

THE NORTH - WEST

GEORGE FORMBY

Newsletter 55

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Specially Produced for George Formby Fans
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Welcome to Newsletter No.55

Well it's been a sad month with the loss of two dear members: Bill Pope of Liverpool and Denis Gale of the Sale branch

Bill was a very keen Broadgreen player and a regular coach trip member. He enjoyed entertaining with his guitar and telling a few anecdotes or scouse jokes. He delighted the British Legion veterans in Caen last year and for the year 2000 he was ready to pay his deposit for the Eastbourne Trip before going into hospital with stomach cancer.

Bill, who has organised many Music Hall Charity Shows over the years, had a lot of friends and relations and they all turned up to show their respect at the St Pauls Church, West Derby, Liverpool on Thursday the 2nd of December. Bill was cremated. The large church was filled to capacity and later the huge band of Bill's admirers moved to the St Pauls Social Club where a buffet was laid on, followed by - at Maureen Pope's request - Cyril Palmer and Stan Evans singing Bill's favourite "Goodbye Dolly Gray."

Denis Gale - A few days after Bill Pope's death I received deposits from Olwen and Denis Gale for the Eastbourne Trip, closely followed by a desperate phone call from Olwen on Saturday morning the 27th December. Denis had passed away very quietly during the night and Olwen, who is partly wheelchair bound, had struggled through a most difficult situation.

On the Friday night they watched TV together and then retired around mid-night. Denis was normal when he went to bed but Olwen woke up around 3am knowing that something was wrong with him. Denis had passed away.

It was the morning of the first Wintergarden meeting so a quick message was phoned through to Charles Stewart who passed on the message to the GFS members.

The funeral service was held at Styal Methodist Church, Cheshire where Cyril Palmer and Dennis Lee performed two songs: "Leaning On A Lamp Post" and "Glad Rag Doll" which was Denis's favourite song.

The hearse then travelled to Overdale Crematorium where we said goodbye to a dear friend and GFS member Denis Gale.

We had great love for dear Denis. He always had a cheery and pleasant approach to people and enjoyed a few jokes. He was typical of how a George Formby member should be.



Denis Gale

The Formby Story

Part 44 by Stan Evans

Apart from being the type of man who couldn't stand responsibility, George was also a very active person who found the task of sitting at home nursing Beryl too much to handle. It wasn't in his nature to be a nursemaid so he just had to get away from the pressure. They had plenty in the bank so it wasn't a case of having to go out to work but he just couldn't hang around while Beryl was suffering.



George was playing Mr Wu in the Bristol Christmas pantomime, "Aladdin" and it was during one of the performances that he received a message telling him that Beryl was in a coma and wasn't expected to recover.

Immediately after the show George set off in his car to get back to Lytham St Annes and as he was travelling through Warrington he called at the home of Fred and Jessie Bailey to see if they had any news. They informed him that Beryl had died two hours earlier on Christmas Day, 1960. George had lost his support of 37 years and felt devastated.

It has always been regarded that Beryl was the business force behind George who kept him on his toes, but I don't think so. My personal opinion is that George was the more ambitious of the two but didn't have a hope of success without Beryl who forcefully guided him through the straight and narrow. George's aim was to be the star, while Beryl's was to see that George realised his ambition. Such was her selfless dedication. The fact that he kept working before and after Beryl's death proves this. However, without her he was in a wilderness.

Beryl was cremated and her ashes were scattered at Lytham St Anne's Crematorium. It was a private cremation and when George was asked why no stage personalities were there he explained that it was because over Christmas there were no newspapers to spread the news.

Still showing his determination to keep working George immediately set off back to Bristol. He continued in the show but after a few days his heart started to trouble him and he was forced to leave the show. News of this brought letters of sympathy from all over the world but this time he didn't have Beryl by his side to reply to them

In all his 37 years with Beryl every letter had been attended to. It was part of their image and no-one could complain that they never received a reply from her. Even the briefest of notes were answered. George was no scholar so he was desperate. Within a few weeks he was earnestly searching for someone to fill Beryl's place - another partner to support him. More Next Month.

The Eastbourne Trip was coming along extremely well and already 30 members had booked and paid deposits.

However, our merry band of uke players have not responded - apart from Des Redfern, Arthur Newton, Paul Woodhead and Cliff Royle, so the trip may be cancelled. The reason for lack of interest is "7 days is too long" which is puzzling as the main complaint after France and S. Ireland was that the trip wasn't long enough. And, even so, I understand that it is almost impossible to book part weeks in Eastbourne during peak season.

Another reason, "Not enough activity for 7 days" is not correct. On the night we arrive we have a booking to do a show for the Eastbourne RAF Club, and Bill Davies, our contact in Eastbourne, is arranging performances at other clubs in the area. The cost of the trip is cheaper than S. Ireland so cost isn't an excuse.

Bill is hoping to hire a hall for the 2nd day, Sunday, so that we can invite members from the southern area of the country. During the week arrangements are being made for us to busk in the town centre and from the Thursday on, the RAF Display takes place across the sea front and permission is being sort for us to perform there. So eventually there will be lots of activity for our trippers.

CANCELLATION?

We must make a decision now because the hotel proprietor won't hold the provisional booking much longer and we are not sure of selling the extra seats. Fortunately we haven't paid out any hotel deposits yet.

You Have To Laugh! -Just

received a late Wrexham Mail article from Jim Knight with a small photo of Jim on the front page. He is promoting the N. Wales meetings but the bold heading reads "WELCOME TO HELL ON EARTH.

Last month I received one from Jon Baddeley with a photo of Jon and the heading over the top (across his forehead) read: **THING OF THE PAST.**



And there's another photo of Jon inside with the caption **WHY DOES THIS MAN LIKE LAMP POSTS?** relieving oneself!

Well it's one way of

Have you any funny captions? Let me have em

We are always stuck for little snippets to fill these small spaces

Ever smiling Walter Kirkland thrust this bit of information into my hand at the Crewe Meeting on Friday the 26th of November.

Dear Stan, We did a concert with Dennis Lee at the Newtown Workingmens Club, Wigan, on the 29th of November 99.

Before the due date Alice & I decided to have a run out to try to find the place. After getting all the directions wrong and finishing up on the Carlisle side of Preston we came back to Wigan to start all over again. To make sure that we didn't get lost again we stopped at a petrol station to ask the way. A gentleman followed me out of the station and asked why I wanted the club and I explained that we were due to perform there.



This lad is more popular than the Queen.

Well, low and behold, - and you could have knocked me down with a wet lettuce - but it turned out that he was the Club Secretary and not only did he ask Dennis to put on the show, but, as a lad he stole Dennis's newspaper round (*The Cad!*) Well, Stan, you must agree that it was a tremendous coincidence.

There must be at least 80 thousand pie eaters in Wigan and we bumped into the Secretary. Or was it perhaps one of your miracles?

Yes, you are right Walter. It was another miracle!! If ever you are having problem we at The Hollies receive a warning signal, followed by a flash of light and a booming voice that says, "Walter's in trouble - send some help" and, like a flash, it's all sorted out.. But Walter, I am very surprised that you overshot Wigan. It's the only town in the country where the M6 Motorway is still cobble-stoned.

Ukes For Sale - We've had a lot of people ringing for ukes lately especially for beginners - but there seems to be none available. So I rang Alan Harris and he kindly slipped a list in the post.

He has a comprehensive list of 17 in total ranging from a 1927 Wendal Hall Ludwig at £800 to a Windsor Whirl at £75 and they are advertised as "Vintage Uke Banjo Finely Restored and Set Up." You can ring Alan on 0113 268 8618 or Fax 0113 26 0006. If you ring him don't forget to tell him that you read all about it in the North West Newsletter. Hope Bob Drinkwater's reading this - it'll quiet him!

S.O.S- The Warrington Blind Society is always urgently in need of entertainer so please give your local branch a ring to see if they want anyone to perform.

Frank Formby by Brian Edge - Jeff Booth is collecting any information concerning his late father Frank Formby - one of George's younger brothers. Should any reader have any photographs, news cuttings, or stories about Frank then Jeff would be pleased to hear from you on 01908 571443.

The following dates Frank performed at the Crewe Theatre (now Lyceum):

27th July 1953 to the 1st August 53

14th December 53 - 30th May 77.



Has anyone got any more information.

*No problem, here's a couple to start him off. Frank topped the bill (as Sinbad) in "Sinbad The Sailor" at the Royal Court Theatre, Warrington on the week commencing Monday January 18th 1954 and he also shared the Palace of Varieties, Leeds, bill with Albert Modley on the week commencing Monday February 14th 1958. The show was called *Beaute De Femmes (the Spectacular Glamour Show)**

Roy Hudd - On the 1st of December Roy did an excellent job of impersonating George (without uke) singing "With My Little Ukulele in My Hand" in the TV show "Call My Bluff." He also received great applause.

Roy does play the uke but, as he says, "Not in the same class as George" or 'The Lad' as Roy calls him.

David Brett - Surprisingly, but after all the adverse publicity revolving around his George Formby biography, all the radio shows he has appeared on to plug his book and the press coverage in almost every newspaper, it hasn't made one iota of difference to George's image. Not one jot!!! At every concert we perform at there is always one person who mentions the controversial book but it never leads to a discussion. I always tell them that all the David Bretts in the world can't destroy the cheeky, cherry image of George Formby who sang his saucy little ditties and entertained the nation when most needed. No-one can argue with that!

They've just made a re-make of an old musical in Saudi Arabia: "Four Brides for Seven Brothers."

Blackpool - Happy 75th to Charles.

It was a surprise party night for Charles Stewart and what a surprise he had, - more like a shock!!!



He couldn't understand why so much grub was being laid out on the table until his mates from the local pub turned up, - followed by umpteen friends and neighbours. It was the best night ever at the cricket club and every seat was taken. We were really pleased when the several members of the GFS stayed over from the Wintergardens to attend the meeting and delighted when [REDACTED] showed his brilliance on the uke.

[REDACTED]

Other performers were: Jim Bramwell, Frank Bennett, Charles Stewart, Alan Middleton (M/c) Paul Kenny, Stan Watkinson, Cyril Palmer and Stan Evans. Apologies if anyone has been left out of the list. Eve Stewart, who is becoming quite an expert with her sing-along backing tapes supplied the backing for the thrashes and it all came over extremely well.

Charles did a spot but he was still reeling from the shock surprise. He said he couldn't understand how all the ladies had managed to keep a secret for so long without him finding out. Especially as it was planned under his own roof.

I know how you feel Charles. I received the same treatment for my 70th and still can't understand how Eva managed to keep it quiet for so long.

Mystery!!!

- There were some very mysterious happenings at both Bill Pope's and Denis Gale's funerals. In the large room of St Paul's Social Club we were asked to sing Goodbye Dolly Gray without the aid of a mike because the amp system had gone on the blink. It was hard work but we managed it.

The following day, at Denis Gale's church service, Dennis Lee and Cyril Palmer also had to struggle without a mike or backing because the electric had also gone on the blink. Now it was the most atrocious day with the worst GALES of the year blowing and howling. It appeared to reach its peak when we attempted to enter the crematorium and surprisingly it calmed down after the committal. I wondered if, with a name like "GALE," Denis was trying to tell us something.

Hymns on Mini Disk! - We received a phone call from one of the little churches in Warrington. "Could we put on a Christmas show to raise a bit of money for the church?" - "No problem", I said, "I'll pop down to see what you want."

MINI DISK

While I was there one of the committee asked if I knew an organ player who could help them out, - they were desperate - to which I replied "I don't, but why don't you put all your hymns on mini disk?" They thought it was an excellent suggestion but had no idea how they should go about setting it up, - but they did have about £170 to invest in a player. "No problem!" I said, "I'll get you a player and put about 50 hymns on disk for you." They were delighted.

DISCOUNT

Tom Bailey kindly picked up a player from Richer Sounds of Liverpool and we were surprised to find that the Sony player had been reduced in price to £120.

The next step was to call on John Hickinbottom to record the hymns on tape and for this I gave him a new 90 minute tape (or I thought it was new). The recording was excellent and transferring to mini disk was no problem.

I rang the church secretary to arrange for the committee to have a listen to a trial run and they were delighted with the result. John is a really excellent organ player with over 30 years experience playing the church organ. He started at the age of nine and has been a servant to the church ever since, (and the pub!)

The first hymn was "Abide With Me" which went down very well and you could see the joy on their faces. At last they'd got some music to sing to.

The next hymn was "What a Friend we Have in Jesus" and they were over the moon. You could hear a pin drop as they listened for the third hymn to come on. I pressed the number three button and there it was, - in FULL BLAST!! - "A-U-N-T-I-E M-A-G-G-I-E'-S HOME MADE REMEDY, GUARANTEED NEVER" and the crowd who were singing it all sounded drunk! I couldn't believe it, how did that creep in? Apparently it wasn't a new tape at all but one that someone had sent in after a booze up party. The committee retired that night with uncertainty and I don't blame em. That's the last time I'll use a second hand tape again. AMEN!

S.O.S. Has anyone got a copy of Gracie Fields (or other) singing, "Play In Your Own Back Yard". It is excellent and quite a tear jerker. I've got a backing tape for it but not all the words. Please give me a ring if you can help.

Channel 5 TV - I wrote the following letter Channel 5 recently to thank them for showing George's film *Boots, Boots* which was screened at the unearthly hour of 3.30 in the morning.

To the Duty Officer, Channel 5 TV, 22 Long Acre, London WC2E 9LY

Dear Sir/Madam, Many thanks for screening George Formby's "*Boots Boots.*" Not the best of his films but well worth watching for the songs.

I appeared on the Gerry Sadowitz Show recently, appealing for worthwhile viewing for the older folk.

With respect to your good selves, but today's viewing is very unsuitable, filled with aggression, foul mouth louts - (not much different to the Sadowitz show), and the modern groups with their bouncing up and down on the stage like chimpanzees are not in the least entertaining. Even the soaps are filled with aggression so it is little wonder that today's youngsters often turn to crime.

Us older folk often wonder if we have lost our sense of humour when we hear uproars of canned laughter in the sit-coms.

We were brought up in a day and age when artistes like George Formby, Gracie Fields, Rob Wilton, Jimmy James etc. received applause because they were talented and if they didn't come up to standard, then the audience didn't laugh. So how about going back a few years to encourage talented artistes to do their stuff, or alternatively, let us have a few series of the old repeats: Old Time Music Hall, Black & White Minstrel Show, Sunday Night at The London Palladium, The Leeds Palace of Variety etc. Give the old folk a treat instead of the trash we are constantly getting. Stan Evans. George Formby Society.

REPLY - Your Reference: DO/13564/JBC/C12E Date: 25 Nov. 1999

S Evans The Hollies 19 Hall Nook Penketh Warrington Cheshire WA5 2HN

Dear Mr Evans Thank you for your recent letter.

Humour is an extremely subjective thing, as your letter illustrates. Every few years a particular comedian or type of comedy will capture the public's imagination, be it music hall, Monty Python, the alternative comedy of the eighties, or the absurdities of 90s comedians Vic and Bob. To suggest that there has been nothing funny since the days of Variety and Music Hall, is to ignore popular opinion and tastes in comedy for the last 30 years.

Channel 5 is a contemporary, unashamedly populist, broadcaster. Whilst we think we are unique in having recently offered a *traditional* variety show - THE BIG STAGE - we will continue to offer more cutting-edge comedy programmes such as the bold and innovative THE PEOPLE VERSUS JERRY SADOWITZ.

CONTINUED OVER

You may not appreciate Sadowitz's style, but when a respected newspaper columnist describes Sadowitz as "worth a hundred Harry Enfields", we're hardly about to replace his show with George Formby re-runs. *That said we do think films such as BOOTS BOOTS are ideal for our afternoon slot.* It's all about matching programmes to audience and attempting to please most of the people most of the time!

We have noted your comments about what you see as the unhealthy influence of soap operas on the nations young. However, we would suggest that soaps reflect society to a greater degree than they influence it and that to blame the rise in crime on programmes such as FAMILY AFFAIRS is misguided.

Nevertheless we take your criticism seriously and have logged your comments for the attention of our controllers of light entertainment programmes and drama. They will also be included in our quarterly returns to the ITC our regulatory body.

MY REPLY - Ref No. DO/13564/JBC/C12E.

Dear Duty Officer, Thank you for replying to my letter.

In my activities I am in contact with around 400 to 500 older folk and for the life of me can't think of any section that would show any interest in Alternative Comedy, Monty Python or Vic & Bob. Just for curiosity, after appearing on Sadowitz, I asked at least 200 older folk if they saw the show and not one person responded. To offer Alternative Comedy as a contribution to comedy means, that your office has absolutely no idea of what older folk appreciate.

REAL TALENT

At the Southport Floral Hall each year they hold the finals of the Whitbread Senior Citizen Talent Competition and each year the hall is filled to capacity with silver topped old folk who thoroughly enjoy watching talent as it was in their younger days.

MINSTRELS

Under the control of The British Stage Productions, The Minstrels Troupe tour the country with the most wonderful show and once again the silver top brigade take up every seat. These artistes are really top quality entertainers and extremely professional.

CONFUSED

I am at a loss to understand why you claim that the George Formby film "Boots Boots" (which is OK for older folk and children) is ideal for an afternoon slot after you've screened it three times at 3.30 in the morning.

You claim that the aggressive soaps are a reflection of life rather than an influence on society, but in the North-west here we are not aware of any public house like The Queen Vic where everybody jumps down each others throats. It seems that the only contact they make with each other begins and ends with

verbal fisticuffs.

Coronation Street was at one time a well balanced 30 minutes show with plenty of humour but for the past couple of years it has followed the likes of Eastenders with the entire cast bawling and shouting at each other. There isn't one family in the soap with a solid marriage. Now this may possibly be a reflection of life in London but it most certainly doesn't portray life in the North-west where Coronation Street set out from.

Someday the media will wake up to the fact that all the foul-mouthed misery they've peddled over the years has contributed greatly to a very sad world riddled with many problems. Already many TV watching youngsters have very little respect for their elders and their only response is to reply with a string of expletives. Stan Evans

Speak Up! - Now if any readers have any views on the quality of TV programmes offered to older folk would you please let me know about it. A few days ago I spoke to Peter Trallope, a BBC TV Presenter. He is very concerned that nothing of quality is being screened that is suitable for the senior citizens of the country. As he said, "We have all sorts of ideas for the older folk but they are squashed by the London office." He also claimed that by far the biggest chunk of TV watchers are pensioners, so we need to voice our opinion.

Blackpool Gazette - An Abuse of Public Money.

I feel I must contribute to the debate to honour certain celebrities. I believe that this would be a total misuse of council funds. I have a young family and pay my taxes like everyone in the hope that the council can improve schools, roads and provide housing to those people who need it, and fund initiatives to help combat crime. Whilst I respect these celebs for the job they do, I do think that any statues should be privately funded by the people who want them. Don't use my taxes to fund something that is nothing more than a glorified pigeon rest. Michael Tarpey, Marton, Blackpool. *And I agree with Mr Tarpey. Statues mean very little after the unveiling. I still haven't heard from the Isle of Man re. why they've moved George's statue.*

Ukuleles in Japan - It's probab:ly a sales gimmick but the Japs are claiming that the uke is a craze over in their country and they recommend it for calming stress.

Ken Bruce on Radio 2 caught wind of this and included it in his programme. He broadcasted: "George Formby mania is sweeping the Far East where interest in the ukulele is booming and selling in their thousands. He invited members to ring in with slogans and some went: "Turned Out Rice Again" - "Oh Mr Wu, How Do You Do" - none of which earned a prize. CONTINUED OVER

The Blackpool Gazette reported: "There is even a special teach yourself ukulele programme on TV and Japan's cultural attache, Katsum Ata, has been invited to the Leeds Christmas party - but he declined."

Gary Mac - Professional Entertainer

Stan, May I take this opportunity to introduce myself to your readers? I have been in showbusiness for 30 years as a variety artist basing my act on music hall and vaudeville, but combining material from the rock and roll years to the present day. The format of my act is guitar, ukulele and bagpipes. The music I play is varied and can alter from venue to venue depending on the audiences I work with.

Having completed another successful summer season in North Wales I am currently recording and producing my first album on CD, this will be available before Christmas. I've included George Formby's famous songs, "Leaning On A Lamp Post" and "When I'm Cleaning Windows."

As the Millennium approaches I am pleased to say I will be entertaining at the new Pines Holiday Park in Dyserth, N Wales in the company of another artist friend of mine, Bobby Grand. Bobby is the Entertainments Manager and himself plays the uke remarkably well. It was he who introduced me to the Formby Society some five years ago.



Having played in club-land and theatres all over the country and abroad, I've enjoyed being part of a unique family of friends and sharing a common attribute - the ability to make people laugh. *Thanks Gary. Who knows you might get a visit from some of our N. Wales members so you'd better be good on the night.*

Lesley Lee - Just had a phone call to say that on Saturday 11th December, while we were at the Granada TV preview, Lesley Lee was winning 2nd prize in the Welsh Line Dancing Competition. It's amazing what talent Lesley has: Tap Dancing, Line Dancing, Twiddling the knobs on the PA System, and keeping Dennis in order. Good for you Lesley.



What was Ghandi's first name?

Goosie Goosie

Penyffordd by Cliff (needs a new ribbon) Royle

It is difficult to compress everything that went on into an acceptable short report so I will have to try to pick out considered highlights of the evening. There was a full house with an excellent buffet provided by members and friends. To all those who contributed in any way please accept our grateful thanks. At the outset Dennis Lee read greetings from Liz Whittaker, the wife of our late member Alan, and then asked all to show respect for two fairly local members of the GFS, Bill Pope and Denis Gale, who had recently passed away.

The theme of the evening was "Gangsters and Molls" and about twenty people turned up in various disguises (and with guns) some so well turned out that they were almost unrecognisable the winners of the fancy dress competition were Brian Edge for the men and Lesley Lee for the ladies. Mustaches and side burns were well in evidence, as were some lovely legs.

There were some performances of a rather different nature. A number of jazz contributions from Crewe members which got many feet tapping, a sketch by members of the N Wales branch: a performance with a Scottish flavour by Dennis Lee and Alan Newton: and the number of Frankie Woods excellent and moving songs, sung by Brian Edge, Alison Nadin and Margaret Moran.

Some of these had a Christmas flavour. And then there was Paul Kenny and the Watkinson brothers in a trio and an outstanding performance by Alison Nadin who presented a superb and different ventriloquist act with audience participation, as well as a magic act: yes, another miracle. So watch out Stan Evans, we missed you but you may soon lose your job.

Not to be outdone, Jim Murphy dressed as a German soldier and disguised as Adolph (*wasn't it Adolf?*) Hitler gave a rousing rendering of "Down (*I think you mean "OUT" Cliff*) In The Middle East" accompanied by Des Redfern, and Arthur Newton excelled himself in playing two Formby songs in a really professional manner.

Thanks to all the players and friends who turned up in spite of the inclement weather, to the South Cheshire Mobsters who gave their usual support, and to Steve Hassal for his excellent drum accompaniment. Drums can make a real difference to a performance at times.

From all at Penyffordd we wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Ukulele Millennium. Cliff (I'll go out and buy one) Royle. *Thanks Cliff. As soon as my back is turned everybody is stealing my miracle act. Shame!!!! I've received a couple of photos from Alison but too late for this issue. Frankie Woods certainly looked the part with his wheelchair dressed as a car and with all the gangster gear on. Good for you Frankie. Stan & Les Watkinson looked a right pair of rogues!*

There's Nowt as queer as a women

I know cos I've tried all my life

To find some logical reason

In the woman I took as a wife! Bum Bum

We'd be completely lost without em but when anything is planned, which involves the ladies, they never get their heads together to plan the thing like us super thinkers do. A simple phone call from one to the other would work wonders! But No! Guesswork planning comes into operation and quite often they load themselves off their own lorry. I'll give you an idea.

It was arranged to give Charles Stewart a surprise Birthday Party and for this, the ladies (God Bless Em) arranged to prepare and take along some sandwiches etc. On the vital day, Monday, we had the electrician fitting lights and plugs in the house which caused chaos all through the living room. Half the furniture had to be dragged out and electrical gadgets were all over the floor. No chance of an afternoon kip!

In the back kitchen however it was worse. It was like D Day! We had enough grub stacked up on the table to feed the Russian army and Eva was still churning it out. "Come on" she said, "We need more stuff from the supermarket!" - "More food!!! How on earth am I going to get all this in the car?" - "Don't worry about that, get your coat on" - and off we went for another half ton of volauvents.

Now I must tell you that we had 4 passengers plus myself, weighing in total about 70 stone, plus 3 uke cases, 2 tape cases, and this great stack of food that was too delicate to be stacked. And we had 50 miles to travel.

We set off through bumpy Burtonwood to pick up Joan & Jim Bramwell and after an hour arrived at the South Shore Cricket Club to be greeted by Charles and Eve, - plus all the other ladies who had brought along the same amount of food each. It all looked very smart laid out but the legs of the food table were creaking under the strain, and the first visit to the huge feast made no impression whatsoever. "Come on folks" shouted Charles, "get some more food down you or I'll be eating it for the next six months." After six visits each we were all stuffed up with volauvents till they were coming out of our ear-holes.

At the end of the meeting we looked at this huge spread and quite honestly it looked as if it was growing bigger. No doubt they'd been hiding it under the table. There was only one answer - "Doggie Bags" and once again we were piling it all back on board again.

Now we've had no visitors for the past couple of weeks, I wonder why? Anybody want any volauvents?

BBC RADIO Scotland - Just done a radio broadcast by phone and before they switched on they asked me to pretend that it was January 3rd because that's when the show goes out. But the first question they asked me when on air was: Hello Stan, and what's the weather like there in George Formby land? Now, I was stumped for a second because how do I know what the weather will be like on Jan 3rd? Anyway I managed to reply with, "Well, we've had a lot of weather lately and I understand that we're having some more next week!" Now they were stumped!

Funny Clubs - A couple of months back I reported on various social clubs that did strange things. Well this one was an old ladies social club that arranged outings to different places but they always chose the time and place to suit the committee. On one occasion they debated with the entire membership on when and where they should go to and finally reached the decision that it would be on Tuesday the 9th because that suited them all. They all wrote it down in their little diaries and everybody was pleased and looking forward to it. They were also pleased that they'd been consulted.

Suddenly, the main character on the committee stood up and shouted, "Oh, I can't go, I'm having my feet done." To which the secretary replied, "Oh, alright then, it'll have to be Monday!" without any thought of asking the members. You've got to laugh!

Computers and the Internet are great for receiving quick articles but mine has been suffering from constipation for the past two days. It was worrying at the time but all's well now. It appeared that Alison had sent me a couple of N Wales "Gangsters & Molls" photos which were quite large and they'd blocked up the bowels. After an hour's straining and groaning we are smiling again.

Music Live - All over the Country - Don't forget the huge music programme that will be sweeping the country from May 25th to 29th next year. The BBC will be giving full coverage and they will advise you on how to apply for a grant to stage your own show. During this period the streets will be lined with all sorts of activities and the BBC will be publicising your activities.

BLACKPOOL will fall on the 29th May, so we hope to hold a great MUSIC LIVE meeting there with BBC backing. Don't forget to mark it down in your calendar. If you are interested in joining Music Live drop me a line and I'll send you more details.

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Dr R G Gale (Denis Gale's son) writes- Dear Stan, My mother has asked me to write to you to express her gratitude to the George Formby Society. The contribution made by the Society to Denis's funeral was greatly appreciated and I'm sure would have brought a wry smile to his face. Only Denis could have been late for his funeral and still get a round of applause!

The Society has been a source of great pleasure, enjoyment and fellowship to both my father and mother for some years now, He was immensely proud when, as a child he had the priviledge of meeting George & Beryl after one of his shows in Bolton just after the war. He was very proud of his involvement in the Society locally as well as on the trips abroad. He has recounted many times the activities in Ireland and Normandy playing through the night as well as raising not an inconsiderable amount of money for charity.

George Formby had always been a central theme in Denis's life, even if it was not always appreciated by his children in their younger days! The friends he made in the Society were a source of great pleasure to both Denis and my mother.

My mother would be grateful if you would pass on her thanks to the President and membership in N. Wales, Crewe, Sale, Liverpool and copy or read this letter to them. R G Gale.

Beryl Wrote to Denis's Father - Dear Mr Gale, Mr Formby wishes me to thank you for your letter to 'land. He was delighted to learn that you had a son who was a uke player. With the greatest of pleasure you can bring your boy round behind stage and I would suggest you do so after the Friday show you are coming to. Please bring this letter with you so that I shall know just who it is. We have so many letters and so many people coming round.

We sincerely trust you will enjoy the show. Mr Formby joins me in sending best wishes. Yours Faithfully Beryl Formby. *Another example of Beryl's generosity.*

DISAPPOINTED

In my Vellum Editor days I wrote to all the stars who had connections with George and apart from Roy Hudd, Norman Wisdom, Roy Castle and Betty Driver, I received absolutely nothing.

High tech church music has it taped

It's a record for organist John

John is our organist at the
Warrington meetings

By PETER MAGILL

A TOP organist who has tinkled the ivories around the world has found the key to a musical dilemma facing the town's churches.

Dwindling numbers of accomplished pianists are believed to be causing headaches for clergy across the town.

But psalm-one has come to the rescue, in the form of John Hickinbottom, a professional organ and piano tutor, from Walter Street, Padgate.

Vicars and priests contact 43-year-old John, with a list of requests for Sunday's hymns.

Using skills honed over 30

years at the keyboard, he then commits the old favourites to tape, then through computer editing, he provides music for a number of churches.

"There are about half a dozen churches involved. I am a purist and usually like to see an organist in every church.

Karaoke

"But there are not enough organists to go around the town so this is something I was asked to do and it has caught on.

"It is like religious karaoke - I send the tapes to the churches and they have music without

the organist."

But John has been asked to draw a discreet veil over which churches actually use his service, perhaps to save ministers and choirmasters from embarrassment.

No stranger to entertaining the masses - and communions - himself, John has accompanied the congregation at a number of church venues, including St John's, at Walton, Oughtrington Parish Church and St Mary Magdalene's in Appleton.

Before becoming a tutor and technician for keyboard instruments, he also travelled the world, appearing in shows and cabaret, and alongside stars such as Helen Shapiro.

His inspiration to make music though, came when he was a member of the choir at Warrington Parish Church.

Backing Tapes

Anyone wanting first class backing tapes is welcome to contact John on 01925 637686 and arrange to go to John's Warrington home, where he will produce the backing to your exact requirements, on a very expensive organ. If possible take sheet music with you and some idea of the right key, speed and style.



We've Cracked it at Liverpool! After 8

years of struggling at Liverpool, - where every so often the meeting falls on Friday 13th - we've finally cracked the problem and now it is a case of get there a bit earlier or you'll have no seat.

For the first half of the meeting we have the normal Formby style when the lads get up in turn to sing a couple of songs each. Then during the second half it's a "Free & Easy" when anyone can dive in and bash out as many numbers as we can fit in. Des Redfern, with his vast repertoire, slots in very well and is usually still playing when they've all gone home. It's very rare that we have the dancers up at any of the meetings - apart from Liverpool where they Rock & Roll at the drop of a hat.

Stan Watkinson, with his banjo guitar and his sing-alongs, adds a nice atmosphere to the get-together and especially when he invites young Steven to do a spot with him. Incidentally, we appealed for a uke for young Steven in last month's Newsletter, well his dad has informed us that he has obtained one for him which he will find in his Christmas stocking.



Stan Watkinson

Without doubt the December meeting was the best ever in all its 8 years and we are growing from strength to strength. Especially when we have 87 year old Jimmy bouncing up and down, kicking his legs up in the air, taking over the mike for a few numbers and dancing with the ladies. Good for you Jimmy.



Trust Denis to be different

Right:- In the last issue some readers didn't know who Rick Tomlinson was so we've managed to obtain a cutting of him playing "Granddad's Flanelette Nightshirt"

If anyone missed it, you missed a treat. He performed it very well on a five string banjo.



Rick Tomlinson

Harry's Old Jokes - Hello folks, I'm back again with a few old jokes. I sold my bike last week to a neighbour for £3. If I'd known he wasn't going to pay me I would have charged him twice as much.

Diner: - Hey waiter, this chicken has got one leg longer than the other.

Waitor: - Well, what are going to do. Eat it, or dance with it?

They have some very funny folk in Blackpool. I was stood on the prom the other day and I stopped this man:- "Excuse me sir, could you tell me where the other side of the prom is?" "Yes, it over on the other side" "Well I've just been over there and they told me it was over here." MORE NEXT MONTH.

Hotel Get Away - As previously reported the merry band of N West uke players were involved in a Granada TV film called "Hotel Get Away" and on Saturday the 11th December we were invited to a preview of the show at the Manchester Granada Studios. 19 of us, - amongst the total audience of 170 people - piled in to see the show and we were introduced to Matthew Kelly who presented the show. Lord Lucan (Des Redfern) didn't turn up.

It was a three hour show which was split into two seperate halves, and we all agreed that the first half wasn't worth writing home to mother about. In fact it was bordering on misery with absolutely nothing whatsoever to laugh at - although it was supposed to be a candid camera type of comedy show.



Barmy Hotel Owner

After the break we introduced ourselves as members of the George Formby Society and the audience suddenly came to life. The warm-up comedian, Ray Turner, made full use of us with plenty of "Turned Out Nice Again" repartee and the audience lapped it up. In full voice we (all across the back row) gave them Lamp Post, Windows and Wu, and the audience joined in with plenty of hand clapping in tempo. From then on it was no longer a boring show but plenty of applause all round.

Towards the end of the show the GFS gang moved on screen and the first shot was of our dear departed member, Denis Gale (see page 2). It was an excellent shot of him and he looked great. There was a sigh from the gang! The next showing was of Jon Baddeley doing a solo performance and then a mish-mash of various shots to wind up the show. We understand that it will be screened in March (on ITV) and there will be around 10 million people tuning in. Personally I don't think that the happy band of GFS players actually fitted in with the show. The plan was to pile as much misery as possible on to the guests with bad food, shady dealings and the worst of service etc. (like Fawley Towers) but we actually lifted the guests out of their gloom and they enjoyed our entertaining. However, it will be very good publicity for the GFS which should bring in more members.



The GFS made her smile

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 Thur in the month. 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.

Crewe Branch - Wistaston Memorial Hall - Every 4th Friday in the month - apart from Dec 19 (Tue) - Brian Edge on 01270 569836.

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

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

To receive N. West Newsletters by post please send a cheque for 50p plus 25p postage (or £2.25 for 3 months) - (£9 for the year) 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

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DON'T FORGET TO WRITE IN

