

THE NORTH - WEST

GEORGE FORMBY

Newsletter 59

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Specially Produced for George Formby Fans
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Welcome to Newsletter No.59

Sad Month - It's been a tough month for Eva & I. After a 3 year battle with various cancers our son-in-law, Tony, had to finally give up the fight. The reason I mention this in our George Formby Newsletter is because Tony was responsible for creating our GF Website - www.thehollies.u-net.com/formby - and also providing advice and information on sending E Mails. We are very pleased that he had a wonderful turn-out at the church funeral service when no less than 200 came to pay their respects. Tony will be greatly missed at the Hollies.



Sale Meeting - Where did they all come from? The Sale room is quite small and the tables and chairs fill up most of the area, but on the 17th of March, St Patrick's Night, every long lost member turned up, as well as the regulars, and they were almost sitting on each other's knees. One long lost soul - who hadn't been seen for years - was Anthony Mason who received a thunderous applause from the ladies on the back row. Cyril Palmer opened the evening and announced, "Give this man a big hand because he has travelled all the way from Leeds - Mike Jenkins" - clap, clap, clap, hooray and all that. "No he hasn't!" He's come from Leigh - not Leeds! - Just down the road! Be Jaybers, what a grand start this was to an Irish Night. We were confused already and the show hadn't even started.



Jed Collins lets it rip

The place was filled to capacity when suddenly another group came in - from Leeds this time - not Leigh! Tony Marshall led the field followed by Mac & Milly McGee and they were ready to have a great night. Mac brought along a number of Irish hats and disguises to add to the show. Hilda and Vera - known on the night as "The Flatley Sisters" - (some wag named them the "Flatulence Sisters") gave a good Irish tap dance performance, and Jed Collins had them all Stamping their Hands and Clapping their Feet to "The Irish Rover," which he performed very well. Jed also performed with his piccolo accompanying Des Redfern on an Irish medley. The night ended with a tribute to the great Irish singer, Josef Locke, with one of his favourites, "The Soldier's Dream." The Union Jacks and wounded soldiers marching brought it all to a grand and glorious finish.

The Formby Story

Part 48 by Stan Evans

George was having a meal at Pat Howson's house when suddenly he felt pains in the stomach and had to be rushed into St Joseph's Hospital, Preston.



George's solicitor, John Crowther, was called to his bedside. George was determined that his hard earned estate mustn't go to his family, so he desperately changed his will in favour of Pat Howson. He was also concerned that whatever he left to his mother, - who was 81 years of age and not in need of cash at the time - would be wasted by the family. So he had to move quickly. The Formby family were sensing that George was being manipulated by Pat and at a time when he wasn't well enough to think straight. They were ready for a fight!

On March 6th Pat went shopping to buy her wedding ring and George was desperate for them to be married so that no-one can contest the will. He had great trust in Pat and felt strongly that she was level headed enough to handle the estate. Later that day Pat was sat at his bedside when suddenly his head fell forward and George was dead. Attempts were made to revive him but it was too late. Father Lakeham administered the Last Rites.

According to David Brett, George's mother, Eliza, rang the Blackpool Gazette informing them that they don't care what Pat Howson says they intend bringing George home to Liverpool and he'll be buried in the Warrington family grave. She also informed the undertaker, Bruce Williams, who was also known as Eddie Latta (George's songwriter) that she wasn't allowed to ride in any of the limousines paid for by the family. She travelled in her father's car.

On Friday March 10th the cortege left the chapel of rest at St Charles Roman Catholic Church, Liverpool, to travel the 20 mile journey to Warrington and it was claimed that 200,000 people lined the streets to watch George go by.

George's sister, Louie, told me that the previous will, which bequeathed £5,000 each to Eliza and Harry Scott (George's valet) - with the rest of the estate going to the sisters (not the brothers), had been changed. Up to the time of the funeral they expected to benefit but soon after the burial, John Crowther invited the family into a Warrington pub and announced that they wouldn't be getting anything. They were shocked. The will had been changed only 10 days before George's death. More Next Month.

Great Performance - It is wonderful to see the youngsters taking to the professional stage and making a name for themselves.

Anthony Mason rang to ask if I could help him with a lift to an old folks home in Ashton, near Wigan, as he was having car trouble. "No Problem - see you in an hour!" The car was loaded with half a ton of equipment and we wended our way to Ashton to find the home.



PROFESSIONAL - We had no problem finding the place and the staff helped us to unload the gear. After half an hour we were set up and Anthony - quite a professional - disappeared to change into his suit. When he emerged he looked immaculate and ready to perform.

BACKING TAPES - Anthony is open in the backing tape business so either ring him on 01925 244877 - or page him on 07654 639147 and leave your number, or pay him a visit on Blackpool North Pier any Saturday or Sunday afternoon - during summer season.

Uke Wanted - Mike Jenkins on 01942 748765 is looking for a Ludwig Copy or similar. Give him a ring if you have one to sell.

Don't Knock Springfield! - Hey! What do you know? Dennis Lee and I were travelling through Platt Bridge, Wigan, and this super smart coach came bombing round the corner. It was so brilliant that we had to slow down to get a better look at it.

Well you could have knocked us both down with a wet floor rag when we saw who it belonged to. It was a brand new coach - smartest in the country - and the name on the side was SPRINGFIELD of Wigan. It was none other than our old mate who, in the past, has palmed us off with three of the worst coaches in the country. Zipping round the corner it looked dead smart with such a blazing array of colour. The coach lit the Platt Bridge main street up and half of the Wigan shoppers stopped to watch it go by. So don't ever knock our Bill's coach business again. The lad's coming up in the world!

Uke Banjo for Sale -Melody uke in perfect condition with only 50 miles on the clock - and half of those were down hill! Must be 1930s/40s but kept in storage because the chap who owned it didn't know how to play the damned thing, - and his wife wasn't much help either. Anyway, when he finally popped his clogs - never having played a note - he gurgled his dying wish, "Get £125 for that uke and shape yourself woman." P.S. The case is in better nick than the uke! Stan Evans

Brian Edge Rang to give news of a 3 hour Boat Trip they are organising from the Crewe Branch. It is on Saturday the 10th of June at 7.3pm and sets off from Chester Quay. The price is £7.50 and there is an optional buffet at £5. 50. They ran the same trip last year and every one of the trippers thoroughly enjoyed it. If interested please ring Brian or Connie on 01270 569836.

Alan Richardson - Heard from Alan, one of the London members with a gift for letter writing. He popped a GF Senior tape in the post and I thoroughly enjoyed playing it. Send an article in Alan and give us a good laugh.

Beryl Eissens our George Formby playing Radio Presenter from Australia is coming back to England on May 31st and staying here for three weeks. She will be staying in Birkenhead and visiting the Penyffordd Meeting on Friday June 2nd. Thanks for E Mail Beryl. Cheered me up no end!

Two Ukcs for Sale By Brian Edge on 01270 569836 - *I hope Bob Drinkwater is reading all this. He complains that we never offer ukcs for sale. Are you there Bob? He's still not sent that article Beryl!*

FOR SALE - George Formby Dallas "C" banjolele with sunburst resonator, complete with gig bag (*what on earth is a gig bag*). The uke is in good condition and has a powerful tone. £150. *Sounds like a bargain at £150.*

PLUS - A smart "Luxor" Supreme banjolele by Horenstein of New York. Ten tension hooks. Lightweight with nice tone in excellent condition with case, £99.

Charlie Landsborough, who has one of the best singing voices in the country, is looking for an Abbott Guitar. If you know of one for sale contact Stan or Les Watkinson on 0151 228 4317. Charlie tops the charts in Ireland.

Matthew Warhurst of Apple Bikes, 6 - 8 Orchard Rd, St Annes on Sea has kindly sent in a copy of the wages ledger from the Empire Theatre, Middleborough, for the week commencing 28th October 1912, starring George Formby senior as top of the bill.

NAME	ACT	SALARY	COMM	AGENT
Vere & Meldew	Comedy	£14		Self
The Kebbles	Duet & Dance	£15	10%	Peels Ltd
Julian Ross	Vocalist	£7	10%	Burns
The Craggs		£50	10%	Burns
Drawee, Hambs, Frisco		£27	10%	Natha
Crosslands Musical	Piano/Violin	£10	10%	Edelston
Le Dure	Dancers	£15	10%	Peels
Lillian Wesson	Vocalist	£8	10%	Peels
George Formby	Comedian	£150	10%	Fortune/G

You will see that GF senior is the top paid star earning £150 for a week's work which was an awful lot of money in those days!

But how did he do it? He was a very sick man with a weak voice and yet he had the personality to draw such great crowds. It doesn't add up! He was earning £150 per week which was £4 more than the rest of the cast together.

I wonder how much £150 would be worth today? Well I should imagine that it must be, at the very least, £10,000. 00. What do you think? You could buy a small house in 1912 for £150 but you'd have a job finding one for £10,000 today. So maybe it is worth more than £10,000. Drop a line.

Guinness Book of Records - Did you know that Guinness themselves hold a record? It's for keeping customers waiting for a reply! I reported in a previous issue that the GFS should be in the Guinness Book of Records as the "Biggest Group of Uke Banjo Players in the World." Well I've wrote to them, faxed em, E Mailed em, phoned em and left a message on the answer phone and after 3 months there's still no reply. More later - I hope

Just Been to the doctors with a complaint called, 'Bunged Up Bowels' and the doctor said, "Eat plenty of fruit but no bananas." "But I sing one of George Formby's songs about bananas and members send me bananas in the post." - "Well" - said the doctor, "you'll have to sing about prunes and tell them all to send you some. Surely George Formby sang about prunes, didn't he?" - "No, but Frank Crummit did, - "The Prune Song."

Max Miller Appreciation Society - Jack

Strutt, Secretary of the MMAS has just sent a copy of the 1st Anniversary Magazine and they appear to be doing very well.

Roy Hudd is their President and dear old Ken Dodd (the finest comedian in the world without doubt) has kindly offered his services as a Patron. For the first year they set their subscriptions at £5 for the year until they knew their commitments. At their first AGM they all agreed to set the figure at £10 and £15 for family membership. They meet at the Business Club, 60 Inner Parade, Brighton every last Friday in the month. Anyone is welcome.

BILL DENVER - I like this bit in the magazine. "After much persuading (*I don't believe that for one moment*) Bill Denver from London, gave us two classic Maxie songs, "Lulu" with a soft shoe routine, and "Isn't it grand to see someone smile." which brought a great ovation. Now I can't believe that it is the very same Bill Denver who would jump up on stage at the drop of a hat. You'd have a job keeping him off! However the mag goes on to read, "We are told that Bill also does a mean George Formby" *so it's got to be "Our Bill!"*

Anthony Mason recently did a show at George and Beryl's house at Mere Corner, on the Warrington Knutsford Road, and while he was there he took a photo for the Newsletter. They asked him to sing all the Formby favourites - which he did - and they all had a grand time.



Hardly a Month Passes that someone doesn't ask

about the many youngsters we had in the society from 1991 when the Warrington Exhibition attracted them like flies round a honey pot. We had loads of em and they were all learning to play the uke far better than any of the grown-ups. Each month I'd like to do a feature on the kids - as they were then and what they are doing today.



Just a few of the merry band of young players we had in the 90s. Where are they now?

LYNDON GARVEY

So I'll start with my own grandson, Lyndon who, under the instruction of Anthony Mason, played and entertained like an expert. Not only did he play chords but he also knocked out great melodies like Rubinstein's Melody in "F", Sailing On The Robert E Lee - Five Foot Two - Anchors Aweigh - Bye Bye Blues and many others. In the early 90s he never had the uke out of his hands and if he'd kept up practising he would have made a great artist. However, he performed a one-man show on BSB TV Studios for Granada at the age of 10 and then retired. On the TV show he was asked why he played melodies instead of just chords like George Formby and he answered with, "Well it's boring just playing chords." How's that for confidence? Although he was the youngest in the group he won the best player under 12 award two years running. However, he wasn't fond of the fame so he retired from playing at 12. He did however take up the guitar and still plays to this day. Now 21 years of age, he has started a business along with his father in the Warrington town centre.



Lyndon Aged 10

The name of his company is "Q Web Design" which supplies professional Web Sites for the Internet. He has all the professional equipment including 4 computers and he is building webs for some large mail order companies.

WEB SITES FOR SALE

If you want a Web Site contact Lyndon on 01925 623464 - E-Mail sales@webdesign.co.uk or check him out on his web site at www.q-webdesign.co.uk. The office address: "Q Web Design, Suite 8B, Gilbert Wakefield House, 67 Bewsey St, Warrington WA2 7JQ.

SAD BLOW - Alas it has been a sad month for Lyndon. His father died of cancer early this month, which has been quite a blow to him and the family. However Lyndon is determined to carry on with the thought that his father would wish him to be successful.

I tried to get an up to date photo of Lyndon but he shot out of the door.

Nice To Hear from Olwen Gale who, I am pleased to say, is coping very well since having lost Denis. She writes:- Dear Stan, I have just finished reading the latest book by Jeremy Paxton who chairs programmes such as “university Challenge” and “Newsnight” on BBC2. It is called “The English” and in it there is an interesting paragraph which I thought would be interesting for your Newsletter.

I will give you a bit of the previous paragraph first:- “The English like to think of themselves as gallant, upstanding, modest, absolutely trustworthy and with impeccable manners. It is the ideal of the English gentleman, but itself, it does not quite answer the question of what Englishness is. Plainly, it cannot simply be a question of class”

THE INTERESTING BIT!

“For years, George Formby was the most successful performer in Britain. He was diffident about his fame and he didn’t like to show off his wealth. But his wife did - no diffidence at all - he was English, she wasn’t.”

Olwen goes on:- I could see what he was getting at, although it struck me as hard on the woman. After all while George had been awarded The Order of Lenin for popularity with the Russian proletariat, she had the authentically English distinction of being World Clog Dancing Champion. So what, I ask him, was Englishness?

Thanks Olwen, you can’t get more English than clog dancing - I wonder if the Dutch performed clog dancing? They all wore clogs in those days!

Beryl wasn’t pure bred English you know. Go back a couple of generations and they were Germans so maybe this is where she got her “bully” reputation from.. I wonder if she got up early in the morning to nick all the sunloungers? Anyway, she was a grafter and I hold the greatest of respect for her. Best Wishes Olwen.



Our Jim’s a Rum Lad. Jim Bramwell, Dennis Lee and I, along with Stan & Les Watkinson, were booked to do this show at Wigan Pier and Jim insisted that we met at my house - Great, although it was an extra 16 mile round journey for Jim! “I’ll show you an easy way to get there” says Jim, and we set off full of confidence. “Turn right, turn left, turn right and turn right twice, followed by a couple of turn left’s and we were soon convinced that Jim was taking us all round the country.

We were going through Newton le Willows and I pointed out Jim’s house to Dennis to which Dennis replied, “Jim, I hope you don’t mind me asking but why didn’t we pick you up on the way?” - “I thought you may have got lost” says Jim!

Eve Stewart was as chuffed as little mint balls when she discovered that the Blackpool Gazette had used her school photo alongside George to publicise a series on Fylde. Notice that they are all carrying gas mask cases, which was the law during the war years. Eve, along with her husband, Charles, run the monthly meetings at the South Shore Cricket Ground every last Monday in the month and they are specially welcoming all to come to the **MUSIC LIVE** meeting on the 29th May which the BBC will be promoting. News of this is already being advertised on Ceefax.



Which one of this happy band of smiling faces is Eve Stewart? Answer on page 19

Liverpool had another great night on April 14th with every seat taken. John Sheeve popped in, did some brilliant stuff with his spider like fingers and popped out again to take part in a charity to raise funds for a needy child. Good for you John!

PAUL KENNY has taken another step forward to his professionalism. He stops the backing tape after the first couple of lines to 'pick his nose' and then starts the tape from the beginning again. Well, you must agree, it is original and nobody else has thought about adding it into their act. Another few months and everybody will be doing it! If you start a group Paul you could call it "The Nose Pickers."



Auctions on the Net. Alan Richardson gave me a Web Site address where you can bid for anything - including ukes. There's a list of about 20 of em which change every day. The address is www.ebay.uk.com and after registering, have have access to all the lots for sale. There's usually loads of uke music books. The main problem is that they never tell you how much the reserve price is, so you can be bid constantly for days and then discover that the uke has been withdrawn.

Just had a phone call from BBC TV London. They are looking for people who can tell a good funny story and are prepared to go before the cameras. The stories must be funny - and true, and with a punch line ending to make it more effective. So if you fancy it, give me a ring and I will put your name forward. There is no guarantee that you will be chosen but at least you have offered. Dan Sandy, the research chap (not 'Guy') said that he contacted us because George Formby fans have a special quality of 'funniness' and possibly run into comical situations every day. Well he's probably right.

Spitting Image? - This chap is a dead ringer for Brian Edge of Crewe. But his name is Ron Anthony who has played over 500 performances with ol' blues eyes, Frank Sinatra, and he's also played with Henry Mancini and songwriter Sammy Cahn. He's also an accomplished actor with roles in "Taxi" with Danny de Vito and in "Blind Date" with Bruce Willis. So Brian's got a look-alike out there who could be a rich relative!



Double Caption!
by Joe McCaffrey

"Verily tis a Nice song, Sir Walter, but what pray is a Lamp Post?"

Or: "That's a good idea, go and clean them windows."
Thanks Joe.

Travelogue on CH4 TV It was all about "Hawaii" but George was playing in the background on a wooden uke.

The presenter said that it reminded him more of Lancashire, not Hawaii, and in fact George Formby springs to mind. Thanks for handing the above in. George is popping up everywhere lately so David Brett's book has had no effect on GF.



Wigan Pier - Wigan was a hard nut to crack some years back. For many years the Council felt that George was simply a cloth cap idiot who did nothing for their image and in 1989 we approached them with a view to putting on a GF Exhibition, - which they ignored. Wigan Pier had a small display on GF Senior but nothing on George and their excuse was that he was born four years too late, - which was nonsense!

However, when Warrington held a very successful GF exhibition, in 1991, drawing over 37,500 visitors, they realised that George wasn't a cloth cap image at all but a pearl that they'd missed out on and some of the councillors were kicking themselves because Warrington had scored one over them.

When I took over the Vellum Editor's job in September 1988, the first thing Eva & I did was to chase around Warrington, Manchester, Liverpool and Wigan libraries for anything on they had on George. We received a few items from the first three but drew a complete blank from Wigan, - NOTHING!!!!

The manager of a particular cafe in Wigan had desires to create a Formby theme but was very despondent when the only picture he could get in Wigan was a Charlie Chaplin look-alike leaning against a lamp post. However, things are slowly changing and whenever Wigan is holding an event they often invite us to take part.

LAURA'S CHARITY NIGHT - Dennis Lee, Stan & Les Watkinson, Jim Bramwell and myself were invited to help to organise and take part in a "Lancashire Night" to raise funds to send young Laura Stretton to Florida to swim with the dolphins. We did similar last year and she gained so much benefit from it that we thought that she deserved another trip.

Ken Smith, of Leeds, started the ball rolling with a cheque for £20 and the ladies from the Penketh Arts & Crafts donated a further £76. Mavis Swift, who started the event was thrilled by the donation as she'd just received a bill for £100 for the hire of the hall and she didn't know how she could pay for it. "It was like a gift from out of the blue" said Mavis, and very much appreciated.



BROWNIES - I was honoured with the M/Cs job but what a task it was keeping 40 young Brownies under control. They are brilliant kids and each with lovely smiling faces but they kept coming to me to tell me how to do the job and would constantly wave to me while they were doing their spot. As a tribute to Wigan's own George Formby they sang: "Lamp Post" - "Windows" "Auntie Maggie" - "Wigan Pier" - "Uncle Joe's Mint Balls" - pinching all Jim Bramwell's songs. But

Jim didn't mind in the least as it was all for a very good cause. Highlight of the show was Dennis Lee singing "Out In The Middle East with the Brownies doing the Sand Dance bit. They were brilliant!



Out In The Middle East dancers

Stan Watkinson had them all singing with his Elvis medley and Jim gave them his latest batch of jokes. The "Mill At The Pier Theatre" is quite awesome with its huge jet black stage and massive curtains, but it would be ideal for a George Formby show.

The Wigan Pier staff were very helpful. They allowed us to use their huge PA System - with millions of slider up & downers - and gave good instruction on how to operate it all. Les Watkinson handled it like an expert.

It was all very good experience and I feel that someday it will lead to us putting on a George Formby variety show in such a theatre.

91 and still playing! - Mr V Mancini of 11 Ashley Place, Warminster, Wilts BA12 9QJ, wrote in regarding the article in the Daily Mail.

UKE FOR SALE - He has two uke banjos: a Keech and a John Grey and due to his age he is prepared to sell the John Grey. He sent in a couple of photos of the instrument, which looks very smart with Mother of Pearl around the drum and down the full length of the fingerboard. All the metal work appears to be gold plated - 8 tension rods and a full size resonator. There is no case with the uke.



The price he is asking is £150 ONO which, going by the photos, looks to be quite a reasonable offer. The cost of postage will be in the region of £6.

If you are interested please give him a ring on 01985 217899 and mention that you read it in the Newsletter.

You Have to Laugh - Whilst at the Doctors I bumped into one of my old employees from many years ago, and she told me that she was now 60 and she'd received her bus pass that morning. She told her husband not to bother taking her to the doctors as she wanted to show off with her new bus pass. She waited at the bus stop for over half an hour till a passer by said, "You are wasting your time waiting there, they are on strike." - Back to the car!

George's Missing Ukes - As reported before we are still searching for 4 of George's missing ukes which were bought at the 1961 GF auction.

There appeared a letter in the latest edition of the Vellum, by Jonas Svensson, who claims that his friend in Sweden has bought one of these (George's Dallas "E") after it was withdrawn by Pat Howson and given to the son of John Crowther (George & Beryl's Solicitor) for services his father had given. I sent the following E Mail to Jonas.

Dear Jonas, This is a copy of an article I've just mailed to Tony Thornton. I hope you find it interesting as I did yours. Best Wishes - Stan Evans.

GEORGE'S MISSING UKES by Stan Evans

Jonas Svensson's article on George's Dallas "D" model was interesting as over the years I've attempted to trace the 19 ukes that were sold at the Lytham St Anne's auction and also keep a record on their movements.

Unfortunately Jonas's details aren't correct according to the information I've gathered. Four ukes are missing as follows:

Lot No. 444 a Black Wooden uke which was bought by Mrs Welsh and then passed on to G Johnson.

Lot No. 445 a Fernandez wooden uke bought by Hyman.

Lot No. 453 a Melody uke bought by Turner, who was an Oldham businessman (Arthur Turner) who retired from business and moved to Blackpool. Unfortunately, after several phone calls we have not been able to trace him.

And Lot No. 458 a Dallas "E" model which was bought by John Crowther, - George & Beryl's Solicitor and Executor of George's will.

Jonas's information that Pat Howson withdrew the "E" model from the auction and gave it to John's son is not correct because his only son at the time, Steven, was only 8 and he knows nothing of it. In fact he didn't know that the uke existed until I told him the story. According to his father he received a letter from America offering a price that he couldn't refuse.

Regarding Pat Howson taking away the "E" model, this also doesn't fit in with my information: Nineteen ukes were lotted in the auction catalogue but a few days before the sale Pat Howson removed three banjo ukes:-

Lot No. 452 a Will Van Allen which was used in the film "Off The Dole" and is now in my possession here.

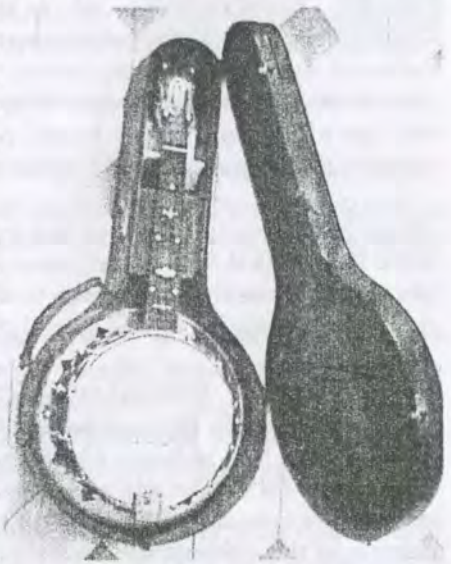
Lot 450, a Dallas "D" and George's Ludwig and Lot 455, both of which are now owned by George Harrison.

CONTINUED - I E Mailed Jonas through the internet to explain that there were quite a few errors in his report and he kindly replied stating that maybe he should have got more confirmation before sending in his article. However he is still keen to work on searching out George's ukes and maybe together we should consider producing a book on them. I'm all in favour of that as it is important that we keep a record of where George's ukes are. Stan Evans.

Excellent Uke for Sale!!! - Further to the spot of

publicity we had in the Daily Mail, Mrs E Baker of 343 High Street, Benfleet, Essex SS7 5HW, wrote to say that she had a special type of John Grey uke banjo for sale and believes it to be a professional model of high quality.

It is gold plated and walnut, inlaid with mother of pearl and ivory and has 12 tension hooks, a hard case and spare accessories. It is in very good condition with a George Formby signature scroll. Sotherby's recommended Keith Payne, who they claim is a uke expert, and he valued the uke at £400. If interested please ring Mrs Baker on 012687 756428 and she will be pleased to hear from you. Don't forget to mention that you read it in the North West George Formby Newsletter.



Warrington Invaded! - Just tak-

ing a few snaps of the Formby family grave when there was a loud shout from the other end of the cemetery. It was Von Hoffman from London, Jack Jones from St Helens and Pat & Tom Ralston. After a photo session we went over to see the grave of Steve Donoghue, the famous racehorse jockey. From there we went to see Hill Crest at Stockton Heath - which is for sale. A young woman answered. She bought the house from Amy Taylor who was a friend of the Formby family. It was understood the house had been improved and this was the reason for the price leap from £150,000 to £285,000, but we didn't notice any improvements.



Dennis The Menace at Crewe - By Brian Edge.

Roger Hall attended his first meeting at Crewe in March and had an enjoyable night out. Roger has been a Formby fan for a number of years; he has a nice ukulele and he can handle it well. Roger last attended a Warrington Meeting some seven years ago. Nice to have with us again Roger.

It was treat to have Harry Jones back after his heart bypass operation. It is good to know that Harry is getting back to full health again.

The March Meeting was well supported with over 80 in the hall and we had a well balanced show with a little variety thrown in. Alan Newton and Dennis Lee performed the Morecambe and Wise signing off number "Give Me Sunshine" and they gave just that with a bright performance dressed in red & white striped barber's shop style waistcoats which was much appreciated by the audience.

Alison Nadin gave us another fine performance of Frankie Wood's puppet show. Billie Bobtail (a 3 foot rabbit) gave a super impression of George Formby on his uke. To perform the split stroke is difficult enough to do in itself but to perform remotely on a puppet is pure magic! (Stan Evans please note). *I'm noting!*

THE MENACE - Dennis Lee's performance of Dennis the Menace was a real surprise. His outfit identical to that of the comic character designed and made by Lesley who is best to know what a menace Dennis really is! (sorry about that Mr Chairman - Sir). The wig was particularly good too! One wonders how Dennis managed to remember all the words of his "I'm Dennis The Menace" song and his mastery of the catapult was appreciated by all - apart from the elderly lady, in the fifth row, on whose lap the missile landed. Mind you his skills were not restricted to the catapult as at one stage Ray Bernard was seen to be frantically closing his uke case to protect his uke from a well directed jet from Dennis's water pistol!

During the three hour show only one song was repeated. This is excellent, as the show is quite spontaneous and it a credit to our performers who are all the time learning new material for the entertainment of the audience. Performers are, however, especially requested NOT to perform medleys of popular Formby songs as this often duplicates songs which our "Up and Comers" are waiting to perform. It can be a disappointment after practising a number for a few weeks to find somebody performs it in a medley. Of coarse this is a hazard that all performers face but if we can take this point on board we can cut down the chances of it happening to somebody.

BOAT TRIP - It was announced that the Boat Trip on the River Dee has been again requested and arrangements have been made for a trip on Saturday June 10th at 7.30. We had a great time last year. More details page 5.

CONTINUED - The M.C. for the night was Carl Basford who was supported on this occasion by Pamela Baddeley. Special thanks once again to those who donated raffle prizes which of great help to the society. Thanks too to everyone who helps in any way to make our meetings so successful. The evening concluded with a thrash and it was good to have with us on stage one of our keenest supporters Ashley Caldicott who thoroughly enjoyed being amongst the music and taking part. Brian Edge. *Thank you Brian - I am shocked! - yes shocked! that the Chairman of the GFS should resort to encouraging variety acts in the North West. Any more of this and we'll have him splashed all over the Vellum. SHAME!*



Jon Baddeley's report on Stanley Matthews and George.

I was fortunate to meet the great man. "Call me Stan" he said and I'm pleased to say that one of my prized possessions is a photo of both of us together. He really was the modest person I've ever met.

I've just bought his biography "The Way It Was" in which there are two references to George. Firstly, to celebrate the winning of the FA Cup in 1953 a dance took place at the Tower Ballroom on April 15th. About 3000 paid four shillings each to meet the team and enjoy the entertainment provided by George Formby, Richard Stinker Murdoch, Norman Evans and Frank Randle.

Secondly, as the Blackpool team was leaving to go to Wembley, Stan remembered thinking that 1953 would be Blackpool's year to win the Cup because it was Coronation Year, Mount Everest was going to be attempted and Blackpool's own George Formby was Britain's number one entertainment star.

Thank you Jonathan. Terribly sorry to hear that you have been under the weather lately. Hope all goes well with you.

Remembering The Past - In Warrington last year they had

a "History Of The World" activity when scenes were played in various period costumes relating to events that have taken place over the past 100 years or so, up to the Millennium Year. During the 1930/40s period they paraded through the Warrington Cemetery and came across a George Formby leaning against a lamp post and playing a uke. They found the George Formby scene so interesting that they are considering doing the same again, this summer, with a genuine GF player. Last week they collared Anthony Mason for another activity. He had to walk round the town in a Lion's skin and growling at everybody. He kept it quiet so I wouldn't film him. I'll bet he looked a right berk!

Penyffordd - April Meeting by our star reporter: Cliff Royle. What an attendance. Not a special meeting, yet some 80 people came to enjoy an excellent evening, well supported as usual by our friends from Crewe, and many visitors both old and new whose support we really appreciate.

There were a number of new/unusual acts. Brian Wright did a couple of novelty songs in his usual "melodious" voice (his playing has really improved); John Croft also provided vocal renditions with uke accompaniment; Jim Knight, more or less recovered from his bout of illness, showed his hidden talent on the keyboard; and Brian Edge rendered the lovely song "Honolulu Baby", accompanied by a gorgeous dancer (Lesley Lee) dressed in a grass skirt, and one or two other little items. Her talents were viewed with interest.

Then there were the Banjo Players Stan Watkinson and Bernard Jones (from nearby New Brighton) who both played in different styles. Stan with his old time melodies and jokes, and Bernard with his rousing Irish songs.

However just to show that the ukes were not to be outdone Ray Bernard played some great Solos, including the Donkey Serenade. And Alison Nadin (a lady of many talents) gave her very first uke solo on stage by playing one of Frankie's original compositions.

Our young players Frank Murphy and Stephen Ensall played well, finishing the evening with a duet. Both seem recently to have changed their hair styles. Is this the secret of success?

We often have a good mix of entertainment, and this evening was no exception for Brian Ensall sang a couple of songs, as did Ken Han from Stockport who are both good singers. Alan Chenery sang George's "The Old Back Room Upstairs" which perhaps brought back back memories of our younger years.

Margaret Royle has returned to the fold after a partial recovery

CONTINUED . . . following an accident, but I'm sorry to say that Dennis Lee and Geoff Shone are both a little under the weather. Hope they get well soon. Then Les Watkinson "Our Kid" to brother Stan, fell and damaged his hand. I am also worried about recent acquired keyboard player Charlie Morrison who I have unable to contact for some time..

However to somewhat brighter news. The day after the meeting Margaret and I went to see Liz Whittaker (wife of Alan who passed away a year ago). She is in good health, sends her regards to everyone and hopes she will be able to visit Penyffordd again before long. Transport is her problem. Alan's uke still stands by the fireplace, where it is always kept. A sad reminder of happier days. The GFS and his uke were his passion and kept him going during the final years of his life. Cliff Royle.

Thank you Cliff. Another excellent report from the pen of the master. I'm very pleased that Liz Whittaker is bearing up and I shall never forget the dedication she had in helping Alan in his wheelchair on the French Trip. And what about Margaret bouncing back like a rubber ball. Wonderful!!!!

Jon Baddeley is looking for the following George Formby 78

rpm records:-

DOMINION

All Going Back / In The Congo C347

DECCA

As The Hours and the Days / With My Little Ukulele F3615

REGAL ZONOPHONE

Hitting The High Spots/I Can Tell it by Horoscope, Australian G23742

Low Down Lazy Turk/Lancashire Hot Pot Swingers Australian G23917

Trailer/ Keep Your Seats Please 1R51

Trailer/Keep Fit 1R52

COLUMBIA

Our Sergeant Major/ They Can't Fool Me DD444

CASSETTES

The Best Of George Formby TC EXE 145

The World Of George Formby Vol2

The Man With The Ukulele (Double Cassette)

CARTRIDGE

The Best Of George Formby

If you have any of these you can ring Jon on 01782 680587

Did You Spot Eve Stewart on the centre pages? Well Eve is the tall and lanky one fourth from the left.

Don't Forget Blackpool's Music Live on May 29th

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

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DON'T FORGET TO WRITE IN

