

THE NORTH - WEST

GEORGE FORMBY

Newsletter 75

Vol. 7
No. 3
Sept 2001



Specially Produced for George Formby Fans
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Welcome to Newsletter No.75 and

we are pleased to report that the Crewe meeting held its best ever show on Friday 27th July, with 120 people filling the hall.

It was all to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of Cliff & Margaret Royle and the organisers did em proud. Plenty of grub was laid on and I've never seen such a long queue. It must have been half a mile long as it weaved its way through all the side rooms. At first I thought they were getting ready to do the conga. Anyway it was a grand "do" and we send our very best wishes to our super reporter Cliff, and the young lady who has kept him on the right track for 50 years: Margaret.



Margaret is reading Cliff's Column in the Newsletter

We regret to report the loss of one of

our past members, 83 year old Doris Myerscough, who some years back attended almost all of the N.West meetings including, Sale, Warrington, Blackpool and Liverpool. Doris loved a good old singalong. She died on July 23rd and after a service at United Reform Church, Newton-le-Willows, was cremated at the Walton Lea Crematorium, Warrington.



Unfortunately poor Doris's mind had deteriorated over the past couple of years to the extent that she had to be under regular care. If left alone she would suddenly stand up and walk out of the house into the main road. John, now in his 80s, had no alternative but to admit her into a care home.

Jim and I went to the home recently and it was pitiful to watch Doris being so helpless. In her past years she had been a wonderful organiser of all sorts of events. Our thoughts go to John, Richard, Michael and his daughter, Jennifer.

John and his family have always had a good philosophy on life. They expressed their thanks for Doris having had a good happy and musical life filled with variety. She was an amateur theatrical player, a singer, a musician, a church president, and an organiser who created many events. Doris stayed with her job as a teacher until she retired at the age of 80. This was a wonderful achievement.

John and the family were so pleased that she had passed into - CONTINUED P 18

Sale Has Moved Again—Unfortunately, one or two of the regular members at the Holy Families felt that our monthly session was intrud-



About 30 of our happy band of merry makers smile for the camera at the Holy Families Club.

ing on their quiet evening so it was decided that we should search for a room that wasn't shared with regular members. The committee members jumped on their bikes and Cyril has informed us that a new venue has been found. From Friday the 17th August onward (we hope) we will be meeting at the Timperley Liberal Club, 43 Park Road, Timperley.

Directions are quite simple. FROM MOTORWAY M60, leave at Junction 7 to join the A56 towards Altrincham. In Two and a Half Miles—(half a mile past Woodheys Club) pass the Pelican Hotel on the left, then turn left at the lights into Park Road, B5165. The Liberal Club is 3/10 mile up Park Road on the left just before the Metro station. As you approach, there is a row of shops on the right, and a tall privet hedge on the left. Slow down to find the entrance to the liberal club along the hedge. If you are coming from the M6 or M56, take the A56 through Altrincham. You will pass the Parish Church on the left and about one mile on turn right at the lights into Park Road. (If you pass Woodheys on the right you've gone too far). One you are in Park Road you follow the same instructions as above. See you there.

"Hello, is that the Salvation Army?" "Yes". "Is it true that you save fallen women."
"Yes" - "Well, will you save one for me for next Thursday night?"

"Mary, how much longer have we to put up with it? Your mother has been living with us for the past 15 years." "My mother? I thought she was yours."

Crewe's Glitter Turns to Gold

by Brian Edge — There was a buzz of excitement in the air in the Wistaston Memorial Hall on Friday the 27th July when 120 turned up to celebrate the Golden Wedding Anniversary of Margaret and Cliff Royle. At 6.45pm the ladies, under the leadership of Mary Newton, were up and running preparing an excellent buffet. Many of the ladies of the society had kindly supplied all the sandwiches for the evening and the club the pies.



Margaret and Cliff brought along an excellent Wedding Cake which, according to Cliff had been saved especially from their wedding 50 years ago. For those who may tend to worry when reading this, please be assured that perhaps Cliff is prone to slight exaggeration, no doubt it was saved from his Ruby Wedding. Seriously folks it was a lovely cake and was brought along all cut and wrapped in serviettes. It was nice to greet Mac and Millie McGee from Leeds, Alan and Eunice Evans of Redditch and Les Pearson and Margaret Moran who has not been able to come for such a long time due to illness. There were quite a number of new faces present and we hope that they all enjoyed the evening sufficiently to come again.

Gareth Sumner sang a new number *The Wedding of Mr Wu* which has not been performed at Crewe for many a year. This was one of a number of tribute numbers performed during the evening for Margaret and Cliff. It was a special treat to have Stan Evans on stage at Crewe again. With him came that old favourite *Max the Dog* who doesn't like sad songs. Along with a few stories (passed by the Society Censor) Stan ended with his own version of *My Way*. Stan is a real good turn and we don't see enough of him these days. So from us all at Crewe Stan, see you again soon?

Members were treated to an excellent puppet show by the talented Alison Nadin. At one stage Alison was working three very large puppets at the same time. It is quite a feat of talent and strength working such large puppets. Mention also has to be made of a very important part of Alison's act, her spotlight operator Jean, without whom the show would not go on.

Our Concerts are presented by an MC who fronts the show and a concert producer who, from the information given to him on the performers list, plans the show and passes the running order to the MC. It was Cliff Royle's night to be MC but as it was his special night, Carl Basford volunteered to take over the role and at short notice Peter Cain took on the job of Concert Producer. They both did a splendid job in difficult circumstances and there were no problems regarding the continuity. The fact that we had a record attendance put extra pressure on Chris Metcalf who collects the subs and sells the raffle tickets. Chris does a grand job for us on the door. Another difficult job is that of our sound engineer Colin Wood. Colin did an excellent job for us on the night especially as he and his family were extremely

worried concerning the health of a close relative. I am delighted to be able to say that things have all turned out well for them, and that is wonderful news.

Our friend Matthew Kelly, the oldest uke performer that we know, took the stage again after a long interval. Sadly Matthew lost one of his daughters sometime ago and as a result he lost his confidence for getting up in front of an audience, so it really was wonderful to have him entertaining us again. The other good news was that Matthew had had a cataract operation and he was delighted to be able to see colours once again. We are very glad for you Matthew. Matthew who lives near Kidsgrove cannot drive at night, but his daughter Diane, who lives near Crewe puts in a lot of mileage to bring her Father along to our meetings. Well, we also had a lot to thank Diane for, for with it being such a hot night our soft drinks ran out and without a word Diane went along to a nearby shop and brought along fresh supplies. It was a very thoughtful gesture but she would accept no payment. All she would say is "that is my contribution to George". Thanks again Diane.

Carl Basford announced during the evening that Fred and Wynn Stevenson also had just celebrated their Golden Wedding, Les Pearson was 70 on the day and our faithful supporter Ramon Lewis was 70 three days earlier. The meeting concluded with a thrash and sing along of *Somebody's Wedding Day* which made a fitting ending to a successful evening. Special thanks to everyone who in any way at all contributed to the concert, thanks to those who kindly brought along prizes for the raffle and finally those who helped to clear up the room at the end of the evening.

The Wigan Boat Express Steams Again

Last year's popular evening on the Foxfield Railway is to be repeated on Saturday the 1st September. The railway is situated at Blythe Bridge and the evening from about 6pm, includes guided tours around the depot to see the large collection of industrial locos, two journeys on the railway, and a buffet supper. The evening costs around £9 and the money will be collected at the Crewe August meeting. Brian Edge.

More Rubbish from BBC TV—

The BBC office appealed for us to meet them at the Liverpool Club for a filming session for a show called "RUSH." They kept us there—posing from every angle—for a full evening, then they booked John Shreeve, for a day's session, playing in the freezing cold weather—of all places—on top of the Liver Building. WHY???? Later they had John performing on an open decker bus in the pouring rain. WHY???? Around the same time they had our youngsters climbing 40 foot up in the air on steel scaffolding—in the driving rain. WHY???? I'll tell you why! **Because they are THICK!!!!**

I received a letter today thanking us for taking part but unfortunately they couldn't use the film. They sent Stan W. a video (on London Town Life). Each episode was nine minutes only so there wasn't time to slot ours in. What a waste of money.



Cliff Royle Our N. Wales Computer Wizard

Reports— Well what can we report this month? Another good 'do' for August of which Dennis Lee would have been proud. Some of our regular visitors were unable to be present but we were able to welcome some new faces.

Interested players and learners among the new faces were:- Alan Evans and Wife Eunice who travelled all the way from Redditch just for the pasties (nice to meet them again but sorry there are no longer any pasties); Anthony Richards and son Michael (recently moved to Towyn); and Mark Henderson and friend Barry from Chester. Mark did a great performance on a wooden uke, and rather shook me when he confessed to only being able to play three chords.(?).

Anyway for the benefit of these and other learners we are trying to organise some practice sessions in the near future. Anyone will be welcome to join us. It seems there is interest in the Ukulele out there somewhere.

This Branch is lucky in that we have some talented youngsters attending our meetings, and I feel that one of the highlights of the evening was during the THRASH when the three of them were each on a mike playing Lamp Post. They were Frank Murphy, Gregory Simister and Stephen Ensall.

We were glad to have Ron Holmes and Sheila Beech back with us once more and Jim Murphy back again from "Out in the Middle East". Isn't it nice to see some past faces back again. Alison Nadin did a great job during the evening for not only did she help out as Assistant MC, but she also gave an excellent performance both as a magician and as a player when she played one of Frankie Woods' songs. Alison lugs all the equipment from and to Rhyl every meeting, and that is a big job for the car is full to the brim. No matter what she is asked to do she does it willingly and well. Thanks Alison.

Crewe again came to support us with Brian and Connie Edge, Walter Kirkland, Alice Cronshaw, Dame Vera Jones who delighted us with her lovely songs, and husband and ace photographer Harry. Jim Knight acted as MC during part of the evening, but he never told us it was his Birthday. However we found out, and so he had to suffer the audience singing "Happy Birthday". Cliff Royle. *Thank you Cliff.*

Beginners Uke Wanted

—Appeal from Cliff Royle— If anyone has a Ukulele Banjo for sale which is suitable for a learner please contact Anthony Richards on Mobile no. 0780. 3924 680.

Who was Joan of Arc? Noah's wife. Where was Ann Boleyn beheaded? Below her chin. "Jonathan, what sort of people go to heaven?" "Dead uns miss."

Another Lucky Find in Warrington—The

phone rang and it was Brian Checkets one of our locals. "Stan, I've got some copies here for you of letters sent by George Formby Senior to his friend, Jack Hands. Ideal for your Newsletter." And here they are

Empire Theatre, South Shields, Oct 17th 1911—Dear Jack, Thanks for your letter received today and thank you for taking the trouble on my behalf. I have sent another wire to the Manager, Warrington, also to Vernon Watson. Now I want you to let me know if Vernon Watson sang my song and patter tonight (Tuesday) and I will give to you what it has cost you to go into the theatre. Could you say to the manager, "How is it that Vernon Watson is singing Mr Formby's song? Didn't he send you a wire asking you to prevent him? Let me know. And is it possible to see Mr Watson and get talking to him, do your best Jack, and let me know whatever I am in your debt even if you go to the theatre every night.



One of GF senior's sketches, "The Wigan Sprinter" with his prizes

Empire Theatre or Empire Dublin (next week) Nov 8th 1911 - Dear Jack, Just a few lines, I have put the case in the hands of V.A.F Solicitors. What do you think? Watson had the damned cheek to do it again at Southport, and this week at the Palace, Bradford. He's not doing the proper verses but a review of it, which conveys to the people it's me with all my gags. I've written to Turpin and told him I was surprised at his conduct—he ignored it. Had a very rough sea passage on Saturday midnight. It was the worst. It was a 7 hour passage that took 16 hours. Regards to Bill and the lads I know.

Walthew House Farm, Wigan Mar 29th 1911—Dear Jackie & Billie, Yours to hand on behalf of Mrs Formby. We want to know for certain if Doris Drew sang "Spanish Onion" or part of it as the case may be on Nov 28th 1910? Can you get some proof that she did sing it as her mother denies her singing after she left the Hippodrome, Wigan Sept 22nd 1910. Will you do this? Oblige, Yours Truly, Geo Formby.

Her Majesty's Theatre, Walsall Dec 7th 1911. Dear Jack, Just a few lines to let you know I shall be coming through Warrington on Sunday next about 11.30 or 12.30. I shall call at that pub next to the Hippodrome : the pub where the back entrance leads to the Hipp stage door. If I am there before opening time I can get a drink—me being a traveller. So I may see you, and Bill. Trusting you are all well at home. I remain your old friend, Geo Formby.

Empire Theatre, South Shields, Will you and your Billy come over to Walthew House Farm. Now when you get to a pub called The Saddle Inn ask for Scott Lane. Anyone will tell you whereabouts it is. George says he would like you to have a little tea with him. Don't forget to bring Billy. We are leaving South Shields very early on Sunday morning and hope to get home about 12 or 2 o'clock. Get to the farm as soon as you can. Hope you will make it convenient to come. Yours Truly, Mrs George Formby.

Telegram from South Shields, to Jack Hands, Orford Lane, Warrington. Let me know if Vernon Watson or Doris Druce imitated me. Have wired to stop them. Formby, South Shields



WAR TIME NEWSPAPER REPORT

George & Beryl

Out Front

- A private in the B.E.F was digging a trench. Near by stood a Major General. The private looked up,



found a familiar face beaming down at him. " * * * * * " he said, "It's George Formby!" "Good Lord" said the general, "So it is!"

For more than a month England's number one film star has been in France, giving shows in theatres, in farmyards, in the streets, in dug-outs, anywhere in fact where he was recognised - which was practically everywhere.

SAYS BERYL - He was stopped for his autograph by a few British soldiers in a French town. "That's always fatal," said his wife Beryl. Soon there were 200. Then a number of French girls pushed their way through. In a few minutes the police were called to rescue George and clear the street.

George has now returned to England - but he's counting the days until he can get back. "I've never enjoyed work like it" he says. George has written the story of his month's adventures among the troops, his attempts (and Beryl's) to master the French lingo and the pitfalls into which it led them. He has also written serious out-spoken comments on the much criticised E.N.S.A. organisation. He has written his story exclusively for the Sunday Express and it will appear next Sunday.

George Has A Reet Time Wi't Troops—*British United Press with B.E.F. Somewhere in France.*

"Time Gentlemen Please" the landlord of the café called. The estiminet door opened and an Englishman in civilian clothes was hurriedly ejected. "Why, if it isn't George Formby" some Lancashire "Tommies" called. "What are you doing here?"

"Ah've coom to out to sing tut troops" George replied. "Well, what about a song then George," said the tommies. So George sang to the troops in the street.

The little scene in the French village was all in fun arranged specially by George for the film and cameramen's benefit. George sang the song, "Cleaning Windows" and gave an encore as the boys of the B.E.F. with the French population cheered him. Then the tommies carried him through the streets shoulder high. "Ah'm having a reet grand time with the B.E.F." said George.

EDITOR'S NOTE:- The above article was filmed and fortunately we have copies on video of the occasion. It also included George, jokingly, being taken prisoner by the tommies, - with rifles - and being marched down the street at gun point. There is no doubt that George was the perfect entertainer to lift the spirit of the troops.

Glasgow Empire was no problem for George

The Glasgow Empire was well known as "The Comedians Grave Yard" and many artists refused being booked there for fear of being booed off the stage. Roy Hudd told a very funny story about Des O'Conner, who was performing there and having a terrible time with the audience. He told a couple of jokes—NOTHING. Sang a song—NOTHING. He desperately needed an excuse to get off stage quick so he threw himself on the floor as if he had fainted, - NOTHING. Nobody bothered to move him so he just lay there. One man from the audience shouted, "If you're going to die you can die there."

However, the Glasgow Empire didn't present any problems for George and he always looked forward to playing there. The following article is from a 1940 newspaper:

SCOT'S PLEA BRINGS FORMBY

George Formby will play his first variety date for years at the Glasgow Empire today fortnight, in response to insistent pleas by a Scot's soldier in France. Sergeant Anderson of Paisley. The sergeant was George's escort during the three days the comedian spent among the Scots troops in France recently. "The happiest time I ever had in my life," says George.

Wherever George went, he was given letters to take home, invitations to call on mothers and sweethearts and have tea with them. And from what I know of this simple, likeable, Lancashire lad, he'll fulfil every promise during his two-week stay in Scotland. His Glasgow appearance is preceded by a week in Edinburgh. Jimmy Hutchinson, who is George's publicity man, cast a reminiscent eye over the Central Hotel today, for he accompanied Laurel and Hardy on their Scottish tour when the crowds were so vast that they wrecked the hotel railings. George is devoting all his spare time to charity work.

Mike (James) Turner (Now using a stage name of Mike

James) has just auditioned at Southport competing against 150 other artists for a show called "Search For A Star" and he's now through to the semi finals. This is being held at Southport Art Centre on Tuesday 21st August.



Convict 99

Mike, who is gathering quite a large repertoire of Fomby numbers, said that the crowds of around 500, love George's songs and he feels great when they attempt to join in with the singing.

He also said that he doesn't like the photo on the left because he looks like someone who has just been let out of jail.

Nay, I can't agree with you there Mike.

It happened this week

60 Years Ago

PORTSMOUTH NEWSPAPER—From the news archives June 12th, 1944

As part of a 10 days tour of bombed areas, in which he expects to raise over £40,000 for victims of air raids, George Formby, film, music hall and radio star, staged a flying matinee entertainment at the Odeon cinema, North End, yesterday. This was the second town he had visited in his 2000 mile tour - he was at Southampton the day before - and he was given a terrific reception by a packed house.

In the show with him were such well known artists as Nellie Wallace, Lesley Strange and the J H Squire Celeste Trio.

All the proceeds from the performance, which has so far realised £442, will help to swell the Lord Mayor's Air Raid Distress Fund. The Lord Mayor Counsellor D L Daley, who was accompanied by the Lady Mayoress, expressed the gratitude of the people of Portsmouth to Beryl and George and the other members of the cast.

George said he owed a great deal to the other members of the cast, to Captain F Vivian Dunn, who conducted the band of the Royal Marines, Portsmouth Division, and Mr Patrick Reed, manager of the North End Odeon.. His idea, he explained, was that those in safe areas should help those in blitzed areas. He feared that those in safe areas which had not had an air raid could not visualise what it really meant.

George Formby told an evening news representative on his arrival yesterday of the perilous motor journey along the winding steep roads in the Welsh mountains on his way to Southampton two days before. "Our head lights fused and on we were crawling along in inky blackness," he said, "I thought that each moment would be my last."

DON'T FORGET TO SEND STAN AN ARTICLE FOR THE NEWSLETTER - G Formby.



■ STALEMATE: Fans couldn't agree, says George's brother Ted

Eee, mother! Row among Formby fans sinks Pier show

PLANS to hold an exhibition to mark the 40th anniversary of George Formby's death have been shelved after a row among members of the banjo-playing comedian's fan club.

A memorabilia show to honour the Lancashire lad, who was born in Wigan in 1904 and became the country's highest paid entertainer, was to have been held at Wigan Pier in September.

It is understood that a disagreement among factions of the George Formby Appreciation Society has led to it being axed.

The news will be a bitter disappointment to Formby fans.

Wigan tourism manager Keith Bergman said: "The exhibition was first staged in Warrington 10 years ago and proved a huge success. We were delighted with the prospect of bringing it to the Pier for a fortnight.

"But officials of the Formby Appreciation Society have now told us that the show is off. It's a great disappointment.

"We were anticipating a lot of visitors to the Pier to see the Formby story unfold in words, pictures and music."



■ TOP entertainer George Formby

Formby veteran supporter Stan Evans, of Warrington, who was a pivotal figure in organising the Warrington exhibition which attracted 40,000 visitors, said:

"We started in high hopes for the Wigan show but these have been whittled away."

George Formby's brother, Ted, 83, said he believed members of the appreciation society could not agree on details for the Wigan show.

10th Anniversary—

Liverpool began their meetings on Friday November the 13th 1991 (no wonder we've had our ups and downs) when it poured buckets with howling gales on the opening night) so the Nov. meeting will be a special. Tom Bailey is organising a table load of butties (dockers doorsteps) and buckets full of scouse for this special occasion. So we are asking all those who supported us in any way during the 10 years to turn up on the night. Don't forget Friday Nov 9th.

WE ARE HOPING TO HAVE THE RADIO AND PRESS THERE.

Dennis Lee has arrived in Kent—Two weeks



ago we left our house in North Wales and set out for our new home in "The Garden of England". We'd seen the Vet on the previous day and he gave us some pills to sedate our three cats for the journey. Putting the cats into their boxes was mayhem as they kept escaping. One went missing for an hour or so thus delaying our journey. Giving them their pills when eventually we'd caught them proved to be a two-man job but eventually we managed it. Lesley and I have a



car each and so we decided to go in convoy with me taking the two females and Lesley taking the male cat. We'd discussed the route and agreed that the priority was to stay together on the motorway at all costs. In the event that we did get split up we agreed to rendezvous at Corley Services near Coventry. I'd estimated that Corley was just about halfway in our total journey of around 300 miles. Final farewells were made to friends in the locality and off we set. My final words to Lesley were "stick together at all costs!" Fifteen minutes later on checking my rear-view mirror again, guess what? You've got it - no Lesley! For goodness sake, we'd only reached the outskirts of Wrexham! I stopped for her to catch me up and waited for twenty minutes. Fearing an accident or breakdown I turned back to see what had happened. On reaching the spot I last saw her she was nowhere to be seen. What should I do? I hadn't a clue where she could be. The other problem was that we'd arranged to meet the landlord of our new rented house that evening to sign the contract and already we were late. If we didn't do that we'd have nowhere to stay that night. I decided to go for it and get to Kent as quickly as possible. Turning south again I bombed down the road and passed everything (except water!). On arrival at Corley Services I thought I'd better check - and there she was. We'd passed going opposite ways on the dual-carriageway at Wrexham when I'd turned back! She explained that the cat had fought its way out of the box and she had to give it another pill and put it back in. The little bugger must have spit-out the first pill! The remainder of the journey was uneventful except for the fact that it was foot down to the floor for the rest of the way. The contract was signed at 7.30pm.

At 9.30am the following day the removal van arrived with all our stuff. When the house was full I asked them to put the rest in the garage. They finished unloading around 3 o'clock. Just as they were waving goodbye I found the garage door wouldn't shut. I ran down the street waving my arms at them and they returned to rearrange my possessions. The house was choc-a-bloc with boxes and we couldn't find a thing even though we'd painstakingly marked them all. There were so many and most were stacked on top of each other. We persevered and at this moment some 2 weeks later I can say that everything is sorted. That's after we had a stall at a car boot sale last Sunday! I haven't had much time to practice my uke but the good news is that I performed at an Old Folk's Home yesterday and at another one today. Both of them loved it and have asked me to go again in a couple of months. I've also got two other performances in the pipeline. Isn't it exciting!

Received a letter from the Department of the Environment today. It told me I was living in a flood plain area. It said if I filled in and returned their form they would telephone me urgently in the event of impending flooding in my locality. Good 'ere i'nit! So from deepest Kent, Lesley and I send best wishes to you all. God bless.

Who knows? One of these days we might be making a surprise visit to a N. West meeting.

WAR TIME NEWSPAPER REPORT.

George's Lancashire Accent —

Somewhere in France an officer of the French army is trying to pick up the Lancashire dialect, and at the moment he's puzzling out the meaning of "summat and nowt," a phrase he picked up from George Formby, who was just returned to his home near Blackpool after a tour in the war zone, where he and his wife Beryl have been entertaining the troops.



George told the story of the French officer when he described his experiences in France to a Lancashire Daily Post reporter today. Several hundred French soldiers who could speak or understand English came into the theatre to listen to me, said George. This French army officer was one of them. He came to one of my shows and understood my songs perfectly, and seemed to enjoy my jokes, but, when I reeled off a bit of good old Lancashire talk, he was flabbergasted. So much so, that afterwards he came round to the back, looking very worried, and asked me what "summat and nowt" meant. I told him that "nowt" was like a balloon with no skin but he was no wiser, and when he left me he was still trying to work it out, and said he intended to learn the dialect.

FISH WAGON TRANSPORT - George and Beryl have had some amazing experiences during their visit to France, travelling about in all kinds of odd ways, they have slept in tiny estaminets and luxury hotels. George has sung in farmyards, in barns, and in theatres good bad and indifferent. Among the indifferent ones, according to the famous comedian, were building's practically falling down, with water running down the walls and with holes in the roofs.

Yet, says George, the tour was the greatest experience of my life. More than 100,000 soldiers listened to them, and on many occasions to get them from one town to another, he travelled in a converted fish wagon with a petrol can for a seat. He was permitted into the heart of the war zone, visiting the Maginot Line and taking with him, on that occasion his wife, who, according to the French authorities, was the first civilian woman allowed to enter the secret area.

George and Beryl had one night in Paris. They visited a theatre where Maurice Chevalier was appearing and they were given a wonderful reception. George described it in this way "Maurice Chevalier said something in French to the audience, and the people started cheering like mad. They were saying something but I did not know what it was. So I just waved my hand, shouted "How do" and sat down.

GEORGE'S DRESS - According to Beryl, the funniest site on their tour was provided by George. I have never seen a thing so laughable in my life as George's dress, she said, "It was an army tunic, riding breeches and a tin hat. He wore it every where he went and the troops seem to like it." George said his most popular songs among the soldiers were the famous Cleaning Windows, Chinese blues, and his latest song which he broadcast to this country from the front, Imagine Me On The Maginot Line.

Soon he hopes to be back again with the B.E.F. and in the meantime George is very pleased to have broken the record which he set himself when war broke out. Aiming at 'doing his bit' by entertaining the troops he set out to sing to 100,000 soldiers wherever a concert could be arranged for them. Already he has exceeded that figure by 50,000 and intends to go on. Well done George.

Sale is moving on - again by Cyril Palmer

July found the Sale Society enjoying a final meeting at the Holy Family Centre. In August we will meet in the Timperley Liberal Club, Park Road, Timperley. Where we will have a room to ourselves. The building is single-storey, with bar, and a kitchen area for making tea and coffee.



Our closing evening in Sale brought a few surprises. Vera and Harry Jones made a first-time visit from Crewe. We were treated to a singalong medley from Vera, while Harry got busy with his camera. Bill Swift, introduced by Les Margaret, sang in the Sinatra style, starting with "I've Got The World On a String." We hope he'll visit us again. John Shreeve made a welcome return visit to Sale, and included his popular version of the "Home Guard Blues". Hard to believe, but John reached the age of 30 a week before our meeting.

It was a night of birthday wishes. Ben Hallewell would be 10 in a few days, while Ken Ratcliffe, looking youthful as ever, was about to be rather more than 10. Les James (Pearson) needed a week to reach his 3 score and 10.

At the interval a birthday cake was produced so that we could celebrate Paul Kenny's recent 21st birthday. Paul was born on 4th July last, so the Sale Chorale (Alice, Hilda, Sheila and Vera) sang "He's A Ukulele Player" written by Vera and Hilda, sung of course, to the tune of "Yankee Doodle Dandy." The evening's concert was well received. There were 12 performers in addition to those already mentioned, singing and playing a nicely varied programme. Connie Edge has built up quite a big repertoire, of which my own favourite is, "I Double Dare You." For his second song Jack Valentine used a wooden uke, originally owned by Harold Fallows, on which he played "Pretty Baby" in a lovely rhythmic style.

Des Redfern brought tears to our eyes, not for the standard of playing, but for the theme of "I'm Nobody's Child." Margaret Moran always thrills with her singing, and she included "Ave Maria," requested by Ray and Alf, recently joined from Atherton. All this one well supported by performances from Alan Southworth, Ben, Brian Edge, Stan Evans, Paul Kenny, Arthur Newton and Walter Kirkland. The evening ended with a thrash. So, thanks to all, players and none players, who contributed to the occasion, and we now look forward to our new venue. Hope to see you there.

Thanks Cyril. I don't think that Des Redfern has quite got "Nobody's Child" right because when Stan Watkinson & I sing it, we are accompanied by high powered wailing and sobbing from the Sale ladies section, amidst cries of, "Don't sing that song again." Hope all goes well with the new venue. You deserve it!

LATE NEWS—Blackpool are considering MOVING statues of George, Les Dawson , and Stanley Matthews. More news next month.

Another Email from Cilla dot com—Ee Bah

Gum Stan, I got another reet kick when I read that you have meetings in Penyffordd. My great granddad told me that it used to be flooded with water and the only place where the farmers could get through was owned by Amos ?. He used to charge the farmers a toll of one penny for up to one man and three horses. The village had a long name that nobody could say, so Amos re-named it. Now it was a very cold day and Amos had a stammer at the best of times. With chattering teeth he said "I hereby name this little village, "Penny f f ord d" - because he charged one penny to go across the ford. Granddad was a rum old stick so I never knew whether he was joking or not. Is it true or was he pulling me leg?

Well I've no idea Cilla Dot Com but I'm sure that the Penyfforddians will soon be on the phone. Has anyone any idea? Come in Geoff Shone.

AN YET ANOTHER EMAIL from Cilla Dot Com. I've read in your Newsletter that some meetings finish with a "grand thrash." I've never been to any meetings. Does it mean that somebody gets beaten up? Sounds a bit drastic if it does.

No, Cilla Dot Com. A "Grand Thrash" is usually at the beginning and end of each meeting. All the players get up on stage together and all play as a group. They play a verse and a chorus of each Formby song, followed by a uke solo. Thanks again.

Matthew Duvall, a future star!!!!

Matthew 19, will someday be a grand George Formby player and there's every chance he could make a living from it. He's got the Formby build, the stance, the looks, the cheeky smile and hidden personality that's appealing to come out.

Matthew needs a break in life—God knows, he's not had much up to now—and he loves George and everything about his songs. He laughs heartily at comical songs. Both Mathew and his friend, Will, wish to thank those who have helped him up the first step of the ladder. Friends like Phil Cartwright and Chris Murray and — as Matthew said— "the man at the Wintergardens with glasses, and black hair who has a Gibson" Whoever you are, Matthew sends his thanks.



Matthew with George's uke

Matthew and Will came to spend a couple of hours with Eva & I and on the way back called in at the Crewe Practise Night for a session. Matthew gave them a song. He is currently based in a Birmingham hospital where there is little or no inspiration to learn to play. He desperately wishes to move nearer to Lancashire or Cheshire to attend all the meetings.

Well, Matthew, from now on **George's light will be shining for you** so we are looking forward to big things. Good Luck and we are here if you need our help.



Thanks from Cliff & Margaret Royle.

Through the N.W. Newsletter may I express the thanks of Margaret and myself for the excellent night we recently had at Crewe in celebration of our Golden Wedding. A full house, excellent entertainment, a great buffet, and above all friendship of the highest order.

Our thanks to everyone for their good wishes in whatever form they were given, and a special Thank You to the South Cheshire Ukulele Society for all the effort put in to make it such a huge success. Cliff Royle.

Email from Robert Ross —

Hi Stan...hope you can help. I'm currently researching a book on the gap-toothed comedian Terry-Thomas (I have previously had over ten books published on the likes of Sid James, Benny Hill, Frankie Howerd and the Goodies).



Photo Emailed to Robert of George & Terry

I understand that Terry-Thomas starred, with George Formby and Billy Cotton in the revue Fun and the Fair. It was performed in summer season in Blackpool in 1953 before transferring to the London Palladium in Oct 1953, until 19 Dec 1953. Have you any information - writers, dates etc - and, if possible, a copy of the programme. I would be very interested to hear back from you. With regards, Robert Ross, 24 Richmond Road, Basingstoke, Hampshire, RG21 5NX

Keeping up with the young uns: Some of us may be well over the hill but that doesn't stop us from keeping up with modern technology. More and more of our older members are involved in computers and Email. Cliff Royle is the latest subscriber to the internet and it didn't take him long before he was sending in Email reports for the Newsletter. Gud on yer, Cliff. Cyril Palmer will be the next.

Two men were climbing a very difficult steep mountain when one of them slipped and broke almost every limb in his body.

"Here, grab this rope" shouted Fred. "I can't grab it, my arms are broken," shouted Alf

"Tie it round your legs" shouted Fred. "I can't, my legs are broken."

"Grab it with your teeth" shouted Fred. "OK", said Alf, "Pull away."

490 feet . . . 400 feet . . . 300 feet . . . 200 feet . . . 100 feet . . . 50 feet . . . 25 feet . . . 10

"Are you OK," shouted Fred, - "Yehh . . . h . . . h . . ."

Panic!!!!!! - Stan Watkinson rang:

"Stan, I've lost my hearing aids. They were in a small blue sachet about 2" x 3" in size and I've searched all through the house and can't find them anywhere. The only place where it can be is at your home. I may have left the case there when we set off for Crewe. Panic, panic, panic."



Panic, panic, panic.

I searched through my rooms and through the garden and everywhere that Stan may have walked. NOTHING!!!! Searched through my car where Stan was sitting, - NOTHING. Eva joined the searched. Panic, panic, panic, - NOTHING.

I rang Brian Edge to ask if he'd found the sachet when cleaning up after the Friday night meeting, - NOTHING. Brian rang the caretaker to ask if he'd found Stan's hearing aids, - NOTHING. I returned back to the garden where Stan parked his vehicle, - NOTHING.

After about two hours of searching the phone rang. It was Stan. "Don't worry, I've found them." "Where were they?" "They were in my pocket!!!!!"

1913 Gala Programme for Auction by Email

Not much time left, but thought you should know about an item I'm auctioning on Ebay Auctions, with less than 24 hours to run. Its a 1913 Gala programme, an all star cast including George Formby Snr, with photos specially taken for the occasion. To view, follow the auctions link from my web page www.c20th.com
Thanks, Simon. *And thanks to you Simon for letting us know. Unfortunately we were too late.*

Olwen Gale writes:

Dear Stan, I was reading about one of the country's top fabric designers, Georgina Von Etdorf and her home, which is a converted Methodist Chapel near Salisbury. In the article it says, instead of the ringing musical tones of the organ, the music you will most likely hear is that of the ukulele, which Von Etdorf has been learning to play for four years—though definitely not in the style of George Formby. She has her ukulele propped up on an armchair in her sitting room. *Thanks Olwen. It's all good reading! Olwen also enclosed a couple of photos of the wooden ukulele but unfortunately they were a little too dark to reproduce.*



(Please note that these little snippets are very useful for filling in between large Articles. Please keep sending them in, no matter how small.)

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2— that they arranged to have a jazz band playing all Doris's favourite songs. John laid on a wonderful buffet at the Kirkland Hotel, Newton le Willows and hired the Chicago Teddy Bears Jazz Band for the afternoon's entertainment. They were great! I spoke to their leader, Ken Doran, who told me that Doris was one of their keenest fans who came along to their concerts specially to hear them play George Formby songs. "Leaning On A Lamp Post" was requested at every show.

When they discovered that I was a Formby fan they shouted, "Do you know Anthony Mason?" Apparently Anthony has played at a few shows with them, at the Wintergardens and Blackpool Pier.

Possibly through Doris's encouragement they have named their last CD "Turned Out Nice Again" and included "Lamp Post" in the tracks. Anyone wishing to buy any of their CDs can ring Brian Singleton (Warrington) on 01925 265777.

Just spent an afternoon with Greg Simister and his pal,

Jack Crilly. They came to my house, armed with uke banjos, to have some songs transferred from tapes to mini discs and what a racket they made. Let these two loose with uke banjos and all the street will know about it! Greg was bashing out Formby songs one after the other and enjoying every minute. They might be a noisy pair but it is wonderful to see these youngsters having an interest in George's songs. They must be encouraged and helped in every way to progress. I managed to find a little uke for Jack



Greg with George's Will Van Allen uke, and Jack

and latest news is that he is romping away learning his chords. Well done Jack.

Paul Woodhead on Safety First with cables. Further to your article last month on "Tape to renovate uke cases," Duck Tape is also used by most theatres etc. for sticking cables to floors (of any description) to avoid injury. You will see it used at music concerts etc. and it has been around for years (not quite as many as you!!). It should be available from any carpet shop & most big music shops i.e. large town or city centre types. You're right of course - it will stick anything to anything. *Thanks Paul. So now you know. Duck tape is gud stuff! P.S. I've just seen a shelf full of Duck Tape at B&Q*

LET ME KNOW IF YOU'VE ANY NEW IDEAS

Musical (Keyboard) S.O.S.—Has anyone got an Instruction Manual for a Technics KN 550 Keyboard that I could have a copy of? Please contact me if you have—Many Thanks Stan Evans.

Grand and Healthy Life—What a nice surprise when watching the TV show (19th July), "Before They Were Famous," presented by Angus Deayton. The show had a lively ending with George's, "It's A Grand and Healthy Life." Great Stuff.

Dad's Army—Tuesday 17th July and I was watching Dad's Army on BBC 2 TV. Suddenly someone was singing in the background, "Who Are You A Shoving Of" which is one of George's songs. It sounded great!

Uke Lessons—Liverpool's John Shreeve—one of the best uke players in the country—is giving uke lessons. This is a good opportunity for anyone wanting to improve their split strokes etc. Or for raw beginners. You can ring John on 07909 832330, which is John's mobile number.

George Was Looking Down on Blackpool



Eve Stewart

How does it happen? Charles and Eve Stewart are always short of artists at their Blackpool meeting and I had every intention of making it to the last one. Unfortunately I didn't arrive home from Doris Myerscough's funeral till turned 6pm—which was too late to face the 50 mile journey—so I opted for a much appreciated kip in the chair.



Charles Stewart

The following morning I rang Jim Bramwell to ask how the night went and he replied, "No problem, quite a number of the regulars couldn't make it, and we thought we were in for an early finish. But out of the blue, Cyril Palmer and Des Redfern turned up."

That was wonderful! But how do these people know? On other occasions Paul Mountain and Lionel Owen have turned up and saved the night. It must be a **MIRACLE!**

Heard at the bus stop: - She was so thin she had to wear braces to hold her corsets up

N. West Meetings

North Wales Branch - British Legion, Penyffordd (10 miles from Chester) Every first Friday in the month. Tel Geoff Shone on 01244 544605 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 Thursday in the month. Bill Turner on 01782 304858.

Sale - **NEW VENUE** - AGAIN—Timperley Liberal Club, 43 Park Road, Timperley. 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 0 1 2 5 3 7 6 8 0 9 7 . Wonderful Buffet .

Wintergardens GFS Meetings:

Sat & Sun 15th & 16th Sept 2001

Sat & Sun 24th & 25th Nov 2001

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

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DON'T FORGET YOUR ARTICLE—OR ELSE

