

THE NORTH - WEST

GEORGE FORMBY

Newsletter 82

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Welcome To Newsletter No. 82 and we are pleased to report that all the N. West meetings have been very active and especially those that have been short in numbers in the past.

Liverpool and Blackpool have had their best meetings ever will full houses and great atmosphere at both venues. At Blackpool Charles Stewart was running round looking for extra chairs—a scene we've never seen before—and at Liverpool we had complaints that some at the back could hear us but couldn't see us. So a little reorganisation is required there.

Eve & Charles Stewart were as chuffed as little mint balls when the crowds turned up, even though the weather was so dreadful with serious warnings of strong gales on the motorways. Actually they didn't expect anyone to brave the storms but they did, and the rain had been so heavy that the front of the club was flooded. However, our lot are made of tough stuff.

Hamsterdam—On Friday the 31st May to the 3rd of June 2002 we will be creating a load of noise and excitement in Holland. We always have a great time on these trips so we are looking forward to this one. Here's the list of happy trippers.



- Colin and Chris Wood
- Alan and Pat Chenery
- Peter and Cynthia Whittaker
- Alan and Eunice Evans
- Dominic and Milly McGee
- Tony and Marg Elsdon
- George and Mary Atkinson
- Jackie Mullock
- Walter and Alice
- Peter Kirkland
- Stan and Eva Evans
- Philip and Jean Hughes
- Des Redfern
- Valentine and Dorothy Wood
- Rosalie Saunders

- Elsie Walton
- Kay Walsh
- Tom and Nora Meredith
- Chrissie Bussingham
- Gerry Robinson
- Brian and Connie Edge
- Charles Penman
- Ted and Ruth Kennedy
- Paul and Gill Woodhead
- Betty Cox
- Derek and Gill Platt
- Jack and Margaret Davies
- Bill and Sheila Found
- Chris and Margaret Volp

The trip is being organised by Chris & Colin Wood, Alan & Pat Chenery, who are hoping to arrange a concert over there with the Dutch players. More news in the next issue.

It must 12 years since our last coach trip to Holland. With a series of disasters it was the funniest show on earth. when everything went wrong. Report in the next issue.

Liverpool—had a best night ever when crowds came from all over to celebrate Stan Watkinson's 60th Birthday. The room was packed solid with very little space to spread the buffet. However the night went with a swing and Stan was double-chuffed. Many thanks to all who played their part and especially to Tom Bailey for pulling out all the stops. Although all the clues were there, it still came as a total shock to Stan who looked gobsmacked when he discovered that I'd got my revenge on him for leading me to the slaughter at Penyffordd. Serves you right Stanley!!! HAPPY 60th YEAR to you. From us all.

Just had a visit from Anthony Mason, Hannah and 14 month Elliott. Well the little lad has shot up since his previous visit and within minutes he had every ornament on the floor. Like his mum and dad he loves music and enjoys dancing. I gave him a small keyboard and he was delighted. Not only does he play with his hands but with his feet also. He was intrigued how different tones came out each time he pressed the keys. Like his dad he'll be a natural player.



Elliott making a noise

If anyone is looking for backing tapes in a few years time, Elliott is your lad.

George's Brother, Ted, was interviewed for TV—

Question: - Why was George sent off to the stables?

A: - Well He was a bit of a rebel, in fact he was a big one really. My uncle John taught him to ride the horses and that was my mother's brother. I can always remember my mother telling me the story of when she had to take him to school, which was quite a big thing for mother to do in those days. While she was talking to the Head by the steps George was standing with her. He suddenly disappeared so she assumed that he'd gone into school. But apparently he'd gone through the front door and come out again through the back because when she arrived home he was there.

Question: - Did George hate the stables?

A:- I don't think he hated the horses but he certainly hated the strict discipline. Every time he got fed up he would desert the Curraugh Camp stables in Ireland and board the first boat back home. He was afraid of facing dad so mother used to hide him under her skirts. Dad felt bad on one occasion when he heard that George had escaped Ireland again and at the same time the ferry had been torpedoed and sunk. Fortunately George had missed that boat and caught the next one. After that dad couldn't send him back again so he sent him to train for Lord Derby

Question:- Do you think that sending him away for such a long time, made him solitary and cut off from the rest of the family?

A:- Yes and when father died he was only 16, so he came home, which he'd always wanted to do. Mother was more sympathetic than dad so she allowed him to come home to lead a normal life, which what he longed for. Living in Warrington he would mix with the lads, motorbikes and everything else because he had the money.

Question: - Do you think that George was spoiled?

A: - In those days, if the head of the house died, it was accepted that the eldest son should take over, and that's how mother saw it. She would say, "Well George, you are the man of the house now," which resulted in George throwing his chest out. From then on he was pampered to the extent he could have anything he wished for. However he had to nag to get his first car, it was an Alvis and mother finally gave way to him. MORE NEXT MONTH.

The Stars Came Out at Crewe. It was an all star

billing at Crewe's February meeting. Guest M.C. Stan Evans adopted an unusual theme for the night as he saw all the artistes being dead ringers of famous film stars, most of whom it must be said, had already departed many moons ago to the happy film studios in the sky. It was extremely funny at first until the artistes waiting to perform began to become concerned as to who they were going to be likened to. Stan got at least one of the likenesses spot on, but by and large I am sure he let his imagination run amok or perhaps he had just brought along the wrong pair of glasses. How in heaven he managed to link me with Mickey Rooney I'll never know. I had expected at least Oliver Hardy or even Gary Marsh! Still it was all good fun and I am sure that the recipients of Jane Mansfield, Marylyn Monroe, and Gary Cooper were pleasantly flattered (or insulted)! He is irrepressible that Stan Evans there is no holding him down.



Arthur Newton took on the job of Concert Producer at short notice and he made up a splendid concert with the twenty artistes that turned up. It was his debut in this onerous job and he did it really well. Thanks Arthur. Alan Newton sportingly opened the how with a rousing version of "Wunga Bunga Boo" with lots of YoHo's from our usual wonderful audience who were 89 strong on the night. Alan followed up with ordinary people a duet that Alan sings with himself doing a quick change mid song - very funny version of a lovely song from "Zip goes a Million". Steve Hassall did a couple of Formby numbers for a nice change from his recent jazz renditions and David Watkins sang "Shine" accompanied by Arthur Newton on the piano accordion. David is a very pleasant singer with a rather nice uke style of playing. We hope to see him again soon.

Connie Edge and Alan Chenery had the audience "Oying" with a new version of Lambeth Walk which featured a Peter Cain backing. Alan Evans made his stage debut at Crewe when he sang "Wigan Boat Express" accompanied by Alan Chenery. Alan Evans certainly enjoyed his experience as much as we enjoyed his performance and we hope we will see him back in Crewe before too long.

Special thanks go to Derrick Jones of Tunstall who went out of his way to bring along Joan Cain to the concert. It was wonderful that she could pluck up enough courage to come along at a time when the memory of Peter is still heavily on her mind. But she did, and after breaking the ice I am sure that she was happy to be amongst so many of her friends again. The local "George Formby" get togethers have been a large part of Joan and Peters lives and I hope that that giant leap that Joan made in coming along will help her, just a little, in coming to terms with her life.

Thanks again to everyone who helped in any way setting up the show beforehand, to those who contributed in any way to the performance and general running of the

evening, to the artistes and our audience who give us such stalwart support and last but by no means least to those who help us to pack up after the show. Without this help the show would not go on.

It was another great night out "considered by many as the best 50 pence worth of entertainment in the world (refreshments included)." Some claim you might say, but can you better it I ask?

HAPPY BIRTHDAY CHRIS. We all wish Crewe's Chris Metcalf a very happy 65th Birthday this month. Chris is well known to all the Crewe supporters as he has faithfully collected the subs and looked after the raffle for a number of years. Chris was a patternmaker and schoolteacher by profession and is extremely knowledgeable on Crown Green Bowling as well as being a keen bowler himself. He also specialises in balancing and re-polishing woods for bowlers in his spare time. Chris is also keen on cycling particularly indoors at the Manchester Velodrome.

GREAT NEWS FROM CREWE'S CARL BASFORD.

Everyone will be delighted to learn that Carl Basford is feeling very much better after his long and complicated illness. Carl has set the Crewe March meeting as a target for his return. We hope he makes it but the important thing for Carl and his Wife and family is that he is recovering every day.

FRED AND DILYS DYKES'S GOLDEN WEDDING — Regular supporters of the Crewe and Penyffordd societies Fred and Dilys Dykes have their Golden Wedding this month. We wish them both good health and every happiness in the years ahead. "*It's been a long time a long time a hell of a long time gone,*" said Fred jokingly. They are a lovely couple.

ASHLEY CALDICOTT HAS A HAPPY TIME ON STAGE AT CREWE.

We are always thrilled when Ashley has a good time, but in the last thrash at Crewe last month Stan Evans really made him so happy. I have to say Stan is wonderful with children particularly those with disabilities and he has a great track record. Stan wrote me a personal letter after the show and I make no excuse for repeating part of it here. "Wasn't it wonderful, Ashley really let himself go in the final thrash. He was laughing from ear to ear, dancing and throwing his tambourine up and down with a twist, and banging it on the way down. It made my night and to me it was worth far more than 50 honorary memberships. We've got to keep the lad improving and someday I feel sure that he will give us a special treat of a lifetime. I can assure you that Ashley knows what's going on and he is taking it all in. Someday he'll respond and we'll all be surprised." Thanks Stan every one of us hope you are right.

Thanks for your report Brian. Angela (Ashley's mum) tells me that he loves "Lamp Post" and at home he attempts to sing it. Now THAT would be a miracle!!!! Stan.





Young Cliff Royle Reports on N. Wales

We may have been a little down on numbers of entertainers this month, but not on visitors, for apart from our two regular Helsby Visitors we were blessed with Members and Wives from the Beacon Hill Probus Club in Frodsham, some sixteen in all. It would seem they all enjoyed themselves and perhaps we will see many of them back again. One gentleman who shall be nameless always comes to our meeting at this time. He brings his wife to celebrate their Wedding Anniversary and still complains that at 50p each it is expensive. He asks why cannot we do a two for one deal for such occasions? Once more Martin Fowell came to see us, and we were delighted to have Tony Elson and Marge back again. Tony has recently had operations on his knees, but thankfully is making a good recovery. Charlie Penman is slowly recovering from his hip operation, and Gerald Jones (Jones the Uke) hopes to rejoin us again soon.

Jim Knight was away on holiday so some of us came in to act as M.Cs and assistants. I would like to say that a great job was done by Deg Bruce who was M. C. in the second half. We have a number of willing helpers and he is one of them, for he also helps with the Sound Equipment the new items on which are helping us to have better all round control. Of course it is not until we look back over the past ten years that we realise that the quality of our Concerts and Performances have considerably improved. For much of this we are indebted to Dennis and Lesley Lee from whom we have recently heard that they have finally managed to get settled down in Cyprus.

Jim Griffiths started off the show in his usual manner, and we had duets from Deg Bruce and Phill Hughes who seem to be doing more practicing than anyone else. Brian Edge was in excellent form singing his usual songs that are both funny and different. Tom Meredith sang and danced?; we knew who he was though he did not have his face blacked.

There was a lot of talent from Crewe and Sale. Pamela Baddeley; Brian Edge and Connie singing "Riding on a Coo Choo"; Alice Cronshaw with her charming songs; Jonathan Baddeley who is always praised for his excellent backing tapes; and Alan Newton celebrating his 65th Birthday!! Walter Kirkland received his reward in the raffle; a tea caddy containing amongst other things; a zip fastener, and a food bar which was marked "Keep your hands off my mini roll". This seems to have had some connection with him having broken the zip on his fly when he was at Bodelwyddan, which incidentally was an excellent week-end thanks to Alice Cronshaw. But who was the rotter behind this joke?

One song sung by Alan Chenery was "Little Back Room Upstairs". This was very appropriate since he had just moved out of his house in Crewe and he and Pat were having to stay in B&B in Penyffordd before going into temporary accommodation in Blackpool. Anyway Alan we wish you and Pat the very best of Good Wishes in your new area, and we do hope that you will be able to make frequent visits to us.

Myself, Deg Bruce, Phil Hughes and Alison Nadin played some songs together in preparation for our trip the next day to play at a Ruby Wedding Celebration in Abergavenny. But perhaps the Star of the Show was Gregory Simister, our 10 year old member, whose playing and presentation is improving at a tremendous rate. Keep going Greg, and always bear in mind that presentation important. What does Stan Evans say? "Be professional". Sadly the "The Two Stans" or "The Pastits" as they are now called, were not able to be with us. Seems Stan Watkinson's Van is suffering with mechanical trouble, and may soon be another member of the "Pastits".

Our last Tuition Night was a great success with about a dozen present. Don't forget the next ones on Thursdays March 7th, and April 4th. Also remember the next holiday together is at Thoresby Hall in Nottinghamshire commencing on August 26th. Alice Cronshaw has the details.

Our April meeting will be a special one to celebrate the 80th. Birthday of Frankie Woods. Jean Nadin has arranged a special buffet for that occasion. Jean wishes that the admission charge shall remain at 50p even though there is a buffet, but has accepted a suggestion that voluntary contributions will be gratefully accepted, the monies from which will go to the Hope House Hospice for Sick Children. Similarly all proceeds from the raffle will also go to the Hospice, so any donations of raffle prizes will be appreciated.

Are They Related?

I'm sure that Morecambe's John Taylor and Crewe's Des Redfern are blood brothers. Whenever they turn up at any of the meetings they are both running round in a frenzy looking for their backing tapes. Des has mini discs with nothing on and John keeps leaving his discs at home and turning up with tapes, which since the advent of mini discs are now outdated.



John & Des singing "Has anyone seen our discs."

They both follow the same pattern: John hands his tapes to Charles and mounts the stage. Charles shouts, "We can't play tapes." John then dashes round to borrow discs and finishes up playing without backing.

Des however, is a little better organised. He brings his discs but either they are the wrong ones or his songs have been wiped off. Just like John he finishes up singing without backing. So I wonder if these two are related.

I keep shouting, "Be Professional" to them but they don't listen. However they are both great entertainers and good musicians so they don't need backing. John is also a brilliant pianist and Des swoons the crowd with impersonations of Frank Spencer.

Dennis & Lesley Lee in Cyprus—Hello All.



The weather is much better now with the temperature up to 19 degrees—not bad for February. Sat up in bed in the mornings we can see the Mediterranean sea through our window. We can't wait to get in it but the water is too cold as yet.

ANOTHER GEORGE FORMBY FAN CLUB—We had our first meeting with 26 in attendance. They shouted for more at the end so obviously they enjoyed it. Ralph Taylor and I play, then there's an ex-mate of Peter Harper who has a couple of ukes and will have a go, and is interested in improving his playing. Lesley joined in the thrash to make up the numbers and little George Morgan, who is here on holiday. Three people expressed an interest in tuition so if they buckle down we have the makings of a group. I also explained that we wanted some variety and any of the old stuff is permissible. We have a spoons player and a lady does Marlene Dietrich so I'll try to persuade her to get up at the next meeting.

A bloke who used to keep the Bay Horse Hotel in Warrington came—Wilf Jerrums. He used to play for Wigan rugby. He said he knows you. Another fellow who was an Assistant Scout Leader from Stockton Heath said that they purchased their tents from you. Wherever I go I meet people who know Stan Evans. Tell Eva I'm missing her salmon butties. *Thanks Dennis. Nice hear from you. At every meeting someone will ask if I've heard from you both.*

More from Dennis

—Well our flight arrived on time and we were met at the airport by our friend Ralph. The cats were due to arrive the following day. Unfortunately we could only get them on a flight to Lanarca which is at the other end of the island 90 miles away. We arrived there only to find that the flight had been delayed 2 hours. When the plane arrived we were told there were various formalities to go through. Sign here, pay that there, and then off to the customs sheds. Imagine the scene—boxes, packages everywhere whilst in the midst, on a table, sat our three kitty cats.

We were told that the Vet hadn't turned up so somebody had to ring him. We waited for him to arrive in his Mercedes car - he looked as if he'd just got out of bed! He relieved us of £501 plus an overtime payment as we were now outside his normal hours—bloody cheek—which must be paid in cash, he said, “sign here” and then got up to leave. I asked whether he should look at the animals and he said, “OK”.

We intended arriving home at around 6pm but after getting lost in the dark we finally arrived home at 11pm. What a day. We've rented a villa until the end of February and it is very nice too. It is also very cold as the houses over here are designed to get rid of the heat. The lounge is about 25' x 15' with an open plan staircase and kitchen

with no heating and no carpets—just tiles—brrrr!

BAD WEATHER— Cyprus has recently experienced its worst weather in 40 years and we've been absolutely freezing. Hot water is provided exclusively by solar panels. If the sun doesn't shine you don't get any! The immersion heater takes 3 hours to provide lukewarm water—imagine what the heating bill would be! Drastic situations call for drastic measures so I said to Lesley "Right—we're having a meeting. I'll be chairman and you can be secretary." (That means that she does all the work) We dismantled the two single beds in the downstairs bedroom, moved in a couch and some other bits of furniture and bought a calor gas heater. We joined a health club at a hotel 3 minutes from us. So now its up in the morning, down to the hotel for a hot shower and by the time we get back the room is nice and warm. If we need hot water for a wash later we put the pan on the stove. Hey, it's like 50 years ago in a 2 up and 2 down in Wigan.

Our furniture finally arrived—two weeks late—but they couldn't get the articulated lorry down the 150 yard drive so they had to bring a smaller lorry to transport it to the door. A customs officer had to come with the removals men to supervise the unsealing of the container. When the boxes were brought in he went round with a Stanley knife slashing various ones open to see what was inside. One contained my ukes and he demanded I open the cases. He asked what they were and if I played them. During coffee they were treated to "Windows" at which they were gobsmacked.

When I called at the office the following day the same bloke asked if I brought my uke—he'd have asked me to entertain the staff if I had. When it got to paying the bill he charged £48 plus overtime as he'd exceeded his normal hours, - bloody cheek

Socialising is the way of life here and we are out most evenings. We've met loads of kind people who have invited up to various functions: Xmas, Boxing Day, New Year, Burns Night Supper and even a pantomime. 24 turned up for Lesley's 50th Birthday Surprise Party and she had a lovely time.

I've been asked to do an evening at a club on March 2nd and also a street party on June 2nd. I did a radio broadcast to set up a GF Branch and 26 turned up for the inaugural meeting. If interest is maintained we'll carry on. George Morgan from Scarisbrick is over here for a month and he's brought his wooden uke for a few sessions.

We'll be moving into a permanent home soon, - 4th flitting in less than a year. Christian, our son is coming over for a month in February. Lesley is back into her line dancing and is quite settled. That's all for now, - cheers, Dennis.

Thanks Dennis, Very nice to hear from you both. At every meeting I am asked if I've heard how you were surviving over there. Good luck with your GF meeting.

I'LL BET YOU'VE FORGOTTEN TO SEND AN ARTICLE IN

Cliff Royle the Man by Brian Edge.

Seeing 79-year-old Cliff Royle on stage in his various comic outfits gives a false impression of this remarkable man. Besides being a faithful Crewe supporter and a Master of Ceremonies, Cliff is a committee member of his home club, the North Wales Branch, at Penyffordd. As you know Cliff writes for you in this magazine but his literary talents stretch much further than that. He has written a number of books concerning life in Flixton where he was born, and also on life around Frodsham - his current abode. One of Cliff's books concerns the ancient practice of perambulating the Parish of Frodsham. That is walking around the boundary perimeter. The distance of the circuit is 34 miles and I recall asking Cliff whether he split this task into two or three walks. "Indeed not" said Cliff somewhat indignantly "I did it in a day!" Now that sounds quite remarkable to me who finds it difficult to make it round to the local shop! Only three years or so ago Cliff got on his bike and cycled to Paris, yes the one in France, in order to raise funds for the British Legion. But it gets better. At the Crewe rehearsal the other night Cliff was sporting an unusual tie, which bore a logo featuring the letter C. When asked what the tie was for Cliff answered "it stands for Centurion and is given for walking 100 miles in less than 24 hours. Actually it just took me 22 hours!" It goes to prove that you can't judge a person by the clothes they wear!

What A Coincidence! - Brian has just phoned with the following report. "On page 5 of this issue you will have read about faithful Crewe supporters, Fred & Dilys Dyke, celebrating their Golden Wedding Anniversary this month. Well Connie & I had a clear week so we decided to have a holiday in Llandudno and we ended up in The Old Abbey on the west side of the Orme.

On arrival at the hotel the porter who was showing us around told us that a couple staying here were celebrating their Golden Wedding and as they were preparing celebrations the lady fell and as a result ended up in hospital with head injuries. The lady had six days in hospital.

When she returned you can imagine our surprise when we found that it was Dilys & Fred. They were delighted to see us and we are pleased to report that Dilys has now recovered and is having another week here to continue her celebrations."

Thanks Brian, you've got an on the spot scoop there OK and right under the nose of our N. Wales super reporter.

S.O.S. John Ceaser, 6 Elizabeth Drive, Wyke, Bradford BD12 8PP is looking for any words for that good old favourite, "He Played His Ukulele When The Ship Went Down." What he wants in particular are any extra verses and especially cheeky ones. If you can help John drop him a line and he'll be dead chuffed.

DROP A LINE IF YOU ARE LOOKING FOR ANY SONGS



Olwen Gale writes—I have recently been reading about Googie Withers C.B.E, A.O. (Order Of Australia), she is married to John McCallum an Australian actor. Her talent for comedy led her to working with George Formby , with whom she appeared in “Trouble Brewing” in 1939. She says, “I don’t think it is a secret, but George was rather a downtrodden, little man. He had a very domineering wife who was pretty, but who was absolutely determined to make sure he never had a chance to flirt with an actress—even to the extent of insisting that he was made up quite separately from the rest of the cast. What made it so silly was that no

one would have wanted to have an affair with him anyway—he wasn’t the most romantic looking of leading men. But she watched him the whole time and when, on one occasion, we were together because they had to change a light or something and we were told to just stand there together, he froze. This was due to her, not him, in fact he whispered to me; ‘I am sorry, but I am not allowed to talk to you. I’m not being stand-offish or anything but she’ I whispered back that I understood and soon we carried on with the scene, and that was that.”

Despite her age Googie is still at present acting in the Haymarket, London, until June in an Oscar Wilde play “Lady Windermere’s Fan.” She is the Duchess of Berwick. Must finish now. Love to Eva.

Thanks Olwen. Poor Beryl, nobody—apart from myself—seems to have a good word for her. However in the next issue we will have Beryl’s side of the story for a change. It’s time someone stuck up for her.

More from Jon Baddeley—Some more comments from people that I’ve met recently.

A person was fortunately to be attending a show given by our George during the war. Apparently, George insisted that no civilians were present in the audience!!!

A lady came to me and said that she had always thought that “the little lady passing by” was George referring to his mother. When I asked why-she said that a mother is the only one that you would give up a date for.

A man who looked as if he was in his late 60s asked me whether or not George’s father was very rich. I told him that in 1921 he had left a sizable will as well as ten years performance dates in his diary. He said that his mother had told him that she once went one of his shows and was amazed to find that he arrived in a chauffeur-driven car.

It really is amazing what people tell you. All the best. Jon Baddeley
Thanks Jon. I wonder why no civilians were allowed. Unless he didn’t want any of the services left out due to shortage of seats. That’s sensible! The figure GF Senior left was around £26,000 which was a lot in those days.

“ZIP GOES A MILLION” By Brian Edge

- BIG SHOW - AT BODELWYDDAN CASTLE.

A force of “Formby” enthusiasts stormed Bodelwyddan Castle, North Wales, early in February, all well armed for a real good thrash. The battalion comprised Cyril and Sheila Palmer, Des Redfern, Cliff Royle and Margaret, Alice Cronshaw and Walter Kirkland, Connie and Brian Edge, Jim Knight and Myra (our Welsh speaking interpreter), Geoff and Dolwen Shone, Dorothy Davidson, Sheila Beech, Doreen Cumpsty,

Jean and Alison Nadin and Frankie Wood. The excursion originally was to be a planned event, but when preliminary enquiries had fallen through and the idea had been shelved, it was discovered that Cliff Royle had already booked up! So word got round and others followed suit and everyone had a splendid weekend.

It was not long after our arrival that Warner’s Entertainments Manager had allocated us a one hour spot on Saturday morning in the Lowther Hall, the main arena and our bash was twice announced on the Friday night during the 1970’s show featuring the rock group “*Poison Ivy*”. By golly the joint was certainly jumping when they were performing! However the announcement resulted in a sizeable support the following morning when we had a planned show. We were allowed to use Warner’s equipment for our backing and three radio mikes. The sound system looked a bit of a formidable piece of equipment but Des Redfern soon sorted it all out, with a fine controlled process of elimination which included opening the massive electrically controlled curtains, bringing down a 20 foot high full size cinema screen, and ejecting an unsuspecting domestic through a trapdoor on the stage. “Eureka” yells Des as the music began to emerge from the large speakers throughout the arena, not realising what had been happening our side of the stage. Alison took charge of the music tapes and discs and the show started on time. After the performance a number of guests said how much they had enjoyed our performance and one said he had been coming to Warner’s for a number of years and it was the most enjoyable entertainment he had seen. He added “I am a window cleaner by profession and I can tell you that I always take special care of bathroom windows!” The performers were Jim Knight, Des Redfern, Cliff Royle, Brian and Connie Edge, Cyril Palmer, Geoff, Alice and Walter Kirkland.

It was never established just exactly when Walter’s zip had broken, and whether it was during his uke performance or his bones solo, but the incident got much mileage during the weekend. Poor Walter was dubbed “*Lord of the Flies*” and from all parts he received many suggestions that he ought to learn the Formby number “*Zip Goes A Million*”. Other source suggested that the next number he ought to learn should be “*Fly me to the Moon*” whilst another wag suggested “*Dare Devil Dick**.”

The irrepressible 79 year old Cliff Royle accepted a challenge from a 40 year old competitor, to an obstacle race, the competitors to travel sitting on large bouncing “Space Hopper”. Cliff gave a magnificent performance and was trailing by a number



Some of the merry band of Jolliday Makers—come on Des, give us a smile.

of yards at the three quarter stage but the cheering of his fellow banjo players encouraged Cliff and with a great rally he won the race on the line. Phew! what a man he is!

The last day was completed with a visit arranged by Geoff and Dolwen to a res-

taurant in a small Welsh Village where we all had a lovely meal before saying our goodbyes to our friends and with memories of a very happy weekend. Special thanks to all who did anything, however small, towards making the weekend the success it was. Thanks again Walter.

Thanks Brian, sounds like a great week-end.

I Had A Dream—The other day I had a vision. I suddenly saw Andy Eastwood on the stage at The Palace of Varieties, Leeds. This is a Grand Old Music Hall setting and ideal for Andy. I Emailed him: Andy, have you ever thought of approaching the Leeds Palace, you'd fit in very well there. I sent him the contact numbers. Low and behold, - and you could have knocked me down with a wet lettuce—Andy Emailed me: Stan, you'll never believe it but Ken Dodd's office has phoned and they want me to appear with Ken at, - wait for it! The Leeds Palace Of Varieties. After the show I quizzed him on the show: -

How did you get on with the show? Yes, it was great - and I thoroughly enjoyed it. (A long drive of course from down south, but as George said in the film, 'That's show business!') The manager asked me about doing the Good Old Days, but unfortunately I'm fully booked already for the dates he had in mind this year, so he will hopefully put me in the show next season... The reception was great both nights. Ken has a magic way with the audience of course. I warm them up after the interval with a 20 minute spot. While we did the Saturday night show, Ken was simultaneously on TV doing his pre-recorded 'Audience With...' He was anxious to know how it had come out, so his missus was watching it in the dressing room on a portable tv so she could tell him how it went! How do you get on with Ken? Great chap, very helpful and always takes an interest. When I came off he called me into the dressing room... he'd written a whole page of notes & ideas & gags that he thought I might like to use in the act.



Sale Report by Cyril Palmer—The heading above sounds as if we went off with a bang! Well, they usually do and February was no exception. Once again we were pleased to welcome first time visitors to Sale. This time it was Jim & Myra Knight from Wrexham. Phil Hatswell from Roth-erham made it two in a row, and Alan Newton is becoming quite regular, - in the visiting sense, that is.

These reports usually concentrate on who sang what, and certainly singing and playing is our main focus. However our meetings are well supported by those who don't appear (not often) at the microphone and their help and support is worthy of a comment. On this occasion we had long-time members, Anne, Ken and Ivy, and Marjorie and Gerald.

Ron Kelly has recently introduced friend Alf to the delights of our meetings. Ron, from Whitefield, has not missed a meeting in the two years since he has first appeared. Wives were well in evidence, adding a degree of decorum between bouts of heckling and repartee. There was Margaret Royle with friend Sheila, Hilda Southworth and Vera Eaves, Myra Knight, and I'll be in trouble if I forget to mention 'er indoors, otherwise known as Sheila Palmer.

Without Tony Kenny (Chauffer cum dad) we would not have the benefit of Paul's expertise with "Saving Up For Sally". Dick Eaves plays in the thrashes and assists Alan Southworth with the sound system. Finally, from Rhyl, there was Allison's mother, Jean and Frankie Woods in attendance as Alison wowed us with the all-dancing all-singing puppet show.

As usual, there was a nicely varied concert. We more frequently see our performers in duet than when I first joined. The two Stans (Evans and Watkinson), Jim Knight and Walter Kirkland (Bones medley). Connie Edge and Alan Chenery (Lambeth Walk). Brian Edge and Alan Newton (Pasadena) were tonight's combinations (Should I rephrase that?)

In the "Something different" category there was ABBA's "I Had A Dream" (Stan Watkinson), "Thank Heaven For Little Girls" (Alan Newton), "New York, New York" (Margaret Moran), "Who Are You A Shoving Of" (Cliff Royle), and "Madam Moscovitch" (Alan Southworth). Les Pearson explained how he thought he was having a funny phone call when the caller said, "This is Cyril Smith" However it really was the larger than life politician, who then booked Les, and Margaret Moran, to entertain The Happy Clovers, a Seniors group, in Rochdale.

After the success of the weekend that some of us enjoyed at Bodelywyddan, a four night venture has been arranged for August 26th near Nottingham. Details from Alice Cronshaw. That's it for now, see you at the Wintergardens. *Thanks Cyril.*

Jonathan Baddeley Emails— On 6th February 2002, I was asked to entertain a Ladies' Over 50s Group at Adbaston near Stafford. A lady came to me afterwards and said that she had once darned George Formby's socks. Apparently, during the mid 30s, this lady was in service at a large house owned by the Slater family in the Stafford area. George was an overnight guest of Mr. Slater and this lady was required to darn the socks.

On 8th February 2002, I went to the Museum in Hanley, Stoke-On-Trent at which there was an exhibition of life from the 1920s to the 1990s. As I entered the room, I was met with the strains of WHEN I'M CLEANING WINDOWS. Closer examination revealed a "jukebox" in the corner on which you could select music from any decade. George gets everywhere doesn't he?

In 1990, an excellent book entitled-The Lost Empire (The Picture Houses of the Potteries and Newcastle-Under-Lyme) was published. Included was a picture of the Palace in Waterloo Road, Burslem aside which was the Palladium-the first venue of George's first film BOOTS BOOTS.A sequel was produced in 1999 entitled-Give My Regards To The Broadway (More on the Picture Houses Of The Potteries). It is interesting that at the Empire Cinema in Hanley for 3 days commencing Monday 18th March 1946, George was appearing in his 1938 film-IT'S IN THE AIR.

I am indebted to Alan Newton for his copy of the January 2002 edition of Traditional Jazz magazine-Just Jazz. There is an excellent article by Sean Moyses about the banjo in jazz. Due to professional engagement, Sean's appearances at the Winter Gardens in Blackpool are very infrequent, but when he is there, he is certainly top-drawer. In this article, he compares the differences between the 5 string banjo, the plectrum banjo, the tenor banjo, he ukulele banjo, the mandolin banjo, the cello banjo and the contra bass banjo. Needless to say that our George gets a mention. All the best. Jon Baddeley
Thanks Jon, George gets everywhere.

A Couple of Happy Birthdays— Crewe's Alan Newton was 65 years young on the 27th of February and Liverpool's Stan Watkinson was 60 on March 6th (the anniversary of George's death) Both Alan & Stan are extremely active playing Both are good musicians Both are good entertainers Both travel to other meetings Both play instruments Both help to run meetings Both sing in a duo Both own a keyboard Both have been in bands—Alan still is And both make backing tapes. Isn't that a wonderful coincidence?



Alan Newton



Stan Watkinson

Phil Hatswell of Rotherham

approached me at the Sale meeting. "Stan" he said, "I'm only a learner but I've just bought a banjo uke and on the inside is the name 'Ron Holiday', do you know anything about him? It would be nice to know something about the previous owner of the uke."



Ron



Phil

Well Eva & I certainly do. Ron and his wife, Ellen, were good friends of ours and on occasions they stayed at our home for short breaks. Ron, a perfect gentleman who was dedicated to playing his uke, had very poor eyesight, but this didn't prevent him from going out into the streets to help raise money for various charities. Wherever Ron went he would take his small wooden uke and his banjo uke to entertain. Ellen and Ron had a caravan on the East Coast and Ron often entertained in the club house. He was also a brilliant ballroom dancer who was often sort after by the ladies as a dancing partner. He would step onto the floor, looking extremely elegant, and the ladies would flock around to dance with him.

Ron was an example to many. Although short of sight he would carry his camera with him and snap photos of anyone in view. He was a very pleasant man and an expert uke player who was always willing to help anyone with queries on chords etc. Nothing was too much trouble for Ron. At the Blackpool meetings there was often a request for Ron to sing "Hurt" which he sang in his usual quiet manner.

Ron also wrote songs and one of them was, "If Only I Could Play The Uke Like Formby" - a brilliant number which, I'm sure, some of the Yorkshire players must know, and possibly still play.

Alas, our friend died a few years back and we were extremely sad at the occasion. In church Anthony Mason sang and played Ron's song as a tribute to him. We will always remember Ron as a wonderful character and a dedicated music man. Take my advice Phil and hold on to Ron's uke. It will bring you good luck and inspiration.

Alan & Pat Chenery

are leaving Crewe for a new life in Blackpool. Alan, assistant Sound Engineer, a faithful member of the Crewe society for many years, assures us that it is no trouble to jump into his car and come to our meetings. We certainly hope to see him and we all wish both of them every happiness in their new venture. *Thanks Brian, when I went to Blackpool Eve Stewart was as chuffed as little mint balls when she heard the news.*

The Charity Shop

By R K Hobbs and Stan Evans.

Oh what a wonderful place to browse
 To try on trousers, skirt or blouse
 See books and second-hand magazines
 Cutlery, crockery, old sewing machines
 Ties for your neck and pictures for walls
 Football and rugby shirts, bats and balls
 Candlesticks, dishes, saucepans and mugs
 And quite a collection of old fancy jugs

Underwear, outerwear, jackets and macs
 Old fashioned ornaments, some with cracks
 Pillowslips, sheets and blankets galore
 All there to gather cash for the poor.
 I gaze and I wonder what tales they can tell
 Like this in the corner, a little brass bell
 I picture a maid in a fine big old house
 With everything there as quiet as a mouse

There in the corner, all covered in dust
 Is a ukulele banjo with touches of rust
 The strings are all broken and the fret board is worn
 With a sketch of George Formby that someone has
 drawn

I wonder who owned it? Was it someone we knew?
 Did he play on the stage like George used to do?
 Whoever it was we can always be sure
 That he played on this uke till his fingers were sore

There's a tear in my eye as I think of him now
 Playing his heart out, then taking his bow
 And isn't it sad that this old banjo uke
 Complete with its case and a tuition book
 Should stand in the window for someone to buy
 Looking forlorn, - another tear in my eye
 There's a story behind all that they sell
 Happiness, tragedy, you never can tell

I simply can't pass one, and just have to stop
 To browse and think back in the Charity Shop

Has anyone got a joke to fill this space?

Recently voted as the World's Funniest Joke

There are no shortage of jokes in the North West Newsletter so it is perhaps worth mentioning that according to the Daily Telegraph 20th December there has been a competition for the world's funniest joke. Ten thousand jokes were entered in the competition and 100,000 people coming from 70 countries of the world judged these. The winning joke came from a Geoff Anandappa of Blackpool.

-oOo-

Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson go camping and pitch their tent under the stars. During the night, Holmes wakes his companion and says: "Watson, look up at the stars and tell me what you deduce."

Watson says: "I see millions of stars and even if a few of those have planets, it is quite likely there are some planets like Earth, and if there are a few planets like Earth out there, there might also be life". Holmes replies: "Watson you idiot. Somebody stole our tent..."

Jim Bramwell gets away with murder at the Blind Centre. He tells the same jokes every time we go there and gets a roaring round of applause. He's told the one about the pig at least a dozen times and they still love him telling it.

I Had A Dream—The other day I had a vision. I suddenly saw Andy Eastwood on the stage at The Palace of Varieties, Leeds. This is a Grand Old Music Hall setting and ideal for Andy. I Emailed him: "Andy, have you ever thought of approaching the Leeds Palace, you'd fit in very well there." I sent him the contact numbers.

Low and behold, a few days later, - and you could have knocked me down with a wet lettuce—Andy Emailed me: Stan, you'll never believe it but Ken Dodd's office has phoned and they want me to appear with Ken at, - wait for it! The Leeds Palace Of Varieties.

After the show I quizzed him on the show: -
How did you get on with the show? Yes, it was great - and I thoroughly enjoyed it. (A long drive of course from down south, but as George said in the film, 'That's show business!')

The manager asked me about doing the Good Old Days, but unfortunately I'm fully booked already for the dates he had in mind this year, so he will hopefully put me in the show next season... The reception was great both nights. Ken has a magic way with the audience of course. I warm them up after the interval with a 20 minute spot. While we did the Saturday night show, Ken was simultaneously on TV doing his pre-recorded 'Audience With...' He was anxious to know how it had come out, so his missus was watching it in the dressing room on a portable TV so she could tell him how it went!

"How do you get on with Ken?" Great chap, very helpful and always takes an interest. When I came off he called me into the dressing room... he'd written a whole page of notes & ideas & gags that he thought I might like to use in the act.

That's wonderful Andy. You can't go wrong if you follow Ken.

Maydayze at Wigan & Leigh Again. Last year we performed in the Wigan town centre and the council organisers were so pleased that they've invited us again. The dates are: Leigh the 18th of May, 12 noon to 4pm and Wigan is on the 25th, 11.30am to 3.30pm

Just Arrived—We've got George's niece—in-law, Christine, staying with us and also Janet, the eager shopper who bought up half of Widnes last year. Christine tells me that she has won another award for Line Dancing and now has Bronze, Silver and Gold Bars. Good for you Christine. Jeffrey would have been so proud that he might have been tempted to put on the dancing shoes himself.

LATE NEWS—Dennis Lee has just held his second Cyprus meeting with 26 turning up. Some expressed interest in learning the uke, two got up to tell jokes and one chap did his monologue. Dennis has a booking in the posh Paphos Beach Hotel—black tie, dinner suit etc.—*What!, no trousers?*

Another Jazz Week-end at Nantwich

and here is an extract from the Festival Brochure— *Crown Hotel Ballroom, Nantwich 12pm to 2pm, Sunday the 31st March, The South Cheshire "George Formby" Ukulele Society" This tribute society are an annual highlight of the Festival. Featuring an array of soloists, they are guaranteed to get your feet tapping. (£1.00 entrance charge to a charity of their choice)

Uke For Sale—Ukes selling fast. Last one advertised in the Newsletter has gone. Here's another. "FOR SALE. Sing-a-Long Uke (American) with case. Good condition. £375. Ring Martin Fowell (01745) 854390".

Nice Touching Tribute from Gerry Mawdsley



Jacks Funeral was a good send off for an elder statesman of the GFS. I thought it was a nice touch after Mike Turner had finished Singing Blackpool Rock as he was returning to his seat he laid his hand on Jacks coffin as much as to say " that was for you old pal"

Mike, I suppose, was as near to family as he could get, to Jack. He visited him about 3 times a week and Val even made up a Sunday lunch for Mike to take to Jack. When Jack died it really hit Mike very hard. See you soon Gerry. *Thanks Gerry*

Gerry

Paul Woodhead Emails —Thanks for the Newsletter Stan. I'm just out of Oswestry Hospital where I had a cruciate ligament replacement, so receiving the Newsletter was welcome light relief.

Another loss with Jack Jones. Like so may others I received my first tuition from Jack via his tapes and subsequent telephone conversations we had. I also had the pleasure of buying him a drink or two at Blackpool.

The downside of the GFS is that people keep dying. We are lucky that the music enables us to rise above the ongoing losses. Love to Eva.

PS - In that I can't walk, your magic tapes are very welcome. I watched one yesterday on rope tricks. Jill has had to have the day off work today as I haven't worked out how to release the knots yet!

Thanks Paul. Hope you are OK now and out and about. Yes I'm afraid that life is like a conveyor belt. We jump on at one end and pop off at the other.

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

Sale - **NEW VENUE**—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 01253 768097. Wonderful Buffet—Always in need of players.

Wintergardens GFS Meetings:

Sat & Sun 16th & 17th March 2002

“ 29th & 30th June “

“ 14th & 15th Sept “

Sat 30th Nov & Sun 1st Dec “

Concerts usually start around 1.30pm each day.

For GFS details contact Steve Wyld on 01773 763353

N. West—Two Lancashire Lads web site:

www.thehollies.u-net.com/formby.

E Mail: stan@thehollies.u-net.com

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