it's getting very lonely out here.

Sadly we are going all American and the annoying part of it is that even the Americans and Australians, who exported the gross word, don't know what the word GUY means! In their TV programmes they also refer to the girls as GUYS, so why are we following them?

Well it's not too late for you all to be saved, so I suggest that we install a GUY BOX at each of the meetings and anyone who utters the word GUY instead of Man, Lady, Chap, Miss, Bloke, Girl, Fellow, etc. will have to pay a hefty fine, followed by three verses of LAND OF HOPE AND GLORY.

Stan Evans - Like George - Proud to be British.

George & Beryl would go stark raving bonkers if they were alive today. On the way home from Penyffordd they were discussing - on talk radio - the possibility of the Americans taking over our British Isles and making us the 54th State of the USA. - SO NO MORE OF THE GUY STUFF!!!! OR ELSE WE'LL SET HARRY ON TO YOU!

Exciting day out at Warrington - You can't beat Warrington for original ideas! Just received a phone call from the council. They are looking for anything on the Formby family grave: When they were born?, when they died?, who is buried in the grave? All that sort of stuff.

It is all to do with the fact that the Formby family lived in Warrington, - which is one of our claims to fame!

"No problem", I said, "But what is it for? - Well you could have knocked me down with a wet lettuce when they told me that the material was needed for an "Open Day at the Crematorium". The mind boggled - what on earth would they do at an open day in a crematorium?

Well the event is on Saturday 6th September, so if you fancy an exciting day out, come to Warrington and you'll have the treat of your life. It'll be full of fun! Definitely 'No Ukes!'

It was Great to meet Roy Ellison and his wife, **Olwen**, - who are over from Perth, Australia - when they came to the Penyffordd meeting. Dennis Lee and helpers made them very welcome and even press-ganged Roy on to the stage to play the uke. He does a spot of entertaining in Australia at the old folks homes and thoroughly enjoys George's songs.

While he is over here he wants to pick up as much GF material as possible - especially backing tapes - because over in Australia you can buy absolutely nothing on George. No problem Roy! You've come to the best spot in the world for anything on George!

North Wales by Cliff Royle - This was perhaps one of the best turn outs we have ever had at a normal meeting.

About 70 were present including a great number of visitors, not only from other branches but also some 25 or so general visitors. One player had come from Australia, not just to be with us, but when over here had seen one of our Press Releases. Yes this number really mucked up the catering. There were only 50 pasties. Still the "catering staff" performed a miracle, and soon all was well. It took on the story of the five loaves and two fishes, or was it the two loaves and five fishes?

It was a great night, with a large number of players providing the entertainment. Steve Evans (of Stratford on Avon) gave us a couple of good songs, although he

admitted sweating like Tommy Teapot. Steve was only a raw learner a short while ago, and didn't he do well? We were also pleased to welcome back a few members whom we had not seen for some time.

Our sound system has improved considerably with the addition of a Stage Monitor which enables players to clearly hear the backing tapes, However, in spite of this, some were all at sixes and sevens with the new thrash.

Dennis Lee & Kevin Blanchfield have recently entertained on the streets at Holywell, ably assisted by Leslie Lee. In spite of heavy rain they did manage to raise about £60 for branch funds. They put in a lot of unseen hard work for us.

Recently Dennis, Kevin and Ray Davies performed (ukes only) at a Wedding Reception of local Euro MP, Joe Wilson. Apparently their performance was so much appreciated that they have been asked to play in Southern France in front of a party of Euro dignitaries, at a party to celebrate the wedding. Unfortunately Ray is unable to go, but Anthony Mason is stepping in to take his place; all expenses paid. Cannot be bad.

Sorry to be brief but I have to be away to Dovedale to lead a cycling and walking holiday, - taking my uke of course.

Many thanks Cliff. I was dead chuffed when you performed at Penyffordd. - And thought, "I knew that man when he couldn't get his timing right" - What a transformation!!! Best of luck with the trip.

Crewe Entertain at the Crown Hotel - Brian Edge.

The Crewe Branch performed in the ballroom of Nantwich's top hotel "The Crown" on Sunday the 19th of July at the beginning of the Crewe and Nantwich Arts Festival. It was an excellent setting and the branch gave a two hour show. The manager, who was delighted with our performance, gave us a further booking at Christmas and another in next year's Jazz Festival. The performers included Jonathan Baddeley, Alan Newton, Don Chalkley, Steve Hassall, Pamela Baddeley, Glenys Huntington, Arthur Newton, Colin Wood, Alan Chenery, Carl Basford, Connie Edge, Mary Atkinson, Brian Edge, and Ron on the bones.

CREWE MONTHLY MEETING

About 70 attended the Crewe July meeting. It was particularly nice to welcome Jenny, Pete and Adam Smith who we had not seen for some time. Glyn and Martin from Wem came as did Cyril, Ken, Ivy and Alice from the Sale Society. There were some new faces too, who, we hope, enjoyed the night's entertainment. In addition we had a special guest in Tony Thornton from Carlisle, the Editor of the GFS "Vellum" magazine. Tony came along to do a report on our branch for the Autumn edition. Hopefully there should be some pictures of our evening in that issue, so look out for it! For those who do not get this excellent glossy magazine four copies yearly will be posted to you upon receipt of a £12 subscrip-

tion to the GFS. The subscription also entitles the member to have free admission to the Winter gardens Conventions on eight days during the year. Application forms can be obtained from Brian.

I can tell you that Tony enjoyed his first trip to Crewe and we were certainly pleased with his on stage performance and his bright sounding ukulele playing "Licence" and Swimmin With The Wimmin."

Peter Cain made his solo stage debut with "Uncle Joe's Mint Balls" after rehearsing "Mr Wu's a Window Cleaner Now" He seems to have the bit between the teeth doesn't he? Keep up the good work Peter!

The Jazz Band, Steve (drums), Alan Newton (trombone), Glenys Huntington (trumpet) Jonathan Baddeley (clarinet) Walter & Ron (bones) together with uke support played "Just A Stomp at Twilight". It had been hoped play a new jazz number, "Yes Sir, That's My Baby," but the backing tape was mislaid so as an encore we sneaked in our old favourite "Dr Jazz."

It was all a good night's entertainment. Stage M.C. was Alan Chenery assisted by Carl Basford.

Thanks Brian. It was a great night and we've noticed that improvements have taken place every month. Especially with the jazz band. Incidentally did you all know that George and his father referred to a trombone as a "Push & Pull?"

Tessie O'Shea - Some years ago there was a debate on whether or not Tessie O'Shea was a better uke player than George. One or two of the members of the Ukulele Society of Great Britain seemed to think that she was. Well last night I was running through a few of the Wheeltappers and Music Hall videos and who should pop up, - on two occasions, - but Tessie playing the uke.

After watching the tape, my opinion is that Tessie was a great attraction, she had boundless energy, a wonderful personality that filled the room and she knew how to get the audience rocking. But that was all!



NO COMPARISION WITH GEORGE! - If the two video clips were anything to go by she wasn't in the same league as George at playing the uke. In fact she was no better than the average member. She bashed her fingers down the strings and created a lot of noise but, unlike with George's playing, you couldn't pick out the various split strokes or rolls. George had it to perfection and I've yet to hear anyone play as well as he did.

voice but she was well out of tune with some of her notes. This can't be said George because every note was spot on and his timing was perfect. He didn't have a sweet voice but he never shouted. He and Beryl were near perfectionists with the ir recordings.

Tessie was born Cardiff in 1914 - once seen never forgotten - the 'full of fun' fat girl - she exuded jollity, friendliness and great style with lyrics and the uke banjo. She once made her entrance in a Palladium revue on the back of an elephant. The elephant, objecting to the 'Two Ton' on his back, threw her off and she was out of the show for several weeks.

She became a big attraction in Variety with her own turn and shared top billing with Billy Cotton And His Band in a touring revue, - "Tess & Bill."

When variety hit the dust she went to America and after playing parts in Broadway musicals (she got the Tony Award for one) she did films and television and became an even bigger star over there than she had been here.

She had one marriage, to David Rollo, - which was sadly dissolved. She died in Florida in 1995.

From "Yours" Magazine - Judith Young of Morden writes: "In 1935 I was quite photogenic ! An elderly uncle took me to Whiteley's in Bayswater to have Polyfotos taken as a surprise to my mother. I was sworn to secrecy. Some time later my father was passing Whiteley's when he looked in the window and there, in the centre, hugely enlarged, were my polyfotos flanked by those of George Formby and the Duke of Windsor.

Judith certainly was in good company. Polyfotos were located in most large stores for many years. For your money you got 48 small photos from every angle.

Brian Edge

George's Mask - by Daryll Snow - We've just had a holiday in Great Yarmouth where we visited the old Windmill Theatre on the sea front. It's now a waxworks known as the "Hollywood Wax Museum", and has about 17 rooms based on different themes, including the inevitable "House Of Horrors"

Well one of them was a "Comedy Hall" featuring all the famous stars like Laurel & Hardy and Charlie Chaplin. In there we found a black face mask of our George, with the caption, "In tribute to a great entertainer George Formby, loved by everyone. There was also a display of photos of various entertainers including George with a playbill dated June 1958 where he topped the bill with a famous

George, with the caption, "In tribute to a great entertainer George Formby, loved by everyone. There was also a display of photos of various entertainers including George with a playbill dated June 1958 where he topped the bill with a famous harmonica band of the day. I mention to the lady in the kiosk that it would be great to have a full size effigy of George and she said that she would mention it to the boss. It's surprising where George turns up.

From Oliver Double's book entitled "Stand Up"

"Variety was different from Music Hall partly because it had to co-exist with other attractions like cinema, radio and eventually television. This meant cross fertilisation as well as competition. George Formby and Gracie Fields went from being big variety stars to big movie stars, and their cinematic success boosted attendance's when they played in variety theatres" . . . "There were performers who presented a single comic character like George Formby senior. Formby's stage character was pathetic and loveable, with a voice uncannily similar to that of his son, the ukulele playing George Formby. His humour totally relied on his character, the main joke being that he thinks he's fashionable and street-wise, but is actually too dim to realise that he hasn't got a clue. In his song 'Playing The Game In The West' he says "Do I look like George Lashwood? Huh huh huh huh! Aye it's a funny thing, I were told that this morning. Very funny. He gets his clothes made at t'same place as me. Funny how they all copy my style isn't it? The joke here is that George Lashford was a rival music hall star, famous for dressing in the height of fashion, whereas Formby was pathetically scruffy, in a battered bowler hat, with his too-long scarf sticking out of from the bottom of his too-tight jacket. There was genuine pathos in Formby's comedy; the chest disease which eventually killed him made him cough so badly that he worked it into the act with the catch-phrase, "Coughing better tonight."

The Northern nit-wit character lived on in George Formby junior who, like his father, was more a comic singer than a stand up. There were differences between them, though, and not just the fact that Formby junior played the ukulele. In his early career, he included a second character in his act, playing a cloak swirling, bomb wielding anarchist, as well as a Lancashire simpleton" . . . "Variety comics had no qualms about ripping each other off, both Will Fyffe and Sandy Powell, for example started by doing impressions of George Formby senior. - Brian Edge.

Trip to Cork - Southern Ireland-

To play at the 10th Anniversary of the Buskers Festival. The trip date is Thurs 29th July to Tues 3rd August and there will be Players from all over the world - SO YOU'D BETTER BE GOOD! Normandy trippers will have first priority with booking. Two coach companies are quoting so we're expecting to hear something shortly. I'm also hoping to get a video of a previous event to show to the members. Prices and more news later.

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: - NOTE - 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 569836 Future dates - 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 Sept.

So as George would say -

"Get Cracking"

Support Your Newsletter

Crazy paving's not all it's cracked up to be!

