

THE NORTH - WEST

# GEORGE FORMBY

## Newsletter 66

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*Merry  
Christmas  
Everyone*

*And a  
Happy New  
Year*



Specially Produced for George Formby Fans  
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# Welcome to Newsletter No.66 and

we open up with a touch of sad news at the loss of one of our Sale founder members, Arthur Fordham.



Arthur was 80 years of age but looked much younger in years and we understand that he was one of the founder members of the Sale branch. The members at Sale will remember Arthur as one half of the Arthur and Wynn duo who always left the meeting early and often to the tune of "We'll Meet Again." Arthur was admitted into hospital after suffering a stroke. He left his wife, Connie, two daughters, a son and several grandchildren.

During his working years he was a plumber and heating engineer and in his spare time he loved to paint portraits. Listening to and playing music was one of the highlights of his life and as well as playing the ukulele, in a quiet way, he also played the guitar.

Arthur was a character at Sale who will be sadly missed by his fellow members. Our grateful thanks his friend, Wynn Jones, who always accompanied him and who gave us the information.

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## Wigan Pier Exhibition

- Warrington Council is still refusing to loan the display units for the exhibition. This was because one of our GFS members lodged a complaint claiming that because he loaned some photos (which were copied and returned) to the Museum in 1991, he holds copyright and therefore should receive payment. It is all utter nonsense of course, but the Council won't get involved with copyright problems or anything underhanded. Before they received the complaint they were only too pleased to loan the display boards (about 70 large boards in total) and invited me down to the Burtonwood stores to check them over.

Warrington will never use the boards again so there may have been an opportunity to purchase the boards from them and set up a permanent exhibition. Wigan Pier may have been interested. However we are still working on Warrington. Since causing the disturbance, and after learning that we are not making a charge to see the exhibition, this person has withdrawn his complaint. However, he might rear his head again if there is a chance of a permanent exhibition.

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**Many Thanks** to all who contributed to this Newsletter. It would be a very difficult task trying to keep it alive without your help. Many Thanks.



# The Formby Story -

## Part 55 by Stan Evans

Pat Howson died through cancer and her father Fred, and Ethel, George's sister, were fighting over Pat's will. The court ruled that her wishes should be carried out and they got nothing. Pat left £20,000, - the remains of the £135,000 will after the courts and death duties had taken their share, to her two friends, Mary Rawcliffe and Marjory Butler. The royalty rights, from George's songs, were left also left to them and the Prioress Carmelite Convent, Wigan.



It is understood that Eliza, George's mother, sold her large Liverpool house to find money to contest George's will. Louie, however told me that her mother had sold out in Liverpool so that she could move back to Warrington. She wanted to visit the cemetery more often to go down the vault to talk to her husband's embalmed body. She found comfort from this.

There is no doubt that Eliza, in visiting George senior, was searching for inspiration and security for herself. She remembered the good old days when they were wealthy but now she'd hit the hard times and had no answers to getting back on course again. She was desperate!

Eliza and Louie, now divorced, lived together in a terraced house in Wilderspool Causeway, Warrington. Within a short time the house was a shambles and they were living in squalor. Eliza was a very independent woman who wouldn't accept charity from anyone. The council made many attempts to re-house them but she refused. Her philosophy was that she and her husband had made many millions of pounds for charity in their better days so why should she need it now? Various entertainers offered to put on a show to raise money but she refused.

Gossip had it around Warrington that George died a very wealthy man but left his mother in poverty. However they were not aware that Eliza was 81 when George died and financially sound at the time. George felt that if he left anything to his mother it would be swamped up by the family. Something he wanted to avoid at all cost.

Eliza, who was totally blind, died at the age of 102 and Louie was moved to a council estate of small houses just off Knutsford Road Warrington. She had no friends around her apart from the daily visit of the cleaner and her family.

One of Eliza's old neighbours rang me to come along to Eliza's empty house to collect photos and memorabilia that had been left behind. I went down and found that the house had been broken into and tramps were dossing down in the rooms. The neighbours were afraid that the tramps might set fire to all the photos and newspapers that were scattered through the rooms. It was like a scene from Oliver and the stench and filth was very uninviting. There must have been at 5 cwt of photos, letters, posters, papers etc. mixed amongst the filth and rubbish. Needless to say I made a sharp exit never to return again. How dreadful it was that such a famous and important family should deteriorate to this level. This house was in the same road as Hill Crest. But what a contrast! Wealth and poverty! Next Month: Forming the GFS.

## Junk Mail! - Have you noticed that we are getting more and more Junk Mail coming through the letterbox?

Some years ago, when I was the editor of the GFS Vellum magazine, I received no less than 15 to 20 bits of junk mail every day. The hall way was full of unwanted rubbish! So each day I gathered together all the junk, added a few items of my own, made up a parcel just big enough to go through the post box (they won't accept them at the post office) and posted it off to Mailing Preference Services, Freepost 22, London.

But before posting off I added my piece of poetry which I called JUNKMAIL . . . .

I wake up each morning at seven, to see what the postman has got  
And he hands me a great bunch of letters. There does seem a heck of a lot  
Well I open them up on the table and there to my greatest surprise  
It seems that some kind-hearted feller, has wrote me cos I've won a prize

Then low and behold there's another. This time it's a car I have won  
Hee I do feel excited about it. I'm having a reet load of fun  
Then I think of this lovely feller. In fact it brings tears to my eyes  
To think that he's taken the trouble, to write me cos I've won a prize

I've got to do something about it. And thank him for all he has done  
I know, - I'll send him some prizes. Then he can share in the fun  
So I looked for a massive large envelope, and knew that it must be full size  
And filled it with all last month's rubbish. Now he'll have a lovely surprise

There's a car and a yacht and a tele, and a bicycle just built for two  
And a holiday in the Bahamas. He can take his mother-in-law too  
I wrapped them all up like a parcel, and stuffed it with owt I could find  
With plenty of junk for protection. Hee I do hope the postman don't mind

Addressed it to Mailing Pref Service, and cos I hadn't a stamp in the place  
Sent it to Freepost 22 London. Hee I would like to see the chap's face  
He'll be terribly chuffed when he gets it, and sees all the prizes he's won  
He'll be off on his hols for a fortnight, with his car and his yacht in the sun

Within a few days I received a very irate reply from Mailing Preference Services who were not impressed with having their desk filled with rubbish. However, they did cross my name and address off their mailing list.

That was some 10 years ago and I've notified that the junk mail is growing again. Perhaps it's time for them to have another pile of rubbish tipped on their desk.



## From Harry and Vera Jones of the Crewe Branch. Via Brian Edge who is becoming quite a dab hand at sending Emails

"A few minutes before going on the operating table, a woman patient at the Crewe Memorial Hospital heard Frank Formby, brother of the famous George, sing the popular Formby song, 'Cleaning Windows'. Frank Is appearing at the Crewe Theatre this week, and was following his usual practice, adopted in each town in which he plays, of visiting the local hospital.

Accompanied by his manager Mr. Dennis and Mrs Dennis, Frank was given a warm welcome by Mr. Bentley (President of the hospital) and the staff. A family man himself, he was at home in the Children's Ward where after nursing the younger children, he presented books to each of the little patients.

The party were shown through the hospital and Frank helped to stir the Christmas pudding, in which he left a surprise for someone who will be joining in the Yuletide festivities. With an invitation to the nursing staff to visit the show "For Your Pleasure," which concludes on Saturday. Frank completed another successful"outside performance."

**Harry and Vera** also discovered details of one of Frank's shows at Crewe. The show was called THE STAR IN MUSIC HALL and was presented by Don Ellis from 30<sup>th</sup> May - 4<sup>th</sup> June 1977. The show starred Reg (Confidentially) Dixon, Frank Formby (Brother of George Formby), Tony Squires(vocalist), Guy and Roger Howard, Tony Raymond and Bettina and the Russell Leite Dancers.

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## Apologies to Super Star Reporter, Cliff Royle

in the last issue I purposely left out of Cliff's report details of a Grand Dinner which Dennis Lee and Co, are staging in place of the December meeting. The reason for leaving it out was to do a special item on it - then I completely forgot. Sorry Cliff. At times I think I'm going senile.

**GRAND DINNER** at the usual venue - 1st December. It is NOT A CONCERT. Just a meal and a get-together. Plus, I understand, a few surprises. Dennis and Cliff are doing the Full Monty, which should be a laugh. Anyone interested please ring Lesley on 01244 544799. Tickets are £12.95 each.

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## Blue Peter

- We've received a lot of very good comments from people who saw the lads performing on Blue Peter recently. Who knows? Maybe we will have another injection of youngsters joining us. Let's hope so to keep George's name alive in the future.

## Christmas Is Coming

so Joe Taylor has sent in a Fruit Cake Recipe. The ingredients are: 1 cup water, 2 cups dried fruit, 1 cup brown sugar, 1 cup sugar, 1 TSP salt, 8 ozs nuts, 4 large eggs, 1 TSP baking soda, juice of one lemon, 1 bottle of whisky.

Method:

1. Sample the whisky to check for quality
2. Take a large bowl
3. Again sample the whisky
4. Turn on the electric mixer
5. Take one level cup of whisky and drink
6. Beat one cup of butter in a fluffy bowl
7. Make sure the whisky is still OK
8. Turn off the mixerer
9. Blake two eggs and chuck in the flied flute
10. Mix on the turner
11. If the flied flute gets stuck ply it loose  
with a drowscriver
12. Check the whisky for tonsistancy
13. Sift two cups od salt
14. Finish off the whiskerly
15. Grease the oven
16. Turn the cake tin to 350 deglees
17. Don't forget to beat off the turner
18. Go to bed.

*Thank you Joe. I'm sure our readers will try your recipe out this Christmas. Keep sending em in.*

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## Spare a Thought for Christian Lee

- Ee Bah Gum the lad is having it rough! Christian, son of Dennis & Lesley Lee and once a member of the GFS, - and a very good uke player - was driven off the high street by the traffic warden who told him to find somewhere else to park his car. He did! He parked on ALDI car park and the floods came and swamped his car up. In the picture you can just spot the top of the car. It's a hard life Christian and it gets tougher as you get older.



**Max Miller** the Cheeky Chappie was one of the great comedians of yesteryears and one of his favourite pieces was . . .

"They took the vanity from a peacock  
The cunning from a fox  
The brain from a jackass  
And the jawbone from an ox  
The venom from a viper  
The stinger from a bee  
Then put them in my old woman  
And bunged her on to me."

They don't produce comedians like Max any more and I'm blown if I can understand all this alternative comedy.



# George's 40th

Assuming that we are able to stage the Formby exhibition at Wigan Pier (Read Page Two) and I hope that we can. DD VIDEO of Chester are interested in sponsoring and setting up a cinema in the exhibition to show GF documentaries. It appears that they have taken quite an interest in George and brought out a five box set of films which they are offering at a special price. Looks like a bargain. Details below.

## FORMBY'S FINEST

### SAVE ALMOST £15.00!

Enjoy a 'Feast of Formby' with this superb deluxe gift boxed set of the Lancashire Lad's finest and funniest films! Packed with great goofy gags and George's inimitable songs on the ukulele, you'll want to watch and enjoy these timeless classics again and again.

This boxed set includes FIVE Formby favourites! **SPARE A COPPER** see George tackling Nazi saboteurs, while in **NO LIMIT** he competes in the TT motorbike races! George is the RAF's newest recruit in **IT'S IN THE AIR** - while in **TROUBLE BREWING**, it all turns out nice again\* when George tracks down a counterfeit gang! And then in **KEEP FIT**, George demonstrates his athletic prowess to woo his lady love.

These films sell individually for almost £55.00 - but if you order now you can receive all five plus a deluxe presentation gift boxed set for only £39.98 post free! Best of all, you can pay in two equal instalments of just £19.99 each! Get the laughs in for Xmas now - order your set today!

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## MATTHEW KELLY AT CREWE MEETING

By the time you read these notes we will have celebrated our 74<sup>th</sup> Meeting at Wistaston and our Sixth Birthday celebration. Much has happened since we first met on the 1<sup>st</sup> of November 1994. When we had paid our hall rent after our first meeting we had a bank balance of 20 pence and after our second meeting we were 30 pence in the red but since then we have gone from strength to strength. We have benefited from the excellent support that our members have given us and that together with donations that we have earned from the concerts have enabled us to build up some excellent sound equipment. We haven't quite reached our targets but we are well on the way.



**Colin Wood does a good job of operating the music machine**

It may surprise readers to learn that over the six years we have spent no less than £3000 on our sound system and music library and still have a respectable bank balance. We have done this ourselves, with no lottery grants or sponsorship begging just with your support and an all round effort by everyone. It is good to know that everything we have is ours and what is more important that it is all paid for. Our only aim is for our performers to have lots of fun and to give our audience the very best value in return for a their monthly subscription of fifty pence.

Well over the past year we have all had fun not only at our monthly concerts but also at our Millennium Tramps Party, our trips down the River Dee and of course that unforgettable evening on a steam train at Foxfield.

I have to say that Stan Evans has contributed to our success by producing for more than five years our very own newsletter that keeps us informed about what is going on in the north west. It should be mentioned that the newsletter was the brainchild of the late Walter Cronshaw, Chairman of the Sale Society and husband of Alice who along with Walter Kirkland are faithful supporters at our meetings and concerts. Regarding the magazine it is hard to believe that the sales commission given to our society by Stan has reached the incredible total of £404 over the five years. This is a wonderful contribution to our success and must not go by without acknowledgement. To produce this 20 page book every month is no mean feat and Stan has to work very hard during the month to get to print stage but he has never failed to get it out on time. The contents of the magazine is only as good as the material that is submitted and there are times when Stan can be low on contributions so do drop him a line to help him out. Short bits are very useful to him for filling in here so don't forget to send Stan something even if it is only a snippet - NEXT PAGE



We took delivery of a new amplifier the night before the concert and we were very pleased with its performance. The amp is contained in its own carrying case and is much more portable than our previous unit.

We were again sorry to hear from people who had come on the fifth Friday of the month and were disappointed to find that there was no concert so I will say again that our meetings are on the fourth Friday so do put a ring around all the fourth Fridays on your calendars so you won't be disappointed. You will all be given the dates for 2001 at our November meeting so do see you pick up your copy.

We were highly delighted to see our dear friend Matthew Kelly at our last meeting. Matthew was brought along by one of his daughters, as he is unable to drive unaccompanied at night. Matthew, 87, to my knowledge is the oldest uke player in the GFS and its branches. Unfortunately Matthew lost one of his daughters recently and he did not feel up to performing on the night but he vowed to return soon and tread the boards once again.

There were thirteen new faces present amongst the 85 who attended the concert and this was very gratifying. Vera Jones sang a new medley and she is growing confidence day by day. Ashley Caldicott put in his best performance to date beating time on his tambourine. Ashley really enjoys being on the stage and has come a long way since he first joined the group. Connie sang Keep Fit and didn't have to go home ill afterwards! Joan Cain and her friend, Vera, Connie and Lesley Lee turned up wearing nice hats. These little touches all help to make the night more interesting.

Alan Newton was M.C. for the first time and did a splendid job for us. Glenys Huntington as Assistant M.C. ably supported him. The assistant M.C.'s job is not an easy one as it involves making sure that the audience gets a well balanced concert and is also a means of ensuring that everyone who wishes to perform gets an opportunity to do so. So do remember to put your name on the list and state the two numbers that you intend to perform.

It was good to have the Larcombe brothers with us again. We haven't seen them since the early days of the Society. Brian Edge.

*Thank you Brian. It is pleasing to know that the Newsletter has contributed to your success. Wally Cronshaw must have been well inspired when he was chasing me to produce the monthly Newsletter. I kept avoiding him but he wouldn't go away, - bless him. It was only when he had me trapped on the little fire escape landing at the Sale Hotel that I gave in. He looked so ill and I thought, "Well if he is so determined, even during his illness, we must satisfy him." The poor lad died shortly after and the Newsletter has never failed to appear in over 5 years. Thanks Wally.*

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*S.O.S. I'm running dry of short articles - Hurry up*

## Super Star & Ace Reporter Cliff Royle



(Mister Reliable) once again marched up and down the Peniffordd British Legion digging up all the latest news for the Newsletter. . . .

It was great to see new faces at the November meeting, especially the children, some 10 of them, all of whom joined in the Thrashes. And what about young Gregory Rewell (aged 9) who sang some Formby songs on the mike without any stage fright. He is getting a uke for his birthday, so what can we expect very soon? It is not possible to mention all the artists introduced by resident M.C. Jim Knight, however I try to give highlights each time so please do not be offended if your name is left out.

We had "Problems At The Mill" as they say in Lancashire. Carl Basford and Ron Wiston were held up by a problem with the backing music so Carl indicated that he might be on at ten o'clock rather than nine. Then Alan Chenery and Colin Wood refused to perform until the backing curtains were fastened up. However their final turn, "Putting On The Agony" was terrific.

There were a number of new and uncommon songs. Brian Edge with "The Magic of Formby" and "Mr Wu's A Traffic Warden Now." Stan Watkinson played a new song he had written, "Dennis Lee Has Gone And Lost His Uke." Brian Edge (on uke) and Jonathan Baddeley (with clarinet) gave us some rousing Big Band music, and Alison Nadin played and sang two of Frankie Wood's songs; "That's The Kind Of Music For Me," and Barnacle Bill." Alison was great and so was Pam Baddeley who sang a couple of modern songs.

Stan Evans got all the children up on stage and had them bobbing up and down singing "I Like Bananas." No wonder the Queen rides side-saddle if, as Stan says, "She sings Bananas when she's Trooping the Colours." Then when the kids had settled down again Stan sang "Old Pal How I Miss You Tonight" accompanied by Max his favourite dog. The kids jumped every time the dog barked and yelped out crying. But did they enjoy it? Yes they did. Thanks Stan.

Dennis Lee had everyone joining in with his singalongs and mentioned our Christmas Dinner to be held at Penyffordd British Legion on 1st December. This is a ticket only evening and will not have the usual format of Uke Playing. Dennis Lee announced that the meal will be "first Class - no frozen food" to which Charlie (heckler) Penman replied "What! No ice cream." He's a wit! But all in good fun. Our thanks to the three lady bouncers on reception (Myra will be delighted to greet anyone in Welsh)

P.S. I noticed Anthony Mason's revealing picture in the last Newsletter - PAGE 11 . .



Peniffordd Continued . . . was he singing "With My Little Ukulele In My Hand?" if so, he appears to have forgotten the words. *Thanks Cliff. I'm pleased that you are attracting the children. Let's hope they take it up seriously.*



Fred Stevenson

*I saved your comments on Fred Stevenson till the end Cliff. He looked terribly concerned at the meeting. He announced that due to having to go into hospital, for an operation on the neck, it might be the last time he will be able to sing - or yodel. Let us all hope that everything goes well for him and that it won't be too long before he is back on stage. All our thoughts go out to Fred..*

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An Article from **Martin Thomas** - A London pensioner is convinced her cat is haunted by the spirit of legendary ukelele strummer **GEORGE FORMBY**. Picked up off the Internet.

Cat-lover Beau Harvey, 67, was playing her treasured album, Formby Favourites, when she noticed four-year-old tabbie Jason getting excited. The cat went berserk to the Formby classic When I'm Cleaning Windows. And before long, the musical moggy was mewing along to the Thirties crooner whenever the album was played. "He just goes mad every time he hears the album," said Mrs Harvey, from Newham, east London. "I've tried out all sorts of different music on him - even modern stuff like Boyzone and Abba - but he only likes George," Beau revealed. "He even knows the words."

Beau was so intrigued by Jason's gift that she decided to find out more about Formby's life. Amazingly, she found out that moggy Jason was born in a cattery just around the corner from where crooner George once lived in Blackpool. "I was gobsmacked when I found out," she revealed. "I wonder if George once owned a cat that's related to Jason?" Jason's favourite's include Why Don't Women Like Me? and The Wedding of Mr. Wu.

*Thanks Martin. I like the bit about George being a crooner. No doubt the cat has good taste.*

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**Wanted** - John Baddeley sent in an Email - Please will you put the following wants in a future edition of the Newsletter. In the mid 70s a 4 LP Set was by issued by World Records called The Man With The Ukulele. I am looking for the Double Cassette that was also issued. I am also looking for the CD "V For Victory" that was issued a few years ago. My telephone number is 01782 680587.

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BLACKPOOL MONTHLY MEETING IS EARLIER - ON DECEMBER 18th

**Songwriters Wanted** Further to last month's appeal for a GF type of tune to fit the following lyrics for the Guinness Book of World Records, we have had some interest. Stan Watkinson is busy working on a tune and Anthony Mason is also sat at his keyboard bashing out a tune to fit:

**THE BIGGEST BANJO UKE GROUP IN THE WORLD.**

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**Uke Banjo For Sale** - Jim Knight is selling a Markendale made Abbott Copy which is in excellent condition. It is complete with a special made case which houses all required - tapes etc. The price is £300 and you can ring Jim on 01978 358472.



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**Laura Stretton from Wigan -**

Earlier this year our little gang of entertainers put on a second show at Wigan Pier Theatre to raise some money to send young Laura Stretton on a holiday to swim with the dolphins in Florida. Well we've just received a card from the family in Florida to say, "Laura's therapy has gone well and she has benefited greatly. Thanks for your help on the Lancashire Night at Wigan Pier. We



are grateful to people like yourselves for helping us to make it here. It is certainly helping to enrich Laura's life.

GREAT! - But isn't it wonderful that our little contribution can be so valuable to a small child like this. We attend our monthly meetings to get up on stage to sing a couple of songs, and think nothing of how important it all can be to outsiders. The George Formby Society should get more involved in helping these unfortunate children.

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**Stars In His Eyes** - Mike Turner of St

Helens phoned to say that he entered a Stars In Their Eyes rehearsal at St Helens theatre and just received a letter to say that he is now in the semi-finals, which is to be held on the 27th of November. For the occasion Mike borrowed an old suit from his father and entered the event as - you guessed it! George Formby singing "Windows." Best of luck Mike. Don't be disappointed if they are looking for pop stars.



## October in Sale - by Cyril Palmer.

**Celebration and Sadness** We were sad to announce the death of Arthur Fordham on October 18th, just ahead of our meeting. He suffered a stroke and died a few days later. Arthur was one of the early members of the Sale Club and rarely missed a meeting. Although not inclined to take the stage these days, he was full on enthusiasm, still looking for a new song to try only a week and a half ago. We will miss him and we offer our sincere sympathy to his widow, Connie, and to her family.



**Hard working Cyril Palmer**



**Young Ivy Lockerbie**

Ken Ratcliffe did well to join us in spite of surviving a heart attack only three weeks earlier. The evening had been arranged as a surprise celebration of the coming of age of our "Door Lady," Ivy Lockerbie, (80 years young!) There was an excellent turnout and we were treated to a most enjoyable buffet. Guests included Mac & Millie McGee, Mary & George Atkinson and Roy Fielding, all from Yorkshire.

Lesley Lee came and brought the Chairman of the George Formby Society, Dennis. We were deeply honoured by her presence. All the performers were in great form. Alice

Cronshaw was a surprise turn with a flag waving backing group for a war song medley.

Ged Collins was a late arrival, and gave us his manic version of "The Wild Colonial Boy" which went down very well with the crowd. All in all it was an excellent meeting, - roll on November 17th. *Thanks Cyril.*

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**Blackpool Night** - The weather was most dreadful with floods surrounding Warrington and at first I thought of cancelling the trip. However, Jim and I set off on the journey and, apart from a slight detour the roads were quite clear.

The awful weather put a lot of members off from attending - especially the 6 ladies who form the Jim Greeves Fan Club, and left a lot of spaces and empty seats. But when Charles Stewart got up on stage to announce that it was to be a good night, even though short in numbers, the atmosphere changed and an excellent night was had by all. Jim Bramwell got the crowd laughing, with his latest jokes, and from there on the job of entertaining was easy. Peter Brown, a semi pro who entertains in the Blackpool area got up on stage and played an excellent version of "Why Don't Women Like Me" - without the aid of a backing tape. Charles got things moving again after the interval with a War Thrust and John Taylor gave us the finished version of D.I.V.O.R.C.E.

## Stroke Of Luck!

friends, and for many years, in Warrington here, we have been aware of the existence of their collection of GF memorabilia. Many people have mentioned it but nobody has come forward with any clues as to who has got it.



It's been quite a mystery and even a notice in the local press didn't bring any results. It's a bit like the Loch Ness Monster! Everybody's seen it but nobody knows where it is.

George and Beryl in the centre with Jessie and Beryl's mother on GFs left. Fred Bailey is kneeling at the front. Who are the others?

Anyway, I was busy pressing Bingo Buttons for the "Over 60's" the other afternoon and this lady walked in and handed me 11 GF photos, a few letters, a Fred Bailey obituary from the local paper and a J Entwistle Catalogue from the 1961 auction sale, after George's death.

"Here" she said, "I am Fred's Bailey's niece and I emptied his bungalow after his death. As soon as possible I will sort out all the other stuff and bring it along." And off she went. Well you could have knocked me down with a wet lettuce. I was so gob-smacked I forgot to get her name or phone number before she dashed off.

There is one interesting short letter from a George who lives at The White Cottage, Goring, Reading, and he was thanking Jessie for supplying him with newspaper cuttings of - presumably - George's death. In it he writes, "I think it is a pity that Harry (George's valet) talked to the press about George's meanness. He was never mean to me and I always found him to be generous." Anyway, we look forward to her calling in again with more items. Nice surprise.

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Liverpool's Tom Bailey phones in, "Stan, you don't know what you are talking about. Ken Dodd is 74, not in his 60s as reported in the last issue." Well I just can't believe it Tom. Ken works like a 30 year old. Are you sure?



## George Tyrer of Abergavenny Writes . .

Stan, A friend of mine found this notice in a New Zealand Museum. You might find it interesting for the N. West Newsletter.

### RULES FOR LADY TEACHERS - 1915.

1. You will NOT marry during your term of your contract
2. You are NOT to keep company with men.
3. You MUST be at home between the hours of 8pm to 6am unless attending a school function.
4. You MAY NOT loiter downtown in ice-cream stores.
5. You MAY NOT travel beyond the city limits without the permission of the Chairman of the board.
6. You MAY NOT ride in a carriage or automobile with any man unless he is your father or brother.
7. You MAY NOT smoke cigarettes.
8. You MAY NOT dress in bright colours
9. You may UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES dye your hair.
10. You must wear AT LEAST two petticoats.
11. Your dresses must NOT be shorter than two inches above the ankle.
12. To keep the school room clean you must:
  - sweep the floor at least once daily
  - scrub the floor with hot soapy water at least once a week
  - clean the blackboard at least once a day
  - start a fire by 7am so the room will be warm by 8am.

*Thanks George, very interesting. I hope you've not been trying these rules on with the missus. How times have changed.*

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## Anthony Mason Emails - Hello Stan, Must let you know where

things are up to. Hannah is due very soon and you can imagine there is an expectant air about the place. We been getting everything ready and hopefully when it arrives should be prepared. I'm getting back into playing again and have played in a few local Jazz nights, I am being steered towards London City Centre for work but trying to avoid it as the travel to London is terrible at the moment with the floods. I was one of those who were stuck on the train for 3 hours trying to get into Liverpool St Station. I still have no uke from Gordon Markendale and it is entering its sixth year since I ordered it. I spoke to him on Saturday and he assured me it would be ready by Christmas, but which Christmas??? Anyway, keep in touch, All the best.

### Under the Weather

Two of our ladies have been having it rough lately: Joan Bramwell who is having difficulty walking, and Margaret



Joan Bramwell Moran of the Sale Branch. Margaret is waiting for a check up at the hospital.



Margaret Moran

## Kath Hammond

kindly followed our lead to interview Winifred Scott (see last month) who was a singer in George's troupe and a member of ENSA.

Winifred, now 88, was employed making tea for the stars and when George heard her singing he said, "I want that girl for my show". Asked about Beryl she said, "I had more contact with George, who was an easy going man, but Beryl was always there getting in the way."

She met many stars and remembers Max Bygraves when he was starting his career. Beryl wouldn't let George drink so he would call Winifred to make a cup of tea. Winifred always closed George's shows in the first half with her soprano and comedy songs. She met well known people like Alma Cogan, Stanley Matthews, Lord Mountbatten and Malcolm Vaughan. Winifred was paid £12 per week.



Winifred in the centre with Kath on the left and Judith Townsend - both are members of the Sheffield Branch of the GFS.

After George died and most of the theatres closed, Winifred was offered a week's work in a Sheffield club and from then on she never looked back. Since then she has made Sheffield her home. Asked if she appeared in any of George's films she replied, "They offered me the part of a German girl but I refused to have my hair bleached." Winifred has many past memories to tell and photos which are currently being sorted out by her daughter in law. As Kath said, "Watch this space."

*Many thanks Kath and Judith. You have done an excellent job and thanks also for offering to pay more visits. An article has gone to Tony Thornton for the Vellum mag*

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## Top Quality Technics Mini Disc Bargain

If you are looking for a Minidisc Player give Richer Sounds a ring on their Mail Order number 087001 12345. They are currently offering a Technics SJHD501 Model for £99.95 (with remote control) which is a bargain! Stan Watkinson has just purchased one from the Liverpool shop (Tel No. 0151 708 7484) and the quality is really top class. The size is only 9" x 7" x 4" and therefore very handy for taking to meetings etc. They have shops over the country so if you give me a ring I'll give you the nearest phone number. They also have a Sharp MDMT161 which is a smaller minidisc player at £79.95. Both models are also recorders. Usually the Mail Order Dept will sell at a cheaper price than the shop. So try them first.





## Liverpool On TV

- It's been an hectic month ringing round helping to organise players for TV. First we had the Blackpool Blue Peter show, and immediately after we had the BBC TV crew on to us again with a country wide documentary on what makes the British Isles tick. They were travelling through the country hitting various towns gathering what goes on in that particular town. Somehow they considered that George Formby went well with Liverpool so we've actually outdone the Beatles. We were their only choice in Liverpool.

Three weeks previous I received a call from them asking for a George Formby look-alike who was a keen Formby fan and who plays and sings like him - I explained that George was a one-off and that there were no look-alikes that resembled him. I rang them back with a string of possibles, and was then told that he must be a Liverpudlian. Oh dear! Let's start all over again.



Local lad John Shreeve

The only Liverpudlian I could come up with any slight resemblance to George was John Shreeve, so I gave them his phone number. All went quiet for three weeks and then suddenly on Tuesday the 24th the phone rang and it was the BBC again. They wanted a bunch of players to meet in the Liverpool town centre in two days time (Thursday) during the day. I explained that they were all working so what about filming at 8pm? - We'll ring you back. All went quiet again.

On Wednesday night we received an urgent call to say that 8pm would be ideal but they were having difficulty in finding a venue. They rang Tom Bailey, who runs the Liverpool branch who then gave them the news that this particular Thursday was like a Sabbath in Liverpool as the football team was on tele in the European Cup. All the pub and clubs would be full!

Came Thursday, with a few hours to go, and we still didn't know where to meet. Anyway, Tom rang our usual venue and asked if it was possible to play during the half-time. "No problem" said Keith, who runs the Broadgreen club, "Come on down." Which we did. When we arrived we found that only about six football fans had turned up and they were more interested in watching us.

Our team consisted of John Shreeve, Joe McCaffrey, Mike Turner, Des Redfern and yours truly, who kept them in tempo. Tom Bailey and Stan Watkinson came along to add applause. We were filmed playing Lamp Post - about 20 takes - and the show, which is called "Rush", will be going out in May 2001 on BBC Choice. We are episode No. 8. Once again, after all the panic, it Turned Out Nice Again, as it usually does. Thanks to all who took part in the filming. Let's hope they don't do a "Hotel Get Away" on us.

**BUT THAT'S NOT ALL!!!** The following morning the BBC crew had John Shreeve climbing up the outside of the Liver Building and parading on the top playing and singing his heart out. He was freezing and soaking wet through and wondering why the BBC had this desire to film our players up in the clouds. John was also on the Blackpool team a few days earlier when they filmed us above the Pleasure Beach - again soaking wet through and frozen. In the afternoon, John was filmed touring round Liverpool belting out Lamp Post on an open deck bus. He was the only one up there so the shoppers were wondering what it was all about. John kept looking round expecting someone to shout, "Smile, you are on Candid Camera."

## Paul Woodhead writes - Interesting article in the Newsletter

65. As I am coming of age I have begun to resent having missed out on some of the great performers whose lives have been lived during my own.

I constructed a short list two years ago - Ken Dodd, George Melly, Norman Wisdom

George Melly was the first to be ticked off the list. Gill & I went to see him at the Music Hall in Shrewsbury last year. I'm not a great jazz lover but I had remembered GM as a great showman and of course he tells a story, as you will know, about going to see our George when he was a child. I remember him saying that GF "really sang quite rude songs" but was always the gentleman which was why he got away with it. Anyway GM is getting on in years but still gave a performance that would be the envy of many a young performer.

This year we got the opportunity to see Ken Dodd. I had heard the story of trams running late in Blackpool when he is on but was still surprised to be exiting the theatre in Oakengates at around midnight.

What a fabulous show. All types of music, a magician, not as good as you of course, no rose in a garden of weeds, the diddy men etc. Like you I would recommend Ken Dodd to anyone. I even bought a tape of Ken Dodd which to my generation is a close second to buying one of Des O Connor!!

Norman Wisdom I haven't managed yet. When Gill & I went on the Isle of Man trip, the coach party called at his house as apparently he encourages it. Unfortunately he was on an army reunion in Cheltenham but his housekeeper allowed us to walk through the garden, which seemed a bit of a cheek, but she too said he would have welcomed us had he been at home. She said he has a few GF stories too. Enjoyed the Newsletter. Paul, or as Cliff Royle describes me "the man from South Shropshire with the unusual songs".

*Thanks Paul, and for the tape. When I was the editor of the Vellum I wrote to Ken Dodd, George Melly and Norman Wisdom for any stories they might have on George.. Ken was too busy to reply, George replied with "As soon as I get time I will send an article, but never did. And Norman was the only one to oblige. And then an unusual thing happened. I started to receive mail from the BBC addressed to George Melly at my address. We couldn't understand why.*

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**S.O.S. Kath Hammond** is looking for two songs, with chords if poss, "Robert E Lee" and that old favourite, "How Are We Gonna Keep em Down On The Farm." If you can help please ring her on 0114 286 3503

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**THE BLACKPOOL DECEMBER MEETING IS ON THE 18th.**



**Paul Woodhead** sent in a nice little George Formby story which he heard on the radio. . . . dad was called up in the RAF during the war and when he left home to go to camp there was a lot of crying in the family. But dad was back that night as he was based at a local camp.

**GEORGE GOES ROUND WITH THE BUCKET.** During the war dad

managed to get some leave so he booked seats for himself and mum at Blackpool Tower to see George Formby. They enjoyed the show and when they walked out they bumped into George who was stood at the door collecting money for the Servicemans Fund. Dad, who was dressed in his uniform, put his hand in his pocket but George refused to accept anything from him. "Not you" he said, "We are collecting for servicemen." Dad, who was always careful with his money, thought the world of George after that. *Thanks Paul. But what's all this about George collecting money in a bucket. After our successful Southern Ireland trip collecting in*



What on earth is he up to? It's a Disgrace!

*a bucket was frowned upon by some of the GFS committee members and considered as "Lowering the tone of the society." George should know better. Shame on the man! Any more of this and he'll be struck off our banner.*

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**Gerry Mawdsley** writes in - It was nice to hear that Anthony Mason is getting hitched. We wish him and Hannah well. Thinking back there are lots of Anthonys that we don't see now. Maybe we should have a reunion of all the lost souls for George's 40th.

*Thanks Gerry. We are having a reunion next September at the Winter Gardens to bring back those who have strayed. Every past and present member will receive an invitation to "COME ON DOWN" and "BRING YOUR UKE" because we are setting up a record for the Guinness Book of World Records as the "Biggest Banjo Uke Group in the World" and - as reported last month - we need someone to write a very simple to play song for it called, "The Biggest Banjo Uke Group In The World." Tell your members to 'have a go.'*

*Sorry about the little font "Westhoughton" on the back page. This computer has a mind of its own at times.*

## 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 (NEXT ONE DEC 18th - for Christmas only) Tel Eve & Charles Stewart on 01253 768097. Wonderful buffet.

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### 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

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**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)

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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.

