

THE NORTH - WEST

GEORGE FORMBY

Newsletter 64

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Jeffrey (Formby) Booth

Specially Produced for George Formby Fans
by Stan Evans, The Hollies, 19 Hall Nook, Penketh, Warrington,
Cheshire WA5 2HN

Tel or Fax 01925 727102

Welcome to Newsletter No.64

and we start with a very sad loss to the George Formby Society.

Jeffrey Formby Booth passed away in Willen Hospice, Milton Keynes, on Friday 18th August, only six weeks after being admitted into hospital with brain tumour.

Jeffrey, who was a member of the GFS, first contacted us when we were setting up the Warrington GF Exhibition and has been a great supporter ever since.

Being a member meant a lot to Jeff because it gave him the opportunity to try to get to know the Formby family again and to make up for all the childhood years he'd lost when he was cut off from the Formby members. Just like his

Grandfather, GF senior, he also was pushed from pillar to post and didn't have a permanent place to rest his head as a child. He was the result of a broken marriage - very common with the Formbys - and lost out on schooling when his father, womanising and gambling Frank, attempted to take him with him around the theatres. The school authorities caught up with them both and Jeff was taken into a Convent Home.

Geraldine - Ethel's deserted daughter who was brought up by Georgina, Eliza's sister - said, "I suffered similar treatment but at least I was given the opportunity now and again of mixing with the Formbys. Poor Jeffrey was cut off from everybody. I thought I had it rough until I met Jeffrey,"

As Jeff said, "At 18 I joined the army and for the first time I knew what it was to have my own bed." Life has dealt out a number of blows to poor Jeff which, although he tried to keep the Formby image of a regular smile, there was always the inner sadness that stemmed from his earlier years. On being taken prisoner of war he was brutally beaten and given a smashed face. He never spoke of those cruel years.

Jeff was always a willing worker who would lend a hand in any way he could to help the society. For two years he organised successful GFS Southern Meetings at Milton Keynes and after retiring from work, spent his time studying the Internet and passing on information to appreciative Formby members. CONT... Page 5



The Formby Story - George Remembered in Yorkshire

Part 53 by Stan Evans.

CONTINUED - The air was alive and buzzing at the Eadon, Lockwood and Riddle Auction Rooms in Sheffield. News that George's ukes etc. were being auctioned off was broadcast all over Yorkshire and the media came running from all angles. Radio and TV presenters chased GFS members for information on George's items and the excitement was growing by the minute. After the sale of the GF photos, records, cine films etc. it was time for the ukes.



LOT NUMBER 168 was a birdseye Dallas "D" uke banjo with the words, "Airforce" and "Coal Hole" written on the skin. A private bid of £1100 had been sent in by Fax from Steve Miller (GFS) which was the highest bid. No other bids were offered.

At the auction yours truly holds up the Ludwig and the Van Allen. Both with bursted skins.

LOT NUMBER 169 was a Will Van Allen uke banjo inscribed with the words, "Mr Wu's A Window Cleaner" and "Mr Wu" (George's handwriting) written on the skin. Also "Mr Formby" written by someone other than George. Now apparently these ukes had been locked away for something like 25 years so if the amount of sweat on the skin was anything to go by George certainly gave the Van Allen a good bashing.

This uke had a better chance of being sold at a realistic figure as there was no private bid offered. It started at £100, - £120, £140, £160, £180 and I was in the running to own one of George's ukes. Ray Bernard leaned over and said, "Stick with it Stan, George played it in 'Off The Dole'". The bids were gathering pace and I was still there when it was knocked down at £240 plus VAT. "The bargain of the day" was what they all cried and I was delighted.

LOT NUMBER 170 was George's Ludwig which he played in his later films and on his war front tour. The auctioneer knew that the Ludwig was the attraction so he started by asking £1000, then £1200, - £1300, - £1400, - - - £1800, (Ray Bernard was in the running) - - £2300, - £2400 and at £2500 Ray dropped out. It was sold for £2600 (all prices are plus VAT) to a Mr Walsh, a young local dealer who no doubt only bought it to make a quick profit. Yorkshire lad Joe Cooper bought Eddie Latta's Gibson wooden ukulele for £320 and the excitement was over. The church hall was now almost half empty as we piled outside for press interviews.

Rex Blaker had no respect for George's ukes and left them stored in a cupboard. The Van Allen and the Ludwig had bursted skins. **CONTINUED PAGE 4**

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3. Walsh, the local dealer, was asked about his purchase and what he intended doing with it and he replied, "I don't know anything about ukuleles but I will be keeping it and treasuring it as an investment." It was quite easy to see that he had no intention of treasuring it and had only bought it to make a quick profit. He didn't look the type to take an interest in George.

Alan Randall, who was introduced as 'the artist who impersonated George' created quite an attraction as the news hounds pressed him for interviews. When asked his opinion of the sale he said, "I am delighted that there has been so much interest in George but I wish that the Ludwig had gone to one of the George Formby Society members who would make use of it instead of locking it away in storage, - it needs playing!! If Beryl had known that they would bring so much she would have sold them before he'd finished playing them."

Soon after, Walsh, the Ludwig buyer, asked for my name and address and I knew then that he was looking for a buyer. Within a couple of weeks the uke was bought by Steve Miller who eventually sold it to George Harrison, along with the Dallas "D". MORE NEXT MONTH

Colin Crompton - Do you remember him? Colin was the comedian who upset the town of Morecambe with his jokes about it being a dead town. Two popular gags were:

"They don't bury the dead there, they stand them up in bus shelters"

"The only entertainment they have is the changing of the traffic lights"

He got some stick from the council but was quick to use it as part of his act.

Well Colin was on the Bernard Manning Show on Granada Plus (Sky TV) on Saturday night 2nd Sept. and sang "With My Little Stick Of Blackpool Rock" at the same time miming to playing a uke just like George. It came over very well!

S.O.S. - Can anyone help? For the past 12 months I've tried to get hold of either an Audio Tape or the Sheet Music to the British Legion hymn, "Oh Valiant Heart" which was played at Princess Diane's funeral. I've phoned the British Legion Supply Stores, and several others, and they can't help - which was very surprising - so we'll try the good old N.West Newsletter and see what results we get here. Don't forget - OH VALIANT HEART on either tape or sheet music.

We often get good results so if you are looking for something drop me a line,

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2 . Jeff and Christine enjoyed staying here with the Lancashire members and visiting the N.West branches. Although he would have loved to have played and sung George's songs he never had the ability. As he said, "Being an electrical engineer I can do anything with my hands until I pick up the uke and then go completely to pieces." Once again he'd been denied.

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY - However, life was very fair to him when he met and married Christine. They'd just celebrated their 17th Anniversary on the 26th of July and had plans to travel round the country with their newly purchased caravan and larger car - Once again he was denied! Just before his death Jeffrey took over the job of Secretary for the Ukulele Society of Great Britain. He was denied yet again.

Personally I have great sympathy for children who have been deserted. But Jeffrey's dilemma went far deeper than the trials of the average neglected kid. He was part of one of the most famous families in the country! What an utter disgrace that a family with such influence couldn't organise looking after their own. But, as Geraldine said, "They were too busy feeding their own egos."

FUNERAL - It was held on Friday the 25th of August at the Crownhill Crematorium, Milton Keynes and the sun shone beautifully for Jeff. The church was filled to capacity and as we walked in we heard George singing "Noughts and Crosses." The vicar gave a most wonderful service which touched strongly on Jeff's life and on leaving the church George sang "Leaning On A Lamp Post." The society was represented by Cyril & Sheila Palmer, Dave & Janet Hawkins, Stan & Eva Evans.

THANKS - Christine wishes to thank all who supported her in time of need. The many cards she received and phone calls gave her great comfort. The donations she received have been forwarded on to Willen Hospice where Jeffrey died.

Happy 80th Birthday Jack -

Well what do you know? Jack Jones will be 80 years of age on the 15th of October.

So you can drop the lad a card at 16 St Anne's Rd, West Park, St Helens WA10 4AS and he'll be as chuffed as little mint balls when he receives them all.

I've just had an hour on the phone with the lad and he sounds as well as ever. He thanks Pat Ralston for looking after him. "She's a treasure" he says! "Always there to help me with the wheelchair and we have some pleasant times. together. "



Young Jack Jones - 80.

Geraldine

Getting into the car with Geraldine to go to Jeffrey's funeral was like stepping into one of George's films. What a great shame that she wasn't given the opportunity to be a star because, like George, she is a natural. "Where's me seat belt?" in broad



From left to right: Geraldine (notice the Formby smile) Michael, son of Pamela (Ella's daughter). And Angela who is Jeffrey's half sister and daughter to Frank.

Wiganese, "I can't find me seat belt," - "Oh I must be sat on it." - "Have you no seat belts in this car?" - "I'll have to have a seat belt!" She went on and on - none stop, and, just like George, flashed her prominent smiling chin. At times she was the image of George.

George's sister, Ethel, had a daughter out of wedlock and very quickly hid her away to prevent any gossip effecting her stage career. Geraldine was brought up by Eliza's sister, Georgina, who had already brought up a family of eight children. I asked her if she remembered George and she replied, "Yes I remember him very well. Unlike Jeffrey I was treated to having trips out to the Formbys and George would often turn up."

Her earliest memory of him was when she was around 3 years of age. This man would turn up on a motorcycle wearing a leather helmet. He would give Nanna (Georgina) some money to buy me some food and clothes. Usually I got the Formbys cast offs. In later years she recognised the man to be George. She feels that George wanted children but this would have interfered with his stage career. She also said that George showed an interested in taking Jeffrey but due to his work he was unable to do it.

I had a pleasant conversation with Angela (Franks daughter) who was aware that her father had been a rambler and gambler. However she remembers the times when he encouraged her to perform on stage from the age of three. Only recently did she discover that she had relatives and was greatly surprised. "It is all beginning to slot into place" she said. Angela is following a stage career and very interested in singing opera. She is also in the process of writing a book on GF senior who is her grandfather.

Paul Woodhead

- Just as I'd finished reading the Newsletter I received a call telling me that Jeffrey had died. Another sad loss. I only knew him a little from Digswell. We shared an interest in computers and he showed interest in how I made backing tunes - the software used etc. For such a happy society we share some sad times. Best wishes to all. *Yes, you are right Paul. Every time a member dies it's like losing one of the family. Jeffrey had just taken on the job of Secretary for the Ukulele Society of GB.*

Get Ready for George's 40th by Stan Evans -

The year 2001 promises to be an excellent year for the GFS and for all the many fans of George Formby. For years we've attempted to convince Wigan's councillors that their local born George Formby was indeed a very valuable asset to the town and that they should take advantage of his name and market it. George used Wigan's name to promote his career so they should do likewise.



Cloth Cap George - A Rare occasion

Gerry Mawdsley made a great break through when he persuaded them to erect a George Formby plaque so we know for sure that they are bending. In the past their attitude has been, "We don't want to go back to the cloth cap days" - but George never, - or rarely, wore a cloth cap. He was a smart dresser!

Well, for the year 2001 - George's 40th, big things are expected to take place at Wigan Pier. The confirmed dates are: -

15th April GEORGE FORMBY OUTDOOR CONCERT - WIGAN PIER.
(Easter Sunday) Outdoor Concert to publicise the exhibition.

15th April GEORGE FORMBY EXHIBITION - WIGAN PIER.
On the same day: We will have the Opening of the George Formby Exhibition at 1pm (till 8pm) This exhibition will run for 14 days until Saturday the 28th April

28th April GEORGE FORMBY VARIETY CONCERT.
On the last day of the exhibition, 28th, a George Formby variety concert, "A 40th Anniversary Tribute To George Formby" will be held in the Pier Theatre.

For those who missed the Warrington Exhibition this will be a good opportunity to see some of the exhibits. The W/n Museum management have offered to loan us the display material so it will be a good show.

S.O.S. - We require to loan any GF exhibits that you are able to offer. These will be taken well care of and returned back to the owners. Exhibitions always bring forward new members who want to learn to play the uke so if you have any for sale (not too expensive for beginners) you can bring them along for our sales table. Also any other GF items you have to offer.

We will be organising uke tuition so ukes are needed and also volunteer teachers.

One Of Those Days!!! - Have you ever had one of those days when everything goes wrong? Each year Anthony Mason and I perform at the Burtonwood Carnival, which is a Music Hall held in a large marquee. There are usually about half a dozen artists and we take turns doing our spots. It's usually a grand afternoon out which draws large crowds.

I rang the organisers to ask if everything was OK and they told me that they have had problems getting other acts and the man who normally supplies the PA Equipment is not coming. "Don't worry" I said, "I will bring our PA and we'll have enough acts to perform all afternoon."

On the day it was pouring down with rain and I was soaking wet just loading the car. At the last minute Charles Stewart pinched Anthony Mason to entertain Danny La Rue in Blackpool, Stan Watkinson was on holiday, - Des had to take his wife shopping, John Shreeve's car broke down, and Jim Bramwell couldn't make it. Only Alan Chenery, - God Bless Him, gave a firm reply that he would be here on the day.

I turned up at the field, with the car filled to the roof, and the rain was really heaving it down. Through the driving rain I managed to find our marquee which was filled with young children huddling under the canvas sheltering out of the rain. The field was as soggy as porridge and almost impossible to drive on. The only activity was from the Warrington Hospital Radio tent which had large speakers spread all round the field to blast out very loud pop music. It was a disaster!!! I managed to slither and slide my car to the marquee and had just unloaded the gear - another soaking - when one of the marshall's came over to tell me that the whole event had been cancelled due to wet weather. At that point - saturated through to the skin - I was wishing "I was a bird and the cat had me."

Just arrived back home and found that Tony Marshall - what a champion - had made the long journey from Leeds. Anyway things didn't turn out too bad because Tony spent a pleasant evening with us talking Formby and the night passed very quickly. Many thanks to Tony and Alan for their support.

Jim Bramwell - We've just done our regular monthly show for the Blind Society which went down very well apart from Jim forgetting to take his hearing aid. For one song, which was recorded low volume, I had to lift the speaker up to the side of his head. My last partner, a pianist, often forgot his glasses.



Senile???? - Brian & Connie claim I am losing my marbles. They rang to say that I had left four articles out of the previous issue and 2 minutes later Neil Forshaw rang to tell me that I had given Alan Newton's name as the owner of the Markendale uke that was for sale when it should have been Jim Knight. Well they are right. There were a few errors but it was all Eva's fault. She had the decorators in destroying all my foolproof system. It's true!!!! Anyway here are Brian's articles

Brian's Articles - Omitted from the last

issue - It was indeed disappointing to hear that several had missed the Crewe June meeting by coming on the wrong night. Whilst they were clearly disappointed at finding nobody here we were equally disappointed that they were not here on the right night. At the risk of being accused of talking down to members, I must iterate that we meet on the **FOURTH FRIDAY** of the month. Which is not always the last Friday in the month. Sometimes there are five Fridays in the month. Our meetings are always held on the **FOURTH FRIDAY**.



Home From Home - Arthur & Mary Newton did a bit of foot slogging the other day trying to find bed and breakfast accommodation in Rhyl. After trying a few places which seemed to be a bit expensive they were attracted by the sign on one establishment "HOME FROM HOME". They knocked on the door and when the lady came they asked if there are any vacancies. "Certainly" was the reply, "Do come in and I'll get you some particulars." They went in and sat down waiting for the lady to return. They noticed one or two elderly residents as they waited. "Now who is the accommodation for?" asked the lady,. "It's for me and my wife" said Arthur. The lady looked them up and down and said quietly, "You do know this is a residential home for the elderly don't you?"

George is Still a Crowd Puller - In a recent Daily Telegraph advertisement selling three compact discs, one of Peter Sellers, one of Spike Milligan and the third of George Formby, guess who's photo they used to sell the products? You all guessed right first time, George Formby.

David Bret Writes Again - I see that David Bret is on the warpath again - this time writing a lot of nasty things about a personal favourite, Errol Flynn. No doubt Flynn's fan club will be on the war path too! Whether the stories are true matters little, the fact remains there was no more handsome hero and heart-throb than Tasmanian born Errol Flynn. *Thanks Brian. Brett's book has had no effect on George - none whatsoever!*

Betty Driver Was Broken Hearted at missing out on role with George Formby



George Formby with wife, Beryl.

I WAS booked for an engagement in Manchester, at the Palace Theatre. It was a wonderful show and I belted out my numbers with gusto.

One night, at the end of the performance, George Formby came backstage to see me with his wife, Beryl. George was quiet and Beryl did all the talking. She said they'd enjoyed my performance and asked if I'd appear in a film that George was making for Butcher's Films called *Boots! Boots!*

I'd known George from variety, where he was top of the bill and had a fabulous act. Off stage, he was gormless but very sweet.

There was a spot in the film where George was to visit a nightclub and they wanted me to be the cabaret singer. I was to have a song, then do a sketch with George.

It was my first experience of film and I was apprehensive. I was given my own dressing room, in which I found, laid out on a chair, the most beautiful gold dress, which I was to wear in my scene.

It was a low-budget film, costing just £3000, and was being made quickly, so there wasn't much time to panic. There was no real plot, just a series of scenes set around George as a hotel boots, doing comedy routines with the hotel staff.

Beryl played the dancing scullery maid, and she and George ended up performing together in the hotel cabaret.

The director rehearsed the scene quickly. I wore the dress and wandered around the tables being very sophisticated and alluring, singing my number.

The rehearsal went well. Too well, in fact, because as soon as I'd finished, Beryl said, "George, she's not singing that, it's the best number in the film."

George said, "But she must do it, it's been written for her."

She said, "I'll do that number!" and she had her way.

All this was said very loudly in front of me. I was broken-hearted. George tried to cheer me up, saying, "Never mind, we've still got our sketch together."

But after we'd rehearsed it, the same thing happened. Beryl watched us enjoying the scene then stormed on to the set and pointed at me, shouting, "George! That kid. She's not going on in the film. I'm not having a kid outshining me!"

The producers felt bad about the way I'd been treated and refused to take my name off the credits. Every now and again the film is shown on television, normally in the early hours of the morning, and my name rolls up with the credits even though I don't appear in it at all!



Is young Betty Driver telling porky pies? Read page 17

George sang Windows at Windsor -

By Charles Stewart

George tells the story . . . I had an invitation to play to the King and Queen and the Princesses at Windsor! I was met at the station by an official of the King's household, and he told me that their Majesties had invited troops stationed at Windsor along to the show and the Royals have requested that you give exactly the same show as you would to the troops. So I sang "Cleaning Windows" - the original version - and several other songs to the most distinguished audience in the world, - and didn't feel in the least bashful at doing it.

Princess Elizabeth and Princess Margaret were there. Margaret was ten at the time. She said to me, "I liked your film 'It's In The Air'". Then Beryl joined in the conversation and, being a homely person, talked to her as she would any other 10 year old. "I liked it too, but the air scenes made George so sick." "There," the Princess told her mother, "I said that Mr Formby was looking green in those scenes."

A few weeks later I played before Queen Mary at a Marlborough troop concert. Sure enough, when I was introduced to her she smiled and said, "Now I want you to sing exactly the same songs that you sang to my children." I did "Cleaning Windows" and all the others.

BANNED - Yet, at a time when I was singing for Royalty the BBC chose to Blue Pencil "Cleaning Windows" because my windows were not clean enough. I was fighting mad at them and launched into British Broadcasting Corporation like a whirlwind. However after I'd played for the Queen it was all settled amicably and the BBC broadcast an apology just before the nine o'clock news.

I took my ukulele to Windsor Castle three times. The third time was in 1949, not long after I had recovered from an operation. The King, Queen and Princess Margaret were there, and naturally I didn't expect them to have heard of the tummy troubles of a humble North Country comic. But I was wrong again. The first words the Kings said, after shaking my hand, were, "I hope you get over your appendix all right." He gave me a pair of cufflinks as a memento of the visit and they are now my treasured possession. The Queen gave Beryl a powder compact at the same time. I was running a Blitz Fund that year and we managed to raise £15,000 for bomb victims, singing in eleven different cities in eleven days. Queen Mary gave me three pieces of Georgian Silver to auction off for the fund.

The King and Queen have seen all of George's films and own his records.

George Keeps Popping Up On TV! .

Twice in one day George's name came on the tele. The first one was during an episode of "Call My Bluff" on Tuesday the 15th August when Roy Hudd had to describe what the word 'Hooshtah' meant. Roy said that it was an Indian type of ukulele similar to the type that George Formby played, He then went on to sing "With My Little Ukulule In My Hand" to great applause from the panel and the audience.

A few hours later, in a show called "What A Performance" - on ITV - Spike Milligan is dressed up as Adolf Hitler playing a wooden uke (genuinely playing) and singing "Mr Wu". Clive James then mentioned George's name.

Twice in one day is unbelievable especially as George passed on almost 40 years. Perhaps it is all building up to his 40th Anniversary next year.

Jack Transport Rang - The

Leeds Branch of the George Formby Society are taking part in the Otley Folk Festival at the Black Bull Pub, Market Square on Saturday 16th September, starts at 2pm. Otley is well worth a visit. It has some quaint untouched buildings and is famous for being the birth place of Thomas Chippendale. Jack informs us that you don't need backing tapes as their resident accompanist, Nigel, will be doing the backing and he can pick up on any tune irrespective of whether he knows it or not. As Jack said, "He can even play with the lid down!" That's great Jack. I'm sure that someone will take up your offer.

Please ring Jack on 01132 662862 or Alan Harris on 01132 688618 if you are interested in going. They'll make you very welcome.



Jack Transport

Won an Empty Box - Amongst the prizes at the Penyfford

meeting was a clock which was taken out of the box and laid on top. One winner chose the clock and took it away leaving the empty box on the table. "One more prize left" shouted Cliff Royle, "and it is a clock." - "It's on a light grey ticket - or is it dark white?" - "Oh dear" said Margaret, - and the number is 236!" - "Here" shouted the voice from the back and he made his way to the front to collect his prize. He picked up the box only to find it was empty.

Bob Drinkwater - Still haven't received the article that's in Bob's typewriter. I'll bet he's saving it for George's 40th. Is that right Beryl?

Sale: August Meeting by Cyril Palmer -

There was a sad note to the start of the evening with the news that Jeffrey Formby Booth had died in mid-afternoon. Although the attendance was down, it was marked by new, rare and long distance visitors. Keith Edwards travelled the 200 miles from Tenby. Not yet ready to go solo on stage. Keith is anxious to make progress and needs more than quarterly conventions.

Tom Meredith drove a shorter journey from the Wirral for his first visit to Sale. Playing his uke banjo in the first half we were treated to one of his Al Jolson acts in the second half.

Bobby King is relatively local and pays welcome, tho' occasional visits. Bobby most often plays character parts in stage productions, but he has a ready wit and a fund of amusing stories and added a nice humorous interlude.

There were visitors from the Crewe area. On this occasion Connie & Brian Edge were accompanied by Alan Newton. Alan often adds a touch of jazz to the proceedings but this time reminded us of the highly romantic Formby with a lovely rendition of "If I Had A Girl Like You." Paul Kenny asked for "Any requests."

Between them Connie & Brian have a varied repertoire. In particular, Connie sang her most recent addition, the nicely rhythmic, "I Double Dare You." Our youngest member, Ben Hallewell, is making good progress, showing greater confidence on stage. Alan Southworth and Walter Kirkland completed the line-up for the evening, with one song from yours truly.

Walter plays bones to singalong medleys as well as individual Formby songs, while Alan adds songs from Billy Uke Scott and Walter Langshaw to a wide selection of Formby songs.

PRACTICE TUITION SESSIONS: Eddie Bancroft has arranged for the use of a room which is only a few minutes from our club. The first meeting will be on Wednesday Sept 13th at 8pm. If anyone is able to help with tuition please telephone me on 0161 748 6550 *Thank you Cyril for the report. I'm sorry I didn't make it to the meeting. I was just getting ready when the phone rang with the sad news that Jeffrey had died. Although we expected the news any time this didn't prevent it from knocking the wind out of us. Tons of good luck with the tuition sessions.*



Cyril Palmer

Crewe is Better Than TV

- "This is the only place you can get anything like these days." - "We wish it was every week." - "This must be the best three hours entertainment for 50 pence in the world!" Those are just some of the comments heard at the end of the Crewe August Concert. At first I thought the last quote was a bit over the top but after a while I began to consider the statement and slowly began to believe it to be true as, try as I may, I couldn't think of anything to compare and what's more, light refreshments are included in the price. It is great to think that we are giving so much pleasure to so many people and this makes all the hard work of everyone involved worth while.



Fred Stevenson has been under the weather

Being Holiday time we always wonder whether anyone will turn up especially when we had apologies from Carl Basford (Son's wedding), Walter Kirkland and Alice Cronshaw (on holiday), Stan Evans (at Jeffrey Booth's funeral), Dennis & Lesley Lee (Son's wedding), Colin & Christine Wood (holiday), Bill & Ivy Turner (illness), and Ann Dando and Trevor Colley (holidays), but we need not have worried as 75 turned up to see the show including guests Ken & Mary from Spalding and Sybil, Peter and Val, relatives of Alan Newton. They all enjoyed their evening of Formby fun.

Jonathan Baddeley opened the show and set the standard which all the artistes maintained throughout the evening. Alan Chenery gave what I considered his best performance to date with his Formby numbers, "Little Back Room Upstairs" and "Wigan Boat Express."

Alan Newton entertained us with the funny song, "What Did Robinson Crusoe do With Friday on Saturday Night" followed by a number (?????????? *which Brian has forgotten to give*) and which delighted the entire audience. Tom Meredith gave an excellent rendering of "Sergeant Major" and "Lamp Post." He has had some tough times at the mike as most of us have over the years but I'm delighted to say he has now got his act in order and gives a really good performance. Glenys Huntington soon got our feet stamping with that great Jazz number "Way Down Yonder In New Orleans" and in readiness for our Steam Railway Trip Connie and I performed Leslie Sarony's "I Like Riding On A Choo-Choo- Choo which was fun to perform and seemed to be well received by the audience.

Cyril's wooden ukulele is a pleasant change from the usual sound of the banjo. He is - and has been - for many years a hard working member of the Sale Society - continued over.

CONTINUED - and is at present helping to organise a practise night for the club in an effort to increase their playing members.

Fred Stevenson gave us two new numbers on the banjo. It is great to have him with us again after illness. Alan Newton gave us a wonderful comical number on his trombone called "The Acrobat" accompanied by yours truly on the piano. It all sounded very good to me as everybody was laughing but I couldn't see what was going on as I had my back to the performer. I hope he wasn't making fun of my bald head or something like that. I always remember my Dad referring to the trombone as a "Kid Pusher." As the brass bands marched in the carnival the trombones were usually at the front and appeared to be pushing the kids back on the pavement.

Talented Alison Nadin performed a new vent routine with her super dummies. The dialogue was all very funny and I was impressed how she was able to talk herself and give different voices to her two dummies in rapid succession. And what about Alison's ability to throw her voice from the mike to back stage, that was really impressive.

Vera Jones gave her best performance to date singing a medley of songs. Up to a few months ago Vera had never sung before and I think she has done very well indeed. She is now learning a new medley of songs and also leaning to play the uke. Vera's husband, Harry, is a quiet chap at the best of times and we wish him all the best during the transitional learning stage. Mind you, take heart, Vera might have bought herself a drum kit.

Al Jolson came to life in the form of Tom Meredith who demonstrated how effective good miming can be. Many people in the audience actually believed that Tom was actually singing. Gareth Sumner, Arthur Newton, Don Chalkley and Cliff Royle all performed well and contributed to a top class show of which we were all proud.

Sound Engineer Colin Wood was on holiday but the system was ably managed by Alan Chenery. Connie Edge was the compere for the night and she did an excellent job in the way she introduced the artistes and kept the show rolling. Connie thanked everyone who contributed in any way to making it a good show and also those who kindly donated raffle prizes. Thanks Brian. Perhaps in the next issue you will give us the name of Alan Newton's second number. Otherwise half the readers won't be able to sleep wondering what it was. And Connie reckons I am losing my marbles!!!!



Young Gareth Sumner is growing up really smart

Don't Forget to Drop a Line to the NEWSLETTER



North Wales by Our Evergreen Superstar

Cliff Royle -This time attendance was a little down; nevertheless we were delighted to see quite a number of first time visitors. Maybe this was the result of our public performance in Wrexham which was transmitted live on Marcher Gold. Jim Knight, our M.C. played a part of the recording which plugged our "Value For Money" evenings which include free pasties. Again our friends from Crewe were well represented.

Alan Chenery rendered a couple of "reet" Lancashire songs, and Connie Edge provided a little "culture" by singing a Tessie O'Shea song in which she indicated she was "Ready Willing and Able," Well now; and Husband Brian was away at a Coin Collectors Fair.

Carl Basford, said to have a large repertoire, sang "The Baby Show" and it was marvellous how he remembered the tricky words. Then Jim Knight gave us "Alexander's Ragtime Band" to the accompaniment of his own backing tape. Colin Wood gave us "Blackpool Belle" and then was accompanied by Alan Chenery with "Window Cleaner." Stan Watkinson sang "Slow Boat To China" which was the tune we danced to when I first met Margaret over 50 years ago.

The audience then joined in with For "They Are Jolly Good Fellows" for Dennis & Lesley Lee who will be celebrating their Silver Wedding Anniversary on the 12th September. We really appreciate the hard work they put in on our behalf and tender our sincere good wishes for their future health and happiness. Young Stephen Ensall gave an excellent performance (now without the help of paperwork and his father) Then Brian sang a couple of melodies just to show Stephen that he too was talented.

We were delighted to have Stan Evans back with us again, with his enchanting voice and wooden uke. He got the best laugh of the night with his joke about the Olympic Athlete. The evening's entertainment ended with a farewell song by Jon & Pam Baddeley based on George's "Goodnight Little Fellow Good Night" Dennis Lee gave us news of next year's special events to mark George's 40th Anniversary and then asked those present to stand in silence in memory of Jeffrey (Formby) Booth who recently passed away. A sad loss. Dennis then expressed thanks to all who turn up early to prepare the room, our M.C.; Deg on the sound equipment; the ladies on the reception desk; those who provide raffle prizes; supporters and visitors and Geoff & Dolwen Shone who both obtain and serve the pasties. Apparently it's the pasties that pull in the crowd. Cliff Royle (Sacked as Ace Reporter). *No Cliff! You've now been promoted to Super Ace Reporter. Unpaid of course! The bit about Alan Chenery rendering a couple of songs is interesting.* **NEXT PAGE**

It's a funny word is "rendered!" It means "tear apart" and in the dictionary it gives the following examples, "He rendered his hair out in rage" and "His fat rendered him unable to touch his toes." See what I mean? Not very complimentary is it? I mean, the lad's doing his best! Some readers might get the wrong impression of Alan so we must use another word there Cliff.



It was rather touching reading that Stan Watkinson's "Slow Boat To China." took you back to your early dancing days with Margaret. The song that takes us back to our courting days was an old hymn, "Fight The Good Fight."

Betty Driver



On page 10 we have the story by Betty of the time when she first started her stage career and when Beryl had her banned from the film "Boots Boots." Now it's all very confusing but in 1991 I received a letter from Betty stating, "I first met George when I was 12 years of age. He came round to see me in the local Repertory Theatre where I was working and I realised then that he was a very nice, easy going man with a wonderful personality.

After that meeting I worked on the same bills as him and Beryl quite a few times throughout my career and also when were both filming in separate films at Ealing Studios. We used to meet in the canteen for lunch and his favourite dish was Lancashire Hot Pot. He, like me used to be mad on American cars. He would come round and show me his new Packard and then the next week it would be changed to a Buick.

I used to get on very well with his wife Beryl. If it hadn't been for Beryl he wouldn't have had anything as he was over generous to the extreme. She had a tight rein on him all the time and therefore suffered a bad reputation for it. "See what I mean - It's all confusing. On page 10 she states that Beryl was some sort of a dragon while here on page 17 she has the greatest of respect for her.

Stan Watkinson is an expert at cutting his own hair and has done it for years. However during his last attempt the door bell rang and as he put the electric clippers down a part fell off onto the floor. When he returned he cut huge chunks out of his hair which left him with large bald spots. He had no alternative but to shave the lot off and cover it up with his cap.



Harry Enfield - Did anyone see the Harry Enfield Show on SKY TV on Friday 11th August? Harry gave reference to George when he said, "This young man came out of the post office and he was the spitting image of George Formby. George's name keeps popping up!"

Confused!!! - One couple who have been contributing to the Newsletter over the last few months thought it entitled them to membership to the GFS. This is a good point which we've overlooked so we'd better explain. Sorry for the confusion.

EXPLANATION: - The GFS is an international body of Formby fans who meet every three months at the Winter Gardens, Blackpool. The members pay £12 per year or £6 for a family membership which entitles members to four Vellum Magazines each year and free access into the Winter Garden meetings.

NEWSLETTER: - This has developed over the past 5 years. It was inspired by one of our late Sale members, Wally Cronshaw, for the benefit of the N. West GF branches, and secondly: because George and his family are part of our Lancashire heritage the Newsletter is read by interested GF fans who want to know what sort of GF activity goes on in and around George's home towns. It is read all over the country, Lancashire, Cheshire, Wales, Yorkshire, London, Essex, Midlands, Scotland, Dorset, Australia and many more places.

N. WEST BRANCHES: - There is no membership fee to attend the N. West branches. Simply turn up and pay 50p or £1 on the door. Details on back cover. You don't have to be a GFS member to attend. Or an entertainer.

GFS: - If you are not a member you can pay a day fee on the door which is usually around £2 to £3. If you enjoy the meeting then you can apply to join at the desk. There has been a few committee changes recently and it is not quite clear who sends out application forms. However this will be decided at the forthcoming September AGM. In the meantime I will be pleased to send you application forms. Hope this clears up the matter and sorry for the confusion.

More Confused - Spare a thought for our London super hero, Alan Richardson, who specially made a long journey to attend Jeffrey's funeral and found that he was a week late. "Not to worry" he thought, "I'll pay Christine a visit" only to find that she was out. Have you ever had one of those days Alan? You'd have been better staying at home on a day like that and typing me out one of your super articles. Drop us a line Alan.

For Sale: Trevor Jones of Blenheim House, 29a Elgin Rd, Pwll, Llanelli SA15 4AD has items to offer which he is selling on behalf of his brother.

Item 1. is a Dallas "C" uke banjo which appears (if the picture is anything to go by) to be in very good condition.

Item 2. is a Windsor five stringed banjo 5 string banjo.

Item 3. is "Popular" eight string mandolele made by Clifford Evans of London.

Item 4. is a "Modern" Five string banjo.

Item 5. is a George Formby Big Hit Song Book containing 10 GF songs.

Plus various George Formby song sheets: Frigid Air Fanny, - "Swing Momma" - - Hi Tiddly hi ti Island" - "In My Little Snapshot Album" - "Keep Your Seats Please" - "Keep Fit" - Biceps Muscles and Brawn".

If you are interested in any of these items please give Trevor a ring on 01554 754778. Or Email - trevorblenheim@btinternet.com

Or Trevor's Hot Line - trevorjones29@hotmail.com

Talking Emails - More and more are joining our little group of Emailers. Here are some of the addresses of N. West members:

Dennis Lee, dlee@1eljay.freemove.com (if you have problems with that one it might be because you are typing a letter "l" after the "@". It is a number "1")

Neil Forshaw:

neilforshaw@nnc.co.uk

Gerry Mawdsley:

ukeleman@freewayuk.co

John Taylor:

johnjtaylor@ukgateway.net

Frankie Woods & Co:

alisonnadin@rhyl5.freemove.co.uk

Colin Wood:

chriswood@claremont44.fsnet.co.uk

Stan Evans

stan@the.hollies.u-net.com

Bob Bellion - Those who came on the S Ireland trip will remember Bob. Well the poor lad has apparently met with disaster. After a night out at his local club, he walked out of the house wearing his slippers and no jacket, and left the front door unlocked. He's never been seen since. Bob is the brother of Ruth & Eddie Kennedy who also came on the trip. The police are carrying out searches throughout the N. West and the only thing they've come up with is a body that was washed up at Liverpool. Unfortunately due to damage the body couldn't be recognised. Bob thoroughly enjoyed his trip with us.



Bob Bellion

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. Every last Monday in the month Tel Eve & Charles Stewart on 01253 768097. Wonderful buffet included.

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

N. West Web Site: www.thehollies.u-net.com/formby. E Mail: stan@thehollies.u-net.com

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.

