

THE NORTH - WEST

GEORGE FORMBY

Newsletter 44

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Specially Produced for
George Formby Fans
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Welcome to Newsletter No. 44

A Prosperous Year to you all and many thanks for the deluge of Christmas Cards that flooded through the door. It was very kind of you all. What sort of a year did we have in 1998? Well I think you'll agree that we progressed very well in the N. West with some very interesting meetings. Crewe and Penyffordd led the way with excellent variety (Formby orientated) shows which attracted many new members. Constant uke practise sessions have certainly helped them to establish far better players than we've ever had before and we soon got to the stage where we had more players than time to allocate.

1998 brought changes when other types of acts were introduced on stage and accepted by the audience as a pleasant change. In fact, we progressed closer to George when we introduced more of George's type of variety.

It was also a successful year for improvements in the quality of our sound systems at the meetings. Good quality mikes, speakers and amplifiers were installed, followed by mini-disk players. This has been a tremendous step forward for the George Formby Society.

One of the highlights of the year was the successful trip to France, for the Anniversary of the Normandy landings, when we entertained the British Legion War Veterans.

During 1998 we lost five dear members in the North-west: Noel Currey of Blackpool, Ellis Sumner of Crewe, David Peerless of Werrington and Lottie and Harry Stanford of Liverpool. All are wonderful who are sadly missed.

We sincerely hope that 1999 will be another progressive year for the N. West.

Apology to Werrington - WRONG DATE!

A couple of months back Brian Edge & I created a hand-out calendar which gave all the dates of the N. West Meetings. An error was made when I printed that the JANUARY and OCTOBER meetings were to be held on the 7th of these months. This is incorrect and should read the 14th. Unfortunately the error was spotted too late for the January meeting but we sincerely hope that no-one travelled any distance and was disappointed.

Change of Address! - Web site address on page 14
should read - www.thehollies.u-net.com/formby

The Formby Story

Part 34 by Stan Evans

George was realising that his type of comedy songs, accompanied by his ukulele banjo, was no competition for the American big band sounds that were flooding the country and consequently his popularity was beginning to wane. After the war years a different type of entertainment was taking over.



However, not to be beaten, George & Beryl set sail to other countries where the American sound was not as popular. They also claimed that if big stars like Frank Sinatra and Danny Kaye could come over here to take our dollars then why shouldn't they travel to other countries to do the same. Entertaining in places like the Commonwealth would also give them an opportunity to thank them for the support they gave in the war effort and for the food parcels that they sent over.

George & Beryl travelled to Australia, Canada, Scandinavia, New Zealand and South Africa and the tours were very successful. During the tour of Canada the huge crowds that greeted them were so eager to touch George that it became dangerous and he was in fear of having his bones crushed.

George had an inferior complex to the extent that he could never understand why he was so popular with the people. He never thought for one moment that he was worthy of such praise and attention and, - as shown on BBC TVs "The Friday Show" - he always claimed that it was the people who made them stars. He also expressed his humble thanks to his birth town, Wigan

In 1950, George was invited to go to America for a thirty day tour and a concert at Carnegie Hall, and he could name his own price, - the minimum being £15,000. George felt uncomfortable with the offer, especially as his films had not been shown in America, so he declined the invitation. His excuse was that he didn't want to leave his little dog behind but this was far from the truth. His claim that it was the people that had made him couldn't be said in relation to the Americans so he refused to go over there to take a chance.

However there was no need for concern because in 1971 Alan Randall performed a similar act in Las Vegas, along with Perry Como and Jack Benny, and received a standing ovation. Their love of the British humour proved that George would have been a star over there. Towards the end of his career he felt the urge to go to America but then realised it was too late. More Next Month.

Jonathan Baddeley was on

Radio Stoke again in December when he spent an hour in the studio with Alison Greatbatch, who is a keen George Formby fan. They talked on George's life and added a few GF songs to improve the flavour. All the old favourites came on: Lamp Post, Wu, Windows, Nightshirt and many more. Several listeners rang in to give their account of George and when they met him.



Ray Bernard rang in and spoke of the time when he met George & Beryl at the Victoria Hall, Hanley, in 1954, after a Sunday night show and went on say that George apologised to the audience for not being able to say "Turned Out Nice Again" because the weather was terrible outside and heaving with snow. He went on to say that he also met him at the Theatre Royal, Hanley, when he went five times during the week to see him perform in "Too Young To Marry".

A man by the name of Doug ? rang in to tell the listeners that he met George & Beryl during the war years, in Tripoli, when they visited his camp. Although they were informed that G & B would be visiting them they didn't believe it until they actually appeared. Doug went on to say that these modern singers like Robbie Williams may draw the crowds today but nothing like the huge audiences that George attracted. Jon finished the programme with a couple of plugs for Werrington and Crewe meetings, and followed with his own medley: Auntie Maggie, Little Ukulele, and Windows. George finally brought the show to an end with "Blackpool Rock" and listeners were still ringing in. *Good publicity Jon. Well done!*

Jonathan also reports - It was pleasing to see George's first film, Boots, Boots on Channel 5 TV recently and the preview on Ceefax made interesting reading. "Hotel Shoeshine Boy George Formby takes to the stage with the scullery maid to become top of the bill at the local cabaret show. Musical with Arthur Kingsley, Tonia Forde, and cheekie chappie George's real life sister Beryl Formby." Someone hasn't done their homework! - Oh Dear Mother. *Thanks Jon.*

A Reet Fool - At the Sale Christmas Party the ladies, - Alice, Sheila, Hilda and Vera did a Jazzed Up version of "Teaching Me How To Make Love" and during the song, - which Alice was singing- I noticed that Sheila was very uncomfortable about the high volume and was constantly hitting Alice on the shoulder and telling her to tone it down a bit. As M/C I was very concerned so I kept telling Sheila to go to the other side of the stage away from the speaker. Little did I realise that it was all part of their act. I felt a reet fool.

Trip To Southern Ireland - Everything is set!!!

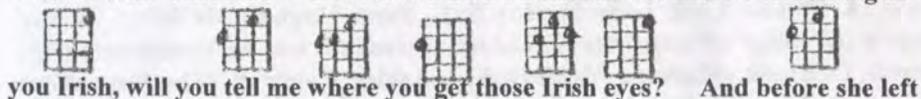
Every seat on the coach has been booked and the ferry and hotel have been booked. We will be leaving Holyhead on the 13.45 ferry (1.45pm) to travel to Dun Laoghaire (near Dublin), and travelling down to the seaside place of Youghal, near Cork. Arrangements for pick up times will be published later.

DEPOSITS WANTED - £25 each - Would all travellers please forward payment on to Dennis Lee. The deposit amount is £25 per person.

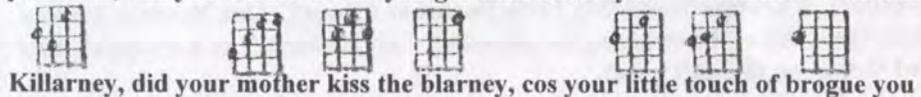
The latest list is Mary Atkinson, Betty, Eileen Hansbury, Charlie Penman, Bill Pope, Marion Wilkes, Irene Conlon, Alice Cronshaw, Glenys, Walter Kirkland, Alan Newton, Des Redfern, Anthony Mason, The Caldicott Family (3), Eve Stewart, Joan Littlewood, Sylvia Currey, Brian & Connie Edge, Alan & Pat Chenery, Stan & Eva Evans, Denis & Olwen Gale, Trevor & Flo Hughes, Dennis & Lesley Lee, Arthur & Mary Newton, Geoff & Dolwen Shone, Alan Whittaker & Liz, Colin & Christine Wood, John & Sue Beever, Paul & Jill Woodhead, Mac & Milly McGee, George & Mary Atkinson, Peter & Joan Crain, John Taylor 50 in Total.



Did Your Mother Come From Ireland cos there's something in



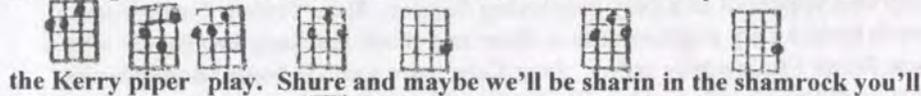
you Irish, will you tell me where you get those Irish eyes? And before she left



Killarney, did your mother kiss the blarney, cos your little touch of brogue you



can't disguise. Oh I wouldn't be romancin I can almost see you dancin while



the Kerry piper play. Shure and maybe we'll be sharin in the shamrock you'll



be wearin on the next St Patrick's Day.



Did your mother come from Ireland cos there's something in you Irish and that



bit of Irish steals my heart away.

Huge Success at Crewe!!! -

OH WHAT A WONDERFUL PARTY FULL OF JOY & FUN rang out the words of the Grand Finale at the Crewe Branch Christmas party at Wistaston on the 18th of December. Everyone of the ninety two that attended went home happy after a very entertaining night which was full of variety and humour. Sadly Jim & Joan Bramwell, Arthur & Mary Newton, and Cyril & Sheila Palmer and Barbara Allen were all unable to attend due to illness.



Peter Healey, the best raffle ticket seller in Crewe.

GEORGE'S SONG THEME

The theme for the fancy dress was a costume depicting one of George's songs and what a response we received. Everyone joined in the party spirit. It was wonderful, so good in fact that it would be remiss not to mention the entrants in some detail.

Jonathan Baddeley (Noughts & Crosses), Pam Baddeley (Sunbathing In The Park), Brian Hill (Hill Billy Willie), Dennis Lee (TT Races), Connie Edge (The Blue Eyed Blonde Next Door), Lesley Lee (The Left Hand Side Of Egypt), Cliff Royle (A Certain Little Lady Passing By), Flora Hughes (Mr Wu), Trevor Hughes (Grandad's Flannelette Nightshirt - actually it was his Grandmother's), Angela Caldicott (Madame Moscovitch), Ashley Caldicott (The Lancashire Toreador), Christine Wood (My Little Snapshot Album), Alan Newton (Mr Wu - from the street of the swinging lampshades), Carl Basford (I'm A Froggie), and Fred Stevenson (I Don't Like).

In addition to those depicting GF songs, Trevor Colley and Ann Dando were beautifully attired in Victorian costumes, Mary Atkinson went back to her youth and appeared as a very convincing flapper, Dave Price a Cowboy and Gareth looked very impressive in a silver and black sequined waistcoat with a black Frank Sinatra type trilby, Joan Cain wore a straw boater dressed with tinsel as did our hard working Chris Metcalf. If I've forgotten anyone then take it from me you were great too.

Two totally independent judges were appointed one being an expert in George's songs. After two hours consideration they told me that their job had been very difficult in view of the high standard that had been set but they felt that their selections were justified on the amount of thought and effort that had gone into creating the winning entries. The winning lady was Lesley Lee and the winning man was Ashley Caldicott. They were presented with prizes on the stage. There were lots of speciality acts on stage throughout the night. Mary Atkinson

sang a new comic song dressed as a young flapper: "I'm Looking For A Man" Dennis Lee rode on stage on a small motorcycle to the soundtrack of "No Limit" dressed in black leathers and a black and white check crash helmet. When he got his breath back he performed the "TT Races."

Pam, Connie, Mary Atkinson, Angela Caldicott, Ann Dando, Joan Cain and her friend joined in singing a Stan Evans song, "Oh Mr Formby, What Are You Going To Do?" The Skiffle group gave a rendering of "Does Your Chewing Gum Lose Its Flavour on the Bedpost Over Night" and Alan Newton & Glenys Huntington played us some lovely carols on the trombone and trumpet, much to the delight of the audience.

Colin Wood, Alan Chenery, Cliff Royle and Alan Newton got together in drag to perform a comic number entitled "Four Girls Bright and Beautiful - We're Looking For A Man." This really went down well with everyone and the lads enjoyed themselves too. At a request of Pat Chenery and Connie, Brian Edge gave a piano solo of the Joe Henderson number "Trudie."

Margaret Moran once more once more delighted us with her lovely voice and Les Pearson kept us laughing with his off the cuff comedy. Stan Evans introduced us to three war veterans with his own new song "The Soldier's Dream." It was hilarious. No doubt Stan had driven his wife, Eva, to the brink of insanity whilst rehearsing this. He was ably supported by Dennis Lee, Cliff Royle and Alan Newton. The Jazz Band got us all Stamping our Hands and Clapping our Feet to the favourite "Dr Jazz."

The highlight of the night was a special visit from "Mr Yo Ho Ho" in person - Father Christmas. He arrived with a sack of pressies, one for everyone in the room. He was so well turned out that he was not recognised by anyone in the room although in his earthly life he is Ron Whiston our "Number Two" bones player. The usual excellent buffet, which was laid on by Thelma and Betty, was thoroughly enjoyed by all. A special vote of thanks to all those who donated such good raffle prizes on the night and to everyone who contributed to what was a very special night's entertainment. *Thanks Brian. When we were dressing Cliff up as a war veteran Dennis Lee smothered him with very heavy lipstick round his face. At the end of the night he couldn't wash it off and Margaret said "I hope we don't get pulled up by the police," One lady said, "Tell 'em you've been drinking black-current." Jim & Joan Bramwell sent their apologies for not being there, - you see: on the way home from the previous meeting we were singing "Share And Share Alike" so I passed my cold, sore throat, wheezy chest and stuffy head on to*



Brian worked so hard he looked really deflated

Jim. When I say "Wheezy" I mean really wheezy. All through the night it sounded like I was playing a piano accordion. The police

knocked on the door twice wanting to know if I had a music license.

HAIL Oh Great One - Worker of Miracles and Escapology - Wriggle out of this one? - *No Problem!!!!*

During my working life I was responsible for the publication of the "World's Greatest Work of Fiction" (The British Rail Great Britain Passenger Railway Time Table) and hoped that I still reigned supreme. But I have to report that Stan Evans, our Editor, has just been presented with the coveted FORMBY PRIZE for FICTION with his mysterious report on the Penyffordd meeting in the January NW Newsletter.



Flora Hughes with Father Christmas, Ron Wiston - at the Crewe meeting.

Whilst Stan admits he wasn't there due to illness he went on to report that Colin Wood went on stage, near the end of the night, and sang "Mr Wu's A Window Cleaner Now." The gist of the article was that Colin got his words mixed up and sang 'With a hi di hi and a long one too' instead of "With a hi di hi and a one lung too." It was a humorous report Stan, but Colin didn't go to Peniffordd that night!! Perhaps it was another miracle? Brian Edge.

PS - Did George actually sing "With a hi di hi and a one lung too?" Really? What a funny thing to sing!

You are quite right Brian! Once again we have brought off another unexplainable miracle. There's no end to the variety that goes on at these meetings! Or, if it wasn't a miracle, could it be that possibly Penyffordd's No.2 Ace Reporter, Dennis Lee, has sent in a duff report? You just can't get the staff nowadays. I will most certainly have a word with him and tell him to get his facts right.

Regarding George singing "With a hi di hi and a one lung too" I have just played the tape and heard George sing "Wun Lung Tu" - who was a well known Chinaman.

A Senior Citizen

sent in by George Tyrer - Old folks are worth a fortune - with silver in their hair, gold in their teeth, stones in their kidneys, lead in their feet and gas in their stomach.

Lately I've become a frivolous old girl and see several gentlemen every day. Will Power helps me out of bed, then I see John, Arthur Ritus shows up for the day but he doesn't stay in one place very long, he moves from joint to joint.

After such a busy day, I'm really tired and glad to go to bed with Johnny Walker. Oh what a life! Oh yes, I'm also flirting with Al Symer. The preacher called the other day and said that I should be thinking about the 'hereafter.' I told him, 'Oh I do, no matter where I am, kitchen, lounge, laundry, I ask myself, 'Now what am I here after?'

George's Light is Shining for John!!

John Guy has had 8 heart attacks in the past few months and he's still with us, but he claims that his time isn't ready yet. Every time he goes into hospital they keep him for a couple of days and then send him home. In fact he was in hospital again over Christmas. John has a harp, which he keeps maintained, and just recently he priced up a new set of strings at his local music shop. They wanted £75. However he went to car boot sale and purchased a new set for £2. He's been having a few problems with his postman lately so he wrote this poem.



Remember the games when we were kids
 Knocking on doors and then running
 Well today it's called Parcel Post
 And don't get to thinking I'm funning
 I heard the front bell the other day
 And I was out of my seat like a shot
 Sprinted a few yards to the top of the hall
 And to the front door I got
 The parcel van was nowhere in sight
 Just a card that he'd left on the mat
 So I picked it up, and said some choice words
 And then said "I'll see about that"
 Down to the post sorting office I went
 And emptied a bit of my spleen
 You should have seen the bloke's face that I cussed
 'twas the funniest thing I'd ever seen
 On the very next day there was a knock on the door
 And also a ring on the bell
 And when I got there he was holding my post
 And also my parcel as well
 I said, "thanks very much" and I gave him a bob
 He said that the tip was quite poor
 I said if you'd stayed on the previous day
 You'd have had a couple of quid or more

Thanks John. No more heart attacks.

George in Panto Again -Eva & I have just had a very pleasant night at the Southport Floral Theatre to see "Goldilocks and the Three Bears." It was produced and directed by Duggie Chapman, who also produced Alan Randall's show, "Turned Out Nice Again," which toured the country about 6 years ago. We were delighted with the show, but mainly pleased when Steve Royle, who is extremely talented, sang George's "Happy Go Lucky Me" and the crowd thoroughly enjoyed it. This was followed later by Steve singing "Goodnight Little Bear (Fellow) Goodnight" another GF song. What a bonus!!

Derek Ball - I've been wondering why we've not received anything from Derek lately. He usually sends in the Werrington Meeting reports. But Bill Turner told me that Derek has been under the weather of late and perhaps this is why we haven't heard from him. Hope you are improving Derek.

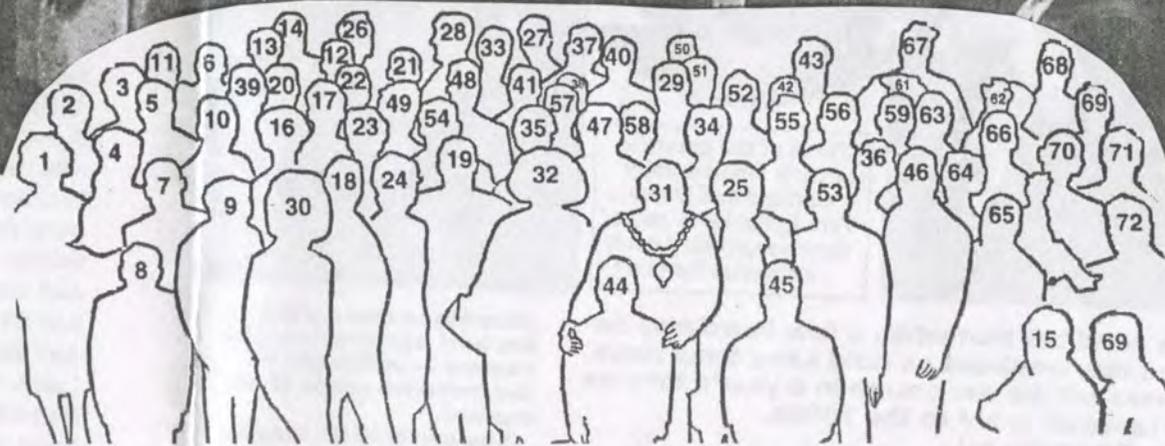


Just look at this collection of stars

who were all appearing at Blackpool at the same time. This shows the pulling power that it had in the 60s. All these stars were performing on the North, Central and South Piers, at the Queens Theatre, the Palace, the Opera House and the ABC, which at that time was a brand new theatre which had just opened with Cliff Richard topping the bill.

The original photo hangs in auctioneer Patrick Smythe's salesroom at Victoria Road, Cleveleys. Patrick, now 62, discovered the photo when looking through his parents' possessions and was amazed to see such an array of famous faces smiling in the Blackpool sunshine. The champagne reception was one of the highlights of his parents' 1962-63 year in office as Mayor & Mayoress of Blackpool - Alderman John H Smythe and Beatrice Smythe.

Patrick added, "At the time it was the norm for so many big name stars to be in Blackpool - many started their careers here." *Our thanks to Charles Stewart for the cutting.*



How many did you recognise?

1, 2, 3: The Fred Pies Trio. 4, 5: Inge Dom and Red. 6: Derek Dene. 7: Albert Modley. 8: Jimmy Clitheroe. 9: Daryl Quits. 10: Des O'Connor. 11, 12: Pope and Keen. 13: Don Arrol. 14: Peter Webster. 15: Harry Bailey. 16, 17: Miki and Griff. 18, 19: Morecambe and Wise. 20, 21, 22: The King Brothers. 23: Carole Gray. 24: Barbara Law. 25: Maria Neglia. 26, 27, 28, 29: The Dallas Boys. 30: Julie Grant. 31, 32: The Mayor and Mayoress of Blackpool. 33: Eden Kane. 34, 35, 36: The Vernons Girls. 37: Bob Miller. 38: Jimmy Clark of the Clark Brothers. 39: Larry Burns. 40, 41, 42: The Karl Denver Trio. 43: Julian Jorg. 44, 45: The Strong brothers. 46: Charlie Cairol. 47: Jimmy Edwards. 48, 49, 50: The Mudlarks. 51: Lonnie Donegan. 52: Mark Raffles. 53, 54: Daily and Wayne. 55: Cliff Richard. 56, 57, 58, 59: The Shadows. 60: Noel Whitcomb. 61, 62: Pinky and Perky. 63: Harry Corbett. 64: Jean Humphries. 65: Albert Burdon. 66: Alan Breeze. 67: Marty Wilde. 68: Jack Watson. 69: Peter Butterworth. 70: Daisy May and Saveen. 71: David Whitfield. 72: Matt Monro.

What's your favourite song of the century?



Three of the greats — Frank Sinatra, Judy Garland and Dame Vera Lynn. Does one of their songs bring back memories for you?

IT'S a good bet that while a few tears may be shed this weekend as Auld Lang Syne rings out, there will be even more in a year's time as a last farewell is bid to the 1900s.

And as the parties get underway, so the songs which have meant so much to so many over the 20th century will be sure to linger in the mind as well as in voice.

From *Roses in Picardy* and *It's A Long Way To Tipperary* to *Lily Marlene* and *White Cliffs Of Dover*. Or *My Love Is Like A Red*

Red Rose, My Way, Strangers In The Night, Over The Rainbow or Beautiful Dreamer.

While many will have fond memories awakened by *Lady In Red, Rivers Of Babylon, It's Now Or Never, Je Ne Regret Rien or Yesterday.*

The Weekly News is

planning to make a list of the best songs of the 20th century — which will be the favourite songs of our readers.

You can help by sending in your vote for your three most memorable. And if there's one song which means more to you than anything else, we'd like to hear about it, and why it means so much.

Write to Songs of The Century, The Weekly News, 185 Fleet Street, London, NW1 1TZ.

✻ Penyffordd March Meeting changed to Mar 12th ✻

Harry Stanford's Funeral. We are pleased that dear Harry had a good send off and the weather was kind to us. He was cremated at the St Helens Crematorium on Tuesday the 15th of December and the George Formby North West branches were well represented.

Jim & Joan Bramwell, Tom Bailey, Bill Pope and Stan & Eva Evans (Liverpool), Dennis Lee (N. Wales), Jim Murphy (Crewe), Eve & Charles Stewart, and Tony & Paul Kenny (Blackpool), Cyril Palmer and Alan & Hilda Southworth (Sale), Jack Jones and John & Doris Myerscough also came to show their respects. We were very pleased to meet young Michael Davies of Blackpool again. In 1991 Michael took the Wintergardens by storm when he played the spoons and the uke at the age of five. Unfortunately he no longer attends the meetings but still plays.

The Queen Played the Uke! - I'll bet no-one in the society knew that the Queen used to play the uke! - "No we didn't!". Well apparently she did according to The Times newspaper, Friday December 11th.

Lawrence Jones of Liverpool sent the article which read "The tradition of royal pantomimes was established early in the war years to brighten the lives of the young princesses. In the run that began with "The Sleeping Beauty" and ended in 1944 with a compilation entitled "Old Mother Red Riding Boots," Princess Elizabeth sometimes clad in tights and skirt too short for her father's comfort, deployed the skills of singer, dramatic reciter, and even UKULELE PLAYER.

Lawrence would like to know if possibly George gave her a few lessons or maybe one of the Formby members, so if you've anything on this please let us know.

Lawrence also writes - Re. your article concerning the removal of George's statue in the Isle Of Man, Hilary & I were over there recently and the statue had been removed, as had Norman Wisdom's. We thought it was to accommodate the new extension to Marks & Spencers, which appears to be where there statues formerly were. If that's the case a new site will have to be found.

Thank you Lawrence. We must try to find out what their intentions are.

The Sale January Meeting - was most certainly the best for a long time, - not including the Christmas Party that is - Almost every seat was taken and the atmosphere was really great. Several newcomers turned up on the night and they were made very welcome. Some of the new members are keen to learn to play the uke, so the future looks rosy at Sale. Alice & Cyril wish to thank all for their support and for the raffle prizes that were donated. It all helps to pay the rent! *We are all very pleased for Sale but the problem is that if it grows more we may have to look for a larger room. It's Turning Out Nice Again, aint it*

Dennis Lee & Geoff Shone visited Jim Murphy in hospital. He'd had his op. and was sat up in his wheel-chair. But it wasn't long before he had Dennis & Geoff pushing him round the hospital while he was entertaining the patients. You can't keep our lads quiet, can you? Anyway he is back home now and progressing very well. Jim has had a steel rod inserted from the hip to the knee and in 6 months time he will have a plastic knee cap fitted. Our very best wishes to you Jim and hope you are still smiling.

Baby Beats Hitler Blackpool Gazette 23/11/41 - Charles Stewart
What Hitler with all his savagery could not do, has been achieved by a one hour old baby. This is to hold up production on George Formby's latest film. Neither threats nor persuasion would make George & Beryl postpone their departure from their home here for the Ealing Studios, to make the Lancashire comedy. Nor would a shower of pineapples (George's name for bombs) make them late on the set.

But when a telephone message went through to the studio on Tuesday that a baby daughter had been born in Blackpool to the wife of George's pianist, Mr Ernest Pullon, everything stopped for her.

Said Beryl, "Off you go to see that daughter of yours." "But the songs have got to be recorded on Sunday, and George hasn't rehearsed them yet" reminded the proud but conscientious father. "I know it's going to mean staying among these fireworks and filming being postponed but go you must," said Beryl. With that Beryl pushed George into the car to take Ernie to the station to catch the train to Blackpool.

WAR FUNSTER No.1.

"That's just Beryl" said Ernie, telling me about it this week, and about the way George keeps everyone amused when bombs are raining down their heaviest. Mrs Pullon, who was Miss Sybil Greenwood before her marriage, was in the theatrical profession and has often visited the Blackpool Palace Theatre. The baby, who is to be christened Wendy, was born at Glenroyd Maternity Home, Whitegate Drive. Thanks for the article Charles.

Web Site - The N.West Newsletter will soon have a web site for those wishing to attend a meeting in the area. Many people ring up asking for GF exhibitions etc. around Lancashire and unfortunately we have to tell them that we have nothing to offer. There are a number of GF web sites on the Internet but ours will be slightly different. It will portray George and his father as "Two Famous Lancashire Lads." Tune in to - WWW.thehollies/formby/home.htm
E Mail Address if you wish to send an article - stan@thehollies.u-net.com

It's Been a Great Year for Werrington

by Bill Turner

A Happy New Year to all, and "WOW" What a year it's been for the Staffordshire Knot Ukulele Society. Apart from the sad loss of one of our staunchest members, "Banjo" Dave Peerless who passed away last January, the year has been very much a huge success. During the year we have welcomed more new members and purchased new equipment etc.



It is two years ago this month since we launched our society and in March 1997 we were visited and filmed by ITVs Denise Mitchell and Dennis Taylor (GFS President) appeared on our show.

John Guy, one of the original GFS founder members travels from Birmingham nearly every meeting and John Mason and Mick travel from Wigan to visit us, - What Enthusiasm!

Our Christmas party was a sell-out with a free raffle and buffet. Peter Gratton's comedy spot went down very well with the audience and young Peter Cain played his keyboard. Janice, Daryll Snow's sister sang to us with her lovely voice and everyone said how much they'd enjoyed the evening.

Our thanks to the ladies who prepared and laid on the buffet and all the different acts who entertained us. Our M/C Derrick Ball has been going through a rough bout of flu - we wish him well - so our thanks go to Carl Basford who bravely stepped in at the last minute as M/C.

Thanks Bill. We are very pleased that Werrington is prospering well and wish you another successful year in 1999. We have never visited the Werrington meeting so one of these nights we will surprise you.

S.O.S. Kath Hammond of Sheffield, is looking for the words to the old tear jerker "The Miner's Song" (or something like that). It is about a young miner who lost his parents.

Hurricane Kath is so busy lately, practising the uke, that she hasn't got the time to play pool any more. So she's decided to sell her Pot Black Manhattan pool table (like new) to make space. The size is 6' x 3' with folding legs as advertised in the Argos catalogue. Price £75. You can ring Kath on 0114 2863503.

I haven't got anything on the song Kath but we'll try to get it for you. The Music Hall Society Archivist should have a copy.

From George's Suitcase - On the 5th of July 1902, Ray Wallace, a Music Hall entertainer, sent a telegraph to George Formby senior,- "Oxford Music Hall, Oxford Street, London, May I sing one verse and chorus of 'Playing The Game In The West' as an imitation of you? Please reply to Ray Wallace, Hammersmith Palace.

George Junior's Agent, Fosters Agency, Piccadilly House, Piccadilly Circus, London SW1, wrote to George on the 3rd May, 1960. "Dear George, After negotiations going on all morning, I have settled the deal with Pye on the following basis. You are to receive a royalty of 5% on 85% of the records sold in the United Kingdom and 50% of this amount overseas. The deal would be for one year only.

They said that they would telephone you to arrange cutting the record, and also to discuss the song on the reverse side. Incidentally, they started off by offering 3% to 1. 1/2d per record, which I turned down flat. 5% is approximately 2. 1/2d per record. Please be sure to let me know when you are coming down as I would like to see you. Harry Foster."



GF Senior

George replied, "In consideration of you having procured for me a contract with Pye Records Ltd, to record for them for one year (from May 25th 1960) for which I will receive 5% of the United Kingdom retail selling price, less purchase or any similar tax and an allowance for the cost of the sleeves derived from 85% of all the records issued and sold in territories other than the United Kingdom, I agree to pay you a commission of 10% - also on any further contracts resulting from the above contracts." Yours Faithfully, George Formby.

Knock on the door

"A Merry Christmas sir, I am the man who empties your dustbin"

"How do you do, I am the man who fills it."

A Snippet from the Blackpool Gazette

GET READY TO PHONE IN SICK - Massed Morris Dancers, World Phone In Sick Day, and the GEORGE FORMBY SOCIETY Autumn Conference are just some of the things to look forward to in 1999.

The Year Ahead directory, published this month, by the Profile Group, lists around 4,000 events in the year running up to the new Millennium.

Your New Year Resolution is to Write to the NEWSLETTER

The Filming of 'Turned Out Nice Again.'

Sent in by Charles Stewart from the Blackpool Evening Gazette 18/1/41

They had to come to Lancashire to finish it! With the famous grin and a wave of his cap, George Formby, Britain's highest paid star bade farewell to his "workmates" in the mill where he had just completed his new film, "Turned Out Nice Again," which was adapted from the Lancashire comedy "As You Are."

It was dawn, - if that's what you call that sombre greyness of early January - when I reached the mills of Horrocks's Crewdson and Co. in Preston. Travelling through the blackness to get there I could help thinking it might be a good thing if some of our star-struck youngsters could have such an initiation. They might never get further than the first attempt, and would save disappointment later.

Early as it was, George and company had been there for hours, and who should be leaning against a lamp post at the entrance to the mills but the star himself. It was a George I had never seen before. Already made up, he looked as if he had just come back from anywhere. He wanted a smoke, but even the idol of millions was not allowed to smoke within the precincts of the mills. Rules in these mills are for all to observe so I, as a guest of George & Beryl, must be taken before one of the authorities to be OK'd as a fit and proper person to be admitted.

The entrance hall was one of the scenes I shall never forget, with the rich dark oak of the walls and the thickly carpeted staircase, the black and white marble floor, the bell - cast in 1800 - and the guns used in the troubles that came when power superseded hand-loom. It was typically English, and, set at the entrance to the famous mills, was representative of the great traditions of British industry which are honoured throughout the world. A messenger arrived, "Everyone is ready Mr Formby" and we set off to the card room for the concluding shots in the film. We stopped at a sort of office which had been set up as George's dressing room. Here Beryl was waiting with Mr Harold Wilton who George always insists shall make him up for the films.

The star's stand in was one of the boys from the Blackpool Opera House and there were others from Blackpool among them Miss Barbara Taylor, winner of the many bathing beauty contests, including the "Venus of the North" title. Dressed in a regular mill cotton apron she was different to the bathing beauty we are used to seeing. The rest of the card room looked black compared with the brilliant lighting for the filming. Gigantic 5,000 kilowatt lamps were suspended from the roof and technicians were darting here and there. The lighting cameras were in place. At that moment the "Stills" cameraman took a picture which you'll probably see in a few months time outside your cinema. "Work please" shouted the director, Marcel Varnel. "Don't look at the camera PLEASE." - OK George. *Thanks Charles for the article.*

Ronnie Hilton - by Stan Evans

Personally I've always considered Ronnie Hilton to be the finest popular singer the country has ever produced. In his time he was note perfect and sang them with such ease. He was a great pleasure to listen to.

On Granada TV, during early December, they screened a film on part of his life when he had a long affair with one of the Black & White Minstrel Show chorus dancers. The film was very well made and Ronnie sang his songs throughout the showing. They had a child, a daughter.

Ronnie was torn between living with his girl friend, Chrissie, or going back to his wife. Chrissie is hounded by news reporters so to avoid adverse publicity that could ruin his career, he returns to his wife. Chrissie gets married to another man but after a turbulent marriage they are divorced.



Ronnie's wife dies and he becomes a very sad man with no further ambitions. He turns to drink. Chrissie hears about Ronnie's down hill struggle and she invites him over. The two of them get married and are happy ever after.

Ronnie was born Adrian Hill in Hull, 1926, and became one of the most popular top of the bill singers from the mid-fifties on. His recording of "The Windmill in Old Amsterdam" is still hugely popular with children of all ages. He began in 1951, by winning a local singing competition. He broadcast with the BBC Northern Variety Orchestra and was resident vocalist at a Leeds dance hall. His first contract came in a most unusual way. A friend had written a song of which Ronnie made a private recording. The boss of HMV Records heard it, signed him and a string of top ten hits catapulted him to headline status in Variety. He also became a popular Principal Boy in panto. He and Chrissie are now semi-retired and living in Sussex. He recently presented a series of popular nostalgic record programmes for BBC Radio 2.

Jonathan Baddeley writes in ... I've just bought a book called "Half Way To Paradise" - Britpop 1955 to 1962 by Spencer Leigh & John Firminger, and George is mentioned twice.

(a) Brian Gregg (Guitarist with Tommy Steele's backing group) is quoted as saying, "Tommy Steele was supposed to be our answer to Elvis Presley but he

quickly became a George Formby character and no-one took him serious as a rock & roll singer.

(b) Larry Parnes was looking for a name for a chap named Clive Powell and is quoted as saying, "You come from the same county as George Formby and Georgie suits you because you are going to be famous one day, you can do all sorts with that name, Georgie Fame.

(c) A second book is called "On Holiday - Bygone Britain 1900 - 1970" I have enclosed an extract from the publication called 'Referee' dated 1910, that lists artists of the day appearing at London Theatres. Of course, the George Formby at two of the theatres related to George's dad.

"Oxford Theatre - Joe Elvin & Co, Chirgwin, Victoria Monks, T E Dunville, GEORGE FORMBY (senior) and Charles Austin & Co."

"Metropolitan Theatre - Marie Lloyd, Ernest Shand, George Formby (senior) Ruby Celeste and May Hallett." *Many thanks Jon.*

Liverpool - we didn't have many at the January Meeting but it was very enjoyable. Tom Bailey did a fine job in purchasing a new Mini Disk player for the branch and what a bargain he got! A month ago I bought one from Richer Sounds of Liverpool for £160. Tom asked for the same model and he paid £139 and they gave him £12s worth of blank disks free. Granted it was a display model but that doesn't matter in the least. As soon as we plugged the player in it started to operate and we had none of the usual problems that we have with the tapes. They are great to use and you did a fine job Tom.

The highlight of the night was the applause that young Paul Kenny received from the members for his first half performance. He has progressed so well lately and he is improving rapidly each month. We are very pleased for him.

MINI DISK RECORDING OFFER

If anyone wishes to have their tapes put onto mini disk, just buy a blank disk from Tandy's or Dixons etc. and bring it along to my house, - with your backing tapes. No charge! You will be pleased with the result.

Mini Disk players are now installed at Crewe, Penyffordd, Blackpool and Liverpool and they are so easy to use.

Apart from buying a Mini Disk Player, Charles Stewart has also purchased a Monitor Speaker to set in front of the artist. This proved a great asset at the last meeting and we all found it far easier keeping in with the timing.

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
PLEASE NOTE - JAN 29th is the next meeting - there is no meeting in February.
MARCH Meeting is put back one week MARCH 12th. Back to normal after that.

Blackpool - Wainwright, Hornby Rd, B/pool - Every 1st Sat. in the month -
Tel Eve Stewart on 01253 768097 - Future Dates: - Sat, Feb 6th, PLEASE NOTE
THAT THE MARCH MEETING IS ON THE 13th TO AVOID CLASHING
WITH THE WINTERGARDENS, the following meeting is on Apr 3rd.
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 - Every 3rd Friday - Ring
Cyril Palmer on 0161 748 6550. Adm £1. All Are Welcome.

Crewe Branch Wistaston Memorial Hall - Ring Brian Edge on 01270
69836. Future dates - Every 4th Friday in 1999 - apart from December 18th.
Adm 50p - unless it is a Special. Get there early for a seat.

Warrington Alliance Sports & Social Centre, Evans House, Orford Lane,
Warrington - Stan Evans on 01925 727102 - SPECIAL MEETINGS on Friday
Apr 30th and Friday Oct 29th.

Werrington Branch (Near Stoke) at the Werrington Village Hall - Ev-
ery 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 - 15th February
So as George would say -
"Get Cracking"

