

THE NORTH - WEST

# GEORGE FORMBY

## Newsletter 65

Vol. 5

No.5

Nov 2000



Warrington Exhibition  
1991 - A model of George  
poses in front of George's  
Norton motorcycle

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.65

and many thanks for your support and congratulations at the AGM of the George Formby Society, which was held at the Winter Gardens on Sunday the 17th September.

A few months ago I was asked to join the committee as Publicity Officer to launch some activities for George's forthcoming 40th Anniversary. "No problem" I thought, "Just up my street." However the job of Publicity Officer didn't entitle me to having a vote at the committee meetings so all the planning in the world could soon go flat if you don't have a vote to back it up.

Well now, having been elected as a committee member, I have a vote and intend making use of it. Thanks to all for your support and confidence.

## THERE'S ALWAYS A SNAG!!!!

Regarding the forthcoming George Formby 40th Anniversary Year: We are experiencing difficulties with both the Wigan Pier Exhibition and the Guinness Book of Records. The Warrington Council, who promised to loan us material from the 1991 exhibition for the Wigan Pier show, is now backing out as one of the original photo lenders has made a complaint. However we are working on this.

## ANOTHER SNAG!!!!

Guinness are asking us to record on video the event at the Winter Gardens when we will be setting up a world record of "The Biggest Banjo Uke Group In The World," and for this we need to obtain permission from Noel Gay Ltd (Leaning On A Lamp Post) EMI (It's In The Air) and Campbell Connelly (Blackpool Rock).

They agree that we can make a recording on video on condition that Guinness obtain a licence each time they wish to use it in broadcasting etc. The Guinness rules are that we have to pay for any future licences with no obligation to themselves. This we can't guarantee because in a few years time there will be a change of committee and they might not agree with it.

However, all is not lost! We can use two or three songs that are out of copyright (over 70 years since the writer died) or use our own songs. So all will eventually turn out nice again.

\*\*\*\*\*

**Many Thanks** to all who contribute to the Newsletter. It would be a very difficult task keeping it alive without your help. Many Thanks.

## The Formby Story -

### Part 54 by Stan Evans.

The court case was over, Eliza received £5,000 from Pat Howson and George's sisters, Louie, Ella, Ethel, and Mary received £2,000 each. The brothers received nothing as was George's wish.

David Bret, in his book writes that of the £135,000 left to Pat by George, she received only £20,000, the rest being swallowed up in court costs.



George's worst photo. Beryl would not have allowed him to pose for this

In a TV interview she said of George: "First of all it was a case of having tremendous sympathy for George. But above all it was his wonderful warmth, his humility, and his honesty. I don't just mean being humble. He must have known of his own greatness, but he didn't spout about it. He just took himself for granted and he was wonderful in his relationship with other people. I have no regret. Materially, I would have saved a great deal of trouble if we had been married, but that is the only regret. I have no other regrets at all."

On 22 November 1971 Pat Howson died of cancer aged 46 and almost immediately a legal battle blew up over her will - instigated by her father, Fred Howson, and George's sister, Ethel. Ethel was reported as saying: There is a jinx on George's money which will be lifted when it is restored back to his family. Fred Howson, a car salesman, knew George through the car deals he had done with him. George for many years was a friend of Fred's family. However, Fred was now going through tough times having lost his family through divorce and lost his money. Both Fred and the Formbys lost their battle and the money was left to Prioress Carmelite Convent, Wigan. As was Pat's wish.

**SUITCASE OF CASH** - Gerry Nicholas reported on TV in The South Bank Show that George & Beryl stored £60,000 (another reported £30,000) in cash in the attic. It was also reported that four people, including Ethel, John Crowther and George's valet, Harry Scott, visited Beryldene after George's death and found the cash. They decided to return later when Harry Scott wasn't there. When they returned however the case was missing and was never found.

Back in 1991 Eva & I took Louie on a tour of George's houses and finished up at Beryldene, Lytham, St Annes. The owner, Mrs Fairclough, invited us in and kindly showed us round. Louie told us the story of the missing suitcase full of cash so it can be safely assumed that there is some truth in it. **MORE NEXT MONTH.**

# THE WIGAN BOAT EXPRESS

## STEAMS AGAIN



90 members of the Crewe branch steamed out of Caverswall Road (BlytheBridge) station recently on their final trip of the year. Armed with their ukuleles they descended on the Foxfield Steam Railway, which they had hired for the evening. What a unique experience it was to have a real steam railway complete with 32 steam locomotives, a station with a museum and a train with engine in steam all to our selves for six hours. Add to that an observation car on our three carriage train complete with bar selling real ale! (The real ale turned out to be "Titanic" which real ale drinkers know goes down very well!) Many of the excursionists were dressed up for the occasion.

The Seven Fifteen "Wigan Boat Express" as we named it made its way through pastoral countryside, "picking flowers on the way" as the song goes. The cows and horses fled away from the fiery monster that pulled our standard gauge train. Leaving the idyllic fields behind us we passed into unspoilt, seemingly enchanted woodland to which many of the excursionists vowed to return to explore and picnic at some future date. The party arrived back at Caverswall Road Station at 7.45 and with sound system already set up in the spacious Refreshment Room our ukulele players entertained for half an hour until the Guard announced "All Aboard" and the revellers rejoined the Express which was stocked up with a magnificent buffet supper which was served on route. By this time it was dark and it was a nostalgic experience travelling in compartment stock and eating our supper in the dim light of the carriages, and seeing the sparks flying from the engine as it huffed and puffed its way up some severe inclines again just as the song depicted.

The Foxfield Railway boasts the steepest gradient in the country but we didn't have to "get out and push it up the hill" as George did! Our Guard did a splendid job looking after our disabled friends and we all ended the night with a planned one and a half hours entertainment singing many of the songs that made George Formby famous.

\*\*\*\*\*

**Halleluja** - You can't beat the Newsletter for S.O.S's. Last month I appealed for a copy of the British Legion Hymn, "Oh Valiant Heart" and lo and behold it didn't turn up in the post a few days later. Many Thanks to Chris Metcalfe of Crewe.

## Super Ace Reporter Cliff Royle was on the spot again to bring us up to date with the latest news from Penyffordd.



If this was to be a report for the Tabloid Press the heading would have been "Traffic Chaos Hits Formby Show." Yes it was a problem for some of us as we had to contend with lengthy delays due to roadworks, and miles of slow moving traffic following a breakdown. However, in true Formby style all eventually "Turned Out Nice Again" and we had another excellent evening. Even though we missed some of our friends from Crewe.

We seemed to inherit a few problems. Walter Kirkland's "son" Ron was absent so Walter had to play the bones on his own; Colin Wood said he was only in the mood for playing one song; Young Frank Murphy said he was not too well, and later trapped his fingers in the door (luckily he soon recovered from all his problems) Stan Watkinson could not get his long arm banjo in Stan Evans's car so he didn't play on the night; and our M/C Jim Knight had to depart after the interval.

There were a few newcomers; Billy Scales, an ex band leader who said he is now too old to blow an instrument gave us a sing-a-long session on the keyboard; and Christine Revell and young son Gregory who is really keen on learning to play the uke. Jim Murphy is away working abroad at present so we were pleased to have his wife Carol visit us with the children. A highlight of the evening was the visit of Hazel Physick of Wallasey. Hazel is the sister of Dorothy Day who wrote a number of songs including "Talking To The Moon About You." which George featured in his film "Much Too Shy." Hazel was accompanied by her friend Lorna. Both enjoyed their evening.



Hazel Physick

**GREAT TV NEWS - BLUE PETER.** Another highlight was the news that the young players Stephen Ensall, Frank Murphy and Gareth Sumner have been invited to do a recording for the Blue Peter programme on 18th October at the Blackpool Pleasure Beach. Stephen and Frank gave a demonstration of how they will perform. Entertainment with a difference was performed by Alison Nadin with her puppets, and Stan Evans performed with his uke and a red rose which I gather is fed on miracle grow. Paul Woodhead journeyed all the way from South Shropshire to entertain us with his unusual songs; apparently not having eaten he was pleased to sing for his pasty.

Incidentally in the publisher's dispute over a word (last issue) I note in my 1933 Chambers Etymological (I don't know what that means) Dictionary it says, among other things against "v.t. render" - "to perform." as against "v.t. rend" - "to tear asunder with force; to split". Do we need an umpire on this point or? *Thank you Cliff. I've found out what the trouble is! You've got a 63 year old dictionary and times have changed. It's out of date! Christmas is coming Margaret so pop into WH Smiths and give the lad a treat.*

**Email From David Scott** - David's mother is Winifred Scott who was a wonderful singer in the war years and a member of George's team, entertaining the Forces, at Orkney and Shetland Islands. Well she is still alive and living at a Sheffield Residential home. She has been very ill, but has made a marvellous recovery. She is at this time writing her memoirs about the old variety days and George features in them quite often. She started out as a singing waitress with Don Rico, where Terry Thomas met her and encouraged her. She topped many a variety bill and worked closely with George for many years. Thanks was sent to David and an invitation to send any more information on his mother. Kath Hammond of the Sheffield Branch was contacted and she rang to say that she would be pleased to visit Winifred in the residential home. Thanks Kath.

\*\*\*\*\*

**Another Slip Up!!!** - You can print 10,000 words and never hear a word from anyone, but as soon as you make a mistake the whole world is on the phone. Dennis Lee rang, "Hey, what's all this in the last Newsletter? You've got my Email Address number wrong. It should read, "dlee@1eljay.freemove.co.uk"

That's nothing Dennis. I got my own address wrong. It doesn't have a space in the middle and should read - stan@theholbies.u-net.com  
More Email addresses, Jon & Pam Baddeley can be contacted on Email address: jonpam@baddeley45.freemove.co.uk

And Brian Edge can be Emailed on: brian@parauke.supanet.com

\*\*\*\*\*

**Thrust in my Hand** at one of the meetings was this little article on the man who thought he could cheat his insurance company. He bought a box of 24 very rare and expensive cigars and insured them against everything including - FIRE. Within a month, having smoked the cigars, and without having paid his first premium, he filed a claim against the company. On the form he claimed that the cigars were lost 'in a series of small fires.'

The insurance company refused to pay out the grounds that he had consumed the cigars in the normal fashion. The man sued and won the case because the company didn't define what it considered to be "unacceptable fire." The company had to pay out \$15,000.

After the smoker had cashed the cheque the insurance company demanded his arrest on 24 charges of arson. He was jailed for two years and ordered to pay a \$24,000 fine. So let that be a lesson to you.

\*\*\*\*\*

HAVE YOU SENT AN ARTICLE IN YET?



## George's 40th

Gerard Rickards has just phoned. He kindly helped us 10 years ago when he travelled out to take photos of George's houses and then created wonderful paintings of six of the houses starting with No.3 Westminster Street, Wigan.

"Stan" he shouted, do you remember me?" - "Of course I do," I replied. "Well I've just read your article on the forthcoming Wigan Exhibition and I'm ringing to tell you that you are welcome to borrow the paintings"

This is great news as the paintings attracted quite a lot of interest in the Warrington Exhibition and two of them, "Hill Crest, Warrington" and "Berydene, Singleton" were sold from the museum.

\*\*\*\*\*

**S.O.S - Song Wanted!** Alan Chenery on 01270 257085 is looking for the words and music to: "There's a tiny house, by a tiny stream where a lovely lass, used to sit and dream, but the dream came true quite unexpectedly, in Gilligilli osenfecka catsenella coben by the sea." Try singing that when you are drunk.

\*\*\*\*\*

## Liverpool's Lawrence Jones -

Did you see Lawrence on TV being interviewed at the Brighton Conservative Conference? It was on the 6pm News on ITV Wednesday 4th October. Lawrence, who is standing for Southport in the next election, spoke very well. Who knows? someday, in the far off future, we might have a Prime Minister who plays a uke.

\*\*\*\*\*



## Grandparents - Isn't it

wonderful when you see grandparents giving up their own leisure time to take their grandchildren round to the meetings. They buy them ukuleles and all the song books etc. and then give them every encouragement to improve their playing. Let's hope the children don't forget them.



Young Ben Halliwell's nan & grandad

## Ken Dodd - What a great artiste this man

is. I wrote to him asking for anything to add to my collection, and also a list of his future engagements. Well I was surprised when I received a most wonderful coloured brochure which contained over 50 beautiful coloured photos of Ken posing with the many stars he has met over the years. It really is a top quality brochure, and quite expensive, so I don't believe for one moment that he is a tight wad.



Ken must be the hardest showbusiness worker in the country. He is travelling through Britain each day and from July to December alone he is performing over 80 shows. To give an example:

2nd August he is at the Memorial Hall, Cleethorpes - on the 3rd in Skegness - 5th New Brighton - 6th Blackpool. How on earth does he have the energy to keep going at that rate? We are deflated if we have two meetings in one week, so Ken must be super-human.

Everyone agrees that when Ken (now in his 60s) retires it will be the end of Music Hall. A wonderful artist!

If anyone hasn't got Ken's video, "An Audience With Ken Dodd" you are missing a special treat. The price has come down to around £6 now so it is well worth buying before stocks run out. Any time you are feeling a little down in the dumps just put Ken on and he will put you right for the rest of the day - guaranteed!!!! He is a GENIUS!!!!

\*\*\*\*\*

## Sept. at Sale - WHAT A SURPRISE! By Cyril Palmer.

With the petrol shortage, plus the Winter Gardens Convention on the following two days, we were resigned to a limited attendance. In fact only sixteen arrived, but they enjoyed a lovely evening's entertainment.

Janet Grootoink and Jonas Svenson were our overseas visitors and were in sparkling mood. Walter and Andy Eastwood arrived from the South coast and Andy, of course, was his usual brilliant self. Andy has recently graduated and is now: Andrew Eastwood; B.A. (Hons)

Les James and Margaret Moran were in good form, even though Margaret is still a little "under the weather." Walter (Bones) Kirkland gave a "rattling" good performance and I completed the line up for the evening. There were two "first time" visitors who will certainly return after a great evening. *Thanks Cyril. Unfortunately, due to the petrol shortage I didn't dare risk travelling to Sale and then Blackpool. However I'm pleased that you had a good night.*



## What On Earth

**is Anthony Up To?** and what a shock Eva & I got when we received a copy of the Sunday Mirror Supplement. Inside was a half page photo of Anthony Mason and his girlfriend Hannah Speller of London. They met when they were working on a play "Alice In Wonderland" and they've been happily courting ever since. They clicked together so well that they are expecting a child in November. No wonder he's been keeping quiet lately. He thought we wouldn't find out.



The bottom half is banned

I can read Anthony like a book. He closed his eyes for the photo trying to look relaxed and at ease with the situation but actually he is embarrassed. Out-going Hannah however is enjoying every minute. She'll bring him out of his shell. They are good for each other and we hope they have a very happy relationship. I'm sure they will.

Hannah is a happy and friendly chatterbox with plenty of topics to talk about. She also has great ambitious to make a mark in the world. Watch this space for further developments - in more ways than one! They'll make a good double act.

\*\*\*\*\*

## Lee Mannering writes to the Accrington Observer -

**GEORGE'S WIFE MERITS A PLAQUE!** - Sir, whenever George Formby is mentioned many memories will be stirred of his Granddad's Flannelette Night-shirt or Cleaning Windows. George will also spring to mind when talking about wartime entertainers but virtually no-one will remember that his wife, Beryl was in her own rights a very successful top of the bill entertainer long before she met George, at Castleford in 1923. Beryl was part of a Clog Dancing act called The Two Violets, along with her sister May.



Beryl Formby

What may surprise many is that although Beryl was born in Accrington there is nothing here to commemorate this.

Although she was one of the hardest women in showbusiness, she brought George to the public and was in fact his general factotum, paving the way for the huge effort they both made entertaining the troops at the war front. It would be nice to see some sort of plaque to pay tribute to Accrington's first lady of showbusiness, Beryl Formby. *I agree with Lee but doubt if she will ever receive the recognition she deserves for her hard work.*

In loving memory of

**ASHLEY NEIL LYNCH**  
Died 14th October 1995



Outside I look quite happy,  
inside myself I cry,  
So young, so brave,  
so loving,  
Why did you have to die?  
I loved and wanted  
you so much  
My gentle thoughtful boy  
The years we spent together  
You brought me  
so much joy,  
My son, you're in my  
thoughts,  
My heart is filled with pain  
Dear Lord,  
please keep him safe  
Until we meet again

We love and miss you Ash  
Mum, Dad, David, Stephen, Ralphy,  
Sharon, Nana, Gandad & Nana Begs

# CELEBRATION OF A COMIC GENIUS

Have You  
Any GF  
Archives  
to Loan?

By Geoffrey Shryhane

## Newspapers

seem to have a licence to report anything they wish. In the interview I never mentioned that Warrington is the base of the GFS or did I say the I have been George's biggest fan for 40 years. It's all hype!

Some years back the same reporter, Geoff Shryhane, a Formby fan, filmed Anthony Mason and I stood in front of George's grave in the Warrington Cemetery. He insisted that we should look really sad and spent about 20 minutes insisting that we pull the most miserable faces.

We did exactly as instructed and looked really despondent. But a few days later my miserable photo headed a happy GF column in the Wigan Reporter and I'm sure that the readers were wondering why I looked so depressed.

WIGAN-born comic George Formby is finally "coming home"... 40 years after his death.

A major exhibition of the toothy comedian's artefacts is to be put on show at Wigan Pier.

The move comes after months of negotiations with the Warrington-based Formby Society.

The exhibition is similar to that which Wigan missed a decade ago. It was held in Warrington, attracting tens of thousands of Formby fans from all over the world.

Fittingly, the scene of next year's massive show is also the place where George's father invented the Wigan Pier Joke.

Stan Evans, ~~was~~ official of the world famous George Formby Society, said: "This exhibition at the Pier is going to be a great hit.

"Ten years ago, the show was offered to Wigan but there was some dilly dallying and eventually it went to Warrington. Obviously, Wigan was the right place because George was born there.

"But now all is set for the exhibition at the Pier next April which will kick off with an outdoor concert and end with a grand variety show." Diary dates are April 15-28.

Stan, who has been Formby's biggest fan for 40 years, said: "George is Wigan's best-known son and despite the fact that it's 40 years since he died, interest in him has never fallen away. We are talking

## Formby expo lined up for home town

about a man who was Britain's most popular film comic and entertainer, a man who was given an award by the Russians.

"I think some years ago it was the fashion for Northern people to want to forget George but this has now changed. Wigan's proud of him again - and I believe the exhibition next spring will bring thousands of additional tourists to the town."

The show will feature a wealth of material, from photos of George to original manuscripts, records, his passport and hundreds of other treasures.

The George Formby Society has branches all over the North which meet once a month, with larger meetings held every three months in Blackpool.

Stan is also appealing for anyone in Wigan who has items connected to George to loan them for the exhibition. He added: "Since the hit show in Warrington, we have acquired many new items. The Wigan show will be bigger and better."

Stan can be contacted at 01925 727102.

## Building Up!

- It might be George's 40th next year but the interest is building up already. This month alone we've had BBC Radio at Blackpool Tower, a BBC Manchester Radio session, BBC TV's Blue Peter at Blackpool Pleasure Beach, the above article in the Wigan Reporter and several enquiries and offers of support. David Bret's Book on George has had no detrimental effect whatsoever on George. In fact it has brought his name to the public again.



WIGAN SON:  
Some years ago, it was the fashion for Northern people to forget George - but that's all changed and Wigan is now proud of him again

**Songwriters Wanted** - As part of the programme for George's 40th Anniversary next year, we are attempting to set up a Guinness World Record as the Biggest Banjo Uke Group in the World which will be held at the Winter Gardens next September. For this we are hoping to sing three GF songs, "Windows - Lamp Post - and In The Air" which are all easy songs to play. However, we are having a few problems clearing the licences so we may have to use two or three songs that the members have written, and which are not covered by copyright. Or use songs that are out of copyright. (The composer has been dead over 70 years)

ALTERNATIVELY we could use our own songs or write a song specially for the event? If anyone out there is talented at knocking out a tune why not have a go at putting a tune to the following lyrics? WHICH ARE ROUGH DRAFT ONLY and subject to alteration. Or write your own song - which must be easy to play.

Suggested lyrics.

## THE BIGGEST BANJO UKE GROUP IN THE WORLD.

You've heard about the Guinness Book of Records  
And the people who've been entered in the book  
There's runners, jumpers, and chaps who climb heights  
But none of them can play the banjo uke

So we thought we'd set a brand new Guinness record  
And the plans we had then started to unfurl  
To celebrate George Formby's Anniversary  
We'd become the biggest banjo uke group in (all) the world  
CHORUS

We're the biggest banjo uke group in (all) the world  
Yes, the biggest banjo uke group in (all) the world  
We're no good at riding backward or flying up side  
down  
At swimming we are hopeless and it makes us wear a  
frown  
But at playing ukuleles we're the best there is in town  
We're the biggest banjo uke group in (all) the world



**Easy Chords  
Only  
Please**

MORE VERSES CAN BE WRITTEN LATER. Please alter as you wish. What we require is a SIMPLE TO PLAY, catchy, lighthearted, GF type tune with a regular ukulele beat. Please note that the above is simply a safety net and may not be used. An invitation has also been sent to Dickie Speake to write a tune. Please forward a tape of your song to me at The Hollies, 19 Hall Nook, Penketh, Warrington WA5 2HN. Good Luck.

## Have a Laugh with Joe Taylor

I held a little hand last night, so dainty and so neat  
I thought my heart would burst with joy, so wildly did it beat  
No other hand unto my heart could greater solace bring  
Than the little hand I held last night, - Four Aces and a King.

Appearing at the Theatre Royal is the world's most short-sighted knife thrower, Rudolpho Colenzo the second, and his assistant Zelda the twenty ninth.

In court today garage owner Monty Ripoff pleaded not guilty to turning the clock back on a number of cars in his garage in Warrington. He stated that at the time of the alleged offence he was 10,000 miles away in Liverpool.

Seamus O'Tool's shattering of the world's 100 metres record by an amazing six seconds last night in Dublin has not been ratified. The judges say he must have taken a short cut.

Every Sunday the very generous Landlord of the Dog and Duck pub picks out a customer who is down on his luck and gives him the right change.

And the last question is: If Vegetarians eat vegetables, what do Humanitarians eat? *Thanks Joe. Keep sending em in. Pleased you enjoyed the Peter Sellers tape.*  
\*\*\*\*\*

## Sid Martin - Do you remember him? Of course you do!

Sid was the Canadian member who came over some years back to see what made the GFS tick. He stayed with Eva & I in Penketh and thoroughly enjoyed his stay. We invited Jack Jones and Ron Holliday over to show Sid a few tricks and he had a great time improving his skill with his uke. Like he said, "You can't get anything over in Canada on ukes!" So the trip was a treat for him.

Well I heard from Sid today and the poor lad is going through it rough. Two years ago he was swimming in a pool over in Canada and he picked up a virus. He was immediately taken to a care unit in the hospital where he was given up for dead. However he came round but with a complete loss of hearing and he's been like that ever since - completely unable to hear. This has saddened Sid because he loved to play his uke and now he is unable to hear anything.

However he is now waiting to have an implant - a long process - which he hopes will be successful.

P.S. I've got a photo of Sid filed away somewhere. Hope to show it next issue.

## Brian Edge Conquers the Email!!!

**His First Report** - Crewe had no shortage of support at their September meeting when 84 turned up to enjoy the fun.

During her spot Connie made a further appeal to supporters to consider dressing up a bit to make our concerts better than ever. Remember the Good Old Days on the television from the City Varieties Theatre at Leeds when everyone adopted their own costume-what great fun and what a spectacle that was. It would be great if we could do the same?

The boys and girls are already practising their sketches for our Christmas Party on 19 December and it is already obvious that we are going to have lots of fun. Don't forget to let me know if anyone amongst our wonderful supporters have any hidden talents in the entertainment line. Also if anyone out there would like to have a go as M.C. occasionally we would be glad to hear from them too.

We are sorry to have to report that we can no longer get the services of the two ladies who used to lay us on such excellent buffets for us as they have now retired. We are therefore back in the real world and have to tell you that the cost of our Christmas Buffet is likely to be in the region of £3. A fairly large increase on our standards but still quite reasonable.

It was also great to welcome back our resident drummer Steve Hassall returning after the Bowling Season which has kept him away from our concerts. Many said that they missed his drumming and also his special talents on the ukulele.

It was also nice to have Stan Evans back on our stage. It is some time since Stan performed at Crewe and it was interesting to note how he has changed his act from a performer of miracles and ukulele player impersonator to a full blown stand up comedian ! Connie is carefully monitoring your future output Stan so just watch it! Brian Edge. *Thanks Brian. Yes I am aware that Connie does a Mary Whitehouse on me and so she should. It's a family show!*

\*\*\*\*\*

**The News** - You've either got to laugh or cry. Just been listening to the News In Brief on TV. "There is War in the East, the worst floods ever in the South, there's just been a mugging in Manchester, someone has just been murdered, a shop's been robbed, the Dome is doomed, a politician's just died, the chap who shot Jill Dando is to go on trial, and a body has just been washed up. Now here is the weather forecast. There will be more rain throughout the country followed by storms in places. Cheerio for now and have a very pleasant weekend."

## BBC Blue Peter

What dreadful weather at the Blackpool Pleasure Beach and why they planted the lads on a stage about 40 feet up in the air I don't know. They dodged in and out for about 4 hours before the BBC crew were satisfied. Anyway the lads, - wet through and stiff with cold, did an excellent job and full credit to them.



Back Row: John Shreeve, Gareth Sumner, Des Redfern  
Front, Frank Murphy, Ben Hallewell, Stephen Ensall

They belted out Cleaning Windows like experts and finished the show singing Lamp Post to the roll of the credits. Fortunately the rain ceased around 4.45pm to allow the filming and a huge crowd gathered at the foot of the steps to cheer them on. Blue Peter is a very popular show so no doubt we will be getting some response from the youngsters to join us. Well done lads!

\*\*\*\*\*

**Just received** an Email from Anthony Mason who is now living with Hannah in Essex. They expect their first child next month (November). Well you must admit! He might be a slow starter but he's a flier once he gets going. We all wish them both well. His Email address is: [wigan.lad@lineone.net](mailto:wigan.lad@lineone.net)

\*\*\*\*\*

**Uke For Sale** - Our brilliant cartoon artist, Joe McCaffrey has a Windsor Whirl uke banjo for sale. These are usually lightweight, with a pleasant sound and ideal for the ladies or youngsters. £75. You can ring Joe on 0151 428 3126, and don't forget to mention the Newsletter.

\*\*\*\*\*

**Liverpool's Anniversary** - The members at Liverpool will be having a buffet laid on for the November meeting which will be for their 9th Birthday. Well we've certainly struggled at Liverpool over the years but I wonder if it is because we were launched on Friday the 13th? All our meetings are around the 13th. Not to worry! We always have a good night and the October meeting was no exception. Three cheers to Tom Bailey for keeping the club going.

\*\*\*\*\*

**LATE SAD NEWS** - We have just received news from Cyril Palmer that Sale Member, Arthur Fordham has passed on (today 18th October) in hospital after suffering a stroke. Arthur was a popular member at Sale and was always accompanied by Wynn Jones. For those who can't remember Arthur, he and Wynn always left the meeting around 10pm and often to the chorus of "We'll Meet Again" More in the next issue.

**Blue Peter TV Show** have just phoned. They are looking for a group of youngsters to play their ukes in Blackpool on Wednesday October 18th at around 1pm. Also they require a few older members to support them. Gareth Sumner, Stephen Ensall and Frank Murphy's names have been given as the younger group.

Now it's always difficult getting anyone to play during the work days as they can't get time off, so if there is anyone out there who is able to support any of these shows during the week would you please give me a ring.

\*\*\*\*\*

Just Received a call from **Paul Woodhead** who was ringing from Tenneriffe. He was ready to appear in a Talent Show which was being broadcast from the Talk Of The Town Theatre. It was on the Internet on "www.powerfmradio.com" so he asked if I would record it for him. The show was to run from 8pm until 1am the following morning.

The promoter, Big Tim Lane, told Paul that also in the competition was a George Formby member and Paul was curious who it was.

I tried to record it Paul but it was so confusing and all I got was loud crashing sounds coming through and loads of adverts. Sorry I failed.

\*\*\*\*\*

**Great Guts** - Every month Jim Bramwell & I entertain at the Warrington Blind Centre and one of the ladies really appreciates us coming, - well they all do but this lady is kind of special with a broad smile and a cheery laugh throughout the show. When Jim is telling his jokes she is laughing at every line and you can't help but enjoy playing to her. In fact we get enjoyment watching her with her wonderful facial expressions. Even if it's a lousy joke we still get hearty laughs from her.

Well today, Eva & I were shopping in ASDA and who should we see but this lady walking round with an assistant who was filling her trolley. We went to her to say hello and it was only then that I discovered that she is totally blind and can't see a thing. But as soon as I spoke she recognised my voice and threw her arms round us both.

It brings tears to your eyes to think that a lady like this is so kind and appreciative of the simple things in life and not in the least bitter about her infirmity. And doesn't it make you think that with good eyesight we have an awful lot in life to be thankful for.

# Blackpool Tower

- In last month's Newsletter we should have reported that BBC Radio Scotland were looking for a few players to appear at the top of Blackpool Tower along with a host of stars. Unfortunately they rang just as the Newsletters were being printed and therefore too late.



Finding the players to be at the top of the tower for

8.30am proved more difficult than I thought. The older members didn't fancy making such an early start (What! Me get up at 5.30am to get to Blackpool, - no way") and the young ones were all working. Anyway, Des Redfern, of Crewe, and John Shreeve, of Liverpool, volunteered for the job and they were delighted when they arrived there.

Des (Lord Lucan) Redfern



John (Spider fingers) Shreeve

"Excellent" said Des, "We appeared and mixed with the stars and enjoyed every minute. The Rolly Pollies were there, and Hale & Pace, and John Inman sang one of George's songs, "I Wish I Was Back on The Farm".

Fred McCauley, the BBC Radio presenter, arranged to have song sheets handed out to everybody and they all joined in with Des & John singing "Blackpool Rock." (I wonder why they didn't sing "Sitting on the Top of Blackpool Tower"). Fred asked the lads why the BBC banned "Windows" and also the difference between a

uke and a uke banjo. "Great Experience" said Des.

\*\*\*\*\*

## Volunteers Wanted

- For the 40th Anniversary we will be pushing quite a lot of publicity out to the media which will bring in requests for artists to perform at various functions, charities etc. also radio and TV (mainly they are small local radio stations) If you fancy doing a spot, drop me a line and if anything comes in for your area we will consider passing your number on.

\*\*\*\*\*

## Crewe Lads

- Alan Chenery & Colin Wood have just done their first show together for the older folk and, after a nervous kick off, thoroughly enjoyed doing it. "They were crying for more" said Alan "so we let em have it." *Good for you lads. It's great experience and very rewarding if they are a good audience.*



**John Guy** - John, who was the GFS magazine Editor for 17 years, has not been too well lately and would welcome a call from any of the members. His number is: 0121 523 3164 - although I have had difficulty in getting through. *Have you paid your phone bill John?*



Now some years back John travelled to Wigan to the site where George was born - No.3 Westminster Street - and along with his two nephews he collected three cobblestones from the front of George's front door step. He thought, "George has walked over these stones a thousand times."

Well, John is now getting rid of some of his GF memorabilia to move house and wishes to give two of the stones away to anyone who calls round to collect them. He lives at: 180 Church Hill Rd, Handsworth, Birmingham, B20 3PG

Thanks for the photos John. Unfortunately due to age they didn't come out clear enough to reproduce. Hope you are well. Keep Smiling.

\*\*\*\*\*

**Hotel Getaway** - Just had a reply from Granada Studios. They have pulled the show out but they might consider letting us have a copy of the show. But it is very doubtful as it is against their principles

I told you it was Rubbish didn't I? I think the idea was great but it lacked a good scriptwriter. The plots were far too weak and they deteriorated each episode. The only spark of life was when we moved in banging our banjos.

Personally I thought that the actors should have been given far heavier character roles. For example the manager should have been a bully who - like Fawltly Towers - was always picking on one particular inoffensive waiter, the hotel owner should have been an habitual drunkard who carried a whisky bottle in his pocket and was always taking sly nips under the table. The staff, who worked long hours, would be grossly underpaid and had to do a few fiddles to subsidise their wages. The guests, instead of being pestered by the staff should have been embarrassed into feeling sorry for them.

Bringing George Formby players into that particular episode wasn't a good move. We were supposed to embarrass the guests but instead we brightened their week end up. We should have been used to bore the pants off a much younger couple who were more into Elvis Presley. However, it is too late to change the script now. Short of a good scriptwriter!!! Shame.

**Olwen Gale Writes** . . . A little news item for the Newsletter - Over the past weeks the TV have been repeating a lot of the old "Minder" series. I watched a number of them and one was entitled "The Long Ride Back to Scratchwood" and I think it was originally shown in 1984.

In the film a ticket (Wembley) tout king - who was the villain - plus Arthur Daly and Dennis Waterman, were watching a TV in a Rolls Royce car and who was on the screen but George Formby singing "Imagine Me On The Maginot Line!"

It would be appreciated if you would give some indication of when the "Hotel Get-away" will be screened. *Thanks Olwen, I keep Emailing Granada but they are not responding. The contacts I had have now moved on to other programmes and Jonathan is now in charge of receiving videos from the public for "You've Been Framed."* However I will keep trying. *Personally I think the reason for not showing any more episodes is because the programme was poor and they had low viewing figures. The whole thing was badly planned from the outset. Will keep you informed. Thanks again.*

\*\*\*\*\*

**John Lennon Story** - Just had a film company on the phone who are making a film on the life of John Lennon. They are looking for someone looking around 17 years of age plus and who can play a banjo. When I queried if they were referring to a uke banjo they didn't seem to know what it was they wanted, however they did insist that he must be equal to a professional artist. I rang Anthony Mason, who is interested in doing the job.

Assuming that Anthony gets the job it could be an excellent opportunity for him as the film will be shown world wide.

STOP PRESS - Anthony and Andy Eastwood applied and both have been successful. But they will not be acting. Anthony will be playing in the background while a younger actor mimes with the uke. Andy will be playing the bass guitar for another actor. Nice to hear our youngsters are progressing.

\*\*\*\*\*

**GF Record for Sale** - As soon as I announced the news of the forthcoming Wigan Pier GF Exhibition to the Wigan Post, and added a request for loans of GF memorabilia, the phone was ringing.

Wigan lad, Jack Holt on 01942 707356 has got a GF LP for sale (or to loan) and it is called "The World of George Formby." Give him a ring if you want to buy it. The price is around the £3 mark. . . . and then you can loan it to us.

SEND AN ARTICLE IN

# 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 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](http://www.thehollies.u-net.com/formby). E Mail: [stan@thehollies.u-net.com](mailto: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.

