

THE NORTH - WEST

GEORGE FORMBY

Newsletter 62

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Specially Produced for George Formby Fans
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Welcome to Newsletter No.62

Well June and July were certainly hectic months with all the meetings and summer shows and we've more lined up for August.

CHILDREN'S HOSPICE - We were invited to do a few spots at the Jordan Stevenson Summer Ball which was organised to raise funds for The Claire House Children's Hospice. Teresa and Steve Stevenson, who recently lost their young son with brain tumour, ran the event. Unfortunately we had to decline from appearing when we discovered that it was mainly pop stuff which didn't blend in with our type of entertainment. However we suggested that to aid the Hospice we would be pleased to put on a show at some other time.

At the **SOUTHPORT SHOW** Jim Hindley who is Secretary of The Temperance Society, collected £115, which normally goes to Alder Hey Children's Hospital, so it was appropriate on this occasion that the £115 should go to Claire House Hospice. The cheque was paid to Teresa & Steve Stevenson of 86 Lander Close, Warrington WA5 5PL Tel. 01925 571376. In total Teresa & Steve raised £2600 on the two functions.

Jeff Formby Booth is struggling with his health. When he stayed with us here in Penketh, early June, he had an usual lump on the top of his head. His doctor didn't show much concern, but soon after arriving back home he lost the use of his left arm and Christine immediately arranged for him to go into hospital. A couple of days later he was unable to walk. Jeff is in Ward 15 of The General Hospital, Milton Keynes.

Our thoughts are with you Jeff and we sincerely hope that you are handling the job OK. Keep that stiff upper lip. Best wishes and love to Christine.

Young Gareth Sumner has just won first prize (£50) in a competition at Coppenhall High School. The function was held to raise funds for Hope House Hospice. Good for you Gareth. We are very pleased for you.

S.O.S - At the Southport Show did anyone accidentally pick up a small box about 5" x 2" x 1" with a short wire attached? This is part of a radio mike and without it the mike is unusable. If you can throw any light on the disappearance please give me a ring. Stan Evans.

MANY THANKS TO ALL WHO CONTRIBUTED TO THIS ISSUE

The Formby Story

Part 51 by Stan Evans

After George's death Pat Howson put the whole of his estate up for sale but removed a number of items before the auction and took them to Sotheby's possibly hoping that they would realise far more than they would in Blackpool.



George's auction was held in a marquee

Rex Blaker, a George Formby collector, attended the auction and purchased three ukulele banjos, plus a wooden ukulele which once belonged to George's songwriter, Eddie Latta. Eddie was also the Liverpool undertaker who conducted George's funeral. Rex met with a tragic death which was reported in many newspapers. He had been involved with the underworld and the Sheffield police staged a major campaign to hunt down his killers.

I became involved when I rang the police to ask the whereabouts of Rex's George Formby memorabilia. The enquiry was immediately put through to the Chief Detective handling the case who fired a barrage of questions. I couldn't understand why he was so aggressive until I realised that he was thinking that I was one of the underworld gang. I started sweating and wishing I'd never phoned the cop shop.

After a while he eased off - realising I wasn't crafty enough to be a gang member, and gave me the name of Blaker's lady solicitor. "WHAT" she shouted, don't talk to me about George Formby's stuff. I'm fed up with those auctioneers. "

It was getting to be quite a job searching out George's items and I was beginning to think that maybe it wasn't a good idea after all. After she'd calmed down she gave me the name of the auctioneers and I rang them. "Thank goodness you've rung" cried Arthur Pickering, who was the manager at the Easdon, Lockwood and Riddle converted church showrooms. "We've been trying to contact you so that your society will have the opportunity to bid for George Formby's items. Come down here as soon as you can and we'll do your society a great favour.

Without delay Eva & I shot down to the showroom where they were waiting for us. Only a few hours earlier there had been quite a bit of tension caused by Blaker's London friend who was claiming that Rex had left all his estate to him (agreed by the solicitor). "Not so" said Arthur, "you can have the railway items and nothing more." They gave him the railway stock and then escorted him through the large doors. For the next few hours he made a lot of noise banging on the doors but they refused to open them. "Now" said Arthur, "After all our work holding on to George memorabilia we want you to do us a favour." - "What's that" I asked him. "Before the auction we want you to put on a short concert." "No problem," I said, and the media immediately got wind of the GFS interest.

Altogether 19 items of George's were lotted: Sheet Music, Cine Films, Photos, records 78s, three Uke Banjos and Eddie Latta's Gibson Ukulele along with a letter saying: "On this Gibson Ukulele I composed my songs for George Formby, Eddie Latta. More Next Month.

North Wales Special by Young Cliff Royle

At the request of Kevin Blanchfield we were asked to perform at the "Royal British Legion Millennium Muster and Service of Thanksgiving." Kevin's job is of course looking after the RBL North Wales in respect of Fund Raising and looking after individual ex-Service Men and Women who need help. What a day it was, very hot and sunny, and a great occasion in the superb location of the Arena. The Muster involved many aspects of military life. A fly past of RAF planes, a helicopter carrying the British Legion Poppy Flag, and a large procession of Service people, both present and past. Included in the procession

were the Bands of the Royal Welsh Regiment lead by their Mascot, a beautiful white goat, and a Prince of Wales Divisional Branch. There were hundreds of Service Personnel and cadets, and even greater numbers of ex-service people accompanied them.

There was singing by the Trelawnyd Male Voice Choir, and a short service of Remembrance followed by The Last Post played by a lone bugler on the ramparts of the Arena. It was a very impressive occasion; some thousands of people being present. A dozen or so members played two sessions, before and after the main event, to some hundreds of the public who either sought shelter from the sun or sat in the open and survived roasting temperatures, and a fresh "desert" style wind.

You may guess what the conditions were like for the First Aid people were continually going round and asking if everyone was all right and if they wanted drinks - water of course. The conditions also caused us a few problems for in addition to the heat the wind blew hats off and wafted the backing and our singing and playing at times.

I received some slagging off about being improperly dressed (no, only the wrong coloured trousers) and for appearing late on the stage. All was forgiven when it was discovered that the time of the start of the second performance had been changed on the last minute. So don't believe anything ever said about me. Someone who shall be nameless moved a seat with a Uke on it which resulted in Jim Knight picking up the wrong uke and playing in the wrong key.

Later we were invited to the home of Jean, Alison and Frankie Woods. Many played in the swimming pool and then relaxed in the garden enjoying cakes, strawberries and cream. The occasion was rounded off with more uke playing. Thanks a lot to our friends in Marine Drive. *Thank you Cliff. Don't worry about your scruffy attire. The star of the show often dresses differently for recognition!*



Sheila keeps Cliff in tune

Laugh Your Socks off with Cliff's Jokes.

A man went into Tesco's in Mold and picked up some cheese. On asking the assistant if it was Wenslydale the reply came, "No it is Tuesday."

We've got em laughing Cliff!

A member who played regularly at a GFS meeting always only played one song. His excuse was that he never had time to play a second one. Subsequently it transpired he had bladder problems.

They are howling Cliff!

My wife is very poorly, she's really unsteady, in fact I have to carry her downstairs to make my breakfast.

They are rocking in the aisles Cliff!

A Yorkshire man had been staying in London for a week with his Lancashire friend who had paid all his expenses. When it came to the departure at Euston Station the Lancashire chap offered to buy a parting drink. The Yorkshire man declined saying that this was unfair since his friend had been so kind during the week he could not accept further hospitality. He therefore proposed they should toss a coin to see who should pay. *Oh Cliff, you've blown it now lad! There'll be letters heading this way from our Yorkshire readers. Ken Smith will be fuming! I'm having nothing to do with it.*

Internet Auction

- Bob Muirhead is correct when he claims that the Ebay Auction, on the Internet, brings good prices. I've just noticed and original song sheet of George's "If I Had A Girl Like You" and with still five days to go the price bid is £8.

Anthony Mason Reports

- Whilst working on the Bingo job a lady came and told me that they had found a trophy from 1912 which was awarded by Mrs George Formby (Eliza). She said that she will bring it along and give it to me. Anthony has just done a Blackpool show for - - you'll never guess! - for the Deaf Society.

Radio 4 . .

Eve and Charles Stewart had the Channel 4 Radio at their house recently and was interviewed giving their opinion of George and the old time entertainers. They have been informed that the show will be broadcast on Wednesday the 2nd August at around 4pm.

ITV

- Did you watch HOTEL GET AWAY - July 15th? Our episode should be about number four or five so keep watching. And watch for dear, late, Denis Gale in the opening shot of our entry into the hotel. Actually the first episode was very good. In ours the hotel owner is a George Formby fanatic who expects his guests to be just as enthusiastic. 20 of us walk in the hotel playing ukes.

Paul (Cat In a Bag) Woodhead writes ... NEWS

FROM SHROPSHIRE - Well Stan, I did my bit for BBC Music Live. The concert went very well. It was in the bandstand in the park at Telford but needless to say it rained just before I came on so we all got soaked.

This was the programme: Mr Hitler, Goodbye Dolly Grey, Siegfried Line, Ma I Miss Your Apple Pie, Frank On His Tank, I Blew A Little Blast, Isle of Man, Put Another Log On The Fire, Singing The Blues, Mam Don't Allow, Cleaning Windows, Blackpool Rock and Leaning On A Lamp Post.



Recently I joined Malcolm Palmer who runs the Stourbridge meeting to entertain the Arthritic Society in Leominster, Hertfordshire. We put on a one hour act which was very well received, so much so that we have been asked back. I was amazed that many of them knew the words to Put Another Log On The Fire. What a lively bunch! We even found a spoons player in the audience who helped us on percussion and as it was held in a school for disabled children the caretaker found me a box of maracas, eggs, rattles and the like which I was able to distribute in the ranks. They may have had arthritis but none of them were stiff.

On Saturday 24th June I am booked to play in "All Around The Wrekin" The Wrekin is a well known hill in Shropshire, near Telford. "AATW" is a festival of music and drama which culminates in hundreds of people joining hands, all around the foot of the hill. I, like all other performers have a 20 minute spot on Saturday afternoon in the main musical.

I am now involved in something called "Tunes From Trenches". Bishops Castle Community College has received a Lottery Grant to set up a national archive of wartime songs. Not the mainstream stuff but rather the "alternative" words the troops put to the songs. The group comprises branches of the British Legion and Shropshire singers and musicians, in all about 15 of us, though some represent branches or clubs of many more people.

S.O.S for SONGS - In November we put on at least one concert of the material we have gathered. If any of your readers have actual "alternative" words to either GF songs or World War 1 and 2 songs I would love to know and I can contribute it to the archive. Additionally any lesser known songs or forgotten verses would be most welcome. Paul Woodhead on Tel/Fax 01952 598840 or Email: paulw@simpop.com *Many thanks Paul. Colonel Bogey comes to mind which goes something like "***** and the same to you." That goes down well. I'll bet war veteran Jim Bramwell knows a lot of those songs.*

Be Warned - If ever you are asked to entertain at an Old Folks Home or Day Centre make sure that you get there in time and well before the starting time. Jim Bramwell and I were booked to put on a show at a Day Centre and due to some confusion (when various staff members kept sending us to the wrong door to unload the equipment) we were late in setting up. It was possibly the hottest day of the year and we'd lost about a stone in weight just unloading - then loading - then unloading again the car. We walked into this large packed room and everybody gave a yell because we'd arrived. These people - bless em - are governed to do everything on time and were relieved when we walked in lugging all our equipment.

We always take the full set of equipment because you don't know for sure just how big the room is. As we walked in the room we were sweating cobs and ready for dropping with the heat. All the seats and wheelchairs were set out in huge circles and we were to perform in the centre of the room. The beauty about being old is that you don't sweat even on hot days and I didn't notice a bead of sweat on any of them. Jim & I however were pouring buckets.

Have you ever tried setting up amplifiers, mikes, huge heavy speakers and loads of cable etc. with about a 100 pairs of eyes following you all round the room, watching every move? After finding the power plug, which was buried beneath loads of old LPs and stacks of tapes etc. we searched in vain for a table to put the amplifier on. One of the staff shouted, "I'll bring one, - back in five minutes," That five minutes wait seemed like hours as the same 100 pairs of eyes curiously wondered why we wasn't making a start. It was embarrassing to say the least. Jim consoled a few when he went round with his mint balls.

The table arrived but it was only 12 inches high from the floor, in fact it was a foot stool and far too low to operate an amplifier, especially in soaking wet clothes. We loaded 2 uke cases on the table to build up the height and plugged in the cables, - not a murmur came out of the speakers and our audience of 80 years old - plus - were showing concern that the coaches may be arriving soon to take them back. We were sweating more by now and Jim went round with another pocket full of mint balls. Suddenly, we had sound and there was a cheer.

You have to admire these nurses. They do a wonderful job tending to the needs of the old folk and after years of experience they've become hardened off to the job enabling them to be caring, but not over sympathetic. It's a gift they achieve. But I do wish they'd be a little more sensitive when we are performing. Jim would be delivering the punch line to his best joke when suddenly one of the nurses would shout, "Are you alright Nellie? Do you want to go to the toilet? For the next 2 minutes all eyes are on Nellie and poor Jim is stood in the middle of the room talking to himself.

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CONTINUED - Simple songs are the best for the old folk. "Side By Side" - "Show Me The Way To Go Home" etc. are ideal. And we don't sing one song after another thinking that they are enjoying it. Not all the old folk enjoy listening to a constant stream of songs so we have a chat with them and take them down memory lane.

A good line is, "These kids today don't know they are born do they? We didn't have flush toilets in our days did we ladies? And we didn't have toilet rolls did we? Do you remember when we used to tear old newspapers up into 6 inch squares? We'd make a small hole in the corner to thread the string through, and the print was better in those days because it didn't come off all over you." - "We didn't have bathrooms in our days did we ladies?" - "We had a tin bath in the living room."

The main thing about entertaining the old folk is settling down and enjoying it. Don't expect perfection because you won't get it and don't worry if you play a duff chord or forget a few words because they are not in the least bothered. Best of luck with your performance. But do have a go, good experience.

Brian Kynaston handed me this little item at the Wintergardens.

"Yes We Have Bananas" was one of the craziest runners in the field of silly songs. Eddie Cantor came found it in 1923 whilst seeking new material for his show, "Make It Snappy" and sang chorus after chorus in the show, stopping the show for 15 minutes. It was based on the reply of a Greek fruit seller to a customer.

Young Cliff Royle says thanks for mentioning his vast improvement on stage in the last issue. He too thought he would never progress but gives thanks to Brian Edge and Dennis Lee for bullying him into having a go.

Charity Show - Lawrence Jones - who arranged for the Southport Show - is helping to organise a show to be held at The Talbot Hotel, Birkdale, near Southport on Thursday November 9th. It is in aid of the RNLi (Royal Naval Lifeboats) and is called, "Remembering The Greats" - George being one of them.

Uke For Sale. Alan Newton on 01270 664538 has a Wendall Hall banjo uke copy which he purchased 2 years ago. It has a Savage & Hoy fitted case and the price is £450. Give Alan a ring if interested (or the uke can be seen at Penyffordd or Wistaston) and please mention that you read it in the N. West Newsletter. Bar Gum.

Nick Saunders trip to the Isle Of Man is from Friday the 1st Sept to Sunday the 3rd Sept and the price is £98, which includes Return Ferry from Liverpool, Hotel, Coach Trip round the isle. A deposit of £25 each is required, made payable to Discovery Travel. More info from Nick at 2 Balla Keyll, Colby, I.O.M. IM9 4AY and the phone number is 01624 835481.

Sale Report by Margaret Moran. Stan

Laurel was born in Ulverston, on this day, 16th June 1890 and for our concert Stan's partner, Oliver Hardy would have said, "Another fine concert Stanley. And it certainly was!

After the usual group thrash, Eddie Bamford got us off to a fine start and Arthur Newton, who wife Mary has been under the weather lately, gave us, "I wish I was back on the farm."

It was grand to see the party of four from over the Yorkshire border. Lionel Owen was Out In The Middle East (well he would be in Sale wouldn't he) and a fez dance by Paul Mountain and Les Pearson needed to be seen to be believed. Ken Smith had em all laughing with two good sing-along spots and I noticed that behind the bar the girls were doing a dance as well as singing.

We were delighted to see Ashley Caldicott along with mum and dad, Angela and Philip, who had travelled from Market Drayton to be with us. Ashley certainly enjoyed the night and showed it by dancing and showing his broad smile. We have never seen him so happy as he danced to the strains of Walter Kirkland and his bones.

Many thanks to Alan Southworth for bringing his sound equipment and for his usual polished performance, - I liked his joke! Thanks to Alan's right hand man, Dick Eaves, and Ivy and the girls on the door. Les Pearson stood in as co-compere, while Cyril is on holiday, and Stan Evans finished the night in grand style. *Thank you Margaret, and we all enjoyed your little, but important contribution to the night. Sounding more like Deanna Durbin every month!!!*

Good News from Australia - As reported previously Beryl Eissens was a record presenter on Australian Radio (all the oldies) but after the station was taken over by another company they decided to concentrate on modern pop stuff and Beryl's old time stuff was no longer required. Anyway they were not beaten - no way! - because they are now forming a group with a view to taking over the station. And if they are successful George will be back on the turntable. We wish you all the very best Beryl and keep us informed on any progress. Perhaps we can help with any GF songs you require.

FORMBY FIND IS GIFT FOR CHARITY

By CHARLES GRAHAM

AN historic signed photograph of George Formby's father has turned up at a Wigan charity shop.

The sepia-edged picture dating from the First World War is now being put up for auction to raise money for the organisation that found it.

Music hall enthusiasts and historians are expected to seize on the rarity which was found among bric-a-brac donated to the Lourdes Association charity shop on Wigan Lane.

Measuring roughly the same as an A4 sheet of paper, the 84-year-old print shows George Formby Snr at the peak of his own fame as a national celebrity.

Auction for historic photo

In his prime as a music hall singer and comedian, he was almost as famous as his film star son, although he is really only remembered these days for his classic jokes about Wigan Pier - gags which a lifetime later would turn into a multi-million-pound tourist attraction.

He died in 1921 aged only 45 while performing on stage but the name was more than kept going by junior who, up to then had been a jockey.

The Formbys lived together in the now demolished Westminster Street close to Central Park although they moved nearer

to Warrington when George Jnr was still a boy.

Bidding

Maureen Sharkey, chairwoman of the Wigan Lourdes Association, said: "We had a box full of all-sorts delivered and we immediately spotted this large, photograph bearing the inscription 'George Formby, with thanks 1916.'

"We knew it was something special and now intend to auction it. I am sure it has a reasonably high collectible value, especially locally as the Formbys were Wigan resi-



AMAZING FIND: John Nolan, Vice Chairman of the Wigan Lourdes Association, with the signed George Formby picture



Fred Harrison, Earlestown Theatre manager who gave George his first break. I've often wondered what Fred looked like. Quite a character he would patrol up and down the theatre queues shouting, "There's a box of chocolates under every seat."

dents. We will keep the bidding open until we think we have got the best price.

"Anyone interested should ring the Wigan Lane shop on (01942) 619996.

Len Hudson, Wigan Metro photographic archivist and expert, said: "The very size of the picture is unusual for that time and although George Formby Snr is not as famous as his son these days, it could fetch any price."

Stan Evans, editor of the George Formby Society's regional news letter, said: "There is not perhaps as much interest in George Snr as his son but this is an interesting find all the same."

The Lourdes Association funds trips to the French village famous for its healing waters and 'miracles.'

Alan Newton met an old RAF pal recently who told him that whilst serving in Beruit he was paddling in the sea when a stranger came and starting paddling with him. He was amazed because the stranger turned out to be George Formby. He didn't recall George putting on a show so he couldn't understand why he was in the area.

Jim Bramwell & I did another old folks home a few days ago and all went very well. The staff were great on this occasion, with no interruptions, but one of the carers would insist on pushing a lady about in a wheelchair with a squeaky wheel. It was quite off-putting as the squeak was in the wrong key and the beat of the squeak was either too fast or too slow for the songs we were singing. Next time we go we'll take an oilcan.

Just received a nice parcel in the post from Beryl Eissens of Australia. The parcel contained 30 clinging Koala Bears - no not real ones! - and a note asking for them to handed out to our members. No problem Beryl and we trust you had a pleasant trip back home. We wish you tons of success with your Radio Station. Perhaps when you are established you will send a tape of your radio show. Thanks for the bears. Best Wishes.

Crewe-sing Down The River!

The Crewe Branch's Boat trip, well supported by the members of the Penyfordd and Sale Branches, had a delightful evening aboard the "Mark Twain" showboat on the lovely river Dee recently.

Over sixty embarked on the gorgeous evening and we explored about eight miles up stream soaking in the scenery, having a good old thrash on the uke, and enjoying a nice meal. There was a well stocked bar which enabled everyone to adequately oil their vocal cords. Everyone agreed it was a very memorable excursion. Thanks to Brian and Connie for the arrangements and to Colin and Alan for bringing the sound equipment along.

Who drank Ashley's pop? at the Crewe Meeting

Local residents Mr and Mrs Williams along with Les Mason and his partner attended the Crewe Branch for the first time. They were warmly welcomed by a very smartly turned out M.C. Carl Basford. We hope we will see them again at future concerts. Carl was ably assisted on the night by Peter and Joan Cain who set the evening's programme which turned out to be a nicely balanced concert.



Mary & Arthur Newton. Mary has been under the weather lately.

Des Redfern took over the sound engineer's job for most of the night as both our sound engineer's were unable to attend. Thanks Des. The George Formby society chairman Dennis Lee and our own Alan Newton both performed outstandingly. The former with "Lancashire Toreador" and "T.T Races" and Alan with "You Can't Love Two Girls at the Same Time" and "If I Had a Girl Like You". The latter being a new number for Alan.

At the practice session earlier in the week the members were asked to add new numbers to their repertoires in an effort to keep up the standard of our concerts.

Alison gave another impressive vent act with two excellent dummies and some very funny patter. Yours truly gave a contribute to two artistes who due to disability are no longer able to take the stage to entertain us. The first being that fine uke performer, magician and puppeteer, Frankie Wood. The audience heard Frankie performing his excellent composition "My Girlfriend Plays a Ragtime Piano" and this was followed by a tribute to Sam Bass who was in the words of the famous musical publisher Lawrence Wright the best George Formby impersonator in the 1950's. The tribute for Sam came with an excerpt from a 1968 B.B.C Radio production of an old time music hall show where Sam performed "I Wish I Was Back On The Farm". *Many Thanks Brian.*

Trevor Colley and Ann Dando who always go out of their way to join in the fun turned up as a couple of cricketers. Trevor performed Blackpool rock and Ann gave a solo. Connie performed her new song "Keep fit" and had Lesley Lee doing her physical jerks in the aisle!

Glenys Huntington gave us an impressive big band trumpet solo her performance always being the highlight of the show. It was great to have Bill Turner on stage again. Bill has the remarkable knack of looking younger every time we see him, perhaps he will let us into his secret?

Special thanks to Colin for taking time of work to set up the sound system for us and indeed to everyone who helped in any way during the evening especially in clearing up after the show - The hardest job of all.

Finally my sincere apologies to Ashley Caldicott for drinking his pop whilst thinking it was my own!! I was very embarrassed about it and whilst Ashley was quite shocked at such effrontery he had a good laugh in the end and really saw the funny side of the incident. The moral of the story is - keep off Ashley's pop!

Blackpool Meeting. The meeting at the Cricket Club was well attended and, although short in players, we had another grand night. The evening of entertainment started with Charles experimenting with the sound system by adding a touch of echo to the voices. It wasn't too bad for the singers but poor Jim Bramwell was once again robbed of his laughs when, as he was delivering his jokes, the punch lines would come out as one long muffle, and poor Jim was wondering why no-one laughed, - apart from those who had heard the joke before that is.

The Cricket Club is a wonderful little venue with good atmosphere and plenty of co-operation from the staff. It is well worth the visit and especially for those who normally have difficulty getting on stage. You can get up and sing your heart out at Blackpool. Hey! And Eve and the ladies always put on a fine spread.

Continued . . . We reported last month that Connie Edge and Alice Cronshaw were struggling trying to find a toilet in Chester. Well this month we have a similar tale about Brian Edge who was desperate to find a toilet in Southport. Brian & Connie spotted a Coffee Shop so it was planned that Connie would have a coffee while Brian used the toilet. "Good idea" said Connie, and in they went. "One coffee please" said Brian, "And do you mind if I use your toilet?" - "We've run out of coffee" said the assistant, "And the toilets are not working!"



A Good Buy!

Our shows are improving by the month and we are attracting a bigger variety of musical instruments. drums, saxophone, trumpet, bass guitar etc. all of which are blending in very well. Well how's this



for an idea? A company by the name of Bright Life UK, Harrington Dock, Liverpool L70 1AX or Tel. No. 0151 709 8909 is offering a set of 5 mouth organs which are set in 5 different keys: A C D F and G and the quality is extremely good especially as the full set of 5 are only £12. 94 inc. postage.

On the left side of the blowing area there are 3 holes which are used for chords only and the other 7 holes are the scales of each key. Almost like playing a uke. George, as a youngster enjoyed playing a mouth organ to the horses at his stables so I suppose it would be appropriate for us to introduce mouth organs into our shows. Like the uke one could learn to accompany just by blowing the chords.

Penketh Carnival.

Many thanks to Des Redfern, John Sheeve and Stan Watkinson for joining in with the Penketh Carnival fun. It rained all day but we don't mind that because the crowds take cover under our marquee to give us a larger audience. Our concerts usually begin at 2.30pm, 3.30pm and 4.30pm but Des got things swinging half an hour earlier for a bonus.



But what a surprise when Stan Watkinson's wife, Barbara, took the stage and harmonised with Stan. They sounded really great! As usual John Shreeve gave a brilliant performance using his own backing tapes which he's produced only the night previous. Des Redfern is a tremendous support on these occasions, - he has quite a large repertoire of songs from pop to Formby. Penketh holds a special place for Des because some 5 years back he made his debut there and stood on stage completely embarrassed having forgotten every word. However, he's now a star player with wonderful timing.

Des Redfern

Uke For Sale

- Old time magician (now 90) Bill Turner of 336 Hornby Street, Bury has a John Grey uke banjo for sale and the price is the best offer over £75. Bill's number is 0161 797 7674. If you pay him a visit be prepared to stay for an hour or two while he shows you a few tricks. And don't forget to tell him that you read it in the N. West Newsletter.

Southport - Sorry we couldn't notify everybody about the Southport event but it was all vague until Lawrence Jones came back off holiday. However it all turned out very well apart from trouble with two mikes that refused to work, - which was a mystery because when tested back home they worked perfectly.



Lawrence Jones

We arrived at the front of the Southport Town Hall at 1.30pm and the council staff were extremely helpful. Within a few minutes they'd brought out a large master control board and after plugging in we were alive with the sound of music. We'd received some publicity on the radio so loads of folk started to gather round. Good old singalongs were belted out loud and the crowds (seated at least 50 yards away all round the perimeter) all joined in.

SWEATING - The singalong tape went on for about an hour but the crowds were wondering why the George Formby players weren't striking up. The problem was that Dennis Lee had been held up with heavy traffic and he was bringing the Concert Script backing tape. What a relief when he turned up!!!



Billy Uke Scott (centre) looking extremely well for his 78 years.

Our thanks to all who turned up on the day - far too many to mention but Crewe, North Wales, Liverpool and Sale were represented and what a nice surprise when Billy (Uke) Scott came along. Also another ex-pro stage entertainer, Frankie Woods, who is one of our N. Wales members.

and an over enthusiastic bunch of macho men joined in shouting for "MORE". Two of them gave a dance in the centre and one cheeky dare devil dropped his trousers and danced out of the arena, - all too fast for me to take a photo, but I'll get him next time.

We received endless comments from the older folk, who were delighted, and the council reps enjoyed it so much they are considering a special event.

Our performance lasted from 3pm to 4.30pm when the Salvation Army Band took over. With regret the crowds wandered off and left the poor band with about three listeners.

THE STREAK - Considering the crowds were so far away from the players the sound came over very well



HAPPY TIMERS - For the forthcoming Pro-shows we must tidy up our act. We are sloppy! Alan looks as if he is waiting for the next train while Connie, one of our glamour girls, has disappeared completely. We must snuggle together more and form nice neat rows. What about a standard dress outfit? - YES!!!!

Blackpool

has lost another member. Joe and Lucy Jackson were regulars at the monthly meeting until illness overtook Joe. Sadly he has passed on. Joe was a Dunkirk Veteran and at his funeral there were 12 Standards to pay respect. Thanks for the information Charles. Unfortunately I haven't a photo of Joe.

Haven't

heard a word from Bob Drinkwater for months. Are you OK Bob. Give me a ring.

Jeff Booth

had just taken over as secretary of the Ukulele Soc of GB and now he's laid up in hospital. It's a harsh world!



STOCKBROKER Derek Williams-Freeman (above), 58, drives a 50-year-old Silver Wraith Rolls-Royce once owned by his boyhood idol, George Formby (inset). He bought it for £3,400 28 years ago and has insured it for £60,000. He is single and lives in London and Hampshire. Derek says:

WHEN I bought my car in 1972, I had no idea the Rolls-Royce had a celebrity past.

I was looking for a model from the Forties or Fifties so I didn't hesitate to hand over £3,400 — my annual bonus — even though I could see the engine needed lots of work.

Up to then, I had driven Minis. The only time I had sat at the wheel of a luxury car was when a friend let me drive his Bentley, so buying the Rolls was a dream come true.

The car's history came to light six years ago when I sent off its chassis cards after I had restored it. I was flabber-



gasted when the name George Formby OBE came back on the records. He bought it from new in 1950 and owned it for a couple of years.

I was over the moon because he had been my schoolboy hero. I would love to know some stories from those days. If only the walnut dashboard could speak.

Day-to-day, I use a BMW for getting around and the Rolls stays in the garage. I use it for special occasions, such as friends' weddings, and I love telling people about its past.

I don't know how much it is worth. A motorbike owned by Formby recently fetched £14,000. But I'd never sell the Rolls. To me, it's priceless.

Burtonwood Carnival is being held on Monday 28th August at 1.30pm. Anyone interested can come along. Also at night we have the Blackpool monthly meeting so it is going to be a busy Monday.

Just received a phone call claiming that there is a picture in the Daily Mail of a scarecrow that has been made to represent George Formby. If we can get hold of a copy we'll have it in the next issue. George keeps hitting the news!

Young Cliff Royle Reports on Penyffordd -

Another GREAT meeting!!! Almost a full house, and it was rumoured that we ran out of pasties. Apparently we are getting more and more residents of Penyffordd coming to see us at their excellent British Legion Club and the Legion really do us proud.



Geoff and Dolwen Shone, best pastie warmer uppers in the country.

Dennis Lee struggles every month to get all the audio gear and heavy speakers there and set up. It is quite a job so he has recently spent a considerable amount of time trying to simplify thing by hooking in to the existing system at the club, and although he got things working perfectly in the afternoon, a few minor problems developed during the evening. However it was a good "do" in spite of the hiccups - with 25 turns in all, ably introduced by Jim Murphy.

We had the usual Formby songs, none of which by some miracle were repeated, from both our members and those from Crewe. Then we had the more unusual acts from Brian Edge and Gerald Jones from Llandudno Junction with his usual jokes twiddly playing and mouth organ recital. It may not have been noticed that young Frank Murphy seemed to be putting in a lot of very fancy strokes, is his dad training him?

We had a couple of speciality acts. Two excellent dancing performances by the Clifton Tappers. The first was a tap dance, and the second, following a costume change was a more modern dance in bare feet. There were seven dancers including Lesley Lee; what a talent this "young" virile lady has. Then as quite a change in tempo Alison Nadin performed her paper folding act to an accompaniment of rhyming poetry. It was excellent! How she remembers the way to fold the paper, never mind the words, is perhaps another miracle.

To end the evening we had both bad and good news. We are sorry to hear that Jeffrey Formby Booth is not too well. We wish him well and as soon as possible. However we are pleased that Liz Whittaker (wife of the late Alan) has obtained a Degree (BA) in Counselling and son Rick is now married and has a family. Frankie Woods, Jean and Alison have invited us back once more to a party cum "swimathon" at their home in Rhyl. How on earth do they put up with us?

May I comment on the confusion over the numbers (last issue) watching us at Chester. I think I was able to see more since I was standing on the first floor of the Rows, not at ground level. That's my story anyway. *Thanks again Cliff for your excellent and super report. Anyway I've just had an Email from Beryl Eissens from Australia and she can't wait to get back here Cliff to sort you out. " The very idea (last issue) that we turned up at Penyffordd together" she says. You've really blown it now Cliff! If you are thinking of leaving the country don't go to Australia.*

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

GF Song Books (Words and Chords) - I've just received a GF Song Book from the Society Shop and it is excellent. The book, which costs £10, contains 35 of George's songs and although the songs have previously been printed in the Vellum it is well worth buying if only to save photocopying. Possibly there will be a few more issues on the way so let's hope this tidies the song job up once and for all. It's not before time.

Tracy Dawson & Roly Poly Mo - When you

are next in Blackpool why not pay a visit to Tracy's new charity shop in Westcliffe Drive, Layton. She runs it along with roly poly Mo who was one of Les Dawsons dancing girls and their aim is to support Les's local charities including the NSPCC; MOSAC (Mothers of Sexually Children); Victoria Hospital Baby Care; Macmillan Nurses; Trinity Hospice Childrens Unit; Animal Rescue; Talking Newspaper for the Blind; Childline; Lady Taveners; Arthritis Care; and the Christie Cancer Group. They also support Children In Need organisations, so Tracy and Mo are doing a great job.

The items they sell are second-hand but in excellent condition and they wash and press items of clothing if required. The Charity Shop With A Difference is open Tuesday to Saturday from 10am to 4pm and donations of good as new quality and designer clothes are welcome.

Tracy, wife of the late Les Dawson is a good sport. Now and again she will turn up at the Blackpool monthly meeting and join in with the singing. Best of luck to them.



8th Army Reunion by Les Pearson - Margaret Moran &

I were invited to Norbreck Castle, Blackpool for the 8th Army Reunion, which was held on the 15th of June. About 300 war veterans were treated to this feast of entertainment which included a four piece band that played 40s music throughout the night. The highlight however was GFS member Paul Harper who did song and dance like James Cagney and performed like Max Wall and Max Miller, - not forgetting our George.

Paul has an amazing act: He sings "In The Fuhrer's Face" dressed in a long trench coat and a German helmet along with a dummy Hitler. Paul is assisted by 80 year old George Stephenson a veteran of the Long Range Desert Group.

When Margaret performed for the 8th Army Reunion in the Wintergardens Ballroom in 1989 approximately 2000 war veterans attended.

Trip To France - Flanders Fields - 15th June - 18th

June 2001 - Hotel provisionally booked in the centre of Lille. £160 each - £30 deposit per person upon booking. Own travel insurance essential. Details and booking form send s.a.e. to Colin Wood, Fir Lodge, 4 Claremont Road, Crewe CW2 7NL. Tel 01270 663558 or Alan Chenery on 01270 257085 evenings. *Thanks Colin & Alan. You are doing a good job but I hope you've hired a coach that matches up to our usual standards.*

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.

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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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