

THE NORTH - WEST

GEORGE FORMBY

Newsletter 49

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Specially Produced for
George Formby Fans
by Stan Evans, The Hollies, 19 Hall Nook, Penketh, Warrington,
Cheshire WA5 2HN

Tel or Fax 01925 727102

Welcome to Newsletter No. 49

and it's been another busy month. Crewe had an excellent boat trip with plenty of George Formby action and the TV cameras arrived at Penyffordd to film the June Meeting. And we've had the Radio & BBC TV in Warrington here. Why??? Read on

EDITOR'S COMMENTS

YOU CAN WRITE About The Dead!

Some months back I received a phone call from the Blackpool Gazette. They were very concerned because a writer by the name of David Bret had written a book on George Formby in which he condemns George and Beryl and boasts that the dead can't sue him.

Bret's controversial book condemns George as a womanising drug addict who had leanings toward homosexuals and sympathy towards Hitler. Beryl was classed as a drunkard, a bag and a cow who had a string of affairs. *We challenged Bret on BBC Radio and he didn't turn up.* And the BBC TV presenter had fears of him not turning up at Manchester so a taxi was arranged to get him there. On Radio he nervously changed his accusations from "Affairs" to "Quick flings" and claimed that the readers will be disappointed after they've read it as it is not as critical as the media have suggested. So why buy the book?

WINTERGARDENS - ZIMMER FRAMES

The Vellum reported that he'd had permission to sell his book at the next GFS meeting and when questioned about this by the press he claimed that he'd no fear of attending because they all walk round wielding zimmer frames and ukuleles.

The book has sparked off a number of phone calls from confused newspapers. Geoffrey Shryhane, free lance reporter of Wigan and ex-editor of the Wigan Reporter condemned the book as TRASH and completely without foundation.

Bret, who is currently getting a lot of national publicity, will be selling to people who are not bothered if the book is based on facts or not. This could be very damaging to the society's image.

Some GFS Committee members have had access to this book for some months so why haven't they published the findings in the Vellum? Then we could all give an opinion instead of leaving it to the outside media.

Would I buy a copy? There are millions of books written today that only last a few months and then finish up in the cheap shops for £2. I'd buy one then. All the Bret's in the world couldn't destroy George & Beryl. But it could ours!

The Formby Story

Part 39 by Stan Evans

George never quite got over his coronary thrombosis illness but being an active man he had to get back to the theatre again. After his attack his position in "Zip Goes A Million" was taken over by Reg Dixon the comedian who, with his catch phrase, "I feel proper poorly" was very popular, especially with the ladies who loved to hear him on radio. They wanted to mother him.

In less than 2 years George was top of the bill at the London Palladium for 10 weeks in "Fun Of The Fair" with Billy Cotton and Terry Thomas. In the show he revived the Honeymoon sketch with Audrey Jeans and sang with The Deep River Boys when he attempted to prove that the old songs like 'Some Of These Days' could be sung in the same tempo as the modern songs of the day.

In 1956 George was back at the Palace Theatre where he played Idle Jack in Dick Whittington. He then took things quietly for a couple of years during a period when Beryl appeared to have lost enthusiasm. Was she turning to drink?

From Beryl's cheque book stubs, George bought his regular supply of cigarettes by cheque and there was nothing unusual until

October 25th 1957 when Beryl spent £20. 10. 9d (about 10 bottles) on whisky.

November 12th she spent a further £11. 5. 6d on whisky

November 13th (the following day) £16. 13. 9d.

January 3rd 1958 £11. 4. 0d on sherry

March 17th £18. 19. 0d on whisky

March 26th £19. 12. 3d on more whisky.

July 17th £17. 11. 9d - whisky was purchased

July 24th £22. 5. 0d - whisky, St Anne's hotel

December 15th £14. 2. 0d wines for Christmas

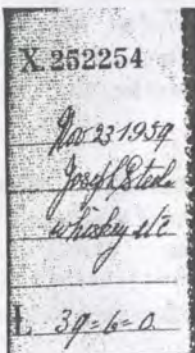
December 16th £15. 11. 0d whisky

December 23rd £7. 1. 0d for wine

January 10th £7. 0. 0d for more wine



Beryl looks under great strain



George assumed that Beryl was drinking through boredom, which caused arguments in the home. He didn't know that she suffering from leukaemia and the drink was taken to ease the pain. He wanted to get back to work but she wasn't fit enough to support him. Stories have been told that builders working on the house found empty bottles buried in the garden, but why would she add the word 'whisky' to the cheque book stubs if she was a secret drinker? More Next Month.

Ron Rigby. In the last issue we reported on the Special Meeting at the Warrington Alliance Social Club which was held to raise funds to send 8 year old, brain tumour sufferer, Jordan Stevenson on short holidays.



We mentioned that one of our old established GFS members disgraced himself when he verbally attacked our brilliant organist, Ron Rigby, in front of the audience. Well we have some very sad news to report this month!

A couple of weeks later Ron collapsed while he was playing the organ at the Alliance Free & Easy Night and had to be rushed into hospital. Apparently he'd suffered a massive stroke and within a few hours he'd lost his life. This left us devastated and we couldn't believe it could happen so quick.

Ron was a gentleman, - in fact, he was a gentleman's gentleman who was very kind to everyone. For the past few years 70 year old Ron had been suffering with failing eyesight but, even so, he was always willing to oblige anyone who needed help with their songs.

Whenever he linked up with a singer he would keep all the singer's work on file to take along the following Saturday. He was a perfectionist who worked extremely hard with his homework and always made sure that he didn't let the artist down. He reminded me very much of our late GFS member, Ron Holliday, who also had failing eyesight, and who was also dedicated to his playing.

In his younger years Ron formed his own Ron Rigby Trio and worked with the Les Peter's Band. Unlike today's keyboard players who simply press a transposing button to find the right keys, he was an expert who could transpose into any key and always knew the right key to suit the singer's range.

Like a lot of brilliant musicians he was an extremely sensitive man who quickly took things to heart. He apologised many times when he had no reason to apologise. Whenever a singer finished his spot he would automatically turn to Ron and ask the audience to applaud him. This upset Ron because he didn't seek his own publicity, - only for the artist.

Artists needing to perfect a song would be invited to Ron's home to work on them. He was a lovely man who will be greatly missed by some of the members of the musical world. Our thoughts go to his devoted wife Edna. Stan Evans.

Since The David Bret session on TV & Radio, the phone has been on fire.

Nice Crowd at Blackpool - Our second meeting at the new Cricket Club venue went down extremely well and we were pleased to see Brian & Connie from Crewe and Alice, Walter, Cyril and Sheila from Sale. And what a surprise when Paul & Kath Mountain, - from Yorkshire, came through the door. It was great to see them all arriving and we knew that we were in for a good night.

But the surprise of the night came when a small crowd entered with a pretty little girl. She immediately took a seat and settled down to see what was going on and Alan Middleton, our M/C, quickly announced, "Well folks, we have a nice treat for you, this is Les's daughter, Charlotte, and we have Les's wife, Tracy with us.



Tracy and Charlotte

There was a look of confusion on the faces of those who had travelled from outside Blackpool and Brian Edge was the first to say, "Who's Les?" Alan replied with, "I'm sorry folks but us locals know the family, - this is Les Dawson's wife, Tracy and his daughter, Charlotte."



Samantha

Well you could have knocked us all down with a wet lettuce, and I was particularly dead chuffed because Les is one of my greatest, - which I'm sure goes for every member in the GFS. At the moment there is a run of "Sez Les" and "Jokers Wild" on Sky TV and Les - with his brilliant brain - is the master comedian who keeps both shows buzzing.

Tracy, along with her friend, Samantha, apologised for interrupting our merry session, - apparently after a night out celebrating a friend's 70th they were still feeling merry. Anyway we soon assured them that we were very pleased to have them as our guests and we knew that we were in for an even better night.

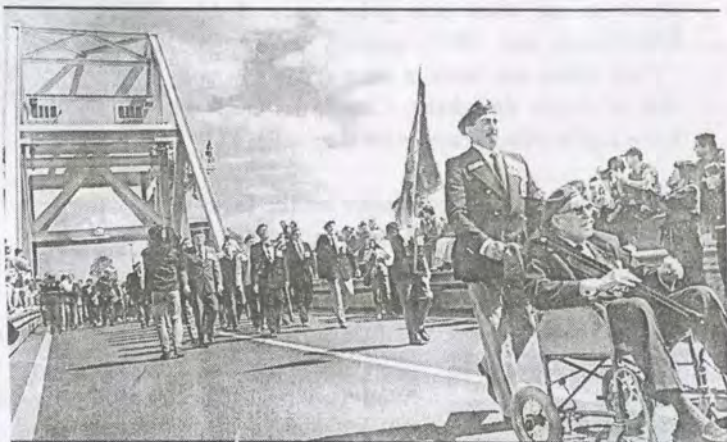
As usual, Charles and Eve, along with Steve and Eileen hosted the meeting and put on an excellent buffet. We had plenty of artists to perform and Tracy & Samantha excelled as a backing group with "Bananas" They were brilliant! A few days later I received a nice bundle of post from Tracy to say that they thoroughly enjoyed the evening. Hope to see you all again!

Normandy - Pegasus Bridge

- Twelve months ago a coach party of our members travelled to France to entertain the Normandy veterans and one of the highlights was the visit to Pegasus Bridge where we entertained outside the local cafes to the many sightseers. This bridge played a vital part in the war as it was claimed that if the Germans had recaptured it they could have rolled up to the beaches to throw the allies back into the sea. This could have extended the war by at least a further 3 years.

When we visited the bridge some of us were uncertain on whether this was the original bridge. Well here are the facts about the bridge. . . .

For almost 50 years the bullet and shelled scarred structure - renamed Pegasus Bridge after the Airborne force's winged horse badge - remained in place, a tribute to red beret bravery and the site of the first Allied action of D Day.



Five years ago the bridge was replaced by a new replica bridge, when the canal was widened. Veterans and historians were shocked to discover that the famous bridge had met an inglorious end, dumped in a lorry park where it lay rusting and covered in weeds, 300 yards from its original location.

Now, following years of negotiations between local officials, the British Embassy and veteran's groups, the bridge is to be restored to honour. In an ambitious Millennium project it will be rebuilt and moved to a new museum close to its original site on a canal.

Work starts early this year and veteran groups hope that the museum, which will be shaped like a glider, and contain 8000 exhibits, will be ready for an official opening on June 6th 2000.

Anyone interested in the project or wishing to make a contribution should contact, The Pegasus Memorial, Airborne Assault Normandy Trust, Parachute Regiment HQ, Browning Barracks, Aldershot, Hants GU11 2BU.



Wanna Play in a Band? - Just received a note from Dennis Lee. Apparently a Duet (guitar and singer) is looking for a uke or banjo player to join them to do small gigs - weddings, parties etc.

Jim, the organiser, is about 70 years old and they play about twice per month. He will be very happy for someone to ring him to have a chat. He lives at Elton, Runcorn, and his phone number is 01928 725258. Please ring him if you are interested in joining the band.

Max Miller Society - Just heard from Jack Strutt who is the first Editor of the Max Miller Society which has just been formed. He forwarded a copy of his first issue which was great. Max was a Brighton lad so it is natural that the society should be formed in his home town.

Roy Hudd, a keen Max Miller fan, is their President and he writes in the first edition. . . . "about time too that someone organised a society for Max. I mean - especially in the place he put on the map, - Brighton.

You are right. There is still a huge interest in Max. Some of the new wave comedians write for my Radio 2 show, 'The News Huddlines' and Max is a great hero of theirs".

Both Roy Hudd and the MM Society are looking for films on Max so if you have any perhaps you'll let them know. The address is Jack Strutt, 111 Brentwood Rd, Brighton BN1 7ET.

I am pleased that Daniel Wiles is a member. You may recall that Daniel directed the South Bank Show, George Formby edition, way back in 1992 which was a great success.

Civilians At War - We are a group of enthusiasts dedicated to recreating the nostalgia of the war years in order to support the remaining dance bands and entertainers. We are a non-profit making social group on the look-out for new members, future events and original clothing. We offer both active and non-active membership and welcome all feedback and ideas.

For further information please contact Glen Sanderson on 0114 2723186 or Paul Harper on 01274 861052

Burtonwood Carnival, 30th Aug - Promises to be a good session, they've arranged a marquee & generator etc. and they are expecting 10,000 visitors

N. Wales by Cliff Royle.

There is a new song in North Wales, "If You Want To Get Your Picture on T.V." Yes; after a couple of hours of recording at Penyffordd we expect to have a spot on H.T.V. at some time in the non-too-distant future under the title "Up For It". However don't expect a long show.



TV Presenter - Ensa

There was a thrash, repeated a number of times until the T.V. crew were satisfied, followed by solos and duos, and then some individual interviews. Hopefully it will give some good publicity to the G.F.S.

We had a very good attendance including quite a number of new visitors; some from as far as Caernarfon. Ray Davies did a good job as M.C. ; he had to because his father-in-law was present, but of course our P.A. equipment went on the blink just when young Frank was due to perform. However a little bit of adjustment to the programme and all was well. Unfortunately our young player, Stephen Ensall, arrived just too late to do a T.V. debut.

There were a few flashy waistcoats about, including two identical ones from the Watkinson brothers from Merseyside. It was said that there are now big holes in their curtains.

There were a couple of new turns; Paul Woodhead gave a nice rendition of the song "The Nicest People" and Ken Han sang a really pleasant song. Not surprisingly there were a number of sing-along sessions which went down very well. Les James almost had me in tears when he sang "Slow Boat To China". This was the tune played in a dance hall in Rothesay, in Scotland, when I first met Margaret (my wife - not Margaret Moran) fifty years ago. It brought back happy memories. We had the usual support from Crewe and Alice Cronshaw from Sale, as well as the usual assortment of players. Bernard Young (ex President of the GFS0 also blessed us with his presence.

On the 19th June we are entertaining at the Penyffordd Carnival, at the express invitation of our regular visitor Chrissie Bussingham. Stan Evans is said to be doing "The Full Monty" at the event so that alone should fill the hall. More next month. Cliff Royle, under paid, and overvalued Publicity Officer.

Thanks Cliff. What do you mean claiming that Stephen Ensall made his TV debut at Penyffordd. You've not been reading your Newsletter. The three youngsters, - Stephen, Gareth and Frank, made their debut at Granada Studios a few months back and did us proud. Frank went on to appear on "Big Breakfast" and the presenter went into a fit of giggles which he couldn't get out of. Now you must do 100 lines, - "I Will Read My Newsletter Every Month."

More Newcomers at Crewe

The May meeting at Crewe attracted 65 which was very satisfactory as it was Whit Bank holiday weekend. We were delighted to welcome Harry and Vera Jones) Joyce and Maurice Bayley, Margaret and Norman Gater, Janet and John Twigg, Mrs Stoneley, and David Philo and his daughter Sam. They all seemed to have a good night as they stayed to the very last plonk. Hopefully we will see them all again soon. We had apologies from Alan Newton and Glenys who were out of the country, Des Redfern was otherwise engaged, Peter Cain was recovering from an operation and Fred Stevenson had a mystery illness which had laid him low. We hope to see them all soon fully recovered and entertaining us again.

Stan Evans performed a "Rose in a Garden of Weeds" with a miraculous climax. A very good routine. Gareth performed a song which he had just learned - a Formby number, "My Little Goat and Me" which had only been done once in the last five years at Crewe. It takes a bit of puff to perform as there are no real breaks in the lyrics but it didn't seem to cause Gareth any problems. I have been trying to encourage him to work with backing tapes as he has excellent timing and would not have any difficulty with them and I really do know that they would enhance his already excellent performance considerably. Gareth said he would try one song using musical accompaniment to see how he gets on. I personally can't wait to hear the results.

Margaret Moran's performance of "Crazy" and "I'll Gather Lilacs" was once more a real treat. I have always been a fan of Margaret since I first heard her perform at Sale some eight years ago.

Mary Atkinson - We regret to report that our little bundle of treasure Mary Atkinson, has been in hospital, - but should be back home now.

Over the past few weeks Mary has been having difficulties with her memory and it is quite serious. When she is back home she will have carers visiting her to make sure that she can manage alone. Mary is 86 but when she plays on the stage she comes over like a young 35 year old and over the past couple of years she's attended many meetings in the N. West.



Her address is Mrs M Atkinson, 25 Hazel Grove, Crewe, Cheshire. And I'm sure she'd like to hear from you. More news as it comes in.

Don't Forget - Harry's Jokes are Wanted

Ukulele legend's pride and joy is on the market for just £14,000 at local dealers

Formby's Rolls classic is ultimate memorabilia

by Betty Anderson

WHEN ukulele man George Formby was at the height of his musical career he wasn't just "cleaning windows" in song - off stage the star was giving the windscreen of his new Rolls Royce a good leathering.

The former Lancashire lad who made a career out of being gormless was never as daft as he looked and one of the wisest indulgences of his success was to invest in the best.

George and his wife, Beryl always bought the best of British and with a passion for cars kept a succession of top of the range Rolls Royces and Bentleys on their drive.

A glance through his fan club album reveals many pictures of George and Beryl in a labour of love polishing the windows of a spanking new Rolls in the driveway.

Now, one of the cars has made its way to motor



Steve Bradley with a Formby Rolls

dealer Steve Bradley of Alderley Edge. The two tone grey Silver Cloud, is in the showroom at Michael Hinde in Malt Street, Knutsford.

Steve says the car is in original condition and comes complete with memorabilia from the George Formby Fan Club.

He is expecting keen interest in the car which has already proved to be a crowd puller in the Knutsford showroom.

George Formby who died almost 40 years ago, was the hottest show business entertainer of his era.

During his career he made 22 hit films, cut hundreds of records and went from Music Hall to West End theatre and eventually television and a one man show.

At the height of his success from 1938- 1944 he was one of Britain's top celebrities.

He was the nation's

favourite comedian and among his fans were the late Queen Mary and the then Princesses Elizabeth and Margaret.

During the war he was the country's hardest working entertainer playing to more than three million allied troops and he was later awarded an OBE by King George VI.

Famous for his cheeky grin and ukulele his appeal was universal and he remained as the country's top show business entertainer until his death in 1961.

Later the Rolls, once the star's pride and joy, with a personalised number plate, was sold on and exported to Monte Carlo where it was used by the proprietors of the famous Hotel de Paris.

Among later owners were Lord Teynham and the newspaper magnate, Eddie Shah.

In mint condition the legendary Roller is a snip at £14,000, said Steve, who put a shine on the distinctive chrome grill this week with just a hint of nostalgia.



George Formby with his famous Ukulele

Sound Equipment - As you know, it's a job lugging heavy speakers, with tape/mini disc players, mikes, mike stands etc. Some of the big speakers are very bulky to carry and the older you get the heavier they become.

Well there is some light on the horizon because a couple of weeks back I went to a magic lecture and the lecturer was using some really good equipment that gave out excellent sound in quite a large hall, and the speakers were less than 12 inches square.

So before buying new P.A. equipment ring Coomber Electronics on 01905 25168 and ask for a leaflet. They are based at Worcester.

George is Remembered - Jim Bramwell, Anthony Mason, Stan Watkinson and I entertained the old folk in Warrington recently and, as usual we had folks telling us little tales of when they met George.

RED CABBAGE

John Moran, said that the Warrington Council asked Fred Bailey to get George & Beryl to open a swanky event and to stay behind afterwards to have a nosh-up meal with them. The chef had to ring them beforehand to ask what they required as a meal. "Oh" said George, "Just give me loads of red cabbage." With this the chef was terribly confused and sorry he asked.

SNOOKER

And another man told me of the time when he worked at the Lyceum Billiard & Snooker Club. The year would be either 1924 or 1925, and on one occasion, George walked in with a friend. He was dead chuffed when George asked him if he would mark the score board for him and his friend. He said that after all these years he has never forgotten the time when he met George and marked his score board for him.

Frank Randle went South - In 1947 the Observer read: "Wigan's Ambassador of Comedy - Friend of George Formby." The story told how George had sent Wigan born comic Frank Randle to London to try out his luck. The report went: Judging by the applause at the Alambrra Theatre he proved a hit in more senses than one, for he accidently received a thick ear in a boxing scene. Frank told the story of when he and George played together as boys in Wigan. Frank started as a comedy gymnast and then a circus clown. He developed his own style in Manchester's "Any More For Sailing" in which he played, 'The vulgar boatman.' He never made headway in London because they considered him to be too Northern.

CANCELLED

Our Penketh Carnival Show has

been called off but the **Burtonwood Carnival** looks very promising. They are supplying a marquee, generator, chairs etc. and expect a turn out of 10,000 people. They also agree to us having a 'car boot sale' at the front of the marquee. The date is Monday August 30th. Players wanted.



Just bought a Josef Locke In Concert tape called "The Songs I Loved So Well" - (by Harmac Music Ltd at the Braemor rooms, Churchtown, Dublin) and it is really good. Some of the songs are: "Blaze Away", which is a good rouser that ends with Josef shouting "I've got em - I've got em" meaning that he's got the crowd with him, - "I'll Take You Home Again Kathleen" - "Danny Boy" - "Little Grey Home In The West" - "Sweet Sixteen" - "Mountains Of Mourne" - "On The Street Where You Live" which is the best I've ever heard sung, - "My Way" - and the old favourite "Goodbye" from the White Horse Inn.

If you want a few tips on how to get the audience moving get this tape because Josef is an expert. The whole audience are singing along merrily and with the wonderful accompaniment - Piano, drums etc. you can't help but join in.

SOUTHERN IRELAND

Those travelling to Southern Ireland could learn something from this tape. The audiences are extremely warm, and willing to join in, but they need well known songs like "Lamp Post" - "Windows" - "Wu" - "Nightshirt" - "Auntie Maggie" - "Blackpool Rock" etc. to get their teeth into (that last bit was a joke - don't bother!) We must be prepared with song sheets to hand out to the audience. The organiser Tim Smith is trying to find a permanent spot for us to entertain from. This will save us having to carry the equipment from one spot to the next.

Brian Edge is currently busy organising concert programmes. Thanks Brian

Late News - Just received a circular from the GFS stating that the Executive Committee don't agree with Bret's book and consequently he'll not be at the Wintergardens. What a great pity - Some of the members were ready to belt him with their zimmer frame!!!

But the adverse publicity is taking effect already. I was due to appear on a Channel 5 "Gerry Sadowitz" show debating on being a member of the GFS and it was considered unwise. We changed it to being a Music Hall fan. Stan Evans.

Bitsathisanthat! by Brian Edge

Overheard at the last meeting: "They call me the 'Van Gogh' of the ukulele as I have no ear for it.

The M.C. at Blackpool asked the performer why he performed the same piece over and over again. "It haunts me" came the reply - "And so it should" retorted the M.C. "You've murdered it often enough!"

Quote: "Whilst I play the ukulele here I play second fiddle at home."

Overheard: "They moan about me at home and I tell them that I can't help breaking into song." *They reply* "If you got the right key in the first place you wouldn't need to break in."

Quote: "Well I know I can't sing so in order to improve my performance I intend getting a luscious blond accompanist that can't play the piano."

Vicar before the children's assembly: "Now children I want you to understand that we are here on earth for the sole purpose of helping others.

Little boy on the front row: "Sir, what are the others here for?"

MORE FROM BRIAN

Civilians at War Society - Les Pearson and Margaret

Moran visited an event over the Bank Holiday. It was a great day out on the East Lancashire Railway between Bury and Rawtenstall. The stations on the line were decorated in wartime fashion and had displays of Military vehicles etc. The band of the Lancashire Fusiliers was present and the British Legion was out in force.

GEORGE

Even George was represented. The strains of the ukulele were heard above all the other activities the player being a chap (thanks Brian) called Paul Harper. They certainly can't keep George down he's everywhere!

George's 40th - Councils won't commit themselves re. activities

during the Millennium Year and this is understandable with Warrington because they are using a £2 million grant to build an arts centre and they are not sure if it will be finished in time. But they do agree that George & his uke will be classed as "art" and they are open for ideas. So I've suggested that we concentrate on the year 2001 when it will be George's 40th Anniversary. A short exhibition will be set up and a grand George Formby variety show will be put on at the Parr Hall which is only a few yards away from the Arts Centre.

Liverpool - Well we had a great night at the June meeting. It was nice to see Tom Meredith come through the door for his first visit and especially as some of the Liverpudlians have never seen his Al Jolson mime act.



WE THOUGHT WE'D GONE DEAF

It was terribly quiet and well organised at Liverpool and nobody understood why. Everybody said "There's someone missing" but none of us could put our finger on it. Now if you have any idea who was missing at the last meeting please ring in. Somewhere in this book we have given you an hidden clue. He is slightly disguised but you might be able to recognise him through his mask.

We had a spot of trouble with the Karaoke backing tape machine but after a bit of cursing, thumping and kicking, the player righted itself. We are looking for more equipment which will be bought in the near future.

But actually we've got the makings of a good backing set up at Liverpool because Jimmy plays the keyboard really well and he's dead keen to get going. He is also into George Formby songs so it looks like a bright future.



Jimmy on keyboard

Brian & Connie Edge made the long journey from Crewe and Connie was dead chuffed because she'd ventured, for the first time, into doing her spot without the aid of a music stand. Good for you Connie. Brian has got to grips with a number of Walter Langshaw (from Sale) songs and he's doing an excellent job with them. His latest is "Fred The Fearless Fireman" and the cheeky words are very George Formbyish.

Anthony Mason's first venture into Summer Season at Blackpool has gone all wrong for the lad and it wasn't Anthony's fault. Far from it! He was linked up with Steve King (singing Jolson) and Roy Chappel (Bing Crosby) at the Tangerine Nightspot but due to poor publicity the hall was almost empty. Some of the songs Anthony sang were: George's "I Wonder Who's Under Her Balcony Now" - "She's Got Two of Everything" - "Count Your Blessing" and then finished off with playing melody, "William Tell Overture." Anthony, along with his Jazz Band friends, is still playing on the pier at Blackpool every Sat and Sun and it is going down very well. He claims it is tough in show biz but worth the effort.



Cruising Down The River - On a glorious



I seem to have seen the pilot somewhere before.

Saturday evening the 12th June forty-nine members of the North West Branches embarked on the river boat "The Mark Twain.*" After an impromptu plonk on the Groves Quayside at Chester they set sail along the beautiful River Dee enjoying the fine architecture of the riverside buildings with their well kept sweeping gardens. The boat quietly and effortlessly glided up stream through idyllic river scenery with all its wildlife) flying mallards and colourful kingfishers, onto the estate of the Duke of Westminster the seat being Eaton Hall which could be seen in the distance. Those down below who were almost on water level had excellent views of the river in a comfortable lounge complete with well stocked bar and those on the upper deck sat comfortably in the open in the warmth of the lovely evening. Colin Wood and Alan

Chenery somehow got all the equipment on board and as a result we had music and everyone enjoyed a turn at the mike. Walkers on the river banks waved as the musical vessel passed them. After about seven miles which took 90 minutes the boat turned and we enjoyed an excellent buffet which had been laid on. The fiftieth member of the party was to have been Auntie Mary Atkinson who sadly missed the event due to having been admitted to hospital. Everyone was sad to hear that she had not been able to be there. (More about Mary elsewhere in the newsletter). As darkness began to fall one could hear the strains of "Sailor" in the dulcet tones of Margaret Moran suitably donning a white ship captain's cap. The evening was enjoyed by everyone and ended with three cheers for Brian and Connie and for everyone who supported the event. The raffle made £36. Thanks to Alice for selling the tickets and for those who donated the prizes.

And I'll Bet You don't know who this

lovely young lady is? Well it is Jenny Cronshaw (hasn't she changed?) who used to attend all the N. West meetings some years back. She was also a very keen uke player. Walt Cronshaw, who inspired the N. West Newsletter, was her Granddad, and Alice is her Grandmother.



Uncle Joe's Mint-balls - In 1998 the company, celebrated its 100 anniversary. The founder, William Santus who was born in 1873 was the son of a shot-firer in a local colliery. He grew up in poverty as one of seven and married local girl Ellen Seddon. He bought a stall in Wigan market hall selling fruit and vegetables. Ellen was a dressmaker but her family had connections with a company by the name of Atty who were established confectioners. They taught her the art of making toffee and before long she was making sweets in her back kitchen to sell on the side of her husband's stall. Her sweets became so popular that within a short time their business was increasing sales beyond their wildest dreams.

William was such a keen Methodist that all prospective employees had to be recommended by existing staff and they had to be Methodists. He was known as fair boss who dealt firmly with any trouble and forgot it afterwards. The mint-balls are still manufactured in Wigan and distributed to all corners of the world. They are very popular with the coal miners who took them to help relieve dryness through the coal dust. They are advertised as *"Uncle Joe's Mint Balls Keep you all aglow - curing coughs and colds and warming the innards"*



Uncle Jim

Jim Bramwell - our Jolly Folk member - has swelled the takings at Santus over the couple of years because wherever he goes he sings the song: "Uncle Joe's Mint-balls," and always carries a pocket full of mint-balls to hand out.

George & Beryl's Houses - We had a call from Chris Clempner who was looking for some GF memorabilia to buy for his friend who has just purchased George's house at Mere (near Knutsford) corner. Chris wanted to buy something to give him as a gift at the house warming party. He was actually looking for something that George had owned, like one of his ukes, but when I told him how much he would have to pay he dropped the idea. In the end he chose a set of George's Library Tapes and four Sheet Music Copies to have framed. He also wanted to know when G & B owned the house but we are not sure if he did. It is possible that they only rented it. According to Ken Ratcliffe, George & Beryl either owned or rented as many as 23 houses. Does anyone have a complete list? More when it comes in.

Harry's Page - Sorry we've missed him out but I can't remember any more. Can you remember any? Oh, I've just thought of one!

Chap: I've just taken my dog to the vet to be put down.

Friend: Was he mad? Chap: Well he wasn't pleased!

IT occurs to me that if George Formby were still around he would avoid taking his ukelele to Oldham. Leaning on a lamp-post in that town can be a lethal recreation. Before a certain liddle lady walks by, it is liable to fall down and crack your head open.

At the latest calculation, there were about 1,409 street lamps in Oldham, put up in the sixties and seventies. The town council admits that 20 per cent of them are unsafe and on the verge of crashing onto roads and pavements. Its lighting kitty can run to replacing only 50 of them. Oldham is therefore a no-go area, not only for comedians with ukeleles but for latter day Lily Marlenes who will stand underneath the lamplight only at the risk of winding up in hospital or the local morgue.

I think this is damnable. Suppose there were a popular revolution against the unenlightened councillors in Oldham town hall? The righteous mutineers would have no handy lamp-posts from which to string up their misruling buffoons - an inconvenience that the peasant inhabitants of the smallest French hamlet would not put up with for five minutes.

If Oldham is too poverty stricken to keep its street lamps standing, it must go a-begging for Euro alms. No town in the UK needs illuminating more. Rarely, does the sun penetrate its grim concrete canyons.

So in Oldham let there be light - even if it has to be supplied by a few hundred pallid, second-hand Euro lamps, salvaged from a tip in Marseilles.

The local taxpayers should insist that the pauper lamps are fitted with cross bars.



LAMP-POSTS KEEP FALLING ON MY HEAD



■ BY, GEORGE!
This lamp-post
could kill

Glenys Huntington's Book Club.

Stan, I've listed a number of books that the members will be interested in reading. You can obtain them any run down library . . .

- The Blackpool Conference by R U Members
- Leaning On A Lamp Post by Ivor Badback
- Formby Favourites by Hugh Playem
- Finish With A Bow by Eileen Dover
- Smile All The Time by B Pleasant
- The Ukulele Tutor Book by L E Mentary
- Practice Ukulele Rhythms by Mark Time
- Choosing a Concert Outfit by Luke Smart
- Brian Encourages Connie by Sheila prove
- Flowers for Auntie Mary by Aunty Rhinum
- Join a George Formby Thrash by B A Plonker
- Aging can affect your performance by Arthur Itis
- The Life History of George Formby by Ed U Cation
- Fred Stevenson's and his Ukuleles by Willie Yodel
- Will Stan Continue his Magic Tricks by Betty Duzz
- And finally - The Secret of Horn Blowing by Fuller Wind.



You've got some good books there Glenys, I'll call in at the library

Thank you Glenys. I will call in at our local library immediately.

Young George - Brian Edge was given a nice little story of

when George was about nine years of age and training to be a jockey at Curragh Camp, Dublin. To put a spirit into the young lads the bosses would encourage to lads to fight and bets would be put on them. Now George and his friend, - also George, didn't like this so they shied away from it. But they showed some initiative when they were told



George told jokes like his father

to take two horses for a walk. When they got the horses away from the camp they raced them to see which was the fastest. Then they put money on the one that won. When the bosses found them out they got into serious trouble. *Nice little story Brian. Mr Sholfield, his trainer, had only one complaint to make about George, he said, "George, like most boys has a fondness for sweets and pastry, but such a diet has a tendency to make fat, the jockey's enemy.*

N. West Meetings

North Wales Branch - British Legion, Penyffordd (10 miles from Chester) Every first Friday in the month. Tel Dennis Lee on 01244 544799 Adm 50p.

Liverpool - Broadgreen Conservative Club, Every 2nd Friday in the month - Ring Tom Bailey on 0151 289 1711 - Bring Your Uke

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

Sale - Woodheys Club, 299 Washway Rd, Sale - Every 3rd Friday in the month - Ring Cyril Palmer 0161 748 6550 Adm £1. All are welcome.

Crewe Branch - Wistaston Memorial Hall - Every 4th Friday in the month - apart from Dec 18th. Ring Brian Edge on 01270 569836. Adm 50p.

Westhoughton - At the Red Lion Pub (Opposite the Police Station) Ring Gerry Mawdsley on 01942 817346 for dates of the meetings.

Blackpool - MOVED TO SOUTH SHORE CRICKET GROUND, Common Edge Rd, Blackpool. DATES CHANGED TO LAST MONDAY IN THE MONTH. Tel Eve & Charles Stewart on 01253 768097.

Warrington - Alliance Social Club, Evans House, Orford Lane, hold special meetings only. Next meeting Friday October 29th. Ring Stan Evans on 01925 727102.

To receive N. West Newsletters by post please send a cheque for 50p plus 25p postage (or £2.25 for 3 months) able to S. Evans - Address below.

Please join in by sending your articles, stories, jokes, etc to Stan Evans, The Hollies, 19 Hall Nook, Penketh, Warrington WA5 2HN

Web Site: www.thehollies.u-net.com/formby
E Mail: stan@thehollies.u-net.com

