

THE NORTH - WEST

GEORGE FORMBY

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Specially Produced for George Formby Fans
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Welcome to Newsletter No.69 and

what a busy month it's been. Up to now five newspapers have picked up on the news that we are experiencing problems trying to borrow the exhibition displays from the Warrington Museum. As explained in the last couple of issues, one of the GFS members complained to the museum and since then they've slammed the door on us. It's all to do with copyright.



George is looking very sad because Warrington has let him down.

The Daily Mail set the ball rolling when they rang asking what the problem was. He also wanted to know if Wigan were considering erecting a statue in honour of George. My reply was, "We are not sure but our society members feel that we honour George sufficiently when we meet together to play his songs." He then offered to ring Wigan (not on our behalf) to ask their opinion of a statue, and was told by a council official that they don't want a statue of George because people regard him as a 'gormless Lancashire idiot."

The following morning: Wed Jan 31st, this BOLD headline appeared in the Mail, "FANS FUMING OVER FORGOTTEN FORMBY." Which is simply not true. During the conversation I never mentioned that fans were disappointed. If it came to a vote I would imagine that at least 50% wouldn't be interested in a statue. We are highly satisfied that we are keeping his name alive by singing his songs.

DESTROYED—However, we are highly disappointed with Warrington. They have shut the door on us and won't budge. The Warrington Guardian newspaper reporter, Julia Ravenscroft, rang them and was told, "We are fed up with all these phone calls about George Formby so we've had all the archives destroyed." - Personally I don't believe that they have destroyed them. But they will still be lying in store at the Burtonwood Air Base and probably they'll stay there until they are finally taken to the tip. The whole thing is utterly ridiculous and all because of one man's complaint.

£6,000—It will be highly disappointing if they have destroyed them. Ten years ago our members contributed £6,000 (£5,000 from a generous member) to help to pay for those display items (about 70 large display boards), so we should have a say in what happens to them. For the past years they have been in storage and Warrington have no plans for them. They have, however, loaned them to other towns and Blackburn borrowed them on one occasion to tour the N. West in an exhibition van.

EXHIBITION—To give us more time to sort the problem out we have put the date back to August 11th (to the 25th), with a Grand Concert on the last evening. When we organised the 1991 show everything opened up as if someone was waving a magic wand. With regret we appear to have lost our magician.

Turned out nice again? Don't make me laugh

MEMBERS of the George Formby Society are distraught at news that photographs and display boards featured in the 1991 Warrington Museum exhibition have been thrown away.

Stan Evans, of Penketh, who is the publicity officer for the North West branch, asked the museum to lend memorabilia for a 40th anniversary exhibition at Wigan Pier commemorating the entertainer's death in 1961.

He said he thinks it is "terrible" that the displays have been thrown away because he thought the society had a stake in them.

"For 18 months I

worked with staff, contacting all the memorabilia owners, doing radio broadcasts, TV interviews and arranged for publicity to be spread throughout the George Formby Society," he said.

He arranged for members to loan several photographs, which were copied.

When the original exhibition took place there was a shortage of funds so the society contributed £6,000, the largest proportion coming from ex-Beatle George Harrison.

Sally Coleman, the council's heritage and archives manager, said: "We are very proud of our links with George

Formby and would never consider throwing out original archive memorabilia relating to him. However, the photographs were copies and, together with display boards, were used as a backdrop.

"With material of this type there are some exceptionally strict copyright issues. Unfortunately, the museum could not trace the owners of any of the photographs and we are advised that if we released the material we may be infringing copyright law. Subsequently, as the material could never be legally used again, the museum decided it should be disposed of."

But Mr Evans said some of the photos were his, while others belonged to the Formby family who could be easily contacted, and said he now faces doing all the work again.

He said the society even offered a disclaimer, taking responsibility for copyright issues over the photographs.

Mr Evans said: "Over the past ten years the museum has loaned the units to other towns - who did nothing to contribute - but slammed the door on Wigan Pier and the Formby Society."

Disappointed: Stan Evans with the ukelele funny man George Formby used in his first film

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However, All Is Not Lost!

To honour George and his 40th Anniversary, we will be holding a one day show and concert meeting, at the Wistaston Memorial Hall, Crewe (normal meeting place) on Friday MARCH 23rd. Several members will be displaying their collection of GF material in the side room and answering any questions. **APPEAL**—If you have any GF memorabilia that you would like to display, or if you would like to take part, please contact Brian or Connie Edge on 01270 569836.

Many thanks to all who contributed to this issue. It would be an extremely difficult task to produce the Newsletter without your efforts. It is all gratefully appreciated.



Hitting The High Spots at Crewe

By Brian Edge. The Uke, Jazz, Magic and Comedy - the ideal formula for Great Show. Few went home from the Crewe January show feeling that they had been short-changed for their fifty pence subs. Another great night out was the general verdict of the eighty-seven who attended. It was a nice surprise to welcome Martin and Glynn from Wem who we have not seen for a long time. I am sure they were pleasantly surprised too at the progress we had made since they were last at Crewe. We were equally pleased to welcome Mavis and Len Hirst from Middleton, Lancashire. Len and Mavis are members of the Sale club. David Watkins, no stranger to *The George Formby Society*, came as a guest of Arthur Newton. David delighted the audience with his pleasant style and his own topical version of *Lets Fall in Love*.



It was popular Carl Basford's birthday and he and his chum Ron (Bones Mark II) Whiston celebrated in fine fashion as a Wee Willie Winkie duo dressed in long night-shirts and nightcaps carrying the customary props of candles and chamber pots. Ron was feeling a bit chilly during the act and in an effort to warm up placed his lighted candle on the stage in front of him allowing the heat to radiate up his nightshirt much to the joy of the audience. The whole act was a sneaky way of introducing Carl's number *I always go to Bed by Half Past Nine*. It was great fun from two very good sports that really take a lot of trouble to entertain us.

Later Stan Evans, Les Watkinson, Alan Chenery and Ashley Caldicott, performed *The Floral Dance*. Stan bashed his big drum and Ashley suitably attired as a Morris Dancer kept them all in order by beating out the time on his tambourine. Stan then had the audience in stitches. He revealed how a man who, by chance, stood next to one of Stan's friends in a public place and happened to know that he came from Cheetham Hill, Manchester and was of the Jewish faith! As we all know our Society prides itself in family entertainment and as there was some doubt as to whether certain sections of Stan's material was permissible the society's Censor had to be consulted on several occasions.

Steve Hassall performed a super brand new Jazz Medley with backing music by Jonathan Baddeley. Steve was accompanied by Glenys Huntington (trumpet), Jonathan Baddeley (clarinet), Alan Newton (trombone) and Lance Corporal Des Redfern (drums). The quartet later performed Milenberg Joys. Also during the evening Glenys performed a trumpet solo entitled *Perdido* which, as usual, was well received by the audience. Glenys said she did not know what a *Perdido* was. It is certainly not in the dictionary. So if you happen to know why, who, where or what then please drop Stan a line.

Des Redfern, donned in pseudo military uniform, performed *Its in the Air* (to the delight of Barbara Allen who was hoping someone would do it). He followed with *Swing Mama*, this being a very difficult Formby number which is rarely performed. It was

a good performance by Des. He was later asked how it was that he only had one stripe on his uniform?" He replied, "well I originally had three but I was stripped down!" Well I am sure nobody would object if he stitched them back on!

As a part of Connies spot she invited four ladies Joan Cain, Angela Caldicott, Alice Cronshaw and Vera Jones on stage to accompany her in the number *Enjoy Yourself its Later than you Think*.

The audience joined in too. It is great to see non uke players taking part in our shows so don't forget if you have a special talent don't be shy. Gareth Sumner gave us a new number of his, this time Elvis Presley's Wooden Heart and both Peter Cain and Cliff Royle performed very well on the night both individually and as a duet.



Colin Wood & Alan Chenery

Alison Nadin showed us all what an excellent artiste she is when she tackled a most complicated magic routine. The stage was covered with playing cards at the end of her act. Those who think that it is hard work learning the uke should try learning to be a magician. Alison however does both equally well. One person who really enjoys himself on stage is Walter Kirkland. He is a delight to watch when playing his bones, such happiness and such energy. However, the popularity of the bones amongst our uke players is beginning to worry me. The bones are having pups, everybody seems to be getting a set. A factory has opened up in Wistaston manufacturing the things! Are they a threat to the future of the Society I ask? Walter was joined on stage by Alan Chenery and Colin Wood for a bones medley, which ended up more like a Scottish Highland Dance. I have never seen Colin Wood so happy in years.

It was announced during the show that for our March Meeting we are to commemorate the 40th anniversary of George' death by holding an Exhibition of George Formby memorabilia, records, relics, photographs. Anyone who has anything suitable for the exhibition please let me know right away. We cannot let the occasion pass without paying our respect to a very special artiste who has given so much pleasure to so many. Only a very few artistes achieve lasting fame in the way George has.

We mentioned the Railway and the Boat trips as possible outings for the forthcoming year but has anyone any better ideas? Finally I have to say that the show would not have been the success it was without the polished performance of our M.C. Jonathan Baddeley. Jonathan kept the show flowing not missing a trick on the way. Even Jonathan could not have performed his job as he did without the quiet unnoticed hard work of Pamela who planned the show. A special thanks to both of them. I would again ask artistes to help the assistant M.C. by indicating their intension to perform on the sheet provided. Thanks again to all our members who help us to clear the room after the show. It is a wonderful help to those who have been on the go since 4pm in the afternoon setting it all up. Thanks again.

DON'T FORGET TO SEND IN AN ARTICLE

ANOTHER NEWSPAPER CUTTING from the WAR YEARS

George & Beryl Were Busy Stars! - After singing

to the troops, George & Beryl are at the Palace Theatre, Manchester, this week. They waste less time than anyone I know. Wherever George appears for a long run he has a telephone installed in his dressing room so that business can go on as usual.

Because of petrol rationing George has had to cut down on his love of motoring. He is still running one car, however, which is quite a description given to me— "has every home comfort." It is furnished with a powerful radio, automatic heater controls, windscreen defrosters, and a writing table. I wonder if they were listening in on Saturday night when the BBC broadcasted a concert in France given to the troops by talented soldiers of all ranks. One of the hits of the concert



George outside the NAAFI RAF Benina, Sept 16th 1943

was a soldier who played the ukulele and sang in a Formby manner, and the song that got the troops singing lustily was "Chinese Laundry Blues" or as some would have it, "Mr Wu."

Another hit of the show was a French village boy who played the piano accordion with much skill. I suggest that if he was brought to England as 'the lad who entertained the troops' there would be a career here for him as a variety act.

Please note: Having a telephone installed and all the Mod-Cons fitted in a car might seem old hat today but in those days very few people had a car or a telephone. In my area there was only one person who had a car and a phone and he was a Bookmaker.

A car on the road was a rare sight, carts were pulled by horses and tradesmen delivered their wares, bread and milk etc. using a two wheeled dandy that he had to push. Ice cream sellers used a three wheeled bicycle with a huge box at the front and the first vehicles we saw in quantity were the Army tanks that travelled down the main roads in convoy. It's a different world today!

Just received a call from Mrs Hare of Warrington. After reading the article of the Museum destroying the archives she rang to ask if the photos she loaned 10 years ago had also been destroyed. She went on to tell the story of George, as a boy, running away from the stables in Ireland and landing at her uncle's pub in the Warrington town centre. "Uncle Tommy," he said, "Would you tell my dad that I've arrived here and let me stay here for the night? - My dad will go mad with me if I tell him." She went on to say that George had boarded ship without any money but was crafty enough to talk his way on board with a promise that his father would pay.

Sale Meeting by Cyril Palmer.

NEW YEAR—NEW VENUE

January found Sale trying out a possible new venue at The Holy Family parish centre, Old Hall Rd, Sale. We were to hold our meeting when the centre was open for the Sale Moor Village Residents Association.

The room is very pleasant, has a bar and is larger than our recent venue, so that the mix of our members and the 'residents' was easily accommodated. There is also a balcony to boost the accommodation should number increase. Our concert was well received by all present, and we are now booked in for February and March.

Alison and Jean Nadin brought Frankie Woods from North Wales, so that we were treated to Alison's amazing paper folded paper act. If you haven't seen Alison at work yet, there is a treat in store for you.

Our regulars were all in good form, Paul Kenny opened the show, we had sing-alongs from Stan Watkinson, Walter Kirkland, Les James and Stan Evans. Alan Southworth was excellent as always Brian & Connie Edge sang from their nicely varied repertoire, while Margaret Moran was quite clearly back in sparkling mood.

Thanks are due to our team of helpers who run the 'door', the raffle, set up and clear up. On this occasion: Ivy, Ann, Sheila, Alice and Walter take a bow. On the sound: Alan & Dick. Finally, thanks to our hosts for making us feel quickly at home. *Thanks Cyril and you deserve a big hand yourself for running around chasing a venue to hold the club together, setting up the equipment, Emceeing the show and then getting up on stage to give us a few songs. I'm sure the venue will be ideal.*

Mary Newton writes—Dear Stan, I

am just trying to complete a crossword puzzle in the Bella Magazine and need your help. Can you, or any of the members answer this clue? "Small stringed instrument favoured by George Formby"

No problem Mary. The answer is a "Violin" and here is a photo of George playing his favourite instrument..

Uke Banjo For Sale —

A great opportunity to own a Gibson Uke Banjo. Andy Eastwood has just phoned. He has a Gibson UB1 for sale which is in excellent condition and gives a very good sound. It also has a case. If interested please ring Andy on 01425 275830.



Just Had a Knock

at the door and it was a young man with a few GF photos to add to my collection. One photo was quite interesting: It showed a group of George & Beryl's friends and relatives but over on the front right we have none other than the great Frank Randle who was a Wigan born top film comedian in his day. Frank, a former acrobat, made 10 films but was never accepted outside the north of England.



With his broad Wigan accent possibly the Londoners couldn't understand what the dickens he was talking about.

The man between George and Frank looks like a brother of Frank. Does anyone know if he had a brother?

In all his films he played the part of someone who was always disrespectful and who showed contempt for authority. Looking lecherous and drunk he would look at a pretty young girl and say, "Bah, I bet you're a hot un." Or he would throw a challenge out with, "I'll fight anyone." "I'll spifflicate the lot of you." - "Bah, I've supped some ale toneet."

Two of George's films, "Let George Do It" and "Come On George" got top audience figures in the North with Frank's "Somewhere In England" way below in fifth place. However, he made one called "Somewhere In Camp" and it attracted a bigger audience than any British or American film except "Mrs Miniver." Another film, "Somewhere on Leave" came second to the American film, "Holiday Inn" and by now Frank was drawing bigger crowds than George.

Frank ruined his life with excessive drinking bouts, aggressive violence, wrecking hotels and dressing rooms etc. and died a bankrupt in 1957 at the age of fifty five.

Tom Bailey wrote in: - Just heard from Maureen, Bill Pope's wife, who asked that her best wishes be extended to late Bill's Formby friends. How nice of her! Also he has heard from Steve & Doris Raymond who are still keen to form a GF meeting in the Southport area. Anyone interested in joining them can ring 01704 540780.

Tom hasn't been too well recently and we missed him at the last Liverpool meeting. He is one of our stalwarts who regularly turns up. Hail, rain or snow. In over nine years he has only missed a couple of meetings. We are proud of you Tom.

TEA FOR TWO

By Connie Edge

At the Crewe Club we have a dedicated group of ladies who make the tea and see that everyone gets their cuppa and a biscuit or two on concert nights. One can imagine that to do this it is necessary to bring along the tea, sugar, milk, biscuits, spoons etc.

Well sometimes we have to share the kitchen with another hirer who is using one of the side rooms of the hall and that is just what happened at our January meeting.

I was asked by one of their ladies if I could boil them some water for their tea. As a large formidable looking boiler was involved I naturally helped the lady. It was not long before she returned and told me that the lady who was responsible for bringing the tea bags had not arrived and could they borrow some. Again I agreed, as perhaps it was a bit unfortunate. I was later informed that as they had not been able to get into their milk bottle as it was so firmly sealed, they had *borrowed* some of ours - (helped themselves of course). The last straw was that they used some of our paper cups and left me the dirty cups for me to clear away! It seems that the group were Spiritualists but I cannot help feeling that their communication systems were somewhat awry on the night! Or perhaps George was having a laugh at our expense?

Thanks Connie. We have a Spiritualist living a few doors away from us and she has a notice pinned to her front door. "Please don't knock as it causes confusion."



George's Autograph— OPEN

TO BEST OFFER. Here's an opportunity to own one of George's autographs and the proceeds will go to the Blackpool Branch. Charles Stewart sent in the item, which is much clearer than it is printed here. It reads Yours Faithfully, "George Formby 1930" and George has finished off with a squirly line.

*Yours Faithfully
George Formby
1930*

The autograph is available to the best offer so if you are interested in bidding give me a ring on 01925 727102.

P.S. An offer has just come in for £20. Any advance on £20.

Uke Banjo Wanted- Alan Hughes on 01978 861072 is looking for a uke banjo suitable for a learner. If you have one for sale please give him a ring.

E.M.I. Set of 4 GF Records for sale. Derek Lucy on 01978 758729 is selling these as he has now transferred the songs over to CD. Good buy for any collector of George's material. £30 or nearest offer.

Cliff Royle – Reporter Extraordinaire

reports on the N. Wales February Wales meeting Yes we missed Dennis and Lesley Lee who are on vacation in sunny Cyprus, but we still had an excellent evening in spite of the tape deck creating some minor problems early on. I am sure everyone felt sorry for Alan Newton who was the first to suffer the horrors of a loss of backing music, and my heart goes out to those who were saddled with the problem. However to our “sound engineers,” don’t get upset; your difficulties and efforts were understood and appreciated..



What on earth is Cliff up to?

There was again a very good attendance (90) including some new visitors, and we had an excellent evening the direction of Jim Knight.

We were delighted to have Fred Stevenson with us again and to note his good recovery from his operation which was obvious from his singing. He played one of his own compositions which took second prize in the GFS competition at Blackpool last year. There was also some excellent support from other friends from Crewe, Carl Basford, Des Redfern, Steve Hassal, and Walter Kirkland with Ron Whiston on the bones. The lads were supported by Connie Edge who again did something rather different, for one of her songs was “Enjoy Yourself It’s Later Than You Think” which was supported by some audience participation. Then husband Brian performed “All Going Back” which he said was the first song that George recorded with his uke accompaniment.

Our youngsters are doing well. Nine year old Gregory Simister was quite proud to say that he had now learned two Formby songs which he played for us. Our other young protégé, Stephen Ensall again performed exceptionally well with a couple of new Formby songs. His right hand work really gives a Formby touch to his playing. It is understood that he is interested in music and aspires to play the drums, What; another Geoff Shone?

Stephen’s father, Brian followed with a couple of smoochy love songs which may have been aimed at the ladies in the audience rather than his wife, They all went down well. Tom Meredith came on stage a second time and everyone assumed he was going to do his usual miming of Al Jolson songs. However not to be outdone he actually sang some, and without the usual black face make-up.

Having seen Alice Cronshaw ‘The War Thrash’ at Crewe I asked her if she would accompany me with this old time favourite. She agreed but only if Walter Kirkland bought her a couple of G & Ts before going on. Walter now says I owe him the money for the drinks. Anyway, it did have a good outcome for we had a special request for a replay at the next meeting for the benefit of the parents of a visitor who said that they would really enjoy such a sing-along. Great. We tried something different again; an additional Thrash just after the interval. CONTINUED NEXT PAGE

This has a couple of advantages for it enables a little bit of time to clear up after the interval, and more importantly it gives beginners the opportunity to play extra songs, which is more encouraging.



Two young stars, Gregory & Stephen

Well, what do you know? I almost missed out one of the star turns of the evening. Would I have been in trouble? Yes! Stan Evans, with Stan Watkinson. They first sang Stan's very own new song I'll Play It On My Banjo Uke" and then gave their version of "The Floral

Dance". It was a superb turn; excellent entertainment and well performed. (I'll have to keep well in with the Lad or he may not print my report.

An excellent evening was enjoyed by all. Thanks to; Sound Engineers; Pasty Providers; Lady Door Bouncers; Providers of Raffle Prizes; Members and Staff at The British Legion and last but not least, our Guests. Without them our evenings would not be the same. *Thanks Cliff. Now let me explain what went wrong with the backing. Our Sound Man, Deg did a really great job of connecting up all the wires and when we tried it out with a Sing-along disc it sounded wonderful. I was strutting round the hall, with my chest out, asking "Who needs Dennis Lee?" But then, our first act came on stage and it was Alan Newton, who is still using tapes. We slotted the tape in, pressed the button—NOTHING, not a murmur! Suddenly our chests were deflated and sweat was beginning to ooze from every pore. Our egos were well and truly deflated!!!!*

We tried everything—NOTHING—NOT A SQUEAK!!! Alan apologised to the 90 odd visitors and retired from the stage. We started the concert again but only those with discs were able to perform. Stan Watkinson was OK because he provides his own backing with his long arm banjo. Jim Knight, our M/C for the night was in a bigger sweat still because his list of disc backing artists was running out rapidly.

SUPERMAN— And then, out of the blue came our hero on the night. Des Redfern, who twiddles buttons for a living, noticed a very minute switch (you need a telescope to find it) had been accidentally switched from 'Analog' to 'Digital' and this prevented the thing from operating. As soon as we switched it back we blasted poor Jim off the stage, - we were back in business again.

DISASTER AGAIN—Oh dear, it doesn't rain but it pours. For no reason whatsoever the monitor (this is the speaker that stands in front of the artists so they can hear the backing) decided to give up the ghost and we had to turn up the hall speakers very loud so they could hear the backing music. IS IT A BIRD? IS IT A PLANE? Once again our super hero, Des, who carries half a ton of screwdrivers in his van, took a look at it and found it to be a loose connection. How on earth did that happen? From thereon the night went perfect! The March meeting will go like a dream—HONEST

Liverpool Meeting

—The January meeting at Broadgreen was one of the best ever. Unfortunately half a dozen—including Tom Bailey our organiser) phoned in to say that they couldn't make the meeting due to heavy colds etc. but that didn't stop us from having a great night. To make up for players Dennis Lee came along to get the party rolling and the ladies had a real knees-up when he took the stage. Paul Robinson (our George Formby look-alike took the stage with a couple of Bright & Breezy songs and Stan Watkinson gave us a number of old sing-a-longs from the 1930s.



Beryl

At the December meeting Alan Williams threatened to make his debut in January and everybody waited for him to get up on stage. However Alan thought better and chickened out—"Not quite ready yet" he said.

We'll get you up next time Alan. Dennis got the ladies dancing to George's "Out In The Middle East" and Beryl & Sheila performed like a couple of expert Arabs. I've never seen a funnier sand dance.



Sheila

Alan and his brother-in-law Dave Hall, were dressed up also as Arabs but men are usually reserved when it comes to making fools of themselves. The ladies however are game for anything. After this excellent performance the ladies got up on stage again with an old time sing-along.



Dave

medley, "Side By Side, Parting Of The Ways and Show Me The Way To Go Home." and from that point the air was electric!

KEN DODD SHOW OPPORTUNITY

—Just received a call (via Cliff Royle) from John Highland who is looking for a couple of experienced uke banjo or banjo players for a supporting band on Thursday May 31st at the Liverpool Philharmonic Hall. They will

be playing a number of songs including: "Leaving Of Liverpool" - "McNamara's Band" - "When I'm 64" and others. The players that sprung to mind were John Shreeve and Stan Watkinson who are both very experienced players. Ken Dodd will be entertaining for the full second half of the show. It is a Charity Show for Cancer Research promoted by the N. West British Legion. Tickets, £12, £10, £7.



Alan



Had a Surprise

visit from Alan & Pat Chenery who called in after a doing a spot of shopping in Widnes. They couldn't have picked a better time as I was in the process of getting rid of some of my memorabilia which is growing faster than I can find room for it.



Looking through my collection Alan said, "Where can I find a lamp post like that." "Well" I said, "It's funny you should ask that because I'm trying to find a good home for this one". Within a few minutes the lamp post was loaded in Alan's car and it was on its way to its new home in Crewe.

Pat & Alan with their new extension to the family

It's funny how some of these items are accumulated. This particular lamp post was given to me by our local postman who's wife had threatened to have it thrown out. And a few weeks later I received a knock at the door and it was a professional entertainer who had finished doing a summer show in N. Wales and was looking for somewhere to unload a 9 foot tall wooden lamp post with a cat perched on top. It had been used in a George Formby spot in the show.

George Formby Blaster

—Warrington lad Phil Smith is a Formby fan and a self employed chap who specialises in car radio sales. He has a huge demonstration van which he tours round in and fitted in the van are several types of car radio models. He pulls up wherever there is a crowd and puts on a demonstration.

His favourite bit of mischievousness is when he comes across the Boy Racing Clubs who are gangs of teenagers with fast cars who pull up at countryside pub and blast out the locals with their car radios playing the most horrible pop music.

Now Phil is really fitted up with amp power and huge speakers that can be turned up and be heard in the next town, so he sets himself in the middle of the gang and puts a George Formby tape on that is ten times louder than all the others together. Needless to say but they soon make a sharp exit. Good for you Phil.

The Werrington

April meeting has been changed to the 3rd Thursday but this is for April only and then other meetings are back to normal.

Blackpool at the Cricket Club.

Came the night and the fog was falling fast around the Warrington area, so Stan Watkinson, Jim Bramwell and myself were doubtful on whether we should make the 50 mile trip or not. However, once we got on the M6 Motorway the fog lifted and the roads were clear.

But what a surprise when we arrived. The room was full, and due to Des Redfern of Crewe and John Taylor of Morecambe turning up there was no shortage of players.



Francis, backed by Alan Middleton

But a bigger surprise was when our long lost friend Francis Collins (now 18) turned up after a long break, and what a lovely young woman she is making. Francis is quite busy working as a shop assistant and also training to be a professional artist on stage. Along with two of her friends she performs at various hotels and some day hopes to make it as a full-time professional artist. Some years back Francis attended the Blackpool meeting regularly and became popular for her great impressions of various Coronation Street stars. I talked to Francis and advised her to keep working on her impressions along with her singing. We hope you are successful Francis.

Our M/C, Alan Middleton, persuaded Francis to give us a song and she came over very well with a song called "Do run run run" or something like that.

Malcolm Palmer Emails: Hello Stan & Eva, Please publish this report in the next Newsletter. Re. Kevin Bridgewater's report in newsletter 98 about John Guy's funeral: There would have been more local GFS members there if I had been informed. I know that Kevin was not told until the night before, even then that would have been time enough to notify the members I had already been in contact with immediately after Kevin had informed me by E-Mail on the day John passed away I had contacted at least four members by phone or E-Mail who would have gone.

I first knew John 30 years ago when I attended my first GFS meeting at the Victoria Hotel Wolverhampton. Since then we always kept in touch. Glenys & myself used to call to see him from time to time when we were in the Handsworth area and sometimes lent a hand in packing the Vellums in his Editor days.

Kevin and the now late Tommy Ashmore, who also sadly passed away in the year 2000, used to visit John often. His memories linger on with video & cassette tapes which I have of him. As Kevin mentioned in his report, he was a character who could turn his hand to anything and a hard worker for the GFS. R.I.P John's never forgotten. *Thanks Malcolm, It was most unfortunate that more members couldn't make the funeral. It all happened so quickly for Kevin to notify everybody who was interested. However John's memory lives on and his past work should not be forgotten.*

Cheers For Mike Turner—As reported in the previous



issues Mike entered the “Stars In Their Eyes Competition” at St Helens Theatre and after the second round he got through to the final. This was held on Saturday the 20th January and Mike had quite a large following from the Formby Society.

We never expect a George Formby impersonator to win these competitions as they plan it so that a modern pop star takes the first positions, - which is good for publicity afterwards. However Mike did extremely well when he received the loudest applause from the crowd and was voted the Audience’s Champion. He also won third place in the competition. Two pop stars won first and second and Big Bopper won fourth, with Frank Sinatra fifth.

His prizes were: A plaque, a large bottle of champagne, 50% off Photo-shots, 50% off having posters printed, two theatre tickets, a certificate, and if he makes his own tape the studio will produce CDs and tapes for him: all professionally made. Well I think the lad has done alright for himself and, as Mike said, “It was very good experience.”

We are very pleased for you Mike. Sorry Stan Watkinson & I couldn’t make the show. We were struggling through our own show on the same night.

New Sale Venue—It was the coldest night

of the year when Sale held their first meeting at the new venue, The Holy Family Club. Half of the crowd never sat down all night but were clinging on to the radiators to get a bit of warmth. One performer refused to get up on stage for fear of losing his radiator spot. I said, “If you stay there I’ll bring the stage over to you. Bah, it was a cold night! Brass monkeys were out on the streets looking for all night welders.



Cyril kept the show going

Cyril Palmer made a good job of setting up the equipment and the sound came over extremely well. Walter Kirkland performed his magic again when he dressed the stage in GF memorabilia, and the ladies braved the freezing night as they sat there, all rugged up, with chattering teeth, taking the money on the door. “How much is it?” I asked Ivy. “A p—p—p—p—pound” she replied. I still wasn’t sure if it was £1 or £5. It will be an excellent venue and the residents enjoyed the show.

But not to worry! If it’s a cold night next month we are supplying everybody with one blanket each, - what’s that? Well I’m not bothered if your name is Winterbottom, you still only get one blanket.

Another Bundle of Laughs from Joe Taylor

A message was today broadcast at Kings Cross Railway Station, "Will the person who lost eight bottles of whisky this morning please call at the Lost Property Office on platform nine where the man who found them has been handed in.

British post office directory enquiry operators are the politest in the world! A survey published today reveals they hardly ever answer back.

Fighting last night between fans of Liverpool and Everton was interrupted for ninety minutes when the pitch was invaded by twenty two players.

Her Majesty the Queen went on a short informal walk about today after she hit her thumb with a hammer.

Arnold Shomark of Texas has made a fortune selling smokeless fuel to Red Indian couples who are not speaking to each other.

Mr Edward Steele, a Liverpool docker, who has just retired aged 65 stated that he'd never had a day's illness in his life. He always made it last a week.

Mr Arthur Perkins who this week won two million pounds on the lottery has announced that he will never work another day's work in his life. So he will be staying on at Fords at Dagenham.

Zsa Zsa Gabor has announced that owing to illness she has cancelled all engagements for three months. But her marriages will go ahead as planned.

A man from Watford has made a serious complaint against the Sunny View Nudist Club. He said that after being in the Nudist Club for three months he had a letter from the Secretary that began, "Dear Sir or Madam."

The Government today announced plans to help the small shopkeeper. They are going to lower his counter.

Mr Robinson the Warrington man whose wife had a ten year affair with a home improvement contractor said today "I had no reason to suspect them" He was speaking from his 12 bedroom, 3 bath-roomed, double garaged, solar heated, en suite pre-fab.

In court today, Mr Brown, owner of a Fish and Chip shop was accused of wife battering.

Always live each day as if it was your last. And someday, you'll be right.
Thanks Joe. Wonderful stuff.

IF YOU'VE GOT ANY JOKES TO SHARE, SEND THEM IN.

Roy Gregory Emailed the following interesting letter. .

In the record of George Formby Sn. "Playing the game in West London" he mentions a George Lashwood who was also known as "The Man in White" in the Victorian music halls. George Lashwood was the husband of my Grandmothers sister Kitty, he met her while staying at the Old Dog and Partridge pub in Nottingham , I was intrigued by hearing this on a 1910 record I downloaded from Napster. --- Roy Gregory --- darwin13@earthlink.net.

Thanks has gone to Roy for the information.

A Grand Old Lady

—Way back in the 1930s one of our Warrington heroes was Sunny Anderson who was well known as the great swimmer who swam the English Channel and who had a room full of trophies. From there on she taught many youngsters at the Warrington Baths and gained a very good reputation for the way she handled her pupils.

Alas many years later her eyesight dimmed and we met her at the Warrington Blind Centre where we entertain each month. "Now then Stan," she said, "I am holding my 90th birthday party on Jan 20th and you must come down to entertain us." "OK Sunny," - (nobody argues with Sunny) - we'll be there."



Keen eyed Sunny with her English Channel birthday cake

Come the day and Stan Watkinson and I turned up at the St Elphins Community Hall to find the place filled with 100 people of all ages.

"Hello Folks—Sunny tells me that you are all great singers who can lift the roof, so come and join in with a sing-along medley. Not a murmur! "This crowd is song dead" I thought. "They've not got a note of music in them. Some made an effort to join in but they were soon drowned out by a noisy rabble on the back row. One group was shouting from their table and didn't show the least interest in our performance.

Stan Watkinson did his spot and received the same treatment. Trying to entertain them was very hard work and the fact that it was a long narrow hall with all the noisy ones at the far end didn't help. But have you noticed? These noisy crowds don't show any interest until you've finished and then they give a good hearty applause. It's as if they are pleased you've finished. After an hour we gave up and started packing away the equipment. Anyway, Sunny, who was sat near the front, enjoyed our songs and some of the older folk came to us afterwards to tell us that they'd appreciated our old songs. You win some and you lose some!

Back Numbers

—After the next three issues and we will have reached 6 years when the third book of 2 years Newsletters can be bound. If anyone wants any back numbers please let me know. Back numbers are 50p each plus postage.

Liverpool's Bob Muirhead writes; - Had a laugh the other day, I was browsing on guy one of the American Bulletin Boards on computer and saw a guy asking if anyone had heard of a song called " Washing Windows " I mailed him suggesting "Cleaning Windows " and of course it was the one he wanted so I sent him the music.

You would have thought that I had sent him the Crown Jewels, - for most Americans Formby is a closed book, - so I sent him a bundle of sites (yours included) he could get info on.

Talking of sites I notice that Jeff Booth's web site is still up and running. Is somebody looking after it ? I hope so as I always enjoyed it. Hope to see you at next meeting. *Thanks Bob, I understand that Dave Hawkins looks after Jeff's computer and answers the mail when he and Janet call in.*

IS KEN SMITH OUT THERE? - Have you noticed Ken that Bob (look up above) refers to this chap as a guy. You see what it is Bob. Ken & I run an organisation, unpaid of course, that completely bans pure bred British from using the word "GUY". We've only got one rule and that is it! GUY is definitely OUT. TABOO. Us Brits have to hold on to our "hee bar gum" - "down to earth" - "call a spade a spade" image and not copy the plastic Americans who don't know what a Guy is. The Yanks and those in Neighbours also refer to girls as Guys so they are spreading confusion throughout the world. So don't forget everybody. No Guys allowed!!!! - Fellers, men, blokes, chaps etc. but NO GUY! I hate the word and my grandchildren constantly use it to wind me up.

THE OTHER DAY— I tried to join an association on a web site and when it asked for a password I offered about 30 names which they rejected. This was because someone else had those names. I even tried my name backward (yelnatn snave) this was also rejected. In the end I gave in and asked for suggestions. The best they could come up with was "Guy 16 " No thanks—I'll join some other club. Ken Smith would never forgive me. Keep the flag flying Ken.

Brian Edge Rang "Stan, did you see George on TV last Sunday (21st Jan) ? He was in 'World At War' entertaining the troops on the front line singing 'Imagine Me On The Maginot Line'. It was only a quick shot of him." *Thanks Brian. No, I didn't see it. In my opinion the finest bit of split stroking George ever did was when he played Maginot Line to the troops. His solo was really something special as he accompanied the backing and played to the applause of the troops. His last line was "You ought to see what the sergeants got" which brought an uproar. George showed em just how experienced he was.*

STILL LOOKING FOR SHORT ARTICLES TO FILL THE GAPS

Theatre Star's Uke For Sale—Maurice Lane was a top banjo uke playing artist in Canada. Alas about two years back Maurice passed on and now his wife has returned back to England to live.

She has brought Maurice's uke with her but due to the fact that no-one in her family wishes to play it she has decided to sell it. It is in excellent condition but, due to having been carried from theatre to theatre, the case has naturally seen better days.

It is a Dallas "C" model and the price is £200. No Offers! You can ring Mrs Lane on 01204 571185.

Olde Tyme Music Hall—Great news for anyone with Sky or Cable TV. Every Sunday night, at 6pm, on Granada Plus, they are showing a series (repeats of course) of the old time music hall shows from the Leeds City Of Varieties. These are very well produced with plenty of variety. If you've not got Sky TV then ask someone to tape them for you as they are well worth keeping in your video library. I taped the same series about 10 years ago and must have watched them a hundred times since. R.G.V. = Really Great Viewing!!! They should make more of them!!!

S.O.S. If anyone has got any bits and pieces of Morris Dancing equipment to sell: little bells etc. please ring Stan Evans on 01925 727102. Many Thanks. - - - - - No!, I'm not taking up Morris Dancing!

Martin Ukulele For Sale—Reg Cutmore on 01205 480186 is selling a Martin Baritone (wooden) Ukulele—around early 1950s. Excellent tone, perfect condition, £500) or near offer. Give Reg a ring if you are interested.

Pro Artist has Markendale Uke For Sale—Brian Groves on 01352 735041 is selling a Baby Gibson copy in really excellent condition. Brian, who is a professional artist, mainly plays guitar with a dash of uke. For his act he is looking for a larger model. Give him a ring if you are interested. Brian performs in N. Wales so he will try to attend Penyffordd sometime.

Went in C J Hughes the other day and they were selling off loads of tapes at very cheap prices. I searched through looking for George Formby tapes but couldn't find one. However, I did find a few Spice Girls at 99p. They didn't last long did they?

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. Where can you get a better bargain than that?

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 - NEW VENUE - Holy Family Parish Centre, Old Hall Rd, (continuation of Marsland Rd) 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 - 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.

Wintergardens GFS Meetings:

- Sat & Sun 17th & 18th Mar 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.

