

THE NORTH - WEST

# GEORGE FORMBY

# Newsletter 71

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Specially Produced for George Formby Fans  
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## Welcome to Newsletter No.71—

And another hectic month! As a tribute to George's 40th Anniversary, Brian & Connie Edge held a very successful GF Exhibition at Crewe, followed by a Grand Concert at night, and the whole event went on like clockwork. Very successful. The community hall where the Crewe branch meet is always very active and on arriving it was full of line dancers doing their stuff. We occupied a side room with our exhibits and when the line dancers had finished they piled into our room with great enthusiasm.

**BLUNDER**—The local newspaper published a shot of myself amongst my exhibits but the caption read underneath, "Brian Edge". Brian rang them to tell them of the mistake and they replied with, "No problem Brian, we'll put it in again." They did, but again with the caption, "Brian Edge."

All the local members found it quite amusing and the running jokes were, "Brian has never looked so young" or "Brian looked clapped out." - CHEEK! Anyway Brian & Connie, it was a huge success and a credit to you both. I only wish we were having similar success with the Wigan Pier exhibition.

**RESIGNED**— Talking about Wigan Pier. After the member complained to Warrington Council re. borrowing display panels for the Wigan Pier Exhibition - causing them to slam the door on us and ruining the chances of a first class exhibition, I decided to vacate the position of Publicity Officer for the GFS. Anyone want the job?

Dennis & Lesley Lee have returned back home after spending two months in Cyprus and they are both looking extremely well and suntanned.



**Poser of the month**— Who is this sweet little darling on the left? It's a picture that was taken some many years ago. Can you recognise him? On the right is how he looks today, with a pint glass in his hand.



No, I didn't film him while was flat out under the table—he jumped up quick when he saw the camera. My query is: How could God allow a sweet young innocent (butter wouldn't melt in his mouth) angelic looking., every mother's dream child like this, develop into this? What a shame! Answer Page 19.

MANY THANKS TO ALL WHO CONTRIBUTED TO THIS ISSUE



**Olwen Gale reports**—Another snippet on George for the N. West Newsletter. In my recent reading I came across this story. The article was on Brian Aldiss, a giant in Science Fiction writers and was born in East Dereham, Norfolk in 1925. His 1990 sci-fi novel “Frankenstein Unbound” was made into a film starring John Hurt and Bridget Fonda and his recent contemporary novel “Supertoys Last All Summer Long” is the basis for a new Steven Spielberg film. He now lives in Oxfordshire with his family.



Our Andy

On his last birthday he had a super party with a jazz band and a marquee in the garden and he says there was a clever there called “Andy” who did George Formby imitations and it went on till three in the morning, finishing with fireworks! I am wondering if this was our Andy Eastwood who is in the society.

*Andy Eastwood is based at Oxford College so you can bet your life that it will be him. Within a few days I will receive confirmation from Walt, his dad, that Andy was the performer and I'll bet he did an excellent job. It's great to see these youngsters progressing.*

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**Louie Formby**—Louie, George’s sister, is still alive and living at the Variety Artists Home, Brinsworth House, of which GF Senior helped to originally sponsor. She will be 95 on the 27th of May but I wonder if this will be her last year?



Louie with Frank

The Formby pattern goes like this: GF Senior died in 1921. George died in 1961. And George’s mother, Eliza died in 1981 (at the age of 102). In 1991, Louie was helping us with the Warrington Exhibition but she was feeling grossly under the weather. When I asked he why she told me that this would probably be her last year because it has a “number one” at the end. However, she rallied to when it was announced that her cousin, Eugene, from Wigan had died. “Thank goodness, “ she said, “Now I’m alright until 2001. This year!

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**Charles Stewart** handed me a great little soft back book titled “Stars In Our Eyes” which was written by Jeffrey Richards— I’ve heard that name before! Wasn’t he the professor who was interviewed by Daniel Wiles for the South Bank Show? (George Formby issue). Mainly the book is looking at the big Lancashire stars of yesterday: George Formby, Gracie Fields, Les Dawson, Frank Randle, Al Read, Hylda Baker, Thora Hird, Norman Evans., and more. It is published by Lancashire County Books and priced at £3.50. It contains some great little stories and several photos. Well worth the read.

## Yorkshire's Mac McGee Emails

Hi Stan, I think I am finally getting the hang of this Email contraption. God knows where all these E-mails I've sent have landed up. I hope I have got to you. One BLOKE received the same message five times.



Milly and I have just come back from a holiday in Tenerife. I took my uke and played in a few bars there. The groups, Irish and country and western were fascinated by it. I sat in with one of them and when I looked up after playing what else, Lamp post. There were quite a few dancing in and outside the bar. There was a lot of interest and for a few days people were pulling me up and asking where I was playing next. There was quite an interest in George Formby. I got the impression we could do a similar job to what we did in Ireland if we could get the same crowd over there.

This brings me to my second reason for e-mailing you. Could Milly and I, along with George and Mary Atkinson park at your place when we all go on the French trip? Your house is the nearest for the toilet!

*No problem Mac, you can park at our house any time you wish. But only because you have done our "Ban The Guy Society" reet proud. In fact, Ken Smith and I have decided to make you our first Honorary Member for the use of the word "Bloke" in your very first article to the Newsletter.*

*So you see, using the words Bloke, Chap, Feller etc. will open doors for you that no other society can offer—even if it is only the toilet door. So keep the British Flag flying.—Land Of Hope and Glory and all that. Proud of you.*

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## Uncle Joe's Mintballs

—Some months ago I wrote to the Managing Director of William Santus Ltd, Wigan, who make Uncle Joe's Mintballs. "Hey", I wrote, we have a member in our society who sings "Uncle Joe's Mintballs" at all the meetings and Old Folks Homes and also takes with him a pocket full of mintballs to hand round to everybody. He is doing a good job for your company so how's about sending him a couple of tins a month for the publicity he is giving you?

After a few months I received a reply, "Sorry, but if we supplied mintballs to everybody who sang the song we would soon be out of business." Well, that's a small minded attitude isn't it? Perhaps he's not a Formby fan. Sometimes Wigan is so hard to move.

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What is "white, yellow, green, yellow, white? A frog buttie (Lancashire sandwich)

Are these eggs fresh? Fresh? The chickens haven't missed em yet!



# George (With Uke) meets 16,000 Soldiers.

Newspaper Article 1944  
Hitler wants a lightning war does he? Well by gum I've just seen some of the lightning that's coming to him. George Formby, the ukulele playing stage and screen star, said this to the "Daily Herald" after entertaining 16,000 soldiers and airmen at a camp somewhere in the North of England.



GF & Co RAF base Egypt

George had promised to give two concerts, one each to the army and the RAF. But so great was the demand that both shows had to be run twice nightly. Only a vast RAF hanger could accommodate the 2,000 airmen who helped George with his latest songs

On Saturday the army—14,000 of them, had two special concerts to themselves and heard for the first time a song written and composed by George and dedicated to the 20s—21s. Civilians will be introduced to it tonight in Manchester. "They're a great bunch, them lads," said George. "you'd think they'd been in the Service all their lives the way they've settled down to the job. In the New Year, when I'm through with my film and panto contracts, I'm fixed to go to France to see them again. Beryl is coming too."

HITLER CAN'T DO IT! "Of course I'm going with the lad," said Beryl. "I've got to look after him and his ukes, haven't I? We've never been parted since we were married and Hitler's not going to do it now. George has been longing to get out there ever since the war started and I'm going up the line with him as far as they'll let me."

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## "Its on the Air"- Jonathan Baddeley

Promotes Crewe Branch on BBC Radio, Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> April—Jonathan Baddeley has just done a 20 minute spot on BBC Radio Stoke talking about George Formby and advertising the South Cheshire (Crewe) "George Formby" Ukulele Society and their forthcoming participation in the Nantwich Jazz Festival.



What an excellent ambassador we have with Jonathan. I know that nobody could have done a better job. He never misses a trick and with his knowledge and enthusiasm for George Formby, his fluent presentation and his confident performance on the uke; he is a great credit to our thriving society. Well-done Jonathan!

# Great 40th Anniversary Day at Crewe

By Ray Bernard

And what a wonderful Exhibition it was too!, hosted by our Wistaston stalwarts, Brian & Connie Edge. A great day was held by all, and attracted over a hundred visitors, in addition to our usual Crewe supporters. Connie's suggestion of a Formby exhibition certainly paid off; George Formby never a finer tribute. Exhibits included photographs records, instruments, music, scrap books, even George's Kimono dressing gown that he wore in the film, "South American George", courtesy of Derek Pearce of Leicester. The rarest items, without doubt, were those displayed by Stan Evans, and all a credit to you Stan for such a fine display of Formby memorabilia. Other exhibitors included Brian Edge, Jon Baddeley, Derek Pearce, Frankie Woods and myself, and I must congratulate Jon on his superb photo collection which I thought was outstanding. The media were represented by Granada T.V. and local newspapers and we were fortunate to see the T.V. coverage featuring Brian and Jon later in the afternoon. At around 5 p.m. Connie informed us that tea was ready and we were treated to a buffet of sandwiches, cake and tea. Thanks Connie it was much appreciated.



## EVENING CONCERT

A fine exhibition was later followed by an equally fine concert. In opening the concert Jon Baddeley thanked everyone concerned with the exhibition then gave us Walter Langshaw's (Sale) own excellent composition, "A Lancashire Lad and His Uke." which I'm sure will become a G.F.S. standard. Arthur Newton followed sporting a 'Country Yokel' straw hat, and of course his song had to be "I Wish I Was Back On The Farm."



Arthur Newton

Connie Edge, Joan Cain, Angela Caldicott and Alice Cronshaw then took the stage with, "I See The Moon", Well done girls! Alan Newton and Brian Edge then treated us to a rousing, foot tapping trombone/piano duet, "Whistling Rufus", had I known you were playing that one lads I would have brought along my Tenor Banjo!

The ever poplar Cliff Royle did an excellent job as compere for the evening and at this point gave us a lively version of "Somebody's Wedding Day". Glenys Huntingdon then played her trumpet with much professionalism and produced a great sound with "Basin Street Blues". Derek Pearce entertained us with a very amusing "Samuel Pepy's Diary" accompanying himself on the tenor ukulele

CONTINUED OVER . . .



Glenys Huntingdon



To end the first half Alison Nadin and her puppet friends entertained us in their own individual styles with a colourful and musical performance.

The second half opened with a comic song from Crew lads: Walter, Ron, Steve, Ken and Alan, entitled, "Don't Jump Off The Roof Dad" which certainly had its funny moments! Brian & Alan then gave us "A Grey Old Lady" which I found very amusing, and even more so when the lads forgot their words half way through.

We then had an excellent performance from Andrew Little with "I Blew A Little Blast On My Whistle" ably assisted by Pam Baddeley and all in the 'whistle' sequence. Adam Smith from Derby then treated us to a great version of a Formby favourite of mine, "Talking To The Moon About You".



A Frankie Woods superb puppet with Alison pulling the strings.

**POLICE RAID**—At this point we were raided by the police in the guise of Derek Pearce and his 'three wives' Gillian, Julie and Jean resplendent in uniform performing "On The Beat" from the film, "Spare A Copper", which went down very well. Then it was my turn with "You Don't Need A Licence For That" and a Jolson tribute, "April Showers", ably assisted by Caron on the piano. The next artiste, Jed Collins, from Manchester had us all in stitches with his "Wild Colonial Boy" and "Ghost Riders In The Sky" and gave us all a lesson in showmanship we won't forget! Hurry back Jed, you were great! Our thanks to all who attended and our special thanks to Brian & Connie for their hospitality and for successfully organising such a wonderful day.

*Thanks Ray, you've done a grand job stepping in for Brian, who was heavily tied up organising everything in sight on the day. Sorry for cutting your article down but they all know that we haven't got*



Emily Knowles with Brian

*space to include every artist on the bill. It was a great day and very well appreciated. The only disappointment was the Granada T.V. presenter, Emily Knowles, who simply had no idea on how to create a lively George Formby style atmosphere. She gave instructions to clear the room and then took a couple of quick shots on film. Many friends rang to say that they thought the news presentation was extremely poor as it gave very little information and none of the exhibits were shown. Although she did have a nice smile for the camera!*



## More Church Bloopers from Bob Muirhead

1. Bertha Belch, a missionary from Africa will be speaking tonight at Calvary Memorial Church in Racine. Come tonight and hear Bertha Belch all the way from Africa.
2. The cost for attending the National Fasting and Prayer Conference includes meals."
3. Miss Charlene Mason sang, "I will not pass this way again," giving obvious pleasure to the congregation.
4. "Ladies, don't forget the rummage sale. It's a chance to get rid of those things not worth keeping around the house. Don't forget your husbands."
5. The peacemaking meeting scheduled for today has been cancelled due to conflict.
6. The sermon this morning: "Jesus Walks on the Water." The sermon tonight: "Searching for Jesus."
8. Barbara remains in the hospital and needs blood donors for more transfusions. She is also having trouble sleeping and requests tapes of Pastor Jack's sermons.
9. The Rector will preach his farewell message after which the choir will sing "Break Forth into Joy."
10. Irving Benson and Jessie Carter were married on October 24 in the church. So ends a friendship that began in their school days.
11. At the evening service tonight, the sermon topic will be "What is Hell?" Come early and listen to our choir practice.
12. Eight new choir robes are currently needed, due to the addition of several new members and to the deterioration of some older ones.
13. Please place your donation in the envelope along with the deceased person(s) you want remembered.
14. Attend and you will hear an excellent speaker and have a healthy lunch.
15. The church will host an evening of fine dining, superb entertainment, and gracious hospitality.
16. The ladies of the Church have cast off clothing of every kind. They may be seen in the basement on Friday afternoon.
17. This evening at 7 P.M. there will be hymn singing in the park across from the Church. Bring a blanket and come prepared to sin.
18. Ladies Bible Study will be held Thursday morning at 10. All ladies are invited to lunch in the Fellowship Hall after the B.S. is done.
19. Low Self Esteem Support Group will meet Thursday. Please use the back door.
20. The eighth-graders will be presenting Shakespeare's Hamlet in the Church basement Friday at 7 PM. The Congregation is invited to attend this tragedy.
21. Mrs. Johnson will be entering the hospital this week for testes.
22. The Associate Minister unveiled the church's new tithing campaign slogan last Sunday: "I Upped My Pledge - Up Yours."

*Thanks for the bloopers Bob. Several readers rang to say how they enjoyed reading them.*

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## HOTEL GET-AWAY

—For those who took part in the disastrous "Hotel Getaway" TV programme, the latest Virgin Inter-City rail commercial should be of interest. The first character in the ad is the Manager of the hotel, who you will recall sacked the two waiters for selling complimentary roses to hotel guests. Brian. *Brian is referring to the Granada TV show that we appeared in and it was so pathetic (not us! - we were good) they decided not show the programme on TV. The two waiters also sold edible knickers.*



## Granada TV Star to Learn the Ukulele?

Zany Paul Crone, popular Granada TV presenter, fronted a Crewe Charity Show "Live at the Lyceum" on Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> April in aid of Cystic Fibrosis. The show comprised local talent of all ages and the artistes had great fun working on the stage of the last Edwardian theatre in Cheshire raising valuable funds for such a worthy cause at the same time.



Paul Crone

The South Cheshire George Formby Ukulele Society had a fifteen minutes spot when as a group they performed George's most popular numbers to the obvious delight of the audience who spontaneously shouted for more.

Paul Crone was impressed at rehearsal when Colin Wood, Des Redfern and Alan Newton ran through Blackpool Rock for a sound check but was astounded when he learnt that there were fourteen artistes in the concert party. Paul later appeared in the dressing room saying that he would like to learn the uke. A wag in the group added, "you'd be a legend with a uke Paul" so he wrote down details of our practise nights as he said he would like to have a go.

Our spot went without hitch, thanks to Colin and Alan for their work on the music and of course to the artistes who were all well turned out and in good voice. Those taking part were: Jonathan Baddeley (M.C.) and Pamela, Arthur Newton, Don Chalkley, Peter Cain, Brian and Connie Edge, Alan Chenery, Des Redfern, Colin Wood, Alan Newton, Ron Whiston, Walter Kirkland and Carl Basford.

## Frankie Woods International Puppets.

Our own Alison Nadin, with Frankie's puppets, also appeared on the same bill at the Crewe Lyceum. Alison had the whole stage to work on and from the wings her act went really well.

For those who may not know, Frankie Woods was a professional entertainer for over thirty years. During that time he made all his puppets by hand and performed with them at holiday venues in the United Kingdom including Blackpool Tower, Leeds City Varieties and many others. Sadly Frankie had a stroke in 1983 and had to retire from show business. The puppets were stored away and he thought they would never be seen again. Then in 1998 he joined the George Formby Society and Alison, who under Frankie's instructions performs them at George Formby meetings and at Charity events, brought the puppets back to life again. She has over sixty puppets to choose from.

## Thank you.

Connie and Brian would like to especially thank everyone who contributed, or helped in any way, towards our exhibition and evening concert, held on the 23<sup>rd</sup> March to commemorate the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of George's death. Both events were a huge success.

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What is the hardest thing about learning to ride a bike? The pavement.  
Would you like a roll on the drums, or a sandwich on the piano?

## Have Fun With George's Films by Brian Edge

In the golden days of the cinema, one very seldom got the opportunity of seeing a film clip twice. Those responsible for continuity and the editing of films in those days were well aware of this. They knew that the picturegoer would have to be extremely alert to spot minor anomalies and as a result, particularly when working on low budget films, they often left them in rather than shoot the scene again.

Since the arrival of the video recorder, things are very different. We are now able to go through our films, time and time again, to sift out such irregularities. *Talk Radio UK* used to run an entire programme on such clips which mostly concerned modern films.

Whilst there is little doubt that the large majority of George Formby buffs have seen George's films many times over, how many have studied them looking for minor faults in continuity and film editing? It is hoped that this article will give everyone a good reason to watch the films yet again, not only to check up on what is written below but also to see what you can find!

When George plays "*Fanlight Fanny*" to the maid and cook in the film "*Trouble Brewing*" there are two aspects. The first being when George has sung the words "*Twice a month two weeks...*" the cook picks up an empty plate. By the time that George has completed the lyric "*She's called a peach because she's always canned*" the plate is full, but by the time George gets to "*When she's dressed*" the plate is empty again! If you don't believe it, pop a copy of the film in the video machine and see for yourself.

The other aspect is in the uke solo of the same song when the question must be asked as to whether George's flashy circular right hand strumming matches the music he is playing.



At the beginning of "*In the Air*" George and his dog, Scruffy, enter a wireless control room. The Corporal in charge pulls down the left hand switch of a pair of large electrical switches on a panel and then leaves the room. By the time that George has finished singing "*They Can't Fool Me*" both switches are in the up position. Truly amazing! Don't blame it on to Scruffy, as he had nothing to do with it!

In "*Spare a Copper*" George, in police uniform, sings "*On the Beat*". His Whistle chain is suspended from his second buttonhole and dangles down to his fourth button before ascending up and into his left hand top pocket. At the point where George sits on the table, the chain gets shorter and is threaded differently. When he gets to the Beryl Reid bit, it has changed again and when he finally sits down it had changed back again! It is great fun this, isn't it?

At the beginning of the film "*Get Cracking*" George can be seen marching at the head of a troop of Home Guard singing the song "*Get Cracking*". The men are mainly old chaps, many sporting First World War ribbons. However, when the parade gets to the village, no doubt in the film studio, the squad comprised of a different group of mainly younger men. Just like magic! Also in the same film, at the point where George has just come out of the river in his homemade tank, you will see that his shoulder flashes read DRAUG EMOH. Obviously the only piece of film available to the film editor was a close up of George portraying him facing the opposite way to that which he was travelling in his tank. The editor decided, with tongue in cheek, to reverse the piece of celluloid, as nobody was likely to notice it. But we did! So do look at George's films in greater depth when you are next viewing them and write to Stan if you discover any interesting bits.



**Olwen Gale** writes—I picked a book the other day on “British Film Comedy 1929—39” It is entitled, “A Chorus Of Raspberries” and when I looked at the index there were ten pages on George Formby! I don’t intend to summarize all of it but will give you a few points out of it.

His discovered was Basil Dean who had already launched the film career of Gracie Fields. The similarities between the two stars were striking—both were essentially cheery, working class, Lancastrians, and Formby, like Fields, had worked the Northern Music Halls from an early age.

The Formby films were a huge success and by the late 1930s George, like Gracie, had become a national star and indeed from 1938—43 the most popular British star. There is a lot of reading on all his films with “George In Civvy St” (1946) being a failure and this turned out to be his final film. Then came his decline and Formby’s years as Britain’s top star were over with more sophisticated styles emerging from Ealing Studios and elsewhere.

ERROR IN LAST NEWSLETTER! Stan, you’ve got me down as Alwyn Gayle in the list going to France next June. Can you put it right?

*Thanks for your article Olwen. Now it’s not my fault your name has been spelt incorrectly. It’s these foreigners from Crewe who can’t spell. I’ll keep my eye on their Emails in future. Keep sending em in.*

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**Albert Seaborne** recalls—In Ashton Under Lyne there is a theatre—Tameside Hippodrome, formerly The Empire Theatre/Cinema, which was built in 1908. It was there that in 1934, as a young boy, I saw 29 year old George Formby starring in the panto, “Babes In The Wood.”

Now, under its new name, many fine shows are presented there. Each year, around November, the popular folk group, The Houghton Weavers, give a spirited performance. The main vocalist, Tony Berry, doesn’t play an instrument, but with tongue in cheek he claims that this is not true. He claims that he practises playing an instrument almost every day. He then pulls out a Banjo Uke from its case and blows out clouds of dust from it.

David Littler, who plays 6 string guitar and 5 string banjo stands behind Tony (he’s very tall) with his arms around him, and while Tony is singing “Lamp Post” he plays the uke, giving the impression that Tony is playing. Incidentally, the uke sounds tinny and awful. The Westhoughton group do remember George and give their tribute to him. *Thanks Albert. One of the group, Steve Millington, owns a company here in Warrington: “FROG Recording Studios” where he produces tapes, CDs etc. Some time back he asked me to find him a uke banjo for the act. He didn’t respond when I offered him a top quality uke so maybe he was looking for something tinny and awful.*



## Cliff Royle The Star of Frodsham sends in his monthly report on N. Wales.

Pleased to see Dennis & Lesley Lee back from their winter vacation, and looking so good. But did we manage without them? Wasn't it a busy night Even after "restricting" some performers it was still nearly 11.30pm before we finished.

We were well blessed with a good audience including some new visitors, and look forward to having more playing talent in Brian Groves (Guitar/Vocalist) and Jim Griffiths (Uke). Already we have Jock Carmichael doing a regular spot.

In addition to our regular friends from Crewe we were delighted to welcome players from far afield; Paul Woodhead with wife, Jill from Shropshire, and John Taylor from Morecambe accompanied by his Mother, Father and Son.

Paul opened the show playing his own compositions; "The Woodhead Jig" and "Going For A Record" which is proposed as a song for the Guinness Book Of Records attempt to take place later in the year. John Taylor sang a couple of rousing songs accompanied by Dennis Lee on the Uke and Paul Woodhead on Bones. We now seem to have more bones than a butchers shop, but they are great! Tom Meredith decided to make a change and sang a couple of nice songs and Harry McCormick (new from Wrexham) also sang two lovely melodies.

The two Stans put on a good ad-lib show. Stan Watkinson is hitting the news: firstly by being accepted to play on a show in Liverpool at which Ken Dodd is the star; then in Widnes where he has been enrolled on a temporary basis as a member of the Irish Regiment Band. Well done Stan. Alas while Stan Evans has been "proper poorly" over the past few weeks, he hasn't been able to sing, so he resorted to some new songs, two of which they sang this evening. It was reported that a member of the audience has an old video which showed Stan with a good head of hair. Did we have videos so long ago?

We had two birthday celebrations; Connie Edge said she was ?? Twice round, and Ron Houston from Dyserth who had reached the Octogenarian status. We still hope to get him up doing a solo or duet one day. Regrettably our sound engineer, Deg Bruce, has a damaged shoulder so was unable to be with us. We wish him a speedy recovery.

TWO CARNIVALS—We now have two events for the Summer where we are to play; Penyfford Carnival on Saturday 16th June, and Frodsham Festival in the Park on Sunday 1st July. Members available to join in please make early contact with Dennis Lee so that a suitable programme can be prepared. Cliff Royle. Overworked and underpaid Ace Reporter; M.C. and general dogsbody etc.

*Well you're in right trouble now Cliff!!! What's this about Tom Meredith singing a couple of nice songs for a change? Does that mean that all his previous songs have been terrible? I'm not getting involved Cliff! You're on your own!*



## Emails (all through Jeffrey Booth's system) Arrived -

Maurice Rodgers (somewhere in the world) wrote: I've just paid a visit to my attic. I remember having inherited some old magazines when a colleague of mine died some years ago. The magazines are titled G.F.C. (George Formby Club) News and there are seven non sequential editions dating from Number 1 1939 to Number 1 of 1941. The contents appeared to have been generated on a Gestetner copier machine but each edition was jacketed in a semi gloss black and red cover. Have you seen any of these around or do you know anyone who might be interested.

*I Emailed Maurice to say that I had seen a copy of the GF Fan Club (which I understand had a membership of 100,000 members) magazine and would be interested in learning more, but he never replied.*

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**Another Email**—Hayley Robinson is a teacher at St Benedict's Catholic Primary School, Hindley. A group of her students are studying the history of the school and want to learn more of the time George Formby went to the school. After several failed attempts to return the Email I opted for the old fashion GPO service but heard nothing from her. I gave her Gerry Mawdsley's details who had information on George at the school.

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**Another Email**—Fiona Skiba is tracing her family's history and understands that her Great Grandfather, Herbert Rawson, who lived in Droylsdon and then Dukinfield, played alongside GF Senior in Pubs and Music Halls. Apparently he was a very good pianist. Have you any detail on this? I replied telling her that none of the books give reference to Herbert Rawson but will appeal to the readers. If anyone has read of any connection with the above please let me know.

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
**And Another**—Victor Hardbattle is a classical guitar teacher in Stockport. One of his pupils (5 years old) wishes to learn to play the uke. I replied giving him Cyril Palmer's number and I understand that the young 5 year old may be attending the Sale meetings.

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**And Another**—David of Canada is trying to obtain GF Videos for his father who met George when he performed at the Royal Hotel, Guelph, Ontario. He says that when he asks for GF videos in Canada he gets silly looks. I pointed him in the direction of the GFS shop.

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**And Again**—Sally Dunbar wants to know the answer to a quiz question that has got all her office staff completely beat. "What was it that George Formby liked to have a nibble at now and again?" All together now!!! In the Key of "C"

 HIS LITTLE STICK OF BLACKPOOL ROCK 

## Arthur Newton plays the hymns in Church On his Ukulele!

Crewe's popular Arthur Newton accompanied children's hymn singing in his local church recently. The mellow sound of the wooden ukulele complimented the young voices nicely and was befitting the occasion. Arthur's debut was well received by all present. Brian Edge.

*Ed. Well done Arthur, perhaps a burst of "Barmaid at the Rose and Crown" on your banjolele next Sunday could well double the congregation!*

## Swimmin' With the Wimmin By Brian Edge.

You may well wonder why anyone would bother to write a song on the above subject when it is something that we all do when we go to the seaside. Well, up to the beginning of the First World War you couldn't legally do it! It's true! Most places forbade men bathing on the same beaches as women.

In the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, people were terrified at the thought of immersing themselves in the sea, until a Brighton Quaker, Benjamin Beale invented the Bathing Machine. This was a wooden box on wheels, drawn into the sea by a horse. You undressed inside and 'dippers' (simple people who had no fear of exposing their bodies to water for long periods) lifted and dipped their customers into the water for a few seconds.

Women suffered from offensive ogling from men with telescopes on the shore so Beale popularised a 'Modesty Hood' an umbrella like attachment that enable women to swim beneath the canopy out of the view of the oglers. Even in those days it is recorded that certain 'sporting' ladies would venture out from under their canopy!

By the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century the bathing costume had been invented and the bathing machines had become smelly objects. Their popularity waned and most of them ended up as stationary beach huts. Each resort, however, still had its own by-laws which prevented males and females bathing closer than 60 feet of each other and hired vessels approaching nearer than 200 yards from where females were swimming. Males were also forbidden from lingering near beaches where females were bathing.

Segregated bathing continued until the First World War when the laws were gradually relaxed to accommodate mixed bathing. Hence 'Swimmin' with the Wimmin'. Brian Edge.

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## George's 16mm Films for Sale.

Is anyone interested in purchasing a 16mm Cine Projector along with several GF films? These were bought at the Sheffield Auction but unfortunately I just haven't the time to spend operating the equipment—although it is quite an interesting hobby to get involved in. The cost of the projector (including splicing equipment) is £80 and the films will be sold at whatever they were purchased at in 1989. These were from £50 upward. If interested please ring me on 01925 727102—Stan Evans.

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DON'T FORGET THE (once only) DATE CHANGE—AT SALE—SAT MAY 19th



# Milton Keynes Hits Warrington Janet Hawkins

and Christine Booth (late Jeffrey's wife) rang, "We are coming to stay with you for a few days to do some shopping and to visit the Crewe Exhibition. OK?" "No problem, we'll be pleased to have you both. On the day they arrived it was the most dreadful day with driving snow and hail stone throughout the country. The TV News was recommending everybody should stay at home instead of risking getting snowbound, but not these two. They arrived at 7.30 pm.



Now Janet loves shopping! She could shop for England! And when she's let loose in the shops she buys just about anything that's on offer: Ornaments, pictures, bed linen, step ladders, buckets, dish cloths etc. and even buys suitcases to carry all she's bought.

Like Janet said, "There are no bargains in Milton Keynes" so they drive the 150 miles to snap up all the bargains in Cheshire - and the shopkeepers look forward to them arriving. In fact, the Warrington and Widnes shops have started putting out huge banners (WELCOME JANET) when she's due to arrive. They order extra stock for the occasion, put the red carpet down and open longer hours. They are now considering holding a "National Janet Day" - On the Saturday they left us with the parting words "We'll be back!"

**But what's all this?** These two young, brazen harlots, Christine and Janet, are leading our Ace Reporter, Cliff Royle astray. As George would have said, "The cheeky fast cats." Although Cliff looks as if he is enjoying every minute of his double cuddle.



Anyway Cliff, back to the reporting and leave these ladies alone. Anymore of the careless philandering and you'll be losing your eyesight. We can't have that of our Super Reporter

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**Just Received** a letter from Christine. Jeff & Christine often told us of their Milton Keynes cows, which are life size, but made of concrete. At first Eva & I thought they were joking, until they produced a photo. With Christine's letter was a newspaper article reporting that some April Fool prankster had surrounded the area with "KEEP OUT" signs to prevent foot and mouth disease.

DON'T FORGET AN ARTICLE FOR THE NEWSLETTER



**Joe Taylor** writes—In the late 1920 and early 30s one of my uncles used to take my two older brothers, myself and a younger brother in turn to the Hippodrome Theatre, Wigan. I had difficulty in containing my excitement and anticipation as the week for my turn came near. The red plush seats of the theatre, the red and gold painted walls, the ornate ceiling and the chandelier with its many lights (we had no electricity at home). The hubbub of the audience, all created for me a world of magic.

The fire curtain, which was lowered before the show, was crammed with advertisements for various goods, shops, and businesses. To kill the time before the curtain-rise the popular game was "I-spy." - a far cry from today's sophisticated, television, computer, mobile phone children. But perhaps, we were more content.

However, back in the Hippodrome, excitement grew as the fire curtain was raised to reveal the red velvet curtain. Then the band appeared and made their way to their places in the orchestra pit. A few minutes passed as a few instruments were tuned, and the overture was played. Then came the announcer's voice. Excitement reached fever pitch as the curtain was raised to reveal a line of beautiful young ladies arm in arm kicking their heels shoulder high in time to the music. A magical moment.

During my many visits to the Hippodrome I must have seen many stars of variety and music hall but only one act remains in my memory. After a fanfare from the orchestra there appeared on stage an Indian (?) gentleman dressed in flowing, colourful, silk robes escorted by a number of beautiful Eastern (?) ladies in attractive, but rather skimpy attire. We saw a few pieces of magic then came the 'piece de resistance.' To a fanfare from the orchestra, and a roll on the drums, an ornate barrel was brought on stage and the magician proceeded to pour in pail after pail of water. That it was water was vouched for by a member of the audience! After a few incantations and passing of the magic wand the water was now proclaimed to be beer and was drawn off glass after glass and was taken on trays to the audience by a bevy of those lovely young maidens, who were from another planet. My uncle said as he drank from his glass that it was not only beer but it was "very good beer." That it was free may have influenced his opinion.

The many wonderful singers, comedians, and other artists who appeared during my visits are all forgotten. But not the oriental magician who turned water into beer.

*Thanks Joe. Like yourself I well remember the many times my father took me to the Royal Court Theatre in Warrington. I loved every minute and it will always stand out in my memory. Ironically, the Royal Court Theatre was pulled down and in its place they built Poll Tax House, - What a contrast!*

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**Margaret Royle** is still under the weather and that's why she hasn't been sat on the door at the N. Wales meetings recently. Come on Margaret, The warm weather is on its way and George's light is shining very brightly for you. Hope to see you at the next meeting.





## And Joe Continues with his barrage of one-liners.

If smoking is harmful why does it cure kippers?  
No one gives you a black eye. You have to fight for it!  
Ten fingers, ten toes, that was the Lord's creation! Was  
he preparing for decimalisation?  
I've just had a funny accident—had me in stitches!  
I bought a carpet in mint condition. It had a hole in the middle.  
Don't worry, lightening doesn't strike twice in the same . .  
Nostalgia's all right but it's not what it was.  
If you can't repeat gossip, what else can you do with it?  
Never tell a psychiatrist you're a schizophrenic. He'll charge  
you double.



Two things happen as you get older. First you begin to lose  
your memory, and, er, I can't remember what the second one is.  
Never bet with a bookmaker if you see him knocking spikes in his shoes.  
Shakespeare was sitting at his desk seeking inspiration. He glanced at his pencil and  
wrote "2B or not 2B."

Charlie Smith's wife had plastic surgery last week. He cut off her credit card.  
Patrick reads the obituary columns each day and thinks it odd that people keep dying in  
alphabetical order.

Harry Smith drinks whisky and Horlicks together. When its his turn to pay he's always  
fast asleep.

British Customs have arrested a famous Russian spy, after the discovery of two  
miniature radios hidden in the cups of her bra. Said an official, "We became  
suspicious when from the top of her dress we heard Kenneth McKellar singing  
'The hills are alive with the sound of music.'"

In Warrington yesterday Mr Ambrose Wainwright ate 622 radishes in 6 minutes 2  
seconds. This doesn't count as a world record as he had a following wind.

Jock McTavish nearly drowned in the Black Sea last week while he was filling his  
fountain pen.

A complaint has been made by a man who bought 26 episodes of "Pot Black" under the  
impression that it was a cooking programme. *Thanks again Joe. I love these  
one-liners. Keep sending em in.*

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## What a Wonderful Smile—At the

Crewe exhibition I bumped into Brenda Shone's beaming smile and when I asked if she had anything to comment on she told me that she thoroughly enjoys reading her regular Newsletter.

"Whenever we feel low" she said, "we read the jokes in the Newsletter and have a hearty good laugh.—picks us up for the day!" Well I'm very pleased to know that Brenda. Makes it all worthwhile. Many thanks. Feel free to send an article in.



**Dallas "D" Uke for Sale**—Evelyn Gerrard on 01244 344721 is selling a Dallas "D" uke with case. The uke is in first class condition so give her a ring if you are interested. Kind hearted Evelyn said, "The uke is for sale at £325—which is what I paid for it a few months ago, however, if anyone is interested I will throw in approx £80s worth of bits and pieces—instruction book, GF song book, videos, tapes etc, free of charge.

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**What A Treat** it gave to see young Adam Smith at the Crewe Exhibition. He walked up to me with a beaming smile and said, "How's that? - I've lost a lot of weight!" Bah Gum—he has! He looked great!



He looked so grand, tall and streamlined that, at first, I had a job recognising him. And on stage at the Friday night concert he had more surprises to offer when he did his solo performance. For years he's hidden in his father's shadow afraid to open his mouth on stage, but, not now. This lad's got style!

He is a wonderful performer with bags of confidence. Good clear voice and wonderful timing. Great selection of songs and he looks as if he is enjoying every minute of it. George would be proud of him. Keep it going Adam and someday you'll be a star.

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**Great Piece Of Equipment**—A friend of mine loaned me a wonderful machine to play around with, which he uses at his church. It is called a Digital Hymnal and it contains no less than 4500 various hymns.

**POPULAR SONGS**—This machine is such a wonderful piece of equipment that I have written to the American company to ask if they supply a similar machine containing all the old time popular songs. This would be perfect for our needs. It is about 12" x 10" by 2" thick and you plug it in like you do a tape player—but it contains no tapes. Press any one of 4500 numbers and the song pops out immediately. You can change the key and the tempo independently and there are several different voices: piano, organ, sax, strings, drums, harp, flute etc. and the sound is perfect for backing.

Assuming that they do produce a Pop Song type, the only snag would be, being American, they probably haven't installed GF numbers in the machine.

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**WE WERE SHORT OF PLAYERS AT THE LIVERPOOL MEETING LAST NIGHT**  
Also at Blackpool so if you fancy an appreciative audience come along.



**Uke Banjo for Sale** Larry Johnson on 0161 945 5296 is selling a Graham Greenfield pre-war Abbott copy with case. Good sound, £500. Give Larry a ring if you are interested.

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**Top Quality Uke Banjo for Sale**—Mike Turner on 01744 882752 is selling his Cartwright Abbott copy, price £370 (no case) excellent sound. If interested give Mike a ring.

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**Paul Woodhead** sent in "An Irishman's Philosophy" which was taken from a Tenerife Newspaper.



There are only two things to worry about:  
Either you are well or you are sick.  
If you are well, then there is nothing to worry about.  
If you are sick, there are two things to worry about :  
Either you will get well or you will die.  
If you get well then there is nothing to worry about.  
If you die there are two things to worry about :  
Either you will go to heaven or you will go to hell.  
If you go to heaven then you have nothing to worry about.

But if you go to hell, you'll be so damn busy shaking hands with all your friends - you won't have time to worry !

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**Bob Muirhead**—Emailed a few puns from the USA.

Two Eskimos sitting in a kayak were chilly, but when they lit a fire the craft, it sank proving once again that you can't have your kayak and heat it.

A three legged dog walks into a saloon in the Old West. He slides up to the bar and announces: "I'm looking for the man who shot my paw."

A group of chess enthusiasts checked into a hotel and were standing in the lobby discussing their recent tournament victories. After about an hour, the manager came out of the office and told them to clear off. "But why?" they asked, as they moved off. "Because," he said, "I can't stand chess nuts boasting in an open foyer."

What was the first thing Henry 111 did on coming to the throne? He sat down.

At what battle did Nelson die? His last one. *Thanks Bob*

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Answer from Page Two: Of course it's young Alan Chenery who does a grand job at Crewe.



# 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?

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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 Thursday in the month. Bill Turner on 01782 304858.

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**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. DATE CHANGE For MAY Meeting Only—Sat May 19th

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**Crewe Branch** - Wistaston Memorial Hall - Every 4th Friday in the month - Brian Edge on 01270 569836.

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

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

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## 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

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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.

DON'T FORGET YOUR ARTICLE—OR ELSE

