

THE NORTH - WEST

# GEORGE FORMBY

## Newsletter 45

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Specially Produced for  
George Formby Fans

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## Welcome to Newsletter No. 45

Again, all of the North-west meetings have been very enjoyable and new members are popping up at all of the branches. The lead up to Friday the 5<sup>th</sup> Feb. was exciting when half the world rang to say that three members were to appear on TV. The phone was still ringing when the show was on. Airline TV attacked Dennis Lee, Anthony Mason and Kevin Blanchfield with their cameras as they were about to board the plane for France, - where they had a booking. Although the lads were filmed for 20 minutes the screening lasted for about one minute. Anyway, it came over very well and they did George proud with Chinese Laundry Blues. Poor Kevin however, didn't get a look in as he was busy queuing up for the tickets while Dennis & Anthony got all the fame. Not to worry Kevin, What goes round, comes round!

### ENGAGEMENT

Another highlight of the month was the engagement of Alice Cronshaw and Walter Kirkland. These lovely people held a celebration at the Wendover Hotel, Eccles, near Manchester on Sunday 14th Feb. and about 60 friends turned up.

As usual, Jim Bramwell lost his way but eventually turned up to tell us that although the journey is only 19 miles he actually clocked 49. He blamed it on his navigator, Joan, but she was having none of it. Des Redfern, who often turns up at the wrong venue, also claimed that he and his Auntie Mary had driven all round Manchester to find us.

After the usual speech and a wonderful meal, the lads got down to setting up stall to give some entertainment which was enjoyed by all. Once again Alice



and the Tiller Girls, - Hilda, Vera and Sheila gave an ace performance and received top of the bill applause. "Encor, encor" from the Cronshaw family, brought the house down so the girls did a repeat.. Hilda & Vera have this special style of hand rotations that are not much unlike George cleaning windows with a duster in one hand and a wet rag in the other, but it came over very well and they did us proud. You'd never guess that they did their rehearsing in the restricted confines of the ladies loo. On behalf of all may I take this opportunity to wish you both much happiness for the future and thank you for a wonderful day.

# The Formby Story

Part 35 by Stan Evans

George & Beryl felt that their careers were coming to an end. George's last film, "George In Civvy Street" wasn't as successful as the previous ones and the public was now buying Bing Crosby records and preferred to watch John Mills films.

George also resented working hard making just to pay it all to the tax man. They were not short of "Brass" so they were contented to sit it out at home and just work for the occasional charity performance. "Working for the tax man" became an obsession with George over this period and one theatre manager claimed that the only way he could do business with George was if he paid him with a case full of cash.



He remembered George walking away with his case filled to capacity and this is why he claimed that Beryl only gave him 5 shillings per day pocket money. The media picked up on the story and no-one thought for one minute that he had several thousands of pounds stashed in his attic. One story claimed £30,000 while another claimed £60,000. Whatever the figure (about one and a half million at today's value) it was an awful lot of money to have stored in the house.

It was also claimed that George would invest cash into shows and in some cases he wouldn't receive a return on his investment or his initial outlay. George was still determined not to work for the tax man when an offer came in that he couldn't refuse. Emile Litler, the show producer, had purchased the rights to stage "Brewster's Millions" which was a comedy about a millionaire who had to dispose of his wealth before he could inherit a far greater wealth. The thought of George Formby playing the part of the millionaire excited him so he immediately contacted George with the offer. The media however thought the part was more suitable to a Jack Buchanan type of actor.

George's films hadn't gone down too well in the West End so he was a little doubtful on how they would accept him in a stage musical. However he decided to go ahead with it and took to the show ( now called "Zip Goes A Million") like a fish to water. He and Beryl dedicated themselves to a strict routine of 'early to bed, early to rise' during the rehearsal period. They knew that George was now too old to play the innocent hero in films so they looked upon this opportunity as a fresh start in their careers. George wasn't happy with opening in London so he insisted on a provincial tour with the premiere at the Coventry Hippodrome. It was here that his father first used the name "George Formby" so it had to be lucky for him. MORE NEXT MONTH

## Crewe's January Meeting - By Brian Edge.

Almost eighty attended and it is indeed gratifying that our members come back again and again to enjoy a variety of music and laughter no matter the state of the weather.

There was a variety of new numbers performed for the first time at Crewe which our members thoroughly enjoyed. Alan Newton, - never short of ideas, performed the duet, "Ordinary People," in a unique fashion singing both George's and Sally's part himself with a quick change of costume in the appropriate places. Quite hilarious!



Ashley Caldicott is a keen Formby fan

Brian & Connie performed Lesley Sarony's post war hit "I Like Riding in a Choo Choo" after which they were joined by Alan Newton and Arthur Newton (no relation) to sing Alan Randall's "Mr Banjo Man" which we will hear much more of in the future. Trevor Colley, himself a 'Water Board' employee, told of the trials and tribulations of his job in a song written by his lady friend, Ann Dando, and set to the tune of 'The Window Cleaner.' It was a very funny song and full marks to Trevor who continually improves his performance.

### FAILED MIRACLE

I'll let you into a secret, Stan Evans is having trouble with his water and he won't be consulting his G.P. about it! It seems Stan is gunning for Trevor Colley (our Water Board man) as he's certain that it is the quality of the water at Crewe that is giving Stan headaches and he wants something done about it. P.D.Q. So you had better bring your pick and shovel to the next meeting Trevor! You see, Stan has a great trick - a real miracle, which involves filling a George Formby mug with water and then turning it upside down over the head of a willing volunteer.

When Stan performs this miracle at other venues it is always a huge success but for some unexplainable reason it never works at Crewe and Stan is suspecting that the water is to blame. Well I can tell you now Stan. Trevor is not too keen on bringing his tools and overalls to the next meeting so perhaps you should bring your own Warrington water.

In view of all that Stan has done for George Formby fans in the North West and indeed throughout the land, he received a very nice personal gift from stalwart Alan Newton. It was a silk tie decorated with bananas! Stan was delighted with it and wore it for the rest of the evening. A very kind gesture Alan.

Glenys Huntington performed a great flugal horn solo entitled "Fever" and isn't she doing well? It is good to have such talent in our group. Young Gareth Sumner put on a really good performance which was perhaps his best to date. He is trying to put his songs over and is really coming over so well. Ever smiling Dennis Lee wiped the smiles off a lot of faces when he announced that he was handing out bills for the trip to Ireland. Mind you they soon forgot any financial worries when Dennis entertained us in his inimitable style.

Our M.C. Alan Chenery looked real smart in his super white jacket. All these special touches help to make our concerts more enjoyable. Thanks Alan. Peter Cain brought along a ukulele that he recently made. What a great job he had made of it. It seems that Peter obtained a metal hoop from somewhere and built a ukulele around it. Great stuff Peter, - yet more talent in our midst.

Thanks to all who donated raffle prizes. They help in raising funds for the society. All greatly appreciated.

#### NEW PERFORMERS

The highlight of the month for me was the practise night which introduced two new beginners, Tony Jones and Trevor Hughes. Both showed great promise with considerable enthusiasm. They clearly had been practising hard on their newly acquired instruments. Then I was told that Ron Whiston (one of our Bones players) had bought a ukulele and was keen to learn. That information was followed by a snippet of news that Alice Cronshaw is also thinking about having a go. Isn't that great news for the society that we have more up and coming stars on the launch pad.

The February Meeting is a special for Alice Cronshaw and Walter Kirkland who have sponsored the buffet. All members of the South Cheshire Branch of the GFS wish to congratulate these lovely people on their engagement and wish every happiness in the future. Brian.

*Thanks Brian. Alan Chenery looked Super Smart in his Daz White Dinner Jacket. I wonder who dressed him? He was the first one to greet me as I walked through the door and for a minute I thought I'd turned up at the wrong venue.*

*Now don't worry about the 'failed miracle' cos It's all been sorted out.*

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**Ronnie Clayton** the very popular Blackpool boxer who, in the 1940s held the British and European titles, and was the first boxer ever to win two Lonsdale Belts, claims that his boxing years gave him wonderful times in which he travelled to far away places like New York and South Africa. And socially he met the likes of GEORGE FORMBY and Rocky Marciano. Thanks to Charles Stewart for the news cutting.

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**Drop a Few Lines to the Newsletter - or else**

## From John Taylor, of Morecambe.

Stan, Could we possibly have a regular article on Harry Stanford's 75 year old jokes? He told hundreds of them and brought pleasure to us all with his own unique style of humour. I suggest a regular feature called Harry's Jokes Column with Jim Bramwell adding his own brand of humour. If you agree please appeal to the readers asking them to put their thinking caps on and send in any of the many jokes he told. My wife hated George Formby meetings but she always remembered Harry and his old jokes.

I will start it off with this one: What was the very important message brought in by the homing pigeon? "Coooo Coooo." which would possibly have had them laughing their socks off 75 years ago.

OK John, here we go with **HARRY'S JOKES COLUMN.**

Hotel Visitor:- Have you a room for the night?

Keeper:- Sorry, all booked up

Hotel Visitor:- Surely you can find a room for me.

Keeper:- Sorry - no rooms left.

Hotel Visitor:- If the Queen came you'd find her a room.

Keeper:- Of course we would!

Hotel Visitor:- Well she's not coming so I'll have it.



**Jim Bramwell** remembers Harry telling this one:

Harry stopped at a hotel for the night and that night a very luscious looking chamber maid came into his bedroom to see if he wanted anything. She left with the parting words: "I will bring you your breakfast in the morning and with this Harry got all excited. He couldn't sleep all night thinking about her.

The following morning he got up early and smartened himself up waiting for the chamber maid to arrive. There was a knock on the door and a scruffy looking waiter walked in carrying his breakfast.

"Where's the chamber maid" shouts Harry. The waiter looked under the bed and replied, "Well I think that one was made in Stoke On Trent."

And here's another Jim remembers: When the Warrington bombing took place seven years ago the police were stopping everybody and searching their bags. Harry was walking into the Patten Arms Hotel for a Formby meeting when one of the policemen, - who he knew - shouted, "What have you got in that case Harry?" Harry replied, "I've got a machine gun," to which the policeman replied, "Thank God I thought you had your ukulele." **MORE NEXT MONTH**

Top Marks to **Ken Smith** for the following poetry.

## **BLAZING UKES**

Sitting at the pearly gates, sat St Peter there to wait  
It was his job to allocate, instruments that sounded great  
You've got a choice said he to one, who's heavenly life had just begun  
Of all the instruments, bar one: piano, saxophone or drum  
Harp or flute, harmonium, hurry now! think hard! which one?  
I'd like the one with golden plating, tuned to "D" for syncopating  
I'm sure it is a Wendell Hall, hanging there upon the wall  
Most pilgrims choose a golden harp, tuned exactly to "F Sharp"  
So think again you awkward sod, that Wendell Hall belongs to God  
There's loads of ukes down there in hell, Gibsons, Wendell Halls as well  
In fact any uke sounds bright, because the temperature's just right  
They say you cannot warm your hands for ukulele playing bands  
So when someone tells you to "go to hell," take your B . . . y uke as well  
And when you're stoking up at night, to keep the vellums nice and tight  
Think about God's Wendell Hall, hanging limp upon the wall.

*Thank you Ken, it's very good. Let's hope the members understood  
You can't play ukes all day in hell, you've got to stoke the fires as well  
And it's not all roses up above, just singing sloppy songs of love  
There's jobs to do like here on earth, cleaning, scrubbing for all you're worth  
Busking just to earn a crust, and polishing gates so they don't rust  
All that scrubbing and dusting books, leaves no time to play your ukes  
So don't be keen to leave this life - stay behind, . . . . . and send the wife.*

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## **Our Members are Tough! -Bah Gum**

In the last issue I included a flyer explaining that Liverpool's Bill Pope was in a bad way in hospital and needed cheering up, and Jim Murphy was feeling sad because he's just returned from hospital after an operation. They both needed a touch of sympathy.

Just after I'd given out the flyers I received a call to say that Bill was fine and back home, and when I went to the Crewe meeting Jim Murphy was there and full of the joys of spring. I asked Jim, "What are you doing here? You are supposed to be ill, get off home."

Arthur Newton keeps on bouncing back and John Guy keeps getting up off the floor. All this Formby stuff must be good for them. Great Show.

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**S.O.S.** Dennis Lee wishes to borrow a RATTLE like they twist round at football matches. Please ring 01244 544799 if you have one to loan - Thanks.

## Blackpool Formby Friends - Charles Stewart.

Stan, I must be having a bout of nostalgia. We had such a good night on Saturday albeit after so many Formby Friends called it off due to illness . . . anyhow, Jim Bramwell's lovely patter reminded me of a chap called Steve Bryan who used to come to the meetings at the Imperial Hotel, many years ago.

In those days Bill Logan was President and we, Eve, Sylvia, Bill and I, used to dine together. Steve was a budding professional at that time and loved to practise his jokes in our company. He had an excellent voice and was a very, very good instrumentalist. He played a long scale Uke and a Guitar.

He got a spot on the Hughie Green Show and it was due to come on TV whilst we were at the Imperial Hotel, so we gathered a bunch of lads and lasses and went round to our house (we lived along the coast at Norbrek at the time) Steve was announced and appeared dressed as George would have been, - immaculate in evening dress and bow tie. He played "Flannelette Night-shirt" and we thought he was great, but he didn't win. He was hilarious at the following meeting describing the audition and dress rehearsal. He was rather critical of "Spewey Green" and we were all disappointed on his behalf.

However someone out there spotted his obvious talent and he was one of the Piers the following season in the Harry Worth Show with Mrs Mills etc. He didn't play any instruments but he was a lead singer in a group of four male vocalists.

Where are you now Steve? We wish you well and would like to hear from you. Have you a story/anecdote to tell? Do get in touch. *Thanks Charles.*

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## How kind of Alan Newton to put me on his

shopping list. The generous man saw this Banana Tie in the shop window so, - knowing that I sing George's "I Like Bananas" he bought it for me. What a kind man! A very nice man!

At Alice & Walter's Engagement Party I sat at the back, surveying all that was going on, and thought, "Isn't it wonderful that we are all like one big happy family of Formby fans who come from all over the country to meet and join in singing George's songs."

And I was extra pleased that it was the Warrington Formby Exhibition that played a huge part in bringing these people together. Really Wonderful!!!





# Steve Royle - You will remember in the last issue I reported that



Like a young George

Steve Royle was the star of the show at the Southport Theatre's "Goldilocks" pantomime. I wrote to Duggie Chapman, the producer, praising Steve and especially for singing two of George's songs - "Goodnight Little Fellow Goodnight" and "Happy Go Lucky Me." Apparently Duggie passed the letter on to Steve and Steve replied:

Dear Stan, I'm glad you enjoyed the pantomime and particularly flattered that you took the time to write with such good compliments.

I am very pleased that you feel I did justice to George Formby's songs as I was a stranger to them myself when first given them. I consider myself a juggler, not a singer. However, I grew to love the songs and I am considering using them in my show on a permanent basis as a result.

Again, I was flattered by your comments and in return think that you were the best in the audience. I'm now even "Happier Go Lucky" after your letter.

STEVE ROYLE (Mad Edgar), C/o Camelot Theme Park, Charnock Richard, Nr Chorley, Lancs PR7 5LP.

*I replied to Steve's letter, including a few of George's songs, and suggested he takes up playing the uke as part of his act. He would go down very, very well, - a wonderful artist!*

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Young George

## WARRINGTON MEETING 30th April

Now we want to make this a Variety Show with non-stop, tip top, performances and we'll have a few non-Formby's there so, for the night, put on your best (be professional) show. For the future we have got visions in the North - west of putting on shows at the theatres so this will give us an opportunity to perform before a strange crowd.

We want variety but at the same time it must be Formby Friendly, and the type of performance that George would have been pleased to have in his concert troupe

SEE YOU ALL AT THE ALLIANCE - Don't Forget Friday 30th April. It'll Be A Good Night!!!

**Josef Locke** - The Golden Boy of Song. Was born Joseph McLaughlin, in Londonderry, Ireland on 23<sup>rd</sup> March, 1918. He came from a musical family but, of his eight brothers and sisters, he was the only one crazy enough to take up a stage career. As a boy he sang in the local Church Choir, and in those days, as a barefooted terror, running through the streets, few, if any, would have prophesied his brilliant success story.



At 16 he joined the Irish Guards and at 17 ½ he was promoted to sergeant. After a few years in England he returned home and joined the Royal Ulster Constabulary where he soon got the name "The Singing Bobby," and his services were soon in demand for concerts. One day whilst on duty he noticed a poster advertising auditions to be held at the Empire Theatre. He entered and came away with a £7 per week contract.

He first engagement was to sing in front of the curtain while the scenery was being changed. He was a strong lad so he also had to handle the stage baggage. After lessons with John McCormick's singing teacher, McCormack advised him to concentrate on ballad singing. Belfast seemed to offer no bright prospects for this ambitious young Irish tenor so in 1944 he came over to London where again he travelled the weary round of auditions and disappointments. He ran out of money and there were some anxious days when had nothing but a cup of tea - followed by sleepless nights. One day an offer came from Jack Hylton to sing at the Victoria Palace and he saw, for the first time his name "Josef Locke" on the posters. He was furious, - who is this? he shouted. It was explained that his name was too long for the space allotted on the bills so they shortened it. Today he feels that the shorter name given to him by Jack Hylton has been lucky for him.

One of his early memories is of an audition over the telephone. This resulted in him being chosen to sing "My Heart and I" and the composer, the great Richard Tauber, played the accompaniment. Again came the weary trudge and everywhere he went it was the same reply, "Sorry nothing today."

#### GEORGE & BERYL

Then, when he was ready for giving up all hope, and going back to Ireland, an offer came to sing in Blackpool. It was in the big Tom Arnold production at the Opera House, headed by George & Beryl. They were so impressed that they recommended him to Victor Carne of Columbia Records. A test was made and Jo was contracted to make a series of records. In a short space of time over a million records were sold in this country alone.

Then came a procession of appearances at all the principal music halls and Sunday concerts. He had great successes at the London Palladium and a Royal Albert Hall Sunday concert. His lovely voice could hold audiences with songs

like: "Hear My Song Violetta" and "Your Tiny Hand is Frozen" from La Boheme, "I'll Take You Home Again Kathleen," "Rose Of Tralee," "The Minstrel Boy," and "Ave Maria." Then came the films.

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### JOSEF'S BLACKPOOL HOUSE

This is Josef Locke's house but it is not the Berydene at Inner Promenade, Lytham St Anne's where George & Beryl lived when they died. Is this the house that George bought from Josef when the tax man chased him out of the country? Does anyone know? Maybe Josef had two Blackpool houses. Do you know the address of this house? Let me know if you do.



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## E Mail from Jeff Formby Booth - Hi Stan (All these E Mailers use the word "Hi" - it's American and as bad as using "Guy")

George was on TV again. This time with the Ex Vicar of Dibley, Dawn French. On Friday night on BBC2 in the comedy "Murder Most Horrid" George kicked off the programme with "Like The Big Pots Do" A uke could be heard all the way through the programme and George closed the show with the same number. Thanks Jeff. Don't forget the Alliance Show on April 30th.

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## Sale is Bouncing Back! - What a great February

meeting at Sale! Every seat was taken - about 45 members - and a larger room is being considered. The meeting went non-stop with a variety of players and Paul Kenny really excelled with "Nightshirt" and "Lamp Post."

Jim Bramwell - as usual - had them in fits of laughter but he slipped up with one of his jokes - as usual - when he claimed that Lancashire was in Wigan. Alan Middleton, sang a folk song all about "Fishermens Friends" the hot toffees. Alan Southworth, - who does a great job with the Sound System - did a wonderful tribute to Walter Langshaw (who was at the meeting) when he sang two of Walter's songs: "Robin Hood" and "The Lancashire Lad and his Uke" Two great songs!



Alan Middleton

Some couple of months ago I sent Roy Fielden, of Yorkshire, the words and music to a long village fete type of song: "Rafferty's Pig," and was surprised when he sang, and remembered, every word. I passed it on was because I couldn't remember the words myself. Great work Roy, and thanks to all for a great night. We are all pleased that Sale is gathering more strength each month.

# Coach Trip To N. Ireland 30<sup>th</sup> July to 3<sup>rd</sup> Aug.

Well we are all set and the coach is fully booked. Subject to alteration here are the picking up times . . .

FIRST GROUP at 7.45am from my home, where we can store the vehicles

SECOND GROUP - Travel through to Crewe to collect at 9am

THIRD GROUP - On the Outskirts of Chester at 9.45am

FOURTH GROUP - Towards N.Wales at Ewloe at 10.10am

And then on to Holywell where we should arrive at the docks at 12.45 and hopefully with an hour to spare before catching the 1. 45pm ferry.

The Busking Festival is quite an occasion over there when the streets are lined with buskers for four days. We will occupy a spot for 30 minutes and then move on to another spot. Sometimes the shop keepers will allow us to plug into their electric point. The publicans are so pleased that they ask the buskers to perform at night in the pub. Timothy Smith, the organiser, is also arranging a concert for us to perform in.

A Concert Script is being prepared for the concerts so we want all the players to practise hard to put on a really good show. We must treat it as a concert, like George performed, and not a Formby meeting. Looking forward to it

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## IAN CAMPBELL of Chesterfield writes: "Did

I ever tell you that my Auntie Kittie, who worked for a tailor in Blackpool, used to do the button-holes in George Formby's suits? Quite a specialised job I understand.

She said that George was a real gentleman and Beryl always insisted that the bill was paid immediately. Josef Locke the Irish tenor on the other hand was a charmer in every respect but when it came to paying the bill, well, forget it."

*Thanks to Brian Edge for sending this article in. The more I hear of Beryl the more I realise what a genuine person she was. Irrespective of what the media have printed in the past she was a treasure to George!*

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## Larry Johnson is still looking for an Abbott uke banjo - pre war.

FOR SALE - He has a Gibson UB3 Deluxe for sale (Sunburst finish) which he claims belonged to George. If you are interested or if you have an Abbott for sale please ring him on 0161 945 5296.

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**There is vacancy for 1 male on the S. Ireland trip**

## Was the Queen a Ukulele Player? - For

the last issue, Lawrence Jones of Liverpool sent in an article which reported that the Queen played the uke in her early days. Lawrence was curious as to who taught her and was it possibly George.

Well I wrote to the Queen's Secretary and received a reply from Allison Derrett of The Royal Archives Office:

Dear Mr Evans, Thank you for your letter of 4<sup>th</sup> December, which has been passed to us here in the Royal Archives, and its enquiry for information about The Queen and Princess Margaret playing the ukulele. I apologise for the slowness of our response, but your letter only reached us a couple of weeks ago. I hope this delay has not caused you any inconvenience.

Unfortunately, I regret to say that I have failed to find any information on this subject. We have little material relating to The Queen and Princess Margaret's childhood, and despite checking likely sources I am afraid I found no suggestion that either of them played, or learnt to play, the ukulele. None of the books about The Queen and her childhood which we have here in the Archives or which are in the Royal Library referred to this matter.

Consequently, I fear we are quite unable to help on this point and I am sorry to have to send what must therefore be a rather disappointing reply. Yours Sincerely, Miss Allison Derrett.

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## Best Night Ever at Liverpool

- What a wonderful night with every seat taken. The newly purchased Mini Disc Player is proving successful and the players are now arranging to have their songs transferred from tape to disc.

We are very pleased that we have a nice friendly atmosphere at the venue and the club staff are always extremely helpful. But what a surprise when Jim Murphy walked in with young Frank. Frank, now eight, is doing extremely well with his singing and playing and someday, we hope, he will make a star. Our thanks to all who support us and especially those who contribute raffle prizes.

### CONFIRMATION

It is now confirmed (see Dennis Lee's complaint on page 15) that the back of Frank Murphy's waistcoat reads, "Young Fogey." Ignore what Dennis Lee tells you or Brian Edge. This is definite!!!

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## There is a vacancy for 1 male on the S. Ireland trip

**Penyffordd Meeting -Cliff Royle.** It is getting difficult to find a great deal new on which to report, as everyone has improved so much that it is hard to pick out something unusual. It was again another great meeting, well supported by visitors (particularly from Crewe), and we had about 80 present.

We were pleased to have the Editor of the Vellum, Tony Thornton with us. He was undertaking one of his visits to branches so that he could do a write-up for the Vellum magazine under the heading "Out On A Limb." Tony gave us a great demonstration of how to play the Uke, and received a special round of applause at the request of the ex-President of the GFS, Bernard Young who admitted that he was not aware that Tony could play the Uke. Usually Tony is seen playing the BASE Guitar. Have I spelt it correctly?

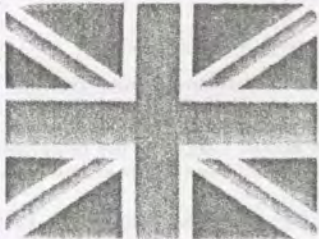
The M.C. was Ray Davies who did an excellent job of announcing the various acts. He brought out a new system for making the Artistes smile while performing, by blowing a whistle if they did not smile. It certainly did the trick in many cases, but in others it temporarily put them off their playing. Yes; it was a good ploy and it worked.

There is always a great response to good sing-alongs from the past, and we had one or two of these. Stan Evans came up with his story about war veterans, and during his rousing song four disabled and injured soldiers marched round the audience; Alan Newton in a pith helmet with a flag and bugle, Dennis Lee with blood stained bandages and a crutch, Jim Bramwell wearing an B&Q shopping bag and looking in a rather sorry state, and me looking worse but I won't tell you how I was dressed.



I am pleased to report that Jim Murphy is making Good Sport Alan Newton reasonable progress after his operation, but sad to say that Alan Whittaker has not been too well again so was unable to attend. A pity for I gather he had been practising hard. So Jim and Alan get well soon. Thanks to all for helping to put on an excellent meeting.

*And Thank you Cliff. Now don't worry about being unable to spell "BASS" . You're doing a gradely job and they all spell it wrong anyway. But what about this new song you've written to the tune of Lamp Post. It is festooned with the word GUY, and you, - a great British Stalwart and a credit to this sovereign isle - know that I hate that horrible American word. So come on Cliff. Get it changed to either, Chap, bloke fellow, anything but "Guy." George said, "It's Wonderful To Be British," so keep the flag flying - LAND OF HOPE AND GLORY*



## Dennis Lee **Ace Reporter No2** writes ...

### FORMBY PRIZE FOR FICTION!!!!

As reported in the last Newsletter Stan Evans has been awarded this prize. Is he losing his Disc Drive? Has the time come for him to stop tapping and hang up his mouse? (computer technical term) Let's consider some recent incidents:

- He mentioned that Colin Wood had mixed up the lyrics to Mr Wu's A Window Cleaner at Penyffordd. WRONG! Mr Wu was a window cleaner at Crewe.
- He recently reported that the back of young Frank Murphy's waistcoat reads was embroidered with the words 'Old Codger' WRONG Brian Edge picked this up and rang me. We agreed that the slogan was 'Young Codger' and consequently Brian informed Stan. What did Stan do? He printed it! But we were all wrong because the slogan actually reads 'Young Fogey' (sorry Brian)

In the middle pages of the last Newsletter there's a picture showing a collection of stars at Blackpool in the 60s. What I would like to know is how Monica Lewinsky sneaked in there at number 23 under the name of Carole Grey. When I asked Stan about it he replied, "Have a cigar." Is there something he hasn't told us?

It's even begun to affect his miracles. Come on Stan, let's see you perfect that water trick. We know you can do it and we've every confidence in you. I volunteer Connie Edge to stand underneath the upturned mug of water without her umbrella next time you try it.

*Now don't you worry Dennis. The water miracle has been sorted out and I will demonstrate it to perfection at the next Crewe meeting. Now regarding this Old Codger business. I think I will have a word with young Frank as he appears to be the only one who knows what he's talking about. Why did you tell Brian that it read "Young Codger?" You lead us both astray! - Hey? Stick to your coach organising in future, you are doing a better job there! I hope!*

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**Charles Stewart** - Brom Whittaker, comes to our monthly meetings to sing lovely old music hall songs in a quiet voice. He brings back memories of another friend, Wilf Forrest. Wilf came from Accrington and was a plumber by trade who also taught his craft at Blackburn College. He had large hands with "Banana Fingers" and played in similar fashion to Brom and Harry Stanford. These three played and sung softly and all held the listeners enthralled. Wilf would start strumming in some corner at the Imperial Hotel and a group would be sure to gather round to join him. Alas, only Brom is left.



Brom Whittaker

**More From Dennis Lee** - Many of you will know Gill & Paul (Cat In A Bag) Woodhead who came on the Normandy trip last year. Well Jim Murphy and his wife Carol and Lesley & I attended Paul's Surprise 50<sup>th</sup> Birthday Party recently. Gill and their sons had an anxious time in making arrangements but all went to plan on the night. Paul was taken to the Royal Victoria Hotel, Newport, Shropshire for a quiet birthday meal. Following that Gill lured him upstairs under some pretext where he was confronted by about 50 guests. Needless to say Paul was gobsmacked.

A buffet and disco were arranged and after responding to his son's compliments - yes you've guessed it - he invited Jim & I to join him on the ukes. We did Lamp Post, Windows and the Lottery Millionaire to the delight of the audience. It was a lovely evening and we thoroughly enjoyed it. On leaving Paul commented, "Thanks for playing with me" with a twinkle in his eye. I'm sure all his GFS mates wish him Many Happy Returns and we look forward to seeing him on the Ireland trip.

*Thanks Dennis.*

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**Just Heard from Jack Strutt** who is the Secretary of the recently formed **Max Miller Society**. Their President is Roy Hudd.

Jack wanted to know if I could offer any help by way of advice in the running of the society. I simply gave him a run down on how the GFS operates and enclosed a copy of a recent Newsletter which gave the story of George Wilson and how he pioneered the GFS. I also suggested that, unlike some societies who don't entertain (but simply watch videos) they should arrange concerts at their meetings, - like we do - and encourage members to get up on stage and perform like Max did. It makes sense because then it becomes a character builder when members learn how to perform before an audience. Plus the fact that it is more entertaining.



I also suggested that they should publish a basic, not too expensive, black & white newsletter to keep the members informed of any activities. Anyone wishing to join the Max (That's yer lot!) Miller Society should write to Jack Strutt, 111 Brentwood Rd, Brighton BN1.

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**Computer Weekly** requested a few George Formby photos for their February 11th magazine. I posted them off and within a few days they returned them with two copies of the magazine. On page 6, under the heading "World Hobbies," they included a huge photo of George playing "Licence"



# Another Irish Song - Thanks to Paul Woodhead



I'LL TELL MY MA WHEN I GO HOME, the boys won't leave the girls alone



They pulled my hair and stole my comb, well that's all right till I go home



She is handsome she is pretty, she is the belle of Belfast city



She is courting 1 - 2 - 3, please won't you tell me who is she

Albert Mooney says he loves her, all the boys are fighting for her  
They knock at the door and ring at the bell, saying my true love are you well  
Out she comes as white as snow, rings on her fingers and bells on her toes  
Old Johnny Murray says she'll die, if she doesn't get the fellow with the roving eye

Let the wind and the rain and the hail blow high  
And the snow come tumbling from the sky  
She's as nice as apple pie, and she'll get her own love by and by  
When she gets a lad of her own, she won't tell her ma when she gets home  
Let them all come as they will, for it's Albert Mooney she loves still

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## Les Pearson sends in a Newspaper Cutting - Comedians? You Must Be Joking!

Entertainment has never had so many young comedians as it does today. And what a sad, sick lot they are. Take the ghastly Lily Savage, angry, bitter, chip on the shoulder, and totally unfunny to me. How Liverpool, the city that gave us Doddy, Ted Ray, Arthur Askey and the great Tommy Handley could produce such a dreadful character amazes me. Today's wanna be comics should read about and model themselves on the past masters - Chaplin - Laurel & Hardy - Marx Brothers - Abbott & Costello - Bob Hope - George Burns - Tony Hancock - Morecambe & Wise. They've always strived for perfection. Compare these and the other greats, to the crude, uncoath, scruffy, foul mouthed trollops we have today. Thanks Les, I agree with the article entirely. They are VULGAR and especially the women comedians. RUBBISH!!



Les Pearson

Thanks Les, I agree with the article entirely. They are VULGAR and especially the women comedians. RUBBISH!!

## An Interview with Herbert Halliday

George's Pianist - with Joe Cooper.

Herbert: George didn't have any grounding in the very thing that he did, that was singing songs and playing the ukulele. He didn't know a note of music and everything he learnt he had to learn it from his backroom boys, either myself or, before me, Ernie Pullen. We used to play these new tunes over to him and he would say, "That's alright, it's worth a fiver, or whatever it was" and it went into the library. He may have used it and he may not, I don't know.



But the one thing that George had was personality, now this is a word that's thrown about, "Everybody is a personality" now to me that is wrong because you cannot be a quality, nobody is a quality, he had a personality not was a personality. I would say that every performer in his day would have given his right arm to have George's personality.

Joe: *Did he have it on or off stage?*

Herbert: He would be having a furious row with his wife walking on to the stage and this was common. They fought like cat and dog, - verbally.

Joe: *Who came out best?*

Herbert: Well, I don't know they were about equal, actually he was a little hen pecked in a sense, and there are other people in the profession, even today who are in a similar position, but I wouldn't mention names.

Joe: *Did Beryl dominate George*

Herbert: She dominated him in the sense, when they first met, and it's rather strange, he threw an orange at her and it hit her in the face. On the railway platform at Castleford. They were coming back to Lancashire and he said, "Does anyone want an orange?" It was then that she realised that in this rather immature person there was the makings of a great man. She knew more tricks of stagecraft than he did and she found that she'd got a goose that was laying an awful lot of golden eggs.

At one time they were performing on the stage simply for a fee - like a lot of others did - but she saw that George was the main attraction in the variety show and it about time that they altered the contracts. Eventually she changed the contracts so that George was the employer of all the supporting acts. On one occasion, - when they were playing at Hull, on a Saturday night, she had her bag

bulging with money. This was the beginning of it and she was the business woman behind him.

You must remember that I was their paid servant. I looked after his music and Harry Scott looked after his stage wardrobe, - he was a valet and a jack of all trades who looked after his cars etc. Right throughout the war he'd been a member of a tumbling act but joined up with George & Beryl later, and until the end. He was one of the beneficiaries of the will. To get back to Beryl, she was educationally, and I don't say this in any derogatory sense, but she was just about nil. But she could go into the theatre, ask the proprietor the different ranges of the prices, and she could tell you within £5 how much there was in the house. Beryl got to be a real power on the stage and she only had to move her little finger and they all came running.

By now George was an artist who didn't have to ask for work, it was the agents who were constantly coming to him and asking him for work. He was the top artist and during the year 1945/46 he earned £63,000. 00 of which he paid the Inland Revenue £58,000. 00. That's why he didn't want to perform all the year round. I used to work 5 or 6 months in the year and I was on a retainer for the rest of the year. George's agents were Lew & Leslie Grade.

Beryl was a keen business woman, and both her and George were very wary of people who were scroungers. George had no real politics but he hated the socialists although he got his money from the three-penny gods in the theatres. He said that he'd worked like stink all my working life and he wasn't impressed with the average working lad.

*Joe: Did he ever talk about his early years?*

Herbert: No, I only know that he was a jockey and he got too heavy to ride. He was always interested in horses but later his great love turned to cars and motor bikes. I've seen him drive out with one car and come back in another.

*Joe: Did he ever talk about his father to you?*

Herbert: Yes, he had a great reverence for his father. The memory of his father cropped up in his conversations regarding his money. In 1948, I said to Mrs Formby: "What a great pity you have no family to leave your money to" and she said, "Well we deliberately avoided them." She had this golden wallet and nothing interfered with it. When I asked what they intended doing with their money she said they would leave it to those who helped them. Incidentally I didn't get a penny but it didn't bother me. I had a contract which satisfied me.

**MORE NEXT MONTH FROM BERT AND JOE**

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**Get Your Act Together for Warrington - Be Professional!!!**

# 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  
Next meeting Friday 5th March -WE ARE BACK TO NORMAL

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**Blackpool** - Wainwright, Hornby Rd, B/pool - Every 1st Sat. in the month - (except March) Tel Eve Stewart on 01253 768097 - Future Dates: - Sat March 13th, Apr 3rd. NOTE - MARCH MEETING ONE WEEK LATER - Saturday the 13th March. Thereafter back to normal. Adm £1 including light buffet.

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**Liverpool** - Broadgreen Conservative Club - Every 2nd Friday in the month - Ring Tom Bailey on 0151 289 1711 Players Urgently Wanted

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**Sale** - Woodheys Club, 299 Washway Rd, Sale - Dates are now settled - Every 3rd Friday - Ring Cyril Palmer on 0161 748 6550. Adm £1. All Are Welcome.

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

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**Warrington** Alliance Sports & Social Centre, Evans House, Orford Lane, Warrington - Stan Evans on 01925 727102 - SPECIAL MEETING ON FRIDAY the 30th APRIL- BE PROFESSIONAL.

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**Werrington Branch** (Near Stoke) at the Werrington Village Hall - Every 2nd Thursday in the month, Ring Bill Turner on 01782 304858.

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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.

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**Deadline for next issue - 15th January.**

**So as George would say -**

**"Get Cracking"**

**Support Your Newsletter**

**Harry's Jokes Wanted for Next Month**

