

THE NORTH - WEST

# GEORGE FORMBY

## Newsletter 63

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Specially Produced for George Formby Fans  
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## Welcome to Newsletter No.63 and

once again thank all who have contributed to this edition of the N -West Newsletter. In all our 5 years we have been very well supplied with articles, snippets, bits of fun etc. Thank you all.

**Jeff (Formby) Booth & Christine** wish to thank all the many members who sent in letters and cards wishing for Jeffrey's quick recovery. They were very much appreciated. Typical of the Formby pattern, Jeff enjoys being on centre stage and gets a great kick when mail arrives.

I took the journey to Milton Keynes on Wednesday the 2nd August and never have I seen such a transformation in a man. It was only five weeks previous that he and Christine were staying with us and we all attended the N. Wales meeting. He looked very normal apart from the angry looking lump on the top of his head. He and Christine intended returning again a week later to visit the Wintergardens meeting but after arriving home he lost the use of his left hand. Two days later he had difficulty walking and was taken into hospital. Alas poor Jeffrey was diagnosed as having a brain tumour which has caused complete upheaval in the Formby Booth household.



Jeffrey is now at home being attended by nurses who visit him three times each day. He is receiving no treatment. We all feel so terribly sorry that Jeffrey should have to suffer so. Life has dealt out a number of cruel blows to him which was caused by his parents splitting up. His father attempted to take him round the theatres, which meant no schooling, but eventually he was put in a Convent Home to be cared for. Eventually he lost trace of the Formby family.

**PERMANENT HOME** - When he joined the army he had his own bed for the first time and after leaving the army he worked as an electrical engineer on bus transport.

Back in 1991 Jeff rang me at the Warrington Exhibition and said that he was George's nephew and he'd written to various organisations asking the whereabouts of the family but without success. Jeff joined us at Warrington and has been a keen member of the society since. He has spent considerable time studying the internet and in turn has passed knowledge on to many members. Our thoughts go out to Jeff at his time of need.

# The Formby Story

Part 52 by Stan Evans

CONTINUED FROM LAST MONTH:

The air was filled with electric on the Sheffield auction day. The media had caught wind of George's items being for sale and they were all there in full force. About four lots a TV cameras were filming including Yorkshire's Calender TV and everybody was buzzing round with excitement. The main question thrown at us was, "What item will bring the highest bid?" to which the reply had to be "George's Ludwig uke banjo which he carried through the war campaign and used in his later films."



Lyndon Garvey, Anthony Mason, Mike Metcalfe and Yours Truly posing.

The auction started with a short concert by Mike Metcalfe and 15 year old Anthony Mason and the packed room gave a loud cheer. The wonderful sounds of "Lamp Post, Windows and Nightshirt" echoed through the high building and the auctioneer couldn't stop his feet tapping to the beat. One young man burst through the door, "Am I too late? I heard it announced on the car radio so I got down as quick as I could." Alan Randall walked through the door and added to the atmosphere. Bill Logan turned up and moaned all the way through the short concert, "What are those idiots doing there?" he grumbled. He was ignored by all who were enjoying the morning treat. Arthur Pickering, the auction manager said, Well we've had some sales here in this old church but never have we had one like this!"

The crowd was dotted with several GFS members all of whom were keen to see what the items brought. The GFS committee decided to buy some items so it was arranged that none of the members would take part in the bidding.

Lot 1. was a scrap album which brought £44. 60 inc vat.

Lot 2. was a copy of the No Limit script which brought £122.65 and by now we were aware that the prices would be high.

**GREAT ATMOSPHERE** - It was easy getting caught up in the excitement and after I'd bid for a quantity of George's old 78rpm records at £5 each I thought, "Why on earth did I bid so much?" I didn't even want them! Put the brakes on Stanley. Two 16 mm films, "I Didn't Do It" and "Off The Dole" brought £133 each and a small quantity of GF photos (one signed) brought £234. 15p. The time was near for the sale of the ukes and there was a hush creeping through the building. A lot of wispering was taking place as George's Dallas "D" marked "Old Coal Hole" was offered. **MORE NEXT MONTH.**

**Received a GF signed photo** for my collection from Albert Hunt recently. Albert is the widower of Hilda, a very keen George Formby fanatic who followed George from theatre to theatre. At the age of 15 she met him at the stage door and got his signed photo which she has treasured all these years. After the sad loss of Hilda, Albert said that he couldn't bear having too many memories of Hilda around the house so he sent the photo.

I feel it an honour to have received the photo which belonged to such a dedicated fan and will treasure it on her behalf. Albert tells me that Hilda was such a GF fanatic that she married Albert simply because he had similar looks to George.

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## Frankie, Jean and Alison wish

to thank all that came to the garden party on Sunday 30th July 2000, we hope you enjoyed it as much as we did. £200.00 was raised by the raffle and auction and this has been sent to the Stroke Association. The white roses and badges that were sold for cancer relief raised £40.00 and this will be matched pound for pound by Ladbrokes Bookmakers - Thank you all for your generosity.

We were certainly lucky with the weather so it must be true that the sun shines on the righteous. If you are ever in Rhyl you are always welcome to call and have a coffee and chat.

Best wishes, FRANKIE WOODS, JEAN & ALISON NADIN. *Sorry Eva & I couldn't make it. We had a hectic programme - plus the decorators at home - and we needed to save some time and energy to visit Jeffrey at Milton Keynes. Anyway we understand that you had a brilliant day and plenty turned up on the day. They've all been talking about it. Cheers, Stan.*



Alison and Frankie

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**Front Cover Photo** - The photo on the front of this issue is possibly the best of the lot. It portrays George as an ordinary man who could rub shoulders with just about anyone in the country. Here he is queuing up at the racecourse to put a bet on with the average punter, and we know for a fact that he and Beryl mixed with royalty. What did Rudyard Kipling write: "If you can walk with Kings nor lose the common touch." What a great man he was.

There is one nice little story in Warrington of when this person saw a Rolls Royce car stop outside a local fish and chip shop and who should step out of the car but George who went inside and waited his turn to get served. Apparently George loved his fish and chips and he was also a great lover of curry. The hotter the better. Fame didn't turn George's head.

# George's 40th Anniversary - Big things are

being planned for next year -George's 40th. The following news is subject to alteration and you will be kept up to date as it develops

**EXHIBITION** - We are planning putting on a George Formby Exhibition at Wigan Pier (George's birth town) for about 10 days leading up to a GF Concert. Negotiations are going on with Wigan Pier, along with the Wigan Council, and news of this will be published in the next issue. Up to now Warrington have been very helpful in offering to loan us the items from the 1991 GF exhibition.



Alongside Wigan Pier

**CONCERT** - A Variety Show (revolving around George) will be staged at the Wigan Pier Theatre on Saturday the 28th of April.

**GUINNESS BOOK OF WORLD RECORDS** - We are planning setting up a record of having the largest number of uke banjo players in one group. This will be held at the Winter Gardens, Blackpool during the September Meeting. The plan is to notify all members, plus all our lost members, of the event and ask if they will learn the three songs which will be used for the occasion: "Lamp Post" - "Blackpool Rock" and "It's In The Air" (All in "C") which are easy songs to play. We will also be asking players to teach their family members to also learn to play and sing the three songs, which of course will help to swell the numbers. Dickie Speake has produced a backing tape for this and news of distribution of the tape and song sheet will follow soon.

One condition states that all taking part must be proficient players so you've got 13 months to become one. More news later.

**CANCELLATION:** Due to a few complications beyond our control the October booking at Formby Hall, Atherton, near Bolton, has been cancelled and plans to put on a show at the Leeds City of Varieties have been put at one side for the time being.

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**Arthur King** - Haven't heard from Arthur yet. He has a contact in Russia who is tracing information on George receiving "The Order Of Lenin". Keep your fingers crossed in the hope that we hear something.

## Whitbread Finals - You Are Missing a Treat?

Once again we booked to see the Grand Finals of the Senior Citizens Talent Contest which was held at the Southport Floral Hall, and what a grand treat it was. These competitions are held throughout the country and anyone is welcome to compete.



Every year all seats are taken - mainly silver topped ladies - and the show begins with a medley of old singalongs played on the organ by Charles Mitchell, a really wonderful player. The Comperre for the day is Connie Creighton, who is also very experienced.

Altogether 14 brilliant acts are introduced and judged by a panel of five judges. During the judging Norman Prince ex the Houghton Weavers, puts on a fine comedy show and then four winners are selected from the line up.

These artists, who are all amateurs and aged over 60 years of age (some in their 70s), put on an excellent show. The winner receives £1,000 plus an "Eric Trophy" (a miniature statue of Eric Morecambe) - 2nd receives £500 plus a cup, 3rd receives £250 plus a cup and there is a special prize for the most original unplaced act, £250 and a rose bowl.

Actually we thought that William Marshall, who was the most original winner, should have been the overall winner. He was brilliant in his Scotch kilt, playing the bagpipes and then the accordion to a medley of Josef Locke songs. He had the ladies shouting for "more" with his marching and the swishing of his kilt. He was the best act we'd seen for some many years and everybody joined in with him. No doubt the audience also thought that he should have got the first prize, but the judges thought different.

If interested ring Bob Brierley on 01524 414734 and you will see a great show for only £4 (pensioners) each, ring the box office at 0870 602 1112. Ring soon as all seats are booked up well in advance.

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**John Guy** - Here's me wondering how John is progressing, laid out in hospital, and the lad is enjoying himself on stage at the Werrington Meeting. Nice to hear that you are up and about John. I tried to ring you a couple of times but had no reply.

**George was a Scarecrow** in the village of Thornton Hough. The little community has been invaded by hundreds of scarecrows who were busking, boating and some, dressed up as traffic wardens, were booking motorists. A record breaking 773 of them had been created by residents to raise money for a children's play area. The picturesque parish on the Wirral easily beat the Guinness World Record for the biggest number of scarecrows, and hundreds of visitors turned up to watch. The name George Formby wasn't added to the article but they all knew it was him by the lamp post and the ukulele.

Isn't it wonderful how George keeps turning up. Hardly a week passes that he doesn't appear in some newspaper or other.

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**Value For Money** - Neil Forshaw popped in the other day and brought a copy of a Kemps Theatre programme (where George made his debut in Earlestown) for

Dec 5th 1912, and it was amazing the number of acts they had. In all over 25 performances and - talk about variety!!! How's this for a programme?

THE VARIETY ARTISTES FEDERATION HAVE KINDLY GIVEN PERMISSION FOR THE FOLOWING WELL-KNOWN ARTISTES TO APPEAR:-

Wee Kitty Masters, Child Impersonator  
 Vi August, Male Impersonator  
 Angers & Escott, Musical Act  
 The Franklins, Comedy Duo  
 Bert Barker, Comedian  
 Alf Warner, Instrumentalist  
 Kavados, Cannon Ball King  
 Gerald Mount, in "Everybody's Doing It"  
 Barr & Kerr, Comedy Couple  
 Ivy Grant, Comedienne and Dancer  
 J H Ellis, Comedian

Musical Middles, Concertinas  
 John Lord, Musical Collier  
 Harry McMerry, Comedian  
 Winifred Collins, Comedy Dance  
 Will Roscoe, Comedian  
 Flo Silvana, Contralto  
 The Dancing Zets, Vocal & Dance  
 Waldo & Wade, Pot Pourri Act  
 Minora & Her Dog  
 Hicks & Blair, Dancers  
 Jack & Etta, Welsh Harmony Duo  
 Mr J Appleton's Prize Quartette

*Plus the Pick of the Artistes who are appearing at Manchester and Liverpool. So how's that for a programme? Why can't we have a few One Legged Equilibrists in our concerts? Or someone who stops cannon balls with his chest like the Canon Ball King? It would go down very well at Sale or Liverpool. Brian Edge and Alan Chenery have big chests, they'd be ideal for the job! Dennis Lee wouldn't be much use, he'd go through the wall!*



## Crewe Meeting - Carl Basford Booed and Hissed!

The audience of 84 at the July Crewe meeting booed and hissed artiste Carl Basford who, after singing his first number dismissed his bone accompanist Ron Whiston by saying "You can go now I only wanted you for one song!" Ron reluctantly left the stage, his lower lip quivering, to the complete embarrassment of the entire audience. In spite of their hisses and boos Carl continued by announcing his next number "The Baby Show." The audience were still clearly unsettled as Carl began but the tables were turned when Ron reappeared wearing a baby's bonnet, a shawl and sucking an enormous dummy. It all ended up happily with everyone laughing. Actually Carl's performance deserved a big cheer as the song really takes a lot of concentration and indeed puff to perform. It was a new edition to Carl's repertoire.



Shame on you Carl

Colin Wood and Alan Chenery performed an excellent duet of "Windows" using the new professional backing tape. One of the best performances of this popular number that I have heard.

Connie, feeling anything but (she had to be taken home at the interval) performed the George Formby number (Keep Fit) followed by the 1930s favourite, "I Double Dare You" it was a good performance even though I shouldn't be saying so.

During the evening Andrew Little, still strapless, performed for the first time with a backing tape. He may have puffed a bit at the end but it was a good performance. It should be explained that performing to a backing tape is not easy - it takes no prisoners - as the thing keeps going when you want to take a breather, but on the other hand it is a good disciplinarian as it helps you to keep good time. Well done Andrew.

Ashley Caldicott's rhythm on the tambourine has developed rapidly and he can now really beat out time to the music and what's more he loves being in the thrash. Ashley's confident has grown considerably since joining the society and we are all delighted with his progress and are all willing him on.

Jonathan and Pamela Baddeley - the M/Cs produced a good balanced programme and I was not the only one to remark on that. Whist on the subject of balanced programmes please don't forget to put your names on the list near the door when you come in indicating that you want to perform and stating the numbers you intend performing on the night. This helps the assistant M/C to plan the show. Whilst the M/C will try to ensure everyone gets a spot it is your own responsibility to write your name and numbers on the list.



Trevor Hughes is performing very well these days and is gaining confidence with every visit to the stage. I am expecting great things of Trevor and have every confidence as he practises hard. You perhaps don't know this but Trevor was a uke star before he could play. When we went on tour of S. Ireland a top Irish newspaper published a half page picture of Trevor resplendent in his fancy waistcoat and his straw hat, holding his uke. We were bashing our brains out and Trevor stole the glory! But do remember that Trevor is a cricket umpire so when he finishes his number and shouts, "How's That?" don't applaud just screw up your faces and shake your head from side to side and he will get the message (only joking Trevor)

We thoroughly enjoyed the visit of Chris Murray of Washington, Co Durham, who graced us with his presence and entertained us so well. Especially with the story of the Lambton Worm ("whist man hold thi gob") which was delivered in his broad N. Easterly dialect. Chris tried to convince his audience that St George was a Geordie. There were rumblings in the front stalls at this and Chris added "It's true I tell you - as sure as I'm riding this bicycle." Chris commented afterwards that he had thoroughly enjoyed the night and said "It is wonderful playing before a audience that actually listens to you," which was a very nice comment and something that we are proud of at Crewe. We are pleased that our members want to hear the performers and don't take kindly to those who spoil their entertainment by talking during the time that artists are performing. Thanks for coming Chris.

Another surprise for members was a new face, David Watkins, but whilst David was new to us at Crewe he had been a member of the GFS many years ago. It was thanks to Arthur Newton for bringing him along and I can tell you that we look forward very much to seeing and hearing David again in the not so distant future. David performed a Formby number not often heard these days, "On The Left Hand Side Of Egypt" and this was followed by "I'm The King Of The Swingers". Great to have you with us David, come again soon.

Margaret Moran, that lovely lady with the golden voice, has missed the last two meetings. Unfortunately Margaret has not been well but we have been in touch with her and assured her that that we miss her very much.

The highlight of the night for me was the tribute to a great entertainer Sam Bass. We played an excerpt from one of his radio shows in the 1960s where Sam sang "I Wish I Was Back On The Farm". Now you know - he really did sound like George Formby, and did you hear the uke solo? It was great! What made it really special was that Sam, who usually sits at the back of the hall, came forward and on stage to take a wonderful applause. *Thank you Brian. I like the bit about Connie singing "Keep Fit" and then going home feeling ill. At our age it's the singing that takes it out of you. It's a good job she didn't do "It's A Grand and Healthy Life as an encore otherwise they'd have carried her out on a stretcher.*

# Blackpool's Memory Lane - George Tops The Bill



**THRILLING VISIT:**  
Colin Foe

WHEN Memory Lane recently recalled the Queen's Theatre in Blackpool, the story took Colin Foe back 40 years or so.

The Queen's - formerly Feldman's Theatre - was in Bank Hey Street and was demolished to make way for the C&A store, itself now under threat of closure.

Back in 1960 Colin had just started at Tyldesley Boys Secondary Modern School and was very proud of the fact that his elder sister Betty was in show-business.

She had a lead role in the

chorus of a show called Knap Hand at the Queen's.

Colin recalls that Vic Oliver had top billing, supported by Anne Shelton and Jimmy Clitheroe.

Colin was thrilled when his big sister fixed it for him to go backstage and meet the stars.

Vic Oliver, immaculately and stylishly dressed as usual - in a silver-grey mō-hair suit - was very friendly but the highlight for Colin was to meet his boyhood hero, Jimmy Clitheroe.

The comic character was then at the height of his fame on stage, radio and TV but away from the limelight struck Colin as a rather sad man.

He was shown into his austere dressingroom where Jimmy sat on a bar stool engrossed in making an intricate piece of tapestry embroidery.

## Backstage

Colin remembers: "He was quite friendly but did not smile - the total antithesis of his alter ego."

Millions of fans loved Jimmy as the mischievous schoolboy in uniform which was his trade mark.

Colin said: "I don't think he really liked being the eternal boy."

Betty also worked at the old Hippodrome theatre which became the ABC complex in Church Street.

Around 1961 Colin was backstage there to meet the singer Engelbert Humperdinck, who was just beginning a very successful second career as a singer after switching his stage name from Jerry Dorsey.

Also on the bill was comedian Jimmy Marshall



**FOND MEMORIES:** The former Queen's Theatre in Blackpool

who became a family friend.

Colin recalls: "My sister had parties occasionally and the house rang to the sound of her beautiful voice and her piano."

He remembers guests like Bill Fraser and Alfie Bass starring in the stage version of the hugely popular Army Game at the Opera House.

"They were very ordinary and I'm moved by their success, especially Alfie."

But Colin was upset to find that Lennie the Lion lives in a suitcase.

One of Betty's close

friends was working then as a window dresser at Hunter's, the very traditional gent's outfitters on Abingdon Street.

What happened to the statue of the huntsman on his horse which hung over the door?

Sometimes, John Inman and Betty would do a double act on the song We're A Couple of Swells in the lounge at Longton Road, where Colin still plays the same piano.

He wonders if the character John immortalised in Are You Being Served - Mr Humphries - came from the name Hunters.



**VERY FRIENDLY:**  
Comedian Vic Oliver

## GF Sketches

Has anyone got a video film of George performing in any of his stage sketches? If so please contact Dennis Lee on 01244 544799.

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## Peter Sellers

The funniest recording ever made on George was the "All Britain George Formby Contest at Wembley Stadium." If you've not heard it you are missing a treat. William Fruit of Doncaster, was disqualified for not starting with "Turned Out Nice Again, hasn't it?" Then came Nigel Breeks of Cambridge College who was stopped because he didn't have a Wigan accent.

A Hindu, Cuma Banagie, was stopped for sounding like Peter Sellers and Spike Milligan.

Herbert Thing of Wigan was disgraced when it was discovered that he was miming to a GF record. The Mayor of Wigan: Alderman Alderman performed the ceremony of the "Smashing of the Ukulele" and the "Crushing of the Bowler Hat."

The contest was won by Arthur Freds who sang "They're Parking Camels Where The Taxis Used to Be."

If you want a copy send me a tape and return postage. Stan Evans.



**BACKSTAGE HIGHLIGHT:** Jimmy Clitheroe

# Yoove Knot Scent Anne Harticle Yet!!

# George Formby...the highest roller of them all!



EARLIER this year Memory Lane was able to help the Rolls Royce Enthusiasts' Club research information about Rolls Royce cars used as taxis in Blackpool during Second World War and before and after that time.

Local enthusiast John McGlynn, of Newton Drive, Blackpool, asked for the Gazette's help and a recent issue of the Rolls Royce bulletin tells how the paper and its readers helped out.

John tells me: "At the recent annual rally of

the world-wide Rolls Royce Enthusiasts' Club I was roundly criticised for playing George Formby records all day while demonstrating my wind-up 78rpm gramophones."

## Staggering

But John's vintage disco was a tribute to a man who was the most active private buyer of new Rolls Royce cars the company has ever known.

John tells me that the Lancashire-born comedian who started his working life as a jockey

bought a staggering 26 Rollers - worth more than £4m at today's prices.

George and his wife Beryl often named their houses Berydene. They had one in Mere, near Knutsford, in Cheshire, on the seafront at St Annes, at Little Singleton, and in Lytham Road, Blackpool. George loved the Fylde.

At least one of his many comedy films was partly shot in Fleetwood and he often visited the docks there. He loved the hustle and bustle of the

place and liked to exchange a bit of banter with workers on the fish market - no strangers to wit and repartee themselves.

Around this time George was buying cars from Loxham's of Preston, the local Rolls Royce dealers.

John told Memory Lane: "Presumably many were bought from the debonair salesman there, Fred Howson. It was his daughter Pat who controversially inherited the Formby fortune."



Ethel's husband Johnny Gibson

## Squadron Leader Johnny Gibson - It's always interesting to slot another piece into the Formby family jig-saw puzzle and here's another piece. Johnny Gibson, an RAF war hero who died recently at the age of 83, married George's sister, Ethel, during the war years and they had a son named Michael. The marriage was dissolved and Michael was left with his father.

About 18 months ago we held a Formby Concert, at Warrington, and the three main guests were: Geraldine (deserted daughter of Ethel) Michael (deserted son of Ethel) and Jeffrey Formby Booth who was also deserted. Michael and Geraldine were meeting for the first time since they were children so it was quite an event. It would appear that the children's lives were disrupted where the parents were involved in show business.

# Sale Report - by Les Pearson -ANOTHER FULL HOUSE

Excellence Personified is how you would describe the July Meeting with Arthur Newton "Sitting On The Top of Blackpool Tower" - Walter (Bones) Kirkland aboard "The Blackpool Belle" - Roy Feilding at "The Rawtenstall County Fair" - Paul Keeny was "Paddlin Madeline Home" - while Connie Edge was doing a spot of "Keep Fit" - Mac McGee was "Down Forget Me Not Lane" - Phil Jones was "Riding In The TT Races" - and Des Redfern was "Changing Trains at Crewe."

After all this Jed Collins made the whole room rock with his excellent performance of "Ghost Riders In The Sky".

STILL REMEMBERED - Our George is nearly forty years gone but he is still remembered everywhere on television. He was mentioned recently in the Harry Enfield Show and a question was asked about George on "Fifteen To One" TV programme.

OVER HERE - George Formby player, Paul Harper, was seen on TV recently in a show which covered the American Air-force occupancy of Burtonwood air base.

MORECAMBE - By Margaret Moran. In the company of Bobby King, who played Harry Scott (George's valet) in the Alan Randall show, "Turned Out Nice Again" we were invited to a show at The Dome which is on the Central Pier,



Jim Casey (left) with dear old Eli Woods

Morecambe. This was true Music Hall Variety at its best. Alan Randall gave a fine tribute to George. Other artists included Jim Casey and Eli Woods, - Mike Craig,- John Conolly, - Alchemy (death defying fire act) The New Scorpion Band and Jim Bowen. Eli Woods is one of the funniest men ever to step on stage. He told the viewers that he was different to all the other artists.They started off with "New Faces" hoping someday to make the London Palladium. Eli, however, started off on the London Palladium and finished up on New Faces. Jim and Eli carried on the funny stage sketches from the late Jimmy James and Co. and the funniest sketch of them all was the one where Roy Castle had a pair of man eating lions in a box under his arm. "How much are They?" Eli kept asking and the audience was in stitches laughing at him! They don't make artists like them any more!

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**S.O.S.** Tony Marshall on 0113 2740111 is looking for a list of Uke Inversion Chords. Please give him a ring if you can help.

**Can't Help but Smile** when I find any old correspondence from our old member the late Logan Petch of the Sale branch. He was a rum old stick. I found an article from him which he sent for the Vellum about 10 years ago. It read: -

"The other day Doreen Crosby, at the Sale meeting handed me the Keech Tutor for the Banjolele Player. It was published by Keith Prowse & Co in 1922, before many of your Vellum readers were born, price 3s 6d in old money (16 pence).

In the tutor there is a photo of a young and handsome Alvin D Keech, one of two brothers, the other was Kelvin D Keech. In 1917 the Keech brothers invented the Banjolele, the name was registered and the model patented. It was copied by many instrument makers and called "ukulele banjo" but so popular was the banjolele that just as every vacuum cleaner is referred to as a "hoover" so the name "banjolele" became as popular.

This new instrument, which was played in the same way as a ukulele, had a specially constructed resonator which gave a much fuller, clearer and more resonant tone than the ukulele. It had a remarkable large sale in the U.S.A.

Nowadays only ancient mariners like yours truly refer to their instruments as banjoleles. Everyone since George Formby refers to them as "ukes." Prices from £2.2shilings to £7, complete with case, tutor and felt plectrum. There was a model at £15.15 shillings but it was very heavy and had to be played sitting down.

Alvin D Keech came to England to promote his instrument which was made in Britain. He taught the Prince of Wales to play and also taught a friend of mine, Jack Jeffries, a law student from Eccles. Sitting on Monton Green Jack taught me to play so I was taught by a man who was taught by the Prince of Wales teacher.

Logan, who passed on a few years back, was a court judge and when I turned his writing paper over to see if it was continued I found that he'd written his article on the back of his court scrap paper. There were references to people being drunk and disorderly, having burst tyres, no lights, stolen tools, lost memory etc.

But the best story of all was when a burglar was taken to court for robbing Logan's house. The burglar couldn't get anyone to defend him so Logan took the job on. The burglar, who no doubt was guilty, then left court with a smile on his face because Logan had successfully got him off. He was a great character with a repertoire of about four songs which he played every month - not very well I'm afraid. "Five Foot Two", Aint She Sweet, and a Stanley Holloway Monologue, were three of em. They don't make characters like Logan any more.

**Air Force War Veteran, S Thomas**, of Warrington, recalls part of his experiences in the desert during World War Two. The airfield was shared by the American and Royal Air Forces.

..... next day we had a few yanks around. They were still fascinated by biplanes and we began to feel like attendants in a museum as we answered their many questions. We were interrupted when one of our lads popped his head round the corner of the hanger, "Hey, guess who's giving a show in the NAAFI? - George Formby!

We knew that he was in North Africa, bumping across the desert, stopping at tiny units and doing his act in a gruelling routine of a dozen or so shows a day in the heat and dust which were not only punishing to him, but which didn't do his ukes much good either. I looked down at a couple of yanks as we still had an audience.

"You are in luck" I said, "Come with us and see our greatest comedian." They trotted along and stood beside me at the back of the NAAFI which was the only space left by then. Not that it mattered. When George walked on the stage with his baggy shirt and even baggier shorts, beamed his toothy smile and shouted, "Turned out nice again, hasn't it?" a roar went up which must have been heard in Cairo. As the great man strummed his way through songs like "Mr Wu" and "Leaning On A Lamp Post" and cracked his simple, home spun jokes, we roared with laughter and now and again glanced at our American guests. They had a look of shock on their faces and as we stumbled out of the exits, still laughing, they said, "He is your greatest comedian?"

It had not occurred to us that they would not be able to understand a single word of George's songs or gags, but when they said, "If that is your greatest comedian you should have Jack Benny over here for a couple of weeks, I couldn't resist saying, "Jack who?"

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**Jeffrey Formby Booth** - Christine has just rung with the latest news on Jeffrey. The nurses were calling three or four times each day to wash him etc. but now they have decided that he would be better looked after in the hospice. On Sunday the 13th August he was moved to Willens Hospice, Milton Keynes where he will receive regular attention.

Janet Hawkins, who is one of our members, has been a great aid to Christine. She is employed looking after the needs of old folk in a nursing home so her experience has been appreciated. Janet and Dave live in Willens so no doubt they will be regular visitors. Our deepest sympathy goes out to Christine who must be going through a tremendous strain.

## Penyffordd Meeting - by Cliff Royle.



It was almost a sell out with a great attendance of 93 present. So what makes our evenings so popular? Well it can only be the superb entertainment at a low, low price.

Our M.C. for the evening was Jim Knight who did a great job in keeping everything going smoothly; well more or less anyway. Of course we are delighted to have Jim's wife Myra as a regular attender, and enjoying helping out at the "Admissions Desk."

It was nice to have a few slightly different songs. Little Back Room Upstairs (Alan Chenery); Keep Fit (Connie Edge); Lottery Millionaire (Dennis Lee); Are You Happy? Yes we are (Brian Edge); When I Fall in Love (Pam Baddeley); a Gospel Medley by Jon Baddeley and clarinet; There Is Nothing Like A Dame (Stan Evans in full voice); Granddad's Four Poster Bed (Alison Nadin); Lancashire Toreador (Tom Meredith); A Sing-along (Stan Watkinson); and T.T. Races (Steve Hassall). Des Redfern rendered a couple of Formby songs which would have won the Song Writing Competition some fifty years ago. All were intrigued by Stan Evans's request for the words to a song which were partly written on a toilet roll. Unsure about the title; was it "Sentimental Loo" a Formby song.

Everyone joined in singing Happy Birthday for Teresa who celebrated her birthday on the date of the meeting. Unfortunately it was too early to celebrate Charlie Penman's on the following day. We wonder if he has a bus pass yet.

There were a couple of great and unusual turns. Youngsters Frank and Luke Murphy sang a Cub Scout song which received great applause. It was just fantastic, and the way their voices blended was superb. We regret to hear that their father, Jim, is going to work abroad for a few years. We'll miss you Jim, but wish you well.

The other surprise came from Roy Ellison who has come over again from Western Australia and brought his family along. Apparently his Formby Club out there has two members; himself and Geoff Murphy. They seek additional members. Any offers? He sang two excellent comedy songs both written by himself; "Our Country Lanes" and a new version of "Galway Bay." Both were written typical Formby style with the usual innuendoes.

Sorry to hear that our singers, Dave and Sheila Howe are both not too well. We sincerely hope they will soon recover.

Last week-end saw the second party held in Rhyl at the home of Frankie Woods, Jean & Alison Nadin. About a hundred were present; friends, relations and Formby fans. We had loads of food, drink and entertainment, and many took -

advantage of a dip in their pool. A great day. Thanks Frankie, Jean, Alison and your helpers. Our hosts organised a raffle which raised 200 for the Stroke Association, and £40 for Cancer Research. The latter was matched by a similar amount from Ladbrokes.

STOP PRESS NEWS from Penyffordd British Legion. They now sell a ukulele ale which is called "Abbotts."

*Thanks Cliff. I must admit you looked rather smart bouncing round on your toes at the meeting, gathering all these bits of information.*

*Re. the Western Australian George Formby Society, which consists of two members, Geoff and Roy. Beryl Eissens, also of Australia, informs me in her latest Email; "Roy lives in a beach area and radio reception is pretty poor down there for most radio stations. But I would like to bet he knows 6NR and Memory Lane and if he is such a fan he will know RTR Uni Station as they are the only radio stations playing that type of music. All the others are playing head banging stuff!" I'm sure that once Beryl is back in the saddle again she will be pleased to give Roy and Geoff a few radio plugs to get more members.*

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## Lawrence Jones

our "Southport Pier Buy A Plank" organiser and election candidate has hunted down the Missing George Formby Statue which disappeared from the Douglas, Isle Of Man shopping centre. After a long search he found the statue in the Normandy Veterans Association Memorial Gardens, which is on the corner of Ridgeway Street and Lord Street, immediately outside the Salvation Army building. George can be found there still leaning on his lamp post.

*Thank you Lawrence. We have been wondering where it had gone to. Apparently Norman Wisdom's statue is still missing.*

ISLE OF MAN TRIP - And don't forget the trip that Nick Saunders is organising. The date is Friday 1st September to the 3rd. and the price is £98. You can ring Nick on 01624 835481

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## Burtonwood Carnival.

You are welcome to join us at the Burtonwood Show on Monday the 28th August. They provide a Music Hall Marquee and we are requested to do about three half hour spots. We normally start around 1.30pm.

S.O.S. - At night we have the Blackpool meeting so you are welcome to come to both of them. We are always short of artists at Blackpool.





# George's 40th Anniversary - Big things are

being planned for next year -George's 40th. The following news is subject to alteration and you will be kept up to date.

**EXHIBITION** - We are planning to put on a George Formby Exhibition at Wigan Pier (George's birth town) for 10 days leading up to a GF Concert. Negotiations are going on with Wigan Pier, along with the Wigan Council, and news of this will be published in the next issue. Up to now Warrington have been very helpful in offering to loan us the items from the 1991 GF Exhibition.

**CONCERT** - A Variety Show (revolving around George) will be staged at the Wigan Pier Theatre on Saturday the 28th of April. Subject to alteration.

**GUINNESS BOOK OF WORLD RECORDS** - We are planning setting up a record of having the largest number of uke banjo players in one group. This will be held at the Winter Gardens, Blackpool during the September Meeting. The plan is to notify all members, plus all our lost members, of the event and ask if they will learn the three songs which will be used for the occasion: "Lamp Post" - "Blackpool Rock" and "It's In The Air" (All in "C") which are easy songs to play. We will also be asking members to teach their family members to also learn to play and sing the three songs, which will help to swell the numbers. Dickie Speake has produced a backing tape of this and news of distribution of the tape and song sheet will follow soon. The conditions state that all taking part must be proficient players so you've got 13 months to become one.

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**Margaret Moran** hasn't been attending the meetings lately and news has it that she's under the weather. Well we do wish her a speedy recovery with whatever is wrong and trust that she will be back with us soon. Remember Margaret, George's Light is always shining for you when you are down and feeling unwell. Like George, keep on smiling

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**Tony Marshall** asked if I knew if there was a Ukulele Ike Fan Club - "No Problem" I said, "I'll look it up on the Internet." Lyndon told me to log on to "www.askme.com" - fill in the questionnaire to become a member, and then ask the panel of experts questions. I logged on and filled in all the personal questions, and I was just wondering why the questions were getting a little too personal when I realised that I'd become the latest member of a Dating Agency.

## Notice Found on Christine Booth's Kitchen Door:

I can only please one person per day  
Today is not your day  
And tomorrow doesn't look good either.

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**S.O.S** - Can anyone help our dear old Honorary Member George Cheetam with a lift to the Sale Meeting? He lives at Conifers Nursing Home, 158 Manchester Rd, Chorlton and his number is 0161 881 2514. George would like to pay a visit to the meeting but has no transport.

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**Editor's Slip Up** - (Second mistake in my life) - Apologies to Colin & Christine Wood and Alan Chenery for giving the wrong date of the Trip To France. It should have read "8th to the 11th of June 2001" not as published in the last issue. (It was Dennis Lee's fault) Anyway we are pleased that seats are being booked and we're looking forward to a good trip.

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**Uke For Sale** - <sup>Jim Knott</sup> Alan Newton has a brilliant Markendale uke (Ten tension rods) banjo for sale (it was on show at the N. Wales meeting). It has a new skin fitted giving an excellent sound, and looks very comfortable snuggled in a well made case. The price is £325. Give Alan a ring on 01978 358472 and don't forget to tell him that you read all about it in the Newsletter.

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**S.O.S.** - In last month's Newsletter I reported that Bill Turner of Bury had a John Grey for sale. Well Bill has just rung to ask if I would pass a message on to a person who read it in the Newsletter and called in to buy it. "What was he like?" I asked Bill (who bless him is 90 years of age) "I've no idea but he was from Cheshire." - "That's a good bit of help!"

So is there anyone out there who read about the uke for sale and went to buy it? If so please give Bill a ring on 0161 797 7674.

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**Tony Marshall's** just rung. He has a Bacon uke banjo (about 1928) for sale (like a Baby Gibson) in deluxe case - £395 ONO.

Also a Baritone uke (like Cyril Palmer's) with case £150.

WANTED - Tony is also looking for a Martin uke. If you have one for sale you can ring him on 0113 2740111. Don't Forget - You read it in the Newsletter.

# 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.

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**Liverpool** - Broadgreen Conservative Club, Every 2nd Friday in the month - Ring Tom Bailey on 0151 289 1711 - Bring Your Uke

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**Werrington Branch** (Near Stoke) at the Werrington Village Hall - Every 2nd Thur in the month. Bill Turner on 01782 304858.

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**Sale** - Woodheys Club, 299 Washway Rd, Sale - Every 3rd Friday in the month - Ring Cyril Palmer 0161 748 6550 Adm £1.

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

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

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**Blackpool. SOUTH SHORE CRICKET GROUND**, Common Edge Rd, Blackpool. Every last Monday in the month Tel Eve & Charles Stewart on 01253 768097. Wonderful buffet included.

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## Wintergardens Meetings:

- Sat & Sun 16th & 17th Sept 2000
- Sat & Sun 25th & 26th Nov 2000
- Sat & Sun 17th & 18th March 2001
- Sat & Sun 23rd & 24th June 2001
- Sat & Sun 15th & 16th Sept 2001
- Sat & Sun 24th & 25th Nov 2001

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**N. West Web Site:** [www.thehollies.u-net.com/](http://www.thehollies.u-net.com/)  
**formby.** E Mail: [stan@thehollies.u-net.com](mailto:stan@thehollies.u-net.com)

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For 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 Front Cover.

