

THE NORTH - WEST

GEORGE FORMBY

Newsletter 51

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Southern Ireland Special - Four extra pages

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

Tel or Fax 01925 727102

Sad Loss to the N.West - Our dear friend and

member, Auntie Mary Atkinson died in St Lukes Hospice, Winsford on Wednesday 11th August after a short illness. Mary, 86, last performed on the stage at Penyffordd at the June meeting. She was an exceptionally smart lady who could easily have passed for a very much younger person. Mary, who had lovely bright eyes and a good sense of humour, will be missed by everyone who knew her. Particularly at the Crewe Branch. She had a Dallas uke banjo since the mid-1930s and has always been a George Formby fan. Mary hailed from Liverpool.



Mary Loved Comedy

Since losing her husband, her ukulele has gathered dust until 4 years ago, when her nephew, Des Redfern, brought her along to the Crewe meeting where she has been playing ever since. Mary was a keen member who loved to attend all the N. West meetings. Mixing with the members gave her a new lease of life and she in turn set a wonderful example to us all.

86 YEAR OLD MARY LOVED COMEDY - So we must be happy for her.

At the funeral, which was held at St Michaels Church, Crewe, we attempted to keep lighthearted for Mary but it was difficult and the hymn, "Abide With Me" didn't help the situation. "All Things Bright and Beautiful" may have been more appropriate.

However George's song, "Goodnight Little Fellow" which was sung at the crematorium, lifted the gloom and the members came out in full voice. New words were fitted to the song for the occasion and Des accompanied on the uke:-

Now your day is through, we say goodbye to you
And know that you have done your best
Tomorrow will be new, and we'll be missing you
So make the best of your night's rest

Goodbye Auntie Mary goodbye
It's time to close your eyes and go to sleep
Those happy meetings we spent with you
When you were singing on the stage
and looking younger than your age
Someday, we'll all meet again and then we'll know the reason why
So go to sleep, the evening shadows creep, goodbye Auntie Mary goodbye.



Des Redfern

After the funeral we assembled at the Merlin Pub where the ukes came out along with the tea and butties. Mary had a grand send off, - in George Formby fashion, - which we can be proud of and Des and family wish to thank all who gave support on the day.

GFS Triumph in S. Ireland

A Really Wonderful Party!!!! - Full Report.

FIRST PICK UP - HALL NOOK - .15am on Friday the 30th July and the first of the fun party started to turn up at Hall Nook, Penketh: Edwin & Ruth Kennedy, Mac & Milly McGee, George & Mary Atkinson, John Taylor, Eve Stewart, Joan Pilkington, Sylvia Currey, Trevor & Flo Hughes, Denis & Olwen Gale, Eva & Stan Evans and Liverpool's very own, Bill Pope. Right from the start it was apparent that they intended making the trip into an experience to remember.



Everybody was full of sunshine and raring to go!

"Springfield Travel" might not have the best coaches in the world but they are based in Wigan (where George set out from) and after 11 years using them we've always had a ball of fun, even if it just commenting on the disasters that occur.

CREWE - At the Crewe pick up we collected Brian & Connie Edge, Alice Cronshaw, Walter Kirkland, Arthur & Mary Newton, Paul & Jill Woodhead, Peter & Joan Cain, Peter, Angela & Ashley Caldicott, Betty Cox, Phillip Griffiths, Glenys Huntington, Alan Newton, Des Redfern, Gerry Robinson and Colin & Christine Wood.

CHESTER - The coach then travelled to the Peacock Hotel, Chester to pick up Tony & Marjorie Elsdon.

EWLOE - Now all was reasonably quiet, with everybody busy soaking up the relaxation, until we landed at the Ewloe Social Club and collected the mad lot



from Peniffordd. It was as if the third world war had broken out when they landed on board with: Charlie Penman (The Crazy Heckler), Geoff (Cheese Pasties) & Dolwen Shone, John Beevers and Sue King.



It was "Come on you lot - Banjos Out" and from then on the atmosphere was electric with one GF song after another. I heard Terry the coach driver mutter, "Now I know why none of the other drivers wanted to make the trip, - this lot are BARMY!!! And how right he was!!!

M. O. T. ? - we soon discovered that some parts of the coach wasn't functional. The tape player was barely audible for those at the front while at the back they were blasted out of their seats. We tried every combination of settings but in the end had to scrap the tapes for our own sing-alongs.

VERY HOT WEATHER - We had problems with the ventilation system - those at the front were stifling hot while those at the back were blowing hot and cold. Connie, at the back was almost scorched to death with the hot air that was pumping out of the system, while Colin Wood had a constant cold draught blowing up his legs. Someone said, "Don't kill that Dragon Fly. That's the ventilation system!"

It was requested we have an hour watching the TV but unfortunately the TV wasn't working. Someone desperately wanted to use the inboard loo but apparently the pipe-work wasn't coupled up and the cold water tap wasn't working. We had a tea machine on board but unfortunately it wasn't in operational order. On the return journey the rain came down heavy and one of the windscreen wipers flew off the coach. The other one went out in sympathy so Terry had to get back to Wigan dodging through the spots.

AT THE DOCKS - We arrived at the Holyhead Docks well in time for the Stena Line fast ferry. These ferries are excellent with all sorts of conveniences aboard: Shops, banks, cafes, restaurants, information, etc. The crossing was perfect and, in fact, we didn't feel as if the ferry had set sail.

It was a lovely quiet crossing, - that was until Mad Dennis rounded his merry band of players together to break the silence. Everybody's head turned as "Mr Wu" came bellowing over from one side of the ship to the other. They received a good round of applause and immediately the bar steward came running over with free drinks for the lads. They'd cracked it here all right - with a captured audience - and anyone who didn't like it had no alternative but to sit and listen. The American passengers were particularly interested and soon showed their



This little dancer thought that we were her backing group.

delight by coming over to congratulate the lads on their performance. Of course, there was no way of stopping the merry gang now. They were in full flight knocking out all George's songs, one after another. Some of our crew wondered how they'd the nerve to get up before a stone cold audience to belt out George's 60 year old songs, but with Dennis Lee as a spearhead they had no alternative but to get up on the stage and get blasting. "Make em have it" shouted the madman. And they did!!!

Now the trip through Southern Ireland was some experience. It was a five hour bumpy (very bumpy) journey and our poor old bus never seemed to get into second gear. At every hill climb the bus went slower and slower and at times when we didn't expect to reach the top at all. Someone shouted, "Will all the women jump off and push" and on one occasion we were overtaken by a young lad on a bike and an electric milk float. "Go on Terry, - you'll make it" roared the crowd at the front.

RIVERSIDE PARK HOTEL - WEDDING - We arrived at the hotel for the meal we'd booked to find a packed house full of party guests celebrating a wedding. We wondered if they could cope with our lot and especially as we hadn't been able to get through to them by phone. However, we'd nothing to worry about. They had everything under control and the meal was really excellent. The hotel was set in the most beautiful surroundings and after the meal we wandered outside to savour the fresh air and the gentle breeze that weaved its way through the huge patios.

We were all breathing in this wonderful refreshment of fresh air, and the realisation that we were sat with the elite, when suddenly a sound echoed through the building. It was the strains of banjos banging away with echoes of "In my Granddad's Flannelette Night-shirt, I got married one day". Dennis and his maniacs were at it again and the wedding guests were wondering what on earth was going on.

However, they gathered around the staunch balconies and gave the lads a worthy applause. Not so much for the



song and the entertainment but more for having the nerve to get up to have a go. Once again the merry band had triumphed. Back on board and the coach finally dragged its way to the excellent Walter Raleigh Hotel. We were greeted on the coach by our host Mary Murphy who was giving out room numbers. "Can we get off the coach for a stretch" asked one man, "No you can't, sit down there and don't be so bloody soft the lot os yus," bellowed Mary. Mary soon let us know who the boss was and from then on she was a delightful treasure. Nothing was too much trouble for her.



Our lovely host, Mary Murphy

Although we arrived at the Walter Raleigh hotel at close on midnight and drained of all energy. It wasn't long before Dennis (the mad monk) was commanding his forces to be on stage and tuned in "C". Once again the merry band had conquered the hearts of the Irish who were soon stamping their hands and clapping their feet to "Lamp Post."

To persuade the lads to get up on stage Dennis had promised: "Three songs only and then off to bed." They all agreed and I personally left immediately after the third song. However the bar crowd were baying for "more" and Dennis had no alternative but to succumb.

SATURDAY STREET SHOW - We arrived at the Moby Dick pub - where the film "Moby Dick" was made many years ago, and the landlord, Kevin, who is also a committee member, made us very welcome. He arranged for us to perform outside his front door.

Youghal is a small village and holiday seaside place where many go for their summer holidays. But as soon as I mentioned to Kevin that several cars were blocking our performing area he immediately set about rounding the owners up to remove them. He also dropped a mains cable from one of his bedroom windows for our power supply and allowed us to use the bedroom for storing our equipment over night. Nothing was any trouble for these people.



Happy tripper Bob Bellian

As soon as our lads set up shop with "Mr Wu" the crowds gathered and showed their appreciation by throwing money into our kitty. We were a success and within one hour collected £144. The Irish

people are very generous where music is concerned.

SUNDAY STREET SHOW - Because we'd been successful on our first day the Festival Committee considered that we should be relegated to a lower part of the area for the second day. So we were told to perform outside the Community Centre, which was about a quarter of a mile outside the town centre. We walked to the hall to measure up only to find that the place was a neglected dump and there wasn't a soul in sight. And we were to perform on the street pavement, which was only about 10 foot wide, forcing the crowd to stand on the very busy street with heavy flowing traffic.



It was a Happy Birthday to
Gerry Robinson

Now this was a very dangerous situation so we immediately reported our concern back to Tim's office. "Nay" said Tim, - laid back, "There's nothing to worry about. They will love you out there!" We had no alternative but to hire a taxi and set up stall outside the wooden Community Centre. Now, surprisingly, as soon as we set up shop the crowds came in their droves. At least 250 people blocked the street forcing the cars and buses to come to a grinding halt. I expected the police to arrive any minute to tell us to move on but nothing happened. The buses had to crawl through gradually thus creating a hold up right through the town centre. When finally the policeman did turn up he stood and watched us perform and still the buses were crawling through. They are so laid back over there and wonderful with it.



Sylvia & Eve - part of our backing group

COMMUNITY CENTRE SHOW - Sunday Night.

Before we arrived in Youghal, the organising of selling the tickets had been left in the hands of Tim, and his Committee, and when asked how many had been sold he assured us that all was going well - "Well at least two tickets: "I tink." The locals showed their concern for us having to use the Community Centre and claimed that they had asked the Council to spend some money on it but they'd

refused. It was badly in need of repair and decoration.

To gain access to the hall we had to knock on a few doors across the street and ask for Bernard. Bernard was at least nine feet tall so nobody could mistake him. He was also very helpful in all our needs. Unfortunately there was a shortage of light bulbs on the stage and not even nine feet tall Bernard could reach that high so we had to perform with the hall lights on.

COST OF TICKETS - Tickets were sold at £5 each from Tim, or £4 off Dennis Lee, or £3 if you look hard up. At the door we were back to £4 again and £1 for children. Anyone who hadn't any money was allowed in free.

They started to roll in and within half an hour every seat in the hall was taken. The show started at 9.30pm as advertised, and the crowd, mainly the older folk, were delighted. They expressed their delight with very good applause.

During the interval they thanked us for taking them back to the old days with George Formby songs, "It's a great relief" they claimed, "because we are so bored with the constant droning of modern music."

The Gang put on a wonderful show and all went like clockwork. To march them all out at the end we gave a tribute to the great Irish singer Josef Locke with one of his favourites "The Soldiers Dream" (See Them Pass By) with the gang marching across the back of the stage. But instead of the crowd marching out they stayed in their seats asking for "more." It was a great success and by now our merry band of trippers was on cloud nine.

JUDGING THE COMPETITION - The Busking Festival competition was judged on (1) Entertainment value, (2) Artistic ability, and (3) Presentation. Now we possibly led the field with regards to Entertainment value and Presentation but in Ireland there are a lot of excellent players there who could outshine us any time. Let's face facts. Most of us don't even know our A7s from our E minors so there is no hope of us competing on artistic levels. The reason why our movement is so popular is because we only need to learn half a dozen chords and we are away. In fact, with Dennis Lee at the helm he would



Secretary, Timothy Smith



Moby Dick Landlord, Kevin

have us appearing on the London Pavilion after we've learnt half a dozen chords.

No way could we compete with the Irish artists unless we had the likes of Anthony Mason or John Shreeve belting out something like "The William Tell Overture" on the uke. With one of these we could win hands down.

The judging of the finals took place in the streets where buskers of all ages performed. Children from about 8 years strutted their stuff and collected money from the crowds. These were entered in the Children's Competition.



Festival Committee member, Darren

THE BIG SHOW - We were informed that we'd reached the finals but due to rain it had to be held in our Walter Raleigh Hotel at 3.30pm. At 1pm the crowds started to roll in by the bus load and at 2pm the place was packed solid with 400 people - mainly children - who had paid £5 each to see the show. There wasn't an empty seat in the house.



The winner of the competition would win £800 with, £600 for the second, £300 for the third and £200 each for the other finalists. We were picked out of the hat as the 5th to go on stage. It was stressed many times over that we must not perform over the 10 minute limit otherwise we would be disqualified, so with this in mind we carefully chose three songs that came within the limit. Wu, Rock and Lamp Post.



Festival Chairman, Michael

THE CROWD WENT WILD!!! - The hall was huge and fully equipped with the very best sound and lighting system, and with an expert sound engineer in control. In fact it was frightening to the amateur busker making his debut. Leslie pressed the mini disk buttons and the gang produced excellent singing and playing. We had a wonderful audience who clapped, shouted their heads off and enjoyed the heavy beat of the Formby songs. Our lads claimed that it was their finest hour being on that stage. It was awesome!

At the end of the show the judges retired to count the votes and after half an hour they returned to tell us that we had taken third place. "GREAT" Our gang shouted, and we were very pleased with the result

SUMMING UP - Now I don't think it was wise having so many players on stage. We had 18 which possibly cramped the style of the main players and also gave the impression that we were a professional group. In fact some of the audience commented on this so it may gone against us in the judging. The stage had about two tons of equipment on board and was far too small to accommodate so many players. About 8 or 10 players would have been just as effective. However we learn from our mistakes and we'll know better next time.

THE IRISH - Well there is doubt about it but the Irish are really lovely people and so very friendly. The children we met were very well behaved and they took a great interest in the festival. There must have been at least 100 or more performing their stuff in the various shop doorways. Some were playing the tin whistles, or dancing, singing, playing the bagpipes, playing a small keyboard and various other instruments.

The adults were into guitars and singing and, surprisingly, one group attracted a huge crowd in the street making an awful racket banging drums. To us it was a dreadful noise but the crowds loved it.

But, without doubt, the largest crowds were drawn by the GFS players. We attracted people of all ages and all the older folk joined in with the singing. They loved taking part in "Out In The Middle East" - "If You Don't Want The Goods" - "Bananas" etc. And cried for more.

JOURNEY HOME - The party's over and we have to retire to bed early so that we can get up at the unearthly hour of 4am. The coach must set off at 5am to catch the 11.10am ferry and dear Mary Murphy had offered to give us an early morning call and lay on a breakfast.

SORE THROATS

We'd done so much singing during the week-end that everybody was suffering from a sore throat. The worst one was Dennis Lee who could hardly speak at all (it was lovely and quiet).

CONCERT

But there were rumours flying round the hotel that we were to perform at 10.30pm in the hotel bar! Nay, Impossible, Can't be done, We are too tired, sore throat, was the reaction from the gang. And then a voice boomed out! It was Dennis the Menace who had suddenly found his voice again, - "Come on

Formby 'sang Nazi-friendly lyrics'



Formby with Dinah Sheridan in *Get Cracking*, made the year before he was investigated. The lyrics come from one of the songs which prompted the inquiry

Rivals blamed for rumour that comic sympathised with enemy

GEORGE FORMBY was investigated by Home Office propaganda experts during the Second World War after being accused of singing pro-Nazi songs, *The Sunday Telegraph* can reveal.

In 1944, the Dance Music Policy Committee (DMPC), a wartime branch of the Home Office, launched an inquiry into allegations that some of the lyrics sung by the comic ukulele performer from Wigan were "enemy-friendly".

The revelation, in a new biography of the entertainer by David Bret, has astonished Formby's fans. The music hall performer and film star was given a medal for his war services in entertaining the troops and was a friend of Field Marshal Montgomery.

Until now, the investigation has remained a secret. Formby never discussed it — even with close relatives.

In later years, he referred obliquely to the period when he was under suspicion as a "nightmare". But he did not reveal why he was under pressure, or that he had ever been suspected of singing pro-Nazi songs.

In fact, the committee investigated him in 1944, while he was working on a film, *He Snoops To Conquer*.

The committee was set up by ministers to vet all dance, comedy and music routines performed or broadcast during the war. Members investigated artists for pro-Nazi or "collaborationist" leanings. The political affiliations of high-profile performers such as Formby were also exam-

by DAVID BAMBER

Home Affairs Correspondent

ined. A committee inspector known as Mr Madden visited Formby and his wife Beryl on the set of the film. Mr Madden informed a horrified Formby that the preliminary inquiry by the committee had declared three of his songs "enemy-friendly".

The songs which fell under suspicion were all from one of his earlier films, *Bell-bottom George*. They were *Swim Little Fish*, *If I Had A Girl Like You* and the title

‘For a patriot such as Formby, who had devoted such considerable time to backing Britain’s war effort, the situation was intolerable’

track — *Bell-bottom George*.

Mr Bret said: "It is possible they were investigating whether *Swim Little Fish* was in some way making fun of the effort against the German U-boats which were at the time sinking British convoys in the Atlantic, although I would say they clearly were not."

Even more bizarrely, *Bell-bottom George*, about Formby's film character hav-

ing a girl in every port, might have been thought to have cast a slur on the Royal Navy, said Mr Bret.

The lyrics of the song include: "A girl in every port may be true / For the boys dressed in blue. / A sailor I know's got three and it's me!"

But the author has "absolutely no idea" why the final song, *If I Had A Girl Like You*, could have been construed as a threat to national security.

"It is utterly beyond me, it is a simple love song."

For a patriot such as Formby, who had devoted considerable time to backing Britain's war effort, the situation was intolerable. He was one of the most successful and best-paid entertainers, and to have been named a traitor would have ruined his career.

Mr Madden told the Lancashire star that his plan to entertain troops in France after the D-Day landings, which were then expected imminently, would be under a question mark.

Eventually, the committee went to the lengths of calling him to London to perform the songs for them. Following a nerve-racking seven-day wait, he was told that the songs had been approved for public performance — provided they were not altered in any way.

It now seems likely that the complaints about the songs had been made by jealous rivals. Earlier in the war, Formby had upset some performers by calling them "lazy sunbathers" for not

GET CRACKING!

The newspapers are splashing George's



getting involved in entertaining the troops and other war work.

Mr Bret said: "There was absolutely nothing seditious about the songs.

"The only likely explanation for George's name appearing on the DMPC list

seems to be that it had been put forward by the Variety Artists' Federation — an act of revenge by one of those entertainers he had branded a 'lazy sunbather'."

The biography was to have been launched at the annual convention of the George

Formby Society, held in Blackpool recently. But members were upset by the disclosure of the investigation and banned the launch.

He remains one of Britain's enduring legends of stage and screen. Famous for his catchphrase, "It's turned

out nice again", and songs such as *Leaning On A Lamp-post* and *When I'm Cleaning Windows*, he made 22 films. Although his popularity faded after the war, he is still remembered fondly by fans who gather every year to celebrate his name. Dennis

Taylor, president of the George Formby Society, said last night that the allegations were unfair. "George was only interested in entertaining people. He had no knowledge of politics and these songs that were investigated are completely harmless."

name around to sell more papers and the GFS don't appear to be doing anything to either stop them or at least take advantage of the free publicity. We are on the defence instead of the attack and in my opinion we are letting George down. George is our hero and we should defend him in every way. He left us a treasure chest of happy, friendly, cheeky songs, - every one without a hint of betrayal in them and we should fight tooth and nail to protect and preserve them. If the papers carry on like this some silly member of parliament, - to make a name for him/her/self - will suggest slapping a ban on the songs. We are the experts on his songs, it is our duty.

The papers are accusing George of singing "Nazi Friendly Lyrics" and we are sat on the fence letting them do it. At the first hint of George being a traitor, a druggie, womaniser etc. we should have called an emergency meeting and E Mailed or faxed every newspaper, TV station and Radio studio in the country condemning any suggestion. I realise that we would be adding to the fire but at least we would be getting our point over and not just sat on our backsides doing nothing

David Bret is a clever salesman! He is doing the rounds of at least 30 radio stations and possibly as many newspapers. We should be doing the same.

First they condemned George, then Beryl, and now they are having a go at the songs. What will be next? Possible the GFS for being in sympathy! At our GF concerts many bemused fans have asked the same question over and over again: "Is it true what they are saying about George?"

So come on you committee members. Don't let them drag George & Beryl into the mud without a fight. Being a member of the GFS isn't just getting up on stage and playing ukuleles. Stan Evans.



Ukulele man: George Formby entertaining troops in 1939

Thanks for the memory, George

I cannot believe that the integrity of George Formby was ever questioned ("Formby 'sang Nazi-friendly lyrics'", August 1). I was fortunate to see one of

his shows while serving in Malta during the war when he was on stage for nearly two hours and would not have left but for his wife, Beryl, pulling him off. Let's

not have any more talk of him being classed as a traitor. Thanks for the memory, George.

Harold Beal
Henfield, W Sussex

SPECIAL REQUEST TO UKE PLAYERS.

There have been complaints from the members of the audience at three N. West Branches about not being able to have a chat with their friends during the interval due to loud thrashing of ukuleles.

Most players are guilty of this at one time or other but it is quite reasonable for those who have quietly sat through the first half of the concert to be able to chat normally, for just a while with their friends. All uke players are therefore respectfully requested not to thrash their ukes during the interval.

everybody, get your ukes out. We are on in the bar."

This was the only disappointing concert of the trip. We were tired, with sore throats, and to top it all the Mini Disc Player had gone on strike. However the crowd enjoyed the evening and Edmund Murphy, the Landlord expressed his appreciation. Some of our gang were too tired to go to bed so they stayed up all night in the bar, plinking and plonking

GENEROUS PEOPLE – The Irish people are extremely big hearted and appreciative of good entertainment. Even the children listened to our concerts and showed their appreciation. At the finals the children threw their arms in the air.

For four outdoor performances we collected in the hat . .	£388. 00
On the door at the Sunday Concert . .	£133. 00
Third Prize in the finals	£300. 00

Making a total of . .	£821. 00
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EXPENSES

Taxis for transporting equipment	£86. 00
Returned £10 each to 47 happy trippers	£470. 00
Tip for coach driver	£46. 00

Total Outlay	£602. 00
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Difference (Irish Punts) £219. 00

This was converted to sterling showing a surplus of £174. 00 which is being held pending a bill for the hire of the Community Hall.

Letter From Ireland

- Alice & Walter received a lovely letter from Alice & Kevin who heard us playing in Ireland. " We hope you enjoyed your short stay in Youghal. For our part, your contribution to the festival was the highlight of the event. Your playing in the street, the competition show on the Monday afternoon, and above all, the wonderful concert on the Sunday night was a joy to behold. One could not be but impressed, on all the occasions, by your members dress, the professionalism, the pleasure that your performers had in giving us, the audience, a whale of a time. You had our No. 1 vote but we were not, unfortunately, members of the judges. Yours Sincerely, Alice & Kevin Murphy.

Well isn't that wonderful. These lovely people, and many hundreds more, thoroughly enjoyed our old songs. "It is like a breath of fresh air" they said.

Year 2000

- The happy trippers were so delighted that they are now asking about next year's trip. Some have suggested Holland, some the Isle of Man and some want to go to the Rose Of Tralee Festival in S. Ireland, which is a longer coach journey than Youghal.

Played for George - In Ireland,

Denis Gale introduced us to Clifford Winsom (stage name: Mr Albert) who was a trumpet player in the Blackpool Tower Jazz Band (1959 Summer season) He played for George and recalls that he appeared to be mean. We explained that Beryl carried all the money while he got on with the job of entertaining. Not much different from many marriages.



A Senior Citizen

I am the life and soul of the party – even when it lasts until 8pm, and I'm usually interested in going home before I get to where I'm going.
A trip out usually lasts for 30 minutes, - before I need the toilet, aspirins, antacid and flatulence tablets.

I'm smiling all the time because I can't hear a word you are saying.
I'm having a good day when I remember which day it is.
I only complain about traffic, children, crowds, politicians and anything that other people approve of.

I'm sure that everything I can't find is in a good place
I'm very good at opening child-proof caps with a hammer
I'm wrinkled, saggy and lumpy, - and that's just my left leg
If it's true that you are as old as you feel, - how can I be alive at 150?

Ode To A Uke Players Wife - Stan Evans

She stood outside the Golden Gates. Her head was bending low
And meekly asked the Sainly man – which way that she must go
“What have you done?” St Peter cried, “to seek admission here
What makes you think you've got the right to stand with me so near?”

“My husband's been a Formby fan since 1961
And I've heard him strum his uke all night till my hearings almost gone
Plinking, plonking all night long and sometimes through the day
He's nearly drove me up the wall, so I simply ask, - which way?

Then when he joined the GFS and they showed him how to play
His singing really was off-key and my hair was turning grey
I've heard that “Lamp Post” ten thousand times, I can't take any more
And Mr Wu the laundry man with a shop with an old green door.

St Peter almost shed a tear, his heart was open wide
“I understand just how you feel, just bring your bags inside
Hello! There's a man stood by my gates, and what an awful din
It's your husband with his banjo uke and he's crying to come in.

A YOUNG FAN - A little boy about eight years old approached us on Saturday holding a Hurling stick. He flicked his ball high in the air and skillfully caught it on the end of his stick. I asked him to show me again how he did it which he did. I decided to give him a Punt coin for his trouble but before I could get it out of my pocket he produced a 20p out of his own pocket", politely asked if he could put it in our bucket and skipped off flicking his ball in the air and catching it like magic on the end of his stick.



Mac McGee with John Taylor

LOW EBB - On the outward journey it was a long way from Dun Laoghaire to Youghal and people were getting just a bit hot and restless. When it was announced that there was still one and a half hours to go morale really got a bit low. Sensing the situation, Dennis Lee strolled down the bus with his usual cheeky smile and in his Wigan accent cheerfully said "Isn't it all exciting?" That gave us heart and the last few miles seemed to pass fairly quickly. Upon arrival at the Walter Raleigh Hotel leading with Peter Cain announced loudly "Thank god for that! It's a good job we weren't going to Tipperary 'cause that really is a long way!"

YOU'VE NEVER HAD IT SO GOOD - Those who are contemplating next year's trip will be interested to learn that the overall cost will be cheaper than this year as instead of hiring an Executive coach it is considered that a bog-standard one will be adequate for our needs.

"HAS ANYBODY SEEN MY GIRL" We had an excellent meal at the Riverside Hotel in Enniscorthy. A double wedding was in progress when we arrived and after our meal we entertained the guests by busking on the terrace. Above us guests came out on the balcony to hear our performance.

It was about this time when Stan lost Eva. The poor chap went down the stairs then up the stairs then he walked around the large hotel first one way and then the other. He was really looking down in the gob. When he had gone Eva appeared from another direction. 'Stan's been looking for you and he is almost out of his mind' someone said. Serves him right" said Eva boarding the bus and sitting in her seat as if she had been there all day. When Stan eventually reappeared, looking like a wizened banana, everyone on the coach started singing "Why are we waiting." The rotten sods!

OUR CHARABANC - on an upward gradient, was at one time passed by a gypsy on a donkey and a jaunting cart although to be fair we did pass them again on the downward grade

WET PANTS - Overheard Walter Kirkland on the promenade outside the hotel shouting "Pull your pants up Alice or you'll wet yourself!" One should explain that Alice was paddling in the sea at the time!

EARLY MORNING BANJO CALL - Early on the Saturday morning John Taylor embarked on a non stop ukulele playing record breakers endurance thrash (waking everybody up) in the park opposite the hotel. First he played for an hour alone in the bandstand then made several playing circuits of the park before resting (still playing) on a seat in front of the hotel. After a good half hour plonking he was approached by a man from behind rather quickly. Thank God for that somebody said from their bedroom, expecting the playing to stop. But it didn't. By this time the man was sitting next to John who was overheard saying "You go Down, Up, Down, Down, Up, Down." Later when questioned as to what the man had said to him John replied "He came over to give me 50pence for luck!" Verdict: He must have been an Irishman!

ALL ON BOARD FOR THE COACH TRIP - On Sunday morning nobody wanted to take responsibility for the destination of the coach. Stan referred applicants to Dennis who referred same to Brian who referred them back again to Stan. The driver stood there holding a map and looking quite bewildered when Stan came up with the ideal solution. They all departed on a Mystery Trip and even the driver didn't know where he was going!

CHUFFED AS LITTLE MINT BALLS - On Saturday night after the concert one of local inhabitants asked where we were playing next? I replied "well that depends on how well or badly we do in the competition." J'sus you are the best group that has ever hit this town" he retorted.

WAS HE DRUNK - Whilst visiting the Distillery on Monday morning Peter Cain was asked to act as official whisky tester. He was given half a dozen tiny cups each containing different brands of the hard stuff. Just have a sip and tip the rest in that bucket he was told. He must be out of his flaming mind muttered Peter downing the lot. There were rumours that Peter had to be assisted into the hotel when they got back but such were untrue. Having said that it must be said that he seemed to be playing particularly well in the later busking session.

HEY! WAITOR - Peter Cain dressed very smartly indeed in his fancy waistcoat and straw hat, stood at the door of the Walter Raleigh Hotel awaiting his taxi to arrive when he was confronted by a man with a broad Irish brogue who asked "have you stopped serving curry at this hotel!"

TOILETS - After the 5am start the bus driver looked for an early toilet stop. He eventually found a garage which boasted a whiffing portoloo! Somehow the 'white triplets' commandeered the master key to this establishment and priority seemed to given to the female species. Males were directed behind a 5 foot fence. "Just go behind there and bend your head a bit" said Alan Newton. Well that is all right for him as he is only five foot one. Its different for six footers they are forced to bend their heads as the "white triplets" are loitering with intent at the other side of the fence and as a result of bending down like that one ends up peeing down ones left leg!

Stephen Ensall wins a holiday. Whilst on holiday at Haven Holiday Centre in Torquay, at the end of July, Young Stephen entered an under 12 years of age talent competition and won a free holiday as first prize. He sang and played "Our Sergeant Major" and received a wonderful applause from the crowd and congratulations from the Haven staff. He is now looking forward to entertaining again when he goes back in September for the grand finals. *We are very pleased for you Stephen. Keep practising hard for the finals Stephen.*

John Ceaser read of a Banjo Festival in the Banjo Times magazine at Dale Bank Farm, Silsden near Keighley so he caught two buses, a train and climbed something like Mount Everest for a couple of miles before eventually landing there with his uke.

He was amazed when he saw many banjo players pitching tents and also bumped into many GFS members that he'd not seen for some years. A group of them sat outside a hotel discussing the old days with Ray Bernard, George Cheetham, Harold Fallows and Dennis O'Connell.

S.O.S. – John wanted to know where he can obtain the CD from, “A Fistful Of Ukuleles”. So if anyone knows would you please ring in or drop a line.

George's Furniture has popped up again for sale and it looks like the same lot that we advertised some months ago under "Antiques and Collectors Items":- "George Formby's solid oak extendable 4 piece dining suite. 9 seater, sideboard, carvery, trolley. Tel 1200 443258. Unfortunately we don't have the area of the country where it is being sold.

Hannah Turner enjoyed the Blackpool meeting at the South Shore Cricket Ground and has sent in a poem all about reliable Grannie.

Back in the fairly recent past
Life's tempo wasn't quite so fast
Dear Grandma used to knit and sew
And help us through our daily woe
But now our gran is in the gym
Skipping to keep herself in trim
She checks the web and surfs the net
Sends out E Mail, gets her video set
Yet still whenever we're in a jam
Whom do we count on?
Still it's gran.

STIFF NECK - Just read about a chap who sprays WD40 on his stiff neck. I don't know if it works but it reminds me of an old friend who was a fanatic at mending motor cars. His wife nagged him endlessly to tile the back-kitchen but he was always too busy with his cars. One day she nagged him so much that he decided to do the job. Half an hour later he'd finished the tiling and asked his wife to approve the job. She found that he'd drilled a hole in the centre of each tile and pop rivitted them to the wall.

HERE'S ALWAYS ONE! - On arriving back in Buckley John Taylor helped Dennis Lee with the equipment from the coach to Dennis's house. No doubt that in assisting Dennis he found a ukulele and had decided to have a bit of a thrash on it forgetting all about the coach. Well eventually the driver battened down the hatches got in the coach and drove off. By a stroke of fortune there was a halt sign about a quarter of a mile down the road. And a scream came from those in the back of the bus for when they turned round to give Dennis and Lesley a wave saw John Taylor furiously and frantically belting down the road towards the bus. Thinking to himself as he ran "Struth its a bloody long way to Morecambe."



RADIO BROADCAST - At the Grand Finals we made a radio broadcast in a show which covered the whole event. It's possible that our 10 minute spot was recorded. If so, we will try to get a copy.

Team Work - We've got a good team in the N. West. It was a pleasure working with Dennis Lee and Brian Edge organising the Southern Ireland Trip and all went like clockwork. Geoff Shone did an excellent job in arranging the meal and Lesley looked after the P. A, Equipment like an expert.

Our thanks to all who took part in the trip and who helped to create a wonderful atmosphere. Stan Evans

P.S. For the next trip we will appoint a "Minister of Coach Outings."

Success at Blackpool - Charles & Eve have had 4 very successful meetings since moving to the South Shore Cricket Ground. It's worth a visit if you haven't been.

Yorkshire's Mac & Milly McGee have announced the birth of another grand daughter. They've now got seven grand daughters but no grandsons. There must be something you're doing wrong Mac.

Mary Atkinson - After a most arduous trip to S. Ireland, Mary returned home and broke her arm in an accident. You were safer on the trip Mary.

North Wales Meeting - By Cliff Royle (*who, I believe, is saving up to buy a new typewriter ribbon - I thought it was a blank sheet in the post*) - We had a huge turn out of about 80 people, including many new comers. Steve Evans and his wife travelled from Stratford - upon - Avon (he's made great strides since he started playing 3 years ago); then there was the venerable Jack Jones who looked as young as ever, and who accompanied Stan Watkinson in a duo.

There was much talk about the most enjoyable trip to Southern Ireland where our "orchestra" came 3rd out of 40 in the Busking Festival. Many sported their "Youghal 1999" T-Shirts, proudly displaying the threat "The Ukulele Has Landed". No doubt this caused some consternation amongst the locals.

Dennis Lee reported that he'd received some bread rolls in the post, and the display of these was accompanied by a very funny taped song provided by Alice Cronshaw and Walter Kirkland. Seems a number were short of sustenance at the last breakfast (or was it the last supper) in Ireland. Dennis also reported that he had been loaned some autographed photos of George and Beryl by Mrs Gort. Very interesting.

A young lady who is cycling on the Pedal to Paris ride to raise money for the British Legion Poppy Appeal fund was introduced by Kevin Blanchfield. She collected £77. 20 and the Penyffordd British Legion added a further £25.

The Ensall family, Stephen and his father Brian, plus Brian's brother, Ronnie, all provided some great entertainment with their songs. During a recent holiday down South both Stephen and Dad entered Talent Competitions, and both won first prizes. Dad's prize was a free holiday. Well done; what a talented family.

Visitor Ken sang for us and the programme timing became rather tight. We had a good mixture of entertainment which was accompanied by Walter Kirkland and Ron Wiston (on his first visit) on the Bones. Dennis Lee's Grandchildren and their parents were with us again and the children joined in the fun by helping with "Out In The Middle East" The children waited anxiously for Stan to perform a miracle which on this occasion was packing a large box into a small box. I wonder how he is with income tax returns?

As an aside there has been some excellent write-ups in the press about the visit of Dennis Lee and Geoff Shone to see George's Rolls Royce at Knutsford. They show two well dressed gentlemen with ukes appearing to drive the car.

Thanks Cliff. Sorry I had to cut your report down a bit. I like the bit about Steve Evans, who comes from Stratford on Avon, making big strides. Well he'd have to do if he comes such a long distance! Don't forget the ribbon.

Success Again at Crewe by Brian Edge.

80 attended the July concert where it was announced that Joyce Sumner had won the 1999 Duck Race with her super-charged duck which had won by a distance. There was an enquiry by the Stewards after objections from a large number of owners of the flotilla that lagged far behind but after a number of stringent tests Duck number 133 was declared the winner. Thanks to all who bought a duck and to those who came to see the race. Our stall brought in £20 for our club funds and we also received a donation from Mrs Mary Harrison of £15. Our members purchased £40 worth of



tickets all of which went to the Wistaston Memorial Hall who runs the event in order to raise funds for the hall and to provide an opportunity for all organisations who use the hall to raise funds for themselves.

It was sad that we had to report that Auntie Mary Atkinson had that day been transferred from Leighton Hospital to St Lukes Hospice at Winsford. On a much happier note we had a big surprise. Joyce and Maurice Bailey who first saw us at the Jazz festival in Nantwich earlier in the year, presented the Society with a superb pencil drawing of George Formby in a lovely gold frame. While on holiday and saw the picture in a shop and couldn't resist buying it for us. In thanking Joyce and Maurice for their wonderful and generous gesture Brian said that it was without exception the nicest thing that had happened to the society since their formation nearly 5 years ago. He said "We have always tried to make everyone happy by generating a friendly atmosphere, where, through the music and fun, we can all forget for just a while, all the nasty things that are going on in the world around us and this gift is truly evidence that we are preceding on the right lines."

Alan Chenery suggested a competition for designs for society emblems on Ties, T.Shirts and Blazers etc. Entries were asked for and these were on display on the night. Members was requested to vote for the design most suitable and tellers were appointed to count the votes. Two designs submitted by Ron Whiston (the work of Mr George Telford) were declared the winners. Special thanks to those who submitted entries. The successful design for a Society T. Shirt featured "Leaning on a Lamp post" and the design for the tie an upright banjolele with the society name on a scroll. NEWS OF THE DEATH OF MARY CAME IN AFTER THIS REPORT WAS PRINTED.

Harry's Page - Well here we are again folks with some more old jokes.



OLD SOLDIER - I was in the back garden when this tramp popped his head over the fence. "Spare a crust for an old war veteran Guv" he said. "Have you been to the Front" I asked him. "Yes" he replied, "But nobody answered the door."

TUNING UP - A knock came at my door the other day. "Hello" this man said, "I am the piano tuner." "But I didn't send for a piano tuner" I replied. "No! - but the neighbours did!"

HARRY THE BUSKER - I was out busking the other day and a policeman stopped me from playing to ask if I had permission to play. "No" I told him. In that case sir I must ask you to accompany me. "No problem" I told him, "What song are we singing?"

SHOW BUSINESS - I had this terrific job in show business. For £10 per week I had to muck out 25 elephants every day of the week.

My friend told me to chuck it in because £10 a week is nothing for mucking out 25 elephants. "What?" I said, "And give up show business."

MUSICAL - Up to last week I was playing in a small quartet. "Why do you call it a small quartet?" my friend asked. "Well there were only three of us"

CHEEK! - I was doing my spot in the local club when this chap stood up and asked if I played requests? "I course I do" I replied. "Well go and play dominoes."

NEIGHBOURS - But I think that my neighbours really enjoy listening to me playing my uke and singing. Why only last week they smashed all my windows so that they could hear me better. **MORE NEXT MONTH**

George Atkinson got in a right pickle in Ireland. Mary said, "Do you realise you've got my pants on? Take em off!" As soon as he took them off she said, "And you've got my knickers on as well!" *Now we've heard about people like that George.*

You've Not Wrote In Yet!!!!

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 - The Red Lion Pub (Opp. Police Station) Ring Gerry Mawdsley on 01942 817346 - Every last Wednesday in the month. Uke Tuition.

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) payable 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

