

THE NORTH - WEST

GEORGE FORMBY

Newsletter 57

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Specially Produced for George Formby Fans
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Welcome to Newsletter No.57

It's been a very busy month!! My son rang me up with a cheery message: There is a letter in today's Daily Mail. Some chap (notice he wasn't a GUY - I've got my family trained) is asking the whereabouts of George Formby's ukuleles and they are waiting for a reply from someone. I quickly typed a letter telling them that I have kept a record on the 19 accredited George Formby ukes that were sold in the 1961 auction, - soon after George's death - mentioned that we were looking for 3 of them, and faxed it through to the Mail.

Well, I'd completely forgotten all about the letter when suddenly there came an avalanche of post shooting through the letterbox. It was a bigger post-bag than Christmas and it all came tumbling through the door. Letters arrived from all over the country and here are a few of em. . . .

DRAMASCOPE, Design, Consultancy and Tuition of Oxfordshire:

Dear Stan Following an article in the Daily Mail I have a number of monochrome photographs of George, his house and some productions that were rescued from a scenic contractor 10 years ago. I am thus writing to let you know of their existence. Terry Powell. I've E Mailed Terry for more details but it sounds like a Film Studio was demolished and all George's photos were about to be binned.

UKES - At least 15 letters arrived requesting information and history on the uke they own and could I give them a value?

DALLAS - The most popular uke mentioned was the Dallas and several were of the opinion that George had signed their uke skin and "is it worth more due to this?" I had to inform them that every Dallas uke produced automatically bore the rubber stamped signature on the skin. Some had been mis-led since the 40s.

KEECH UKES - Several wrote in offering to sell a Keech uke to any of our interested members and thought that this particular uke, with Alvin Keech's signature engraved on the back, was probably worth a lot of money. Especially as the instrument had the genuine wooden, push in pegs. I informed them that the Keech, with the small drum, low skin and high action is probably the worst uke ever produced and the best place to sell it was in an antique auction where someone may buy it to hang on the wall.

GFS - Several wrote in asking for details on how to join the society and how to buy a uke. CONTINUED ON PAGE 10.

The Formby Story - Part 46 By Stan Evans

Only a few weeks after Beryl's cremation George and Pat Howson announced their engagement to be married in a Press and TV interview. "Well", said



Look into George's eyes and you will see a man who is, inwardly, a very lonely soul. In desperation he is searching for someone to fill the huge void left by Beryl.

George, "We want to be straight with the public. We don't want any secrets from anybody. People might think it strange but to be perfectly honest I've got to have somebody to look after me."

The press then had a field day tearing George and Beryl's 37 years of marriage to pieces. "Their life was a sham" reported some papers, and, "They've not lived as man and wife for over 15 years."

The truth was that George was so hopelessly lost without Beryl that he had to use any excuse he could to justify finding another support very quickly. He had to have the sympathy of the nation behind him so once again Beryl was classed as the ogre by the media.

George was a good actor so it was easy for him to convince the nation that he'd had a rough ride and now, at long last, he'd found someone who he could enjoy his life with.

Eliza, George's mother, often a woman of wisdom, wasn't convinced by it all. She was quoted as saying, "Beryl wouldn't allow any woman to get her hands on George when she was alive and she'll make sure they don't now she's dead.

Frank Formby - Further to Brian Edge's appeal for information on Frank Formby, John Guy rang with a bit of news. He remembers Frank very well when he played regularly at the Birmingham theatres. John was only about 18 at the time but he went to see Frank perform at the Aston Hippodrome. Frank danced, performed some brilliant sketches, and then played the ukulele - but he wasn't in George's class on the uke.

He also remembers Frank staying at the local pub and on one occasion John walked with him from the theatre to the pub. Frank also played at the Margate, Cliftonville Hippodrome and the Hall Green Working Men's Club. Frank earned £100 for his performance at the club and a few weeks later John did a similar spot and earned £25. *Thanks for the report John.*

Uke Wanted - Graham Greenfield is still looking for an Abbott uke. You can ring him on 01283 223074.

Sky Digital TV - After a lot of advertising over the past months offering Sky Digital TV, Eva and I decided to change over. There is no extra charge but we have found that we have a lot less channels for the same £32 per month. We appear to have lost all our foreign programmes (mainly German) that we had before, and we seem to get more advert than before.

SKY TALK - But there is one big advantage with Sky Digital! For no extra charge you can take advantage of a 40% discount on all telephone calls simply by dialling 140 before the phone number. 40% is worth consideration to big users. Also you can use Sky Digital for sending E Mail. It's worth thinking about.

Hotel Get Away - Don't forget to keep your eyes open for the "Hotel Get Away" show we are appearing in during sometime in March. There are about 5 episodes altogether but we don't know date of ours.

Jack Skelland - Most of you will remember Jim Bramwell's old partner who used to sing "Mint Balls" with him at the meetings. Well Eva & I met him in town the other day and had quite a chat with him. Jack broke away from the GFS to take up Line Dancing but soon realised that after a few pints it is difficult to dance in a straight line. So he's given it up. He's not considering coming back to the society and never plays any of his two ukules. He may consider selling one of them should anyone ring him.

All You Bucketeers -

Anyone busking (even for charity) and collecting money in a bucket should beware because some of the GFS committee members are strictly against bucketeering in the name of George Formby and disgracing the name of the George Formby Society.



What is the correct ruling? Well apparently we should seek permission from the local council to busk and collect cash, and whatever name is on the bucket should be the recipient of the bucket contents. Fair enough.

But what is the ruling regarding the name George Formby? Well anyone can use the name George Formby because it is part of the Public Domain but they should not use the name George Formby Society unless agreed with the GFS and the contents are going to the society. Fair enough.

So don't forget, - If you are busking don't use the name George Formby Society unless it is on behalf of the GFS. In future my charity bucket will read, "George Formby Children's Hospital Fund" and the collections will go to the Alderheath Children's Hospital. A very worthy cause!

Charity Show at Wigan Pier

- We have been invited to put on a Lancashire Night show at the Wigan Pier Theatre to raise funds for two Wigan children who are going on holiday in America to swim with the dolphins. The show is on Wednesday the 22st of March at 6.30pm.

Ticket prices: £4 and £2.50 concessions. We will have a packed bill which will include Wigan Clog Dancers, brilliant sketches by the young children, a cluster of GFS members (or should it be clutter?) and, hopefully, a Gracie Fields. Plus others. They really put a lot of effort into their shows.

The children - from the age of seven - all love George's songs and they will be singing: Windows, Lamp Post, Nightshirt and Auntie Maggie. So we will have to sing some songs that they've never heard before. Well "Wigan Boat Express" and "Wigan Garden" can be two of em.

John Shreeve - What a

treat we had when the front door bell rang. It was John Shreeve and his merry band of cousins, of all ages. We'd not seen John for some time due to him moving house. "I brought you some good news" shouted John. "After waiting over four years I've finally got my new Markendale Ludwig copy."



£660 EACH - Almost 5 years ago John and Anthony Mason were both working full time and, - feeling a bit flush at the time, (which was rare for them two) they invested in two of Gordon Markendale's uke banjos. They both paid cash six hundred and sixty pounds each (600 for the uke and £60 for the case) which was all the money they had at the time and was told that the ukes would take 12 months to make.

One year went by, - no ukes. Two years went by, no ukes. Three years, - no ukes and by now the lads were getting very concerned. The only answer they received was "They are on the bench being finished off" or "The first one is finished and sounds excellent but I've just got one little alteration to make."

Over four years went by and Anthony and John decided - for the second time - to pay him a surprise visit on his doorstep. As soon as he opened the door he was surprised by the lads, who were demanding satisfaction. "Oh", he said, "I've been trying to ring you to tell you that your ukes are ready - well, they are not quite ready as I've still got a little job to do on them. I'll deliver them to you". A few days later Gordon turned up at John's door with his uke. (Anthony has to wait another 5 years)

SURCHARGE - "Right, that will be another £70 you owe" said Gordon, "But I've paid you in full" said John. "Oh no you've not, that was for the uke but you owe another £70 for the case." Poor John was gobsmacked and couldn't believe what he was hearing. He reluctantly gave him a cheque for the difference.

BE WARNED - If you are considering buying a uke get a written guarantee that it will be produced in a certain time. Pay a deposit only and be prepared to take the matter to a small claims court if the maker doesn't come up with the goods. It is the same with uke cases. Members should ask advice before parting with money.

QUALITY - John's Ludwig copy sounded really great and the quality far better than the original. However, one thing let it down and that was the cheap pegs that were fitted. Gordon is an excellent craftsman and few can match him!!!

Llandudno - Jim Bramwell, Stan Watkinson and I were asked by the Royal Blind Society if we would travel to Llandudno to entertain 45 of their members at the Belmont Hotel. "No problem - We'll be there on the day" But little did I realise that Stan & Jim would be hit by the flu bug and unable to go.

Anyway, Dennis Lee, - good old reliable - stepped in and the two of us went off to lovely Llandudno. We'd no idea where the hotel was but by a stroke of luck we took a wrong turning and bumped straight into it on the sea front. As soon as we walked through the door we were greeted by a host of cheery smiles and within half an hour we had em all singing their hearts out. "Side By Side" never sounded better. Most of these people may be blind but they certainly appreciate life and thoroughly enjoy entertainers visiting them.

HAPPY DANCERS - It is very rare that you witness people getting up and dancing to Formby songs but this happy lot did. They all joined in with "Lamp Post" and "Windows" and about ten of them danced their legs off. "Out In The Middle East" brought out all the sand dancers and they played the part like experts.

GRAND FINALLY - After about 90 minutes of songs I handed each one a Union Jack while Dennis dressed 8 of them up in wounded soldiers bandages. During "The Soldiers Dream" they paraded through the room to the waving of the flags and thoroughly enjoyed every minute. "Best night ever" they all shouted and each of the carers came in turn to shake our hands. "Thoroughly enjoyable" they all agreed.



Uke Banjo for sale - Godfrey Thomas on 01978 759823 has a Windsor Whirl uke banjo for sale. It has a case which is well worn but usable. The price he is asking £75 or nearest offer. Now Windsor Whirl ukes are not the best for volume but they always give off a sweet melodious sound. Ideal for a beginner.

Year 2001 Calendar - We are looking for as many dates and details as possible for a 2001 Calendar, which will be on sale from next Autumn. We need dates of when George appeared at theatres, moved houses, bought boats, opened functions etc. Altogether we need 365 facts and figures so, - as George would say: GET CRACKING.

Wendell Hall - Well we've all heard of Wendell Hall but nobody appears to know anything about him. Who was he? Well the information I have is that he was an entertainer who decided to have a go at manufacturing uke banjos and that's all the news I have. Is it true?

I was looking through some old sheet music this week and found a good old song that we used to sing as kids: "It Ain't Gonna Rain No More" and who was it written by, none other than Wendell Hall. It's a great little song with some wonderful words like: "The night was dark and dreary and the air was full of sleet.

The old man stood out in the storm and his shoes were full of feet"

Chorus - Oh it ain't gonna rain no more no more, it ain't gonna rain no more

But how in the world can the old folk tell if it ain't gonna rain no more

We always changed the last line to:-

"But how the heck can I wash my neck if it ain't gonna rain no more."

Looking through the same pile I noticed a copy of "On The Golden Shores Of Wigan." Part of which goes:-

On the golden shores of Wigan that's where I'm heading for

The sun is always shining and it ain't gonna rain no more.

All good stuff and if any piano players want a copy let me know.

Internet - For those who are on the net there is an interesting web site which was shown on TV recently. It is called "Find A Grave" and anyone can look up the once famous "Dead & Buried" people. I logged on, punched in the name George Formby and low and behold there it was. All the details of both George junior and George senior.

COMPLAINT - It was nice to find the two Georges among the list but there was one complaint that I would like to lodge: The first entry is on George junior and it gives details of him being a noted British ukulele player, a film star from 1921 to 1961 (which is not correct) Singer of comic songs and awarded the OBE in 1946.

The second entry was George senior (who should have been first) and the only credit he received was being the father of GF junior, entertainer and comedian. We've got to put the records right! He earned more credit than that!

Anthony Mason's just popped in. He's finished touring round the country and now able to make backing tapes etc. You can RING him on 01925 244877 or PAGE him on 07654 639147 - Don't forget to leave your Tel No.

Sale Meeting - Due to the dreaded flu only 22 members turned up at the meeting but we were fortunate to have plenty of players to entertain

FOGGED UP - Alan Southworth and Dick Eaves & wives couldn't make the meeting as they were fogbound. Cyril Palmer operated a double-barrel job in handling the sound and emceeing the first half of the show.

MINI DISK PLAYER - Sale have now bought a disk player like the other branches so it gave Cyril an opportunity to get to know the new equipment. He soon found that it is easier to handle mini disks than tapes so the night went on without a hitch.

DEBUT - First on the bill was brave hearted Eddie Bancroft who was making his debut on the stage. He's attended the meetings for many years but only now has he had the nerve perform. The Sale crowd are excellent with new starters and no matter how good or bad they perform they always get a grand applause. Good for you Eddie.



JOKES - Jim Bramwell, our established comic was struck down with flu and couldn't make it on the night, so one or two nipped in with a few jokes, - not as good as Jim mind you. Brian Edge asked "What is the difference between 'unlawful' and 'illegal.' Well apparently 'unlawful' is against the law but 'illegal' is a sick bird! Get it? No? Well we didn't at first but after a couple of minutes a few titters broke out.

Margaret Moran gave us 'Ave Maria,' which went down very well, and Des Redfern sang his latest song: 'DI V O R C E' in the style of Billy Connelly, but Des changed the words to his wife hating the sound of his uke. Which is a sore point with him.

Ken Ratcliffe - At the Sale meeting Ken told me some news on George's houses. Ken claims that five of George's houses are currently up for sale: Hill Crest, Warrington, is being offered by Bradford & Bingley Hill Room Gate Road, St Annes - which was converted to flats George's Singleton home is on the market. The Preston New Rd house is for sale. and Russell Grant has now left George's Beryldene, Lytham St Annes to move near to Mount Snowdon. Beryldene is now for sale.

The ukelele mystery

CONTINUED - George's brother, Frank, appeared at Halifax Palace during that time but unfortunately George never played there. For the past 20 years I have been arranging Escorted Tours to Hollywood and Las Vegas to "Meet The Stars" but now I am recently retired.

QUESTION Do any of George Formby's ukeleles still exist?

AT AN auction held in Lytham St Anne's on June 21, 1961 — soon after George Formby's death — 19 of his ukeleles and uke-banjos were catalogued for sale, and I have been able to keep a record of each owner of 16 of them over the years.

The other three have disappeared, and I am interested in locating them. I'm still looking for two small wooden ukeleles made by Jose Fernandez, which were lot numbers 441 and 445, and a melody uke-banjo bought by someone named Turner, which was lot 453.

The 16 ukes are owned mainly by members of the George Formby Society, and I'm pleased that my family owns George's first uke-banjo played in his films — a Will Van Allen which he used in the film *Off The Dole* in 1935.

Anyone interested in George's ukes should contact me, and I will be pleased to send them an up-to-date list of owners.

Stan Evans, George Formby Society, 19 Hall Nook, Penketh, Warrington.

Continued from page 2.

Another Interesting Letter in the Daily Mail avalanche, - which is still coming through the letterbox.

I was very pleased to see your article in the Daily Mail about George as I've been looking for the GFS address for some time.

Years ago I worked at the Halifax Palace Theatre as a teenager and while there I visited other theatres in the area to see the stars as I had a great interest in show business. One of my happiest memories of the time was going over to Manchester Palace to see the great George Formby "live" in *Zip Goes A Million* and watching it from back stage in the wings as I got in free due to my theatre connections.



Banjo search: Three George Formby ukeleles are unaccounted for

And Another - From Bob May of Birmingham.

Dear Stan, Interesting to read your piece in the Daily Mail re. George's Formby's ukes. On holiday at a hotel in Cornwall in the early 80s we observed a late arrival unload a collection of ukuleles and banjos from his Volvo estate car and take them away to his room. Later at the bar he explained to us that they were half of the George Formby collection - about 10 from memory - and that he couldn't bear to be apart from them even on holiday.

Some years later, working for a Birmingham newspaper, I was sent to Nuneaton to photograph Alan Randall who wrote a biography of George in 1974 and was known as a performer of George Formby songs as well as being an acknowledged jazz piano and vibraphone player.

I told him of my Cornwall experience and then waved to all his ukules and banjos laid out and exclaimed, "and this is the other half." One of the many pictures I took of Alan showed him with his BMW car and cherished number plate UKE 1..

My thanks to Bob for his letter. The person he met at the hotel would be Bill Logan who bought six ukes at the 1961 auction and purchased more later. Alan Randall didn't own the other half but he did own two of George's ukes at one stage: a Baby Gibson and a Dallas "C."

Lot 453??? - Just been speaking to **Malcolm Dennison** who knows of **Arthur Turner** who purchased a uke banjo at the 1961 auction. Arthur owned a Petrol Station in Oldham at the time and has since retired

and moved to Blackpool. He lives somewhere at the rear of the **Blackpool Hydro**. So is this one of the missing ukes? Perhaps one of the Blackpool members will have a look through their directory for an **A Turner** in that area and let me know if they find one. Apparently Arthur will be in his 80s now but his wife was much younger.

And a Very Interesting letter from Lindsey MacDougall who is the son of Roger MacDougall the songwriter who wrote 8 songs for George (which were used in his films).

Lindsey wrote: I recently read your article in the Daily Mail regarding George Formby and wondered if you would be kind enough to answer a question for me?

My late father's name was Roger MacDougall. He often mentioned to me that he had written some songs for Mr Formby to be used in his films. I would be grateful if you could tell me the names of these songs and perhaps provide me with the lyrics.

I was very pleased to hear from Lindsey so I sent him a George Formby Catalogue which gives all George's songs, films etc. and also a photocopy of two of the songs: "I Wish I Was Back On The Farm" and "You Can't Go Wrong In These."

If anyone has the following Lindsey would appreciate a copy: "I'm The Ukulele Man" - "On The Beat" - "The Emperor of Lancashire" - "I'd Do It With A Smile" - "You're Everything To Me" and "Swing Mama."

George's 78s for Sale - Mr Joe Rimmer on 01904 764560 wishes to sell 19 George Formby 78 rpm records (mainly Decca) and 4 Gracie Fields 78s. Please give Joe a ring if interested.

Dallas "A" Uke Wanted. Alan Wilson, 10 Cumber Close, Brixam, Devon TQ5 8RP is looking for one at around the £75 mark. Can you help him?

UKE REPAIRS - Just been speaking to Alan Chenery on the phone. Along with Colin Wood, Alan will take in any ukes that require repairing - new skins etc. as long as you don't require it yesterday. Naturally there will be a charge for the service and they will do their best to accommodate everybody but it is only a part time service as they have their work to do. You can ring Alan on 01270 257085 or you will always see both Alan and Colin at the Crewe meeting and most times at the N Wales meeting.

They are trying to find the name of a company where they can buy calf skins from. Does anyone know of a supplier?

This is great lads, we need someone in the area who can handle repairs. If anyone has got any old ukes that need repairing give Alan a ring. Also if you have any spare uke parts or broken ukes that can be robbed for the spares, give them a call.

Cliff Royle's reports on Penyffordd - We expected a small turn out since a number of regulars tendered apologies for non-attendance. However this was not to be for there were plenty of guests, including a number of first timers, so we had a fairly full house. It looked as if there would not be enough pasties to go round, but Dolwen and Geoff produced the usual miracle.

Jim Murphy was encouraged to take on the role of M.C. which he did well, even introducing the Chairman of the GFS, Dennis Lee as the man who has a dust cart and a fire engine named after him. Jim's threat to blow the whistle if players don't smile can either get results or put them off completely. I was asked to take over part way through the second half so that Jim could get to the bar for his first (?) pint.

Luke and Frank Murphy did an excellent unaccompanied duet: perhaps I could refer to it as a Young Peoples "Barber Shop" performance. Luke is the younger brother of Frank, and is only 5 years of age, yet he performed in real style with a lovely smile. The Murphy's are really showing us the way.

Then Alison Nadin put the "cream on the cake" by performing a very unusual act with coloured paper, accompanied by words and music. The room was deadly quiet during her fantastic performance, for everyone was waiting to see what was going to happen next. It is understood that this was once one of Farankie Wood's acts, which was passed on to her. She's been practising this for weeks with a view to taking over from Stan Evans. (*Hey! What's all this?*)

Peter Cain of the Crewe Branch performed his "Swimmin With The Women;" well done Peter. Des Redfern tried out Auntie Mary's 1933 uke, and two of our lady members (Anne & Sheila) joined in a small SELECT THRASH with Anne showing no fear of the mike. Following young Stephen Ensall, dad Brian raised his voice in song and someone said he should be on "Opportunity Knocks"

Brian Edge claimed that he didn't sing 'rude songs' but he would play 'love songs.' So what do you think of that Connie?

It is with regret that I have to report that Sheila Beech is still quite poorly, and that the wife of Charlie Morrison, our recent keyboard player, passed away after a long illness. His wish is that he can soon return to our meetings which he finds a great source of friendship and pleasure. Cliff Royle

Thanks Cliff but what's all this? Everybody at Penyffordd is producing miracles while my back is turned. First we have Geoff & Dolwen with the pasties and then Alison is doing the Yakky Dars. It's not on!!! Tell em to watch out!

DON'T FORGET YOUR ARTICLE FOR THE NEWSLETTER

Our Ace Reporter Cliff Royle of Penyffordd and the nicest looking lad in the society, has sent in a joke but after handing it round to half the membership no-one can get it. So let's try it on the Newsletter readers

Cliff's joke: "Did you hear about the elderly lady who went to the Doctor with flu? He prescribed tablets 3 a day for 5 days to be taken at regular intervals. Times suggested 7am, 3pm, and 11pm.

She took the first one at 9pm. The next ones at 3pm, - if she remembered - and the evening one at 11pm - if she had not fallen asleep. At the end of the month she returned to the Doctor and complained that although she was still taking the tablets the flu had not been cured."

Confused? - HELP!!! - Is there anyone out there who can understand Cliff's joke? If so, drop me a line so that we can let the others know. Cliff used to work in a Law Office so perhaps it's a Solicitors joke? Or maybe he's turning to Alternative Comedy, - He'll be busy now typing out an explanation for next month.

Budding Star - I've just heard that Cliff did an excellent job of sharing the M/c role at Penyffordd but I hope he didn't tell any of his Solicitor jokes.

Albert Seaborne sent in a newspaper cutting containing an article from J Devine of Timperley. "You asked if anyone remembered the visit of Laurel and Hardy? I do because I used to sell flowers to people who visited the cemetery at Brooklands.

George Formby had a house called "The Spinney" in Brooklands Road and would have garden parties on the lawn. If stars came to Sale they went to his house for a party - Laurel and Hardy did just that. *Thanks Albert.*

Uke Wanted - Learner requires a uke banjo - not too expensive. Contact Ron Houston at Dyserth (near Prestatyn) Tel 01745 571042.

Just Been Talking to Jon Robinson - who's Jon Robinson you are asking - well Jon is the contact for Granada TV Studios who set us up with the "Hotel Get Away" job. He's finished filming Hotel Get Away and is now in research in the "You've Been Framed" dept. "Stan" he said, "Tell your members to dig out some comical video footage so that they can earn some money. Have you got anything on video that raises a titter? Let me know.

Ray Bernard & Karen

have been invited to take part in the musical "M'Lita Dolores" which is to be staged at the Repertory Theatre, Stoke on Trent on Saturday 4th March.

Karen is the Musical Director and Pianist while Ray, on ukulele will be singing many songs - among them: Ukulele Lady, Crazy Words, Ukulele Baby and a number of lesser known Jolson numbers including: Robinson Crusoe, Who Cares, Yoo Hoo, That Certain Party, Pasadena etc. A special podium is being built at the side of the stage to accommodate the band and several Savoy Orphean's records will be played featuring Bert Ralston.



There is a nice little ukulele story of when Bert Ralston, who played sax in the Orphean's band, went on holiday, in 1927, to South Africa with M'Lita, who is Stoke's forgotten star. Bert suffered a gunshot wound whilst stalking game and he was placed under a tree out of the sun. He asked M'Lita to hand him his ukulele and sang "Always" before dying. In memory of Bert, Ray will be singing "Always" with the very same Martin uke that Bert used when he died. The play will contain over thirty musical items dated from 1900 to the late thirties. Tickets can be bought from Mike Lloyd Music Stores, Tel: 01782 207777 or 712500. The show starts at 7.30pm.

All Round The Houses! Some of the letters received from the Daily Mail article were very enlightening. One chap in particular doesn't have a uke but he has a mandolin, with broken strings, which he bought years ago but he can't play it. Now he is devoting his time to the bagpipes and has made a cassette of Irish & Scottish songs. He also plays the highland pipes but had to alter 7 out of 10 tunes to be able to play Auld Land Syne and Loch Lomond etc. as the start is 2 holes lower than the Chanter. The Brian Born has 2 drones and the Highland has 3 drones (*what on earth is he on about?*)

He goes on! There is a baritone for the BB but I have two on the baritone reed so it is hard to tune in. I have two other interests (*oh dear*) which are Vintage Cars and I've been on rallies to Scotland and England and to Palastine.

From here on his letter livens up with: I'm sure you are concerned about the Irish. What is wrong? I'm a Protestant but respect other religions. Stan, If you find time please send me all your interests. *Now, have we anyone out there who would like to make a penfriend of this man. I'm sure you'll find the experience very rewarding and you'll learn a lot. I haven't got the time to reply!*

Big "Do" at Chester - by Dennis Lee. BBC MUSIC LIVE.

You may have heard the BBC is to promote a major, nation wide, musical event between the dates, 25th to 29th May 2000.

The 29th of May is a Bank Holiday Monday and has been entitled "The Perfect Day." Plans are being formulated with Chester City Council for the GFS to be represented. This will probably take the form of 3 half hour spots between 11am and 2pm. Many other groups will be involved and all are required to perform in "The Rows" i.e. on the upper walkways of the shops looking down at a audience which will be at street level.

TELEVISION COVERAGE - There is a strong possibility that some of the groups will be televised because of "The Rows" unique setting and appeal. Another advantage from our point of view is that we'll be under cover.

GET YOUR NAME DOWN - A party spirit is being encouraged with perhaps three or four performances taking place simultaneously in different directions. In order to reserve a suitable pitch we'll need to know how many can attend. We are hoping to have around 20. This will be good publicity for the North West Branches so please let me know if you are coming. Dennis.

SAME DAY - BLACKPOOL- Thanks Dennis, - Please note that the Blackpool meeting is also being held on the Monday night and we have registered with the BBC for radio or TV coverage. So we will have to think about performing at Chester and then a quick switch over to Blackpool to finish the day off.

Thomas Slater (93) Writes -

In my early teens (about 1925) my mother bought me a small wooden banjolele and I assure you that banjolele had an adventurous life. At about 18 I got my first motorcycle and joined a club. I met another young man there who had a similar banjolele so whenever we went out on social runs with the club members we were "The Band."

When we went to the T.T. Races, on the Isle of Man, we would sing our heads off on the boat, and there would be at least 50 of us plus the large crowds of passengers that gathered round to join in. The Captain, who was very concerned, would ask us to spread out as the huge crowd was making the boat tilt over. Those were "happy days" we would all march down the Blackpool Prom with us (the band) in front leading the procession singing our heads off. I still play my uke but suffer with rheumatism in the fingers.

DON'T FORGET TO SEND IN AN ARTICLE FOR THE NEXT NEWSLETTER

Crewe Branch Hit the High Spots-

Monday January 17th 2000, was a special day for the South Cheshire (Crewe) Branch as they realised their ambition to play as a group on the stage of their own Lyceum Theatre where so many famous stars the likes of Stan Laurel, Wee Georgie Wood, and the Formbys had previously trod the boards.

The show was an Old Time Husic Hall held in aid of Cancer Research. The demand for was so great that the gallery had to be opened to accommodate the audience and 700 packed the theatre on the night.

The Lyceum comprises an ultra modern foyer, with restaurants and bars on four levels with plenty of lifts to get one about, but step through the door and one finds oneself whisked back in time to the most beautiful Edwardian Theatre with circle and gallery and boxes all adorned in the traditional manner with cherubim.

group, all dressed in their colourful attire with boaters, performed six of the most popular Formby numbers in their two ten minute spots and they then led the grand finale with "Leaning On A Lamppost" which was sung by the entire company.

It was a wonderful experience for the society playing to a packed house and a great advert for the George Formby Society. The group had rehearsed their concert at our regular practise nights which are normally held between the monthly concerts.

Those taking part were George Formby Society members Colin Wood, Alan Chenery, Ron Whiston, Brian & Connie Edge, Steve Hassall, Walter Kirkland, Alan Newton, Don Chalkley, Peter Cain, Des Redfern and Jonathan Baddeley who introduced individual members.

Thanks for your report Brian. I don't know if you sensed it but there is something very awesome back stage in the old style, well used theatres. Was the show videoed?



Is that another one of your daft ideas?

Crewe Meeting - Jonathan back as M.C.

Illness struck the January meeting at Wistaton Memorial Hall. About 15 apologies were received which reduced the gathering to 65, but there were plenty of performers and the concert was of the usual high standard.

It was good to have Jonathan Baddeley back on the M.C. rota where he joins Carl Basford and Alan Chenery. They will each front the show four times during the year - Jonathan is assisted by his wife Pamela.

Among those unable to attend were Harry & Vera Jones. Harry had had a heart by-pass operation a few days earlier and all those attending signed a get-well card for him wishing a speedy recovery.

Don Chalkley and Peter Cain both put on their best performance ever after a lot of hard work at the Crew Practise Nights. Dennis Lee performed "Grandads Bowler Hat" a Walter Langshaw number followed by Alan Randall's "Lottery Millionaire" which had all the audience taking part.

Ray Bernard sang George's "Americam Medley" accompanied by Karen on the piano and concluded with a personal favourite "You Don't Need A Licence For That." Young Frank Murphy added "Come On George" to his extensive repertoire of of Formby numbers. When will see his father, Jim, performing solo?

And There's More - THANKS A MILLENNIUM - The Society has received a warm "Thank You" letter from Sheila Burgess, the Chairperson of local Cancer Research Campaign for our performance in the Old Time Music Hall at the Crewe Lyceum Theatre. The event raised about £7,000. 00 for Cancer Research funds.

Thanks again Brian. Eva & I haven't attended Crewe for the past 3 or 4 meetings but we will be there in full force at the next one. Also, Jeffrey & Christine will be with us. For those that don't know, Jeffrey is George's nephew (Frank's son.)

Dallas "B" for Sale - John Conway on Tel No. 01625 829568 is selling a "B" which is in good used condition. Complete with case. Best offer over £75.

Olde Tyme Music Hall Thursday 27th April at the Queens Hall Theatre Widnes. This is a really excellent, very highly professional show and well worth going to see. Tel 0151 424 2339 and the prices are only £5 or £4 concessions. See you there.

George Formby Memorabilia - Are there

any GF Collectors out there? If so, my postbag (over a hundred letters from the Daily Mail article) has contained some offers..

GF AUTOGRAPH FOR SALE - no price given. Please write to Mr Ralph Smith, 76 Westbury Rd, Cleethorpes DN35 0QL

GEORGE & BERYL AUTOGRAPHS - no price given. H Stenhouse, Apt 16 Somerset Ct, 47 Somerset Ave, Blackpool, tel 01253 838064



GEORGE'S 78rpm RECORDS - no price given. Mrs Coulthard, 6 Middle Street, Wilberfloss, York YO41 5NR has about 200 assorted.

TWO GF SIGNED PHOTOS - no price given. Mr John D Wells, "Pitcairn" 180 Windermere Rd, Kendal LA9 5EZ. The photos are from the 1920 and 30s.

G & B SIGNED PHOTO - no price given. Dee Stanley, "Gladhayes" Marshwood, Bridport DT6 5QB. Tel 01297 678336.

AUTOGRAPHS FROM THE T T RACES on the Isle Of Man. 2 GF - 2BF and 1 Florence Desmond. Mr Derek C Woodriff, 64 Tynwald Rd, Willaston, Isle of Man IM2 6HY. Tel 01624624481.

None of the above have any idea of what the items are worth and are looking for guidance from GFS members.

In My New Job

as GFS Publicity Officer I am working on an idea to revive the membership of all the 1,400 members who have joined in the past 9 years and then packed up after a year or two.

It's all "In The Air" at the moment but we could register to have the GFS entered in the Guinness Book Of Records as the largest number of Uke Banjo Players in the World and for this we need to appeal to all those past members (and current members) to turn up on the day. Perhaps Sept. 2001 might be the ideal time in memory of George's 40th Anniversary. Also the GFS 40th as well. Assuming that the package is agreed by the committee, this would be an ideal tribute to George who, with his uke, often had ideas of conquering the world.

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 (Tues) - 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

Web Site: www.thehollies.u-net.com/formby

E Mail: stan@thehollies.u-net.com

DON'T FORGET TO WRITE IN

