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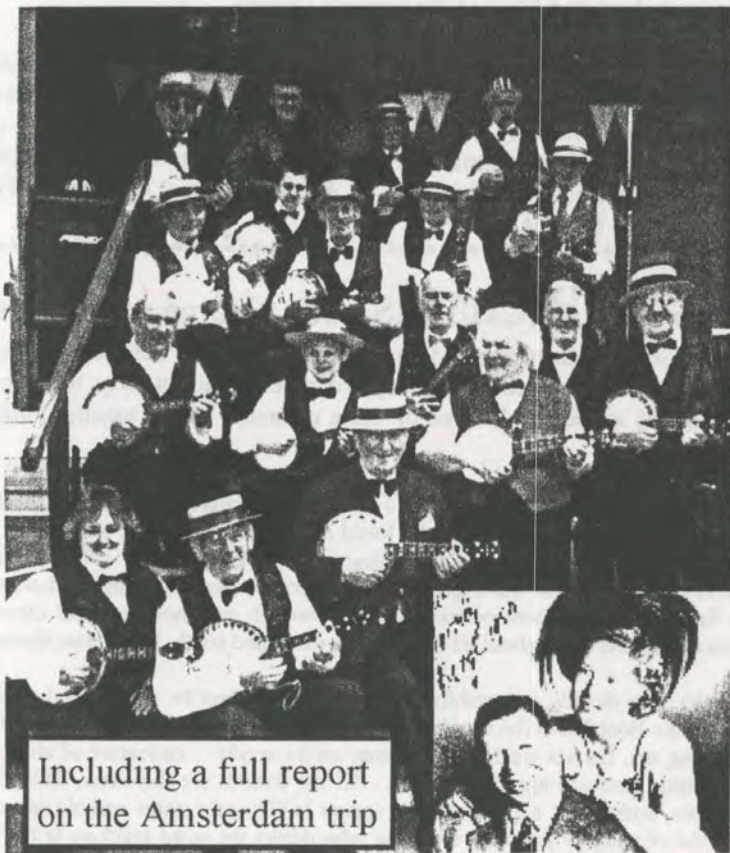
GEORGE FORMBY

Newsletter 85

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Including a full report
on the Amsterdam trip

A Happy Band Of Formby Players With George and Beryl

Specially Produced for George Formby Fans
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Welcome To Newsletter No. 85

and once again we have been very busy with our regular run of George Formby meetings, Jubilee Celebrations etc. and a Warrington tribute to Jack Jones attracted no less than 100 people to be entertained by our players.

The weather wasn't kind to us when we were wind swept at Colwyn Bay and in the Wigan town centre. However, our gang of players soldiered on just like George & Beryl would have done and finished the concerts smiling.

Once again, the yearly coach trip, - this time to Amsterdam—was very successful and we are now looking forward to the next one, - Dublin, we hope. Amsterdam is not all it's cracked up to be. The only night life attraction we saw was two blown-up Frank Bruno look-alikes exhibiting themselves from their bedroom windows. Enough to frighten the living daylight out of anyone. So now read on, - and Many Thanks To All Who Contributed To This Issue.

Professor Richards on George

—continued from last month — And George's third appeal was the songs—you can't dissociate George from his songs, and his songs, which were saucy and cheeky, but not dirty, were an absolute integral part of his appeal. All three of those elements bound together, made him a film personality.

In many ways the Formby character is what's known in literature as "The Holy Fool" and one critic said that he was the innocent fool who loved and trusted the world, and I think what people liked about it was this innocence, this trusting nature. They thought actually that although he appeared to be gormless he was a good man, and people like that image of Lancashire, that here was a fundamentally decent person, who got through somehow, without cleverness, because, of course, the one thing about all the English, north and south, is to detest cleverness.

George Formby was already an established musical star when he was signed up by John E Blakely for "Boots Boots" and the songs were vital to his image, - he recorded 189 of them, and many were about sex, but sex treated in the sense of innuendo - caricature of almost the Donald McGill seaside postcard approach to sex. All the themes are the same, fat ladies, honey-mooners, nudists, underwear, all these things appear in George's songs and his attitude to them is that of a kind of naughty juvenile, someone who thinks the word knickers is terribly funny, and this was the level of sophistication with which sex was approached. George Orwell, who is sound on cultural matters, says that seaside postcards and by extension George's songs, in many ways embodied the nature of British society at the time, which was bawdy, hypocritical, gentle and deeply moral, and I think that's probably right.

This kind of humour diffused an area of tension within a deeply repressed society. It made sex into a joke, as something to laugh at and therefore not to get too hot under the collar about. Many people liked that element of the songs, but there were some areas of society that thought they were naughty. MORE NEXT MONTH FROM PROF RICHARDS.



In Memory Of Jack Jones—

Well there was a wonderful turn out at Sacred Heart Church on Monday 10th June and most of the congregation attended the concert which was held at ROOSTERS CLUB - next door to the church. We estimated about 100 in total and the setting was perfect for a Jack Jones Special, clean, well decorated, good seating, good sound, nice stage, - ideal for the occasion.

CHURCH MASS—Father Christopher possibly doubted Pat's boast that she could conjure up at least 100 people to attend a special memorial mass for Jack. "Difficult during a working week." But Pat was right and the Father was pleased to hold the very first Memorial Mass to be held at that church. He gave a Eulogy of Jack's life and added, "Jack and Pat met at a local club—I wonder if she was leaning against a lamp post." Father Richard, who often shared a joke with Jack, gave up his day off to help with the mass and commented on the "Singing with Gusto" from the George Formby singers. The three hymns were, "Guide Me O Thou Great Redeemer," - "Amazing Grace," - and "How Great Thou Art." It was Pat's friend, Mary Morris who suggested that Jack was worthy of a memorial mass and during the service she read out the Gospel reading of St Paul to the Romans.

THE CONCERT—The audience consisted of around 50 Formby fans and a similar number of Jack's friends, neighbours, church members, etc. Many travelled from as far as Rotherham, Leeds, Preston, Loughborough, Crewe, Liverpool, St Helens, and felt that the enjoyment they received was certainly worth the journey. One lady was from the USA.

Graham Greenfield did a grand job in gathering the names of players and we were all set for a great concert. The players in order of appearance were: Stan Evans & Stan Watkinson (The Past Its), Dennis Taylor, Alan Harris, Kevin Selby, Dereck Pierce, Alan Southworth, Paul Kenny, Cliff Royle, Cyril Palmer, Mike Turner, Andrew Little, John Shreeve, Des Redfern, and last but certainly not least: Jim Bramwell who poured out his latest jokes and had the crowd laughing. A grand finish to a wonderful tribute. John Shreeve's rendition of "The William Tell Overture" was electric and Jack would have thoroughly enjoyed that.



The best of friends, Jack and Pat

Pat and Tom Ralston did a great job in organising the tribute, and Pat expressed her thanks to all who supported them. A wonderful buffet was laid on and she was delighted. The staff at the club were very helpful and a young man behind the bar asked for details on buying and getting started with the uke. Someone suggested that the tribute should be held every year, which brought a hearty round of applause. Well why not? There's always something electric about George Formby shows held in Warrington.

CONSTRUCTIVE COMPLAINT!!! - Now I don't want to dampen the occasion, - It was great, there's no doubt about that. But after all the years of practise we've had, we should be able to recognise when non-Formby fans are in the audience and, knowing this, we should be able to add more variety to the show. An appeal was made at the beginning for more variety but it seems that most players are dedicated to solely Formby. It was noticeable that many of the non-Formbys went home after the first hour and maybe this was the reason, - little variety. We must learn from this.

Alice Cronshaw Breaks Track Record at Crewe

Concert day at Crewe starts at 4 o'clock in the afternoon when Harry Jones and Vera, Alan Newton, Ramon Lewis, Connie and Brian set about preparing the hall for the evening concert. It's a big job which takes about an hour and a quarter to get things to our liking. Then Colin has to set up his sound system which takes about half an hour. Colin works so he is not always able to manage the four o'clock start but he has to fit it in as it is not a good idea to leave it until the last minute when loads of people are milling around. The next job is going back home to prepare tea and get ready before getting back for 6.45 p.m. when the first arrivals begin to drive into the car park. It is all part of the Friday concert. The same arrangements apply to other groups who put on these concerts. It is done to ensure that our supporters get the best possible evenings entertainment.



The M.C. and concert producer then have to consider the artistes who have arrived on the night and plan their evening getting a good balance of Formby and other music, making sure that the same numbers are not repeated if at all possible. They must integrate to best advantage speciality acts and similarly make sure the lady performers are suitably placed in the show and also take into account the placing of the not so experienced performers. It is a big job and has to be done in a few minutes before the curtain rises at 7.40p.m.

About half an hour before the show was to begin Alice Cronshaw realised that she had left an important item at home. "You'll have to nip and get it Walter" she said, (they live in Manchester) and without a word Walter said "right" and dashed off. I just happened to say to Alice "you are sure you haven't got it aren't you?" As a result she hurriedly looked in the side pocket of her handbag and found what she thought she had left. Well I know the Commonwealth Games are being held in Manchester this year and clearly Alice is in training for she took off from the starting blocks like Fanny Blankers Koen screaming "Walter, Walter, Walter" at ever increasing levels of decibels. I think she caught him up just as he was leaving the car park. She can certainly move can Alice!

Jonathan Baddeley was the M.C. this month along with Pamela his Concert Producer. We always get a good show with this combination who work really very well together.

Jim Knight one of our faithful supporters from Wrexham opened the show with "Granddad's Flannelette Nightshirt" followed by a bones medley and his act was followed by the Penryffordd trio of Deg, Phil and Frank, all immaculately turned out with "Persil" white shirts, coloured waistcoats bow ties and boaters and their act matched their appearance as they performed as a team.

Whilst all this was going on some of the audience may possibly have noticed our drummer's equipment appearing through the curtains at the back of the stage and a person coming on and off in a semi crouching position, in the forlorn hope that, perhaps, just perhaps, that he would be able to set up his kit without anyone in the audience noticing him! How strange that they came from Stratford upon Avon, Rotherham, Manchester, Liverpool, Rhyl and Wrexham and a host of other places and managed to get through the traffic! I will let you know if he manages to catch the bus at 6am. on the way to Amsterdam! In spite of that unbelievable piece of un-professionalism, Des managed to redeem himself later in the evening with a comic song which had the ninety strong audience crying with laughter (and worse).

What a good night it turned out to be! The twenty-two or so artistes performing two

numbers each and yet not one song was duplicated! The M.C. commented on this at the end of the evening that it must be some sort of record.

Alison Nadin along with her dummy Alf gave us some great entertainment, with new patter, which was twice interrupted by the audience with applause. I have said a lot about Alison's talents in these pages but for me that was one of the best performances I have seen using one dummy.

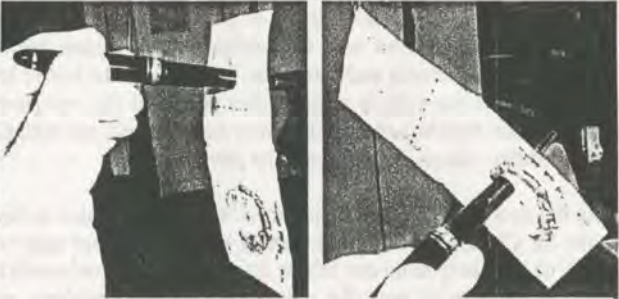
I was delighted to see Carl Basford on stage again this month. This time he sang "If you want to get your Photo in the Press" which was followed by "Mary" especially for Mary Newton who had a birthday. We all sang "Happy Birthday Mary."

Connie tackled her new Formby number "Sitting on the Sands All Night" a fast number with loads of tongue twisting lyrics. Then she invited Alan Chenery to join her with "Lambeth Walk" which had the audience singing along. Greg Simister's performance was eagerly awaited. This 10 year old always has something new and this time it was "Out in the Middle East" and didn't his eyes light up when the audience responded with the la-la-las? His other number was from the film "Its in the Air" and was entitled "They Can't Fool Me."

My own efforts were "Robin Hood" written by Sale's Walter Langshaw followed by "Wigan Pier" which always seems to be popular with audiences in general. Tom Meredith is always a welcome visitor to Crewe he always puts on really good performances here. Tom sang "Sergeant Major and The Lancashire Toreador."

Bill Turner sang two rather nice ballads Bill's performances are improving month by month. During the interval Connie got on the mike and said how nice it was to see our friend Matthew Kelly along with his daughter Dianne. Matthew, who is ninety, has been ill with a bad foot for some time and in consequence has been unable to attend. We thank Dianne for bringing him along and we hope he will soon be back on stage entertaining us again.

Alan Chenery and Colin Wood performed a duo with "Putting on the Style" and a new Dickie Speake number for them in "Riding on a Blackpool Tram." Both songs came over well. Stan Evans and Stan Watkinson (complete with a U.S. style steel army helmet) performed their usual repertoire and Stan showed us an impressive trick with a £10 note, which perhaps, by virtue of its size, was not fully appreciated by those at the back of the hall. However, his stooge Colin Wood who unfortunately did not have Stan's know how mutilated one of his own £10 notes certainly did not appreciate it.



For those sat at the back of the hall it really is a wonderful miracle.

Steve Evans and his wife came again from Stratford upon Avon and Steve put on another excellent performance with two catchy numbers. The latter of these "The Irish Built the Pyramids," a difficult number, was performed really well and from my memory this is the first time that this song has been performed at Crewe in the last eight years. Steve's second number was "Fanlight Fanny." Steve presented himself really very well and it was a pleasure to see him in his brightly coloured waistcoat up there entertaining us. MORE ON THE CREWE MEETING ON PAGE 8

Super-hero Cliff Royle reports



The attendance was a bit down this month at Penyffordd Was it due to school holidays, the storm we had, or the football? Anyway we had a great night during which a few different songs and acts were on the menu.

Jim Knight sang "I hear music"; Alan Newton came up with "Oh Babe"; Tom Meredith in his latest rise to stardom sang "Don't laugh at me 'cause I'm a fool"; Alice Cronshaw gave us "Ball in the jack" accompanied by some unrehearsed members of the audience; Connie Edge played "I double dare you;" followed by husband Brian's "Fearless Fred the Fireman"; Cyril Palmer sang "Nightingale sang in Berkeley Square: and "Violetta": followed by Vera Jones with a general sing-a-long; then we had the PAST ITS in full flow with "I'm Nobodies Child" and a song borrowed or nicked from Des Redfern; Des left us laughing with that witty though suggestive ditty "The day we went to Blackpool"; and Pamela Baddeley accompanied by Jonathan sang a medley of old time songs. As usual we had the Bones "played?" by Jim Knight and Walter Kirkland; always a nice variation in the programme.

There was a smattering of Formby songs by Walter Kirkland (worried that he would forget the words to "In my little Wooden Toolshed in the Garden", but he didn't!); Alan Newton (The Lancashire Lad and his Uke); Jonathan Baddeley (When the waterworks caught fire); and Brian Edge with "King of the Swingers" which got the bar staff bopping. Our three "Tenors" Phil, Frank and Deg roused the roof with their Formby melodies, and of course we enjoyed the brilliant playing of young Godfrey Simister who always manages to come along with at least one new song he has learned since the last meeting. Keep up the good work Godfrey.

A presentation was made of a miniature garden arrangement to our sound engineer Alison Nadin to celebrate her recent Birthday and as an acknowledgement of all the work she does for us and others. Alison is not only our equipment technician, but manhandles all the equipment between home and events and sets it up. In addition she has to look after Frankie Woods, and squeeze him into the vehicle with Mother Jean and the equipment. Anything that wont go in gets left. Alison entertained us with a new ventriloquist act with Granddad. It was excellent. So Happy Birthday Alison. Keep laying the paving stones.

During the evening a further cheque for £300 was presented to Sarah Jones for the Hope House Hospice for Children. She was delighted with this further sum which means that the total donated by us with help from our fellow Branches in the last month has been over £800.

As a matter of interest over the past six weeks our members, assisted by those from Crewe, Sale and Liverpool have performed at some ten events (six during the period of the Jubilee Celebrations), and we still have one to go.

These performances have enabled us not only to raise the money for the charity, but have also helped us fund improvements to our sound equipment. May I quote from a statement made to me by Jonathan Baddeley "This is the best sound system I have played to at Penyffordd", and he should know! Of course this in no small part has been due to the guidance given to us so freely and willingly our Crewe friends.

Thanks are due to all helpers, performers, the audience, the Staff of the Legion, and those who provided Raffle prizes. We welcome any additional prizes that are so kindly donated.

Cliff Royle. (Your "express", but not yet past it reporter). *Many thanks Young Cliff. My Hero*

Dennis Lee Reports from Cyprus

Andy Eastwood was out here last week and Lesley & I went to support him accompanied by Ralph & Pat. He put on a good show but it was outside and the audience were quite a way back from the stage. They were hard work and were reluctant to join in. We sang our heads off to try to create some atmosphere. Andy stayed the night with us as his hotel was 2 hours drive away. We had a good chinwag about old times. He's back working with Doddy on his return. What an opportunity and Doddy could teach him a lot on how to play an audience.

We had a street party at the club last Saturday with 300 people there. Ralph & I did a half hour spot and the audience loved it. On the Sunday we did a 1 hour spot for the Freemasons. That went down well also.

Had our meeting last night with numbers being maintained at around 30. Still plugging away and practice is due to resume soon. The target is to get 3 more uke players and then we'll really be established. Sounds easy but getting people to practice can be hard work. Never mind we're giving it our best shot and hopefully we'll succeed. On a personal level I get so many invitations to play at house parties that I'd never be in. Weather is hotting up now with 35* forecast for Sunday. Hope the weather is good in Warrington. Dennis

Thanks Dennis. On the way back from Amsterdam we were discussing getting a party together to invade you in Cyprus. Our lot are very outgoing so don't be surprised if we suddenly turn up. Have the kettle on.

The Penyffordd Gang are doing a wonderful job in raising funds



Sarah Jones is pleased to receive a further cheque for Hope House for £300.

for Hope House Children's Respite Hospice. They house over 200 children who are terminally ill and desperately need £1.5 million each year to keep going. The government contribution is only 5% and the rest is collected through hard work and kind contributions.

If George & Beryl were alive today I'm sure that they would be pleased with our efforts and would no doubt play an active part in collecting funds. So carry on the good work Penyffordd. These kids need help!

Uke For Sale—Geoff Shone has a Melody Uke for sale in good condition. With case. The normal price for a Melody is around £120—£125 but this is for sale at £100. Give Geoff a ring on 01244 544605 if interested.

HAVE YOU A UKE FOR SALE? GIVE ME A RING AND WE'LL SELL IT HERE

CREWE MEETING—CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5 - Thank you both for coming such a long way. Another really excellent performance was by Alan Evans of Redditch. Alan gave a very confident performance of both his songs. He has an excellent singing voice and his uke playing is improving all the time. He has a nice uke too! His first number, not very often sung at Crewe was *"The Best of Schemes,"* and this was followed by the late Stanley King's *"Fifty Percent of its Mine."* Come and visit us anytime both of you!

Alice Cronshaw and Vera Jones both entertained us well during the evening with some nice songs. Don Chalkley played *"Thanks Mr Roosevelt,"* and *"I went all Hot and Cold."* Walter Kirkland was *"Happy Go Lucky Me"* and he followed with a virtuoso performance on the bones. Gareth give us his usual unaccompanied demonstration as to how to play the uke which is always enjoyed by the audience. The only performer who did not play was Andrew Little. Perhaps next month? Alan Newton who gave a superb rendering of *"Come to the Cabaret"* to concluded the show. His second number was a comic version of *"Swimmin With the Wimmen"* where Alan dressed for the part in flippers, bathing hat and rubber ring. It was all great stuff. If I have forgotten anyone well you were great too! *Thanks Brian.*

The 1990 Trip To Holland was a nightmare—

but a ball of fun—Continued from last month . . . We marched our gang, with luggage, through the streets of Wageningen and as we turned the final corner we saw the funniest sight ever. The three ladies and two men—plus Keith in a wheelchair had failed to push start the 5 ton coach, - possibly they were out of practise, or was it due to the fact that the brakes were seized on. We were many miles from home with a clapped out coach, yet spirits were high and we've never laughed so much. What else could go wrong? The Dutch AA were called out and within a couple of hours we were on our way back home, - but running late to catch the boat. Bill put his foot down hard to get to the docks before the coached packed in completely. We couldn't stop for a break, no toilet stops,- and the toilet on the coach wasn't working — "Don't drink anything till we reach the boat" he cried. "Hold yourself."

Bill phoned home to his garage, "Meet us at Dover with a fresh coach, this one won't finish the journey." Everybody on the coach heard this which brought howls of "I've got to be in work tomorrow," followed by more laughter from the crowd. We arrived with ten minutes to spare and boarded ship. Fate attacked again when we found that the lifts to upper decks were not working and Keith Smith, a big man in a wheelchair had to be manhandled up the stairs. To make things worse someone had let his wheelchair tyres down. What else could go wrong?

To leave the boat, at Dover, our gang of muscle men had to push the coach to get it started, which brought loud laughter from the other coaches. Fortunately it started at the first push so we were on our way. Bill's second coach was waiting for us at the dock gates and we transferred the luggage over. The old coach went in front for fear of it breaking down again, but it ran like a dream, without any problems, and the two inch dowel was still jammed in the crank case.

Turned mid-night and we arrived in Wigan. The cold rain was bucketing down and we got soaking wet while we were unloading the cases. Bill's yard is a rough piece of land with lots of puddles, and in pitch darkness. We found every puddle. Well this was a most disastrous trip but everyone on the coach had a brilliant experience never to be repeated. THE END.

We have somewhere, a very funny photo of the ladies attempting to push the coach in Holland.

Wonderful Amsterdam Trip—Well, that's another

successful trip under our belts. The trip to Amsterdam went smooth—well almost—with only three or four disasters, which fortunately didn't dampen our spirits too much. The first bit of bad news arrived when we stepped on the coach and discovered that Phil Hughes and Jean Smith couldn't make the trip. Phil had taken ill the night previous.



The second disaster, which came as quite a shock, left us gloomy for awhile. The coach driver, George, warned us on leaving the coach in the Amsterdam centre, that we must beware of PICKPOCKETS. Two minutes later Brian Edge had his wallet lifted containing about £350, plus all his information, bank details, credit cards etc. To make things worse a banner flew above his head telling all to BEWARE OF PICKPOCKETS. These criminals are so crafty. While this shady looking character in the photo was having his photo taken, with the ladies, one of his gang was helping himself to the contents of the onlookers pockets. However, Brian and Connie looked on it very philosophically and said, "Well we are only too pleased that the disaster wasn't a coach crash or something like that." Very wise!



ANOTHER FAWLTY TOWERS—The IBIS Hotel is a great place to stay. Quite rich looking, clean and set in lovely green fields with large fish ponds. But whoever designed the place must have been some sort of a practical joker because every fresh coach load of people who arrived had to spend the next half hour looking for rooms. Up and down—up and down—up and down, following anyone who you thought might look as if he knew what he was doing. This was because the rooms are allocated by the driver of the coach, and he's no wiser than you.

The hotel is built in three blocks which don't link up—only at the bottom—and there are very few signs telling you which block is yours, especially if you're a little tired from the journey. Now you'd think that if you chose the wrong block you'd soon be able to jump from one block to the other, without any problems, but not in this case. If after lugging the suitcases in the lift, to take to the top floor, you discover that room 4321 isn't on that floor, then you have to lug the whole lot down again to try another block. Then, after hauling to lot into the lift again, you find that once again you've drawn a blank. At that stage you look for someone who appears to know where he's going and follow him, - only to discover that he's as lost as you. Even one of the cleaning staff directed me to the wrong block. Because the George Formby Players have a happy spirit we enjoyed the confusion and laughed all the way, - up

and down—up and down again. It went on forever. The staff ignored us as they've seen it all happen so often. Everybody settled into their excellent rooms, - apart from Alan & Pat Chenery who sensed a horrible smell in each of the rooms they were offered. Finally they were delighted and settled in for the night.



Des looked very worried, -
"We are not that friendly."

DOUBLE BED PANIC—But Dez Redfern didn't settle in—no way. He was extremely worried!!! After entertaining the crowds at the bar until 3am he went to his room only to discover that he was sharing a double room with Charlie Penman and, - it was a double bed. Laid back Des had never moved so fast. He shot down to the reception and, in his best English, blurted out, "Charlie and I are friends but we are not that friendly! Des looked worried for once. The staff quickly found him another room for the night.

ALICE PANIC—Alice Cronshaw almost had tears in her eyes when she discovered that she'd left her 'life saving pills' at home. Panic, panic, panic for the next few hours as she dashed from one room to another wondering what on earth she could do. She had to have the pills at all costs. Ever helpful Walter said, "Look, if we don't manage to find a doctor that can help you, I will hop on a plane and go back home to fetch them." More panic, panic, panic, Alice rings up, "Hello, is that the doctor? - "Yes! This is the doctor" - "er, er, er, hold on. I've just remembered where the pills are. Thank you very much but I don't need you now." Walter also had a little panic when he lost a tooth as he was biting on a round of toasted bread leaving him with a slight whistle in his speech. . You couldn't get better scripts than these on TV.

AMSTER CANAL BOAT TRIP—The city gets its name from the Amster Canal which has a dam. It is surrounded by old architecture, however very little interest was shown by many of our happy band of George Formby Players when the boat Captain and guide tried in vane to educate us on the fine arts of Amsterdam. We just wanted to get on with our "Sailing Up The River Concert" and the poor Captain had absolutely no control. He gave up to leave us mopping up the bottles of red and white wine which were placed on every table.

The wine did the trick and very soon we had all the players up front banging out all George's hearty songs. Everybody joined in—except the crew—and after the wine the songs had never sounded better. It was a great night and one to remember.

IRMA GREISER—Some of you will remember Adolf Hitler's right hand woman who was the dreaded monster of the German concentration camps. Well, I've got news for you. She's still around and working collecting toilet money on Amsterdam City Railway Station. I noticed

that there was a very long queue outside the ladies toilet so, as a man came out of the gents I quickly nipped in smartishly. Irma saw this and immediately ran into the gents to drag me out. "Read this, read this," she constantly repeated as she pointed to the Dutch notice which was pinned to the door. I got the impression that she hated men as she blasted my eardrums.



Jaap's daughter Ina

OUR DUTCH FRIENDS—One of the reasons for the trip was to make contact with old friends from the past who are—or were—members of the GFS. These people love



Jaap Hofman

George's songs and over the years they've made many trips to the Blackpool meetings. Jaap Hofman arranged for us to all meet at this wonderful community hall and bar where we spent four hours together chatting, playing and enjoying each others company.

THE GEORGE FORMBY SOCIETY—NEDERLANDS A few years back the Dutch players had two GF Societies but now they are down to one with only around twenty members. Jaap, who is dedicated to George, is the Treasurer and helps to keep the GF fans together. Along with Jaap came his daughter, Ina, who is not particularly interested in George but who enjoyed meeting Jaap's fellow enthusiasts. We were very pleased to meet other



Jan and Carolina Kramer, excellent Email contacts in Holland

Dutch players and friends: Jan Kramer (our Email contact) and his wife Carline, - Iet Romsom, - Jaap Smit, - Lawrence Hagensten, - Wim Van de Ven (commonly known as Bill) and last but certainly not least Jan Fens, a really great craftsman who makes models. He brought along a table full of exhibits for us to view.



Jaap Smit

Jan Kramer was the first of the Dutch players to get up on stage and we soon discovered that he has a great strong voice.

As usual he received a hearty applause from the crowd. Also with a lovely voice, and who puts his heart into every song, is Wim Van de Ven (call me Bill). He loves to play nice quiet ballads.



Wim Van de Ven Known as Bill

I'll never forget the treat I had some eleven years ago when I heard Jaap Hofman sing George's "Down The Old Coal Hole," so I threw out a request for him to sing it again. "If I can remember the words," said Jaap. In his usual 'deep down in the coal mine' voice he gave us his rendition and fortunately remembered all the verses. Good show Jaap.



Iet Romson and Jan Fens brought along a great display of hand made GF memorabilia

In his usual 'deep down in the coal mine' voice he gave us his rendition and fortunately remembered all the verses.

We have great admiration for these GF enthusiasts who plug away trying to keep George's name alive. In their country they have few means of obtaining simple things like GF backing tapes, books, uke strings, bridges etc. but they keep on playing. So if there's any GFS officials out there: these Formby fans need support.

CD PRODUCED—Paul Woodhead did a grand job of recording the concert and a CD will soon be available.



HAPPY BIRTHDAY—ELSIE WALTON (right of picture) celebrated her 70th birthday on the coach with a bag full of toffees. "Enjoyed every minute" said Elsie.

Betty Cox (left) gave us the quote of the trip. When daughter Jill butted into her conversation, she said, "Shrink Your Neck." Poor Jill was gobsmacked! "Mother," she said, "Where's that from?"

Still on the Dutch Trip

You can always rely on Alice Cronshaw for a good laugh and she didn't let us down in Amsterdam. The gents toilets in the streets leave little to the imagination as they are exposed to all who pass by with very little privacy.

Alice, on the right, made Walter jump when she suddenly turned up with a guided tour of the toilets while he was attempting to relieve himself. Poor Walter was shell-shocked but Alice just carried on with her tour.



Colin, Alan, Pat & Christine wish to express a

BIG AMSTERDAM THANKYOU to Stan Evans and Jaap Hofman in Holland for all the hard work in making the Amsterdam Concert, firstly possible, and for helping to make it the great success that it was. We know that it took many phone calls and E-mails to Holland and back. Thank you Stan and Jaap.

Thanks also go to Paul and Gill Woodhead for buying wine then selling it on the bus to raise money to help cover costs of the hall in which the concert was held. To Des Redfern, for lending us his sound equipment. Which was greatly appreciated.

Finally A BIG THANKYOU from Christine for the kind messages received and the beautiful magnolia tree, which was presented to me by Brian and Connie Edge on your behalf. *Thank you Christine. All the hard work was appreciated by all. It's not easy organising a coach trip but thank yourself lucky you didn't have a coach load of Charlie Penmens.*

P.S. The cost of the hall was 240 euros. We raised half of this through a raffle and with Paul and Jill's wine sales to the drunkards at the back of the coach. Jaap Hofman contributed an equal amount from the George Formby Society funds, Netherlands.

Jaap writes—Many, many thanks for your warm enjoyment at our meeting.

And thank you Jaap. Our merry band of George Formby Players were delighted at meeting you all and are looking forward to doing it again. Perhaps by plane next time.

Liverpool had a great night—After the biggest downpour of rain that flooded the roads and slowed down all the traffic, it was almost a full house at the June Liverpool meeting. As usual, night owl Des Redfern turned up about 10pm—just in time to take over the stage for the rest of the night and, along with John Shreeve they did an excellent job.

Apart from George Formby songs, Des also has a repertoire of old established Irish songs like, Fields Of Athenrye, - 40 Shades Of Green, - The Wild Rover,— Black Velvet Band, and wherever he goes he always makes for the nearest Irish club where he often performs until the early hours of the morning. So perhaps he's got a touch of Irish blood in him.

We are pleased that Tom Bailey is getting back to normal health. Tom, who has been the regular anchor since the meeting started 11 years ago, never fails to turn up with a bag full of raffle prizes. He also takes the money on the door and keeps in contact with all the members. So we are very pleased for you Tom. Keep up the good work.

What An Interesting Chap—Maurice Leakey—

I received a phone call the other day from Maurice Leakey. He was looking for GF videos and found my name in his local Car Boot in Bristol. How's that for fame?



I explained that I no longer supplied any tapes, videos etc. and put him in touch with Mal Scott of Southport. However during our conversation it turned out that we have quite a lot in common. Like myself, Maurice has worked as a cinema operator and around the same period, in the early 1940s. The difference is that my experience lasted for about two years in the local cinema while Maurice stayed with the trade. He was a cine operator in the RAF, followed by a career working for EMI. Now he is using it as a keen hobby.

Now retired, Maurice is a keen collector of cine films and now owns around 750, specialising, whenever possible on 16mm black & white British musicals, which he finds difficult to obtain. He owns George's "No Limit" on Super 8, and "Spare A Copper" on 16mm, and is always looking for more.

"Well," I said, "You are just the man I am looking for. I have some GF films for sale on 16mm, and a projector to show them on." Within a couple of days he was knocking on my door, which resulted in him buying the lot.

Altogether he owns around 20 different types of projectors (I'll bet his wife is pleased) and is always on the lookout for more. So if you have any cine films or a projector for sale, drop me a line and I'll be pleased to put Maurice in touch with you.

Hee, I Was Proud! - I was with Jon Baddeley the other day and he said, "I was talking to this CHAP and . . ." - "Hold it there Jon" I said, "I'm really pleased that you referred to this as a CHAP. That's got reet British spirit! I hate the word 'Guy'. Now carry on with your story."

Bob Muirhead Emails Hi Stan, Just returned from the Jack Jones Concert which I thought was excellent, someone said we should do it again next year and I agree. We went to see Joe Brown a couple of weeks ago and he brought the house down with his Uke playing, only problem for me was I got home around midnight and then had to be at the airport for 4am to catch a flight to Majorca. Andy Eastwood was appearing for one night at a nearby hotel so Sheila and I went along to see the show, spent a pleasant hour with Andy before he went on and enjoyed his performance very much (he gets better every time I see him) I was amazed when he brought out a violin and wowed them with his playing what a musician eh. See you at Liverpool.

Two In A Row at Sale by Cyril Palmer

It was always going to be difficult to match the success of the April meeting, but a surprise was in store. Another good attendance of fifty, of whom fourteen were first time visitors and four more were first time at our current venue. I hope I don't mix up any of the new names. Tom and Norah Meredith with sister Dorothy brought our longest travelled visitor, cousin Joan from Australia. Well I didn't mean they were there to bring her... oh, never mind, it's just another senior moment. But they also brought along the latest youthful talent, Greg Simister. (Talk about rent a crowd!) Greg sang "Licence" and "Home Guard Blues," Tom's songs were, "Little Ukulele" and "Our Sergeant Major."



Christine Wood made her first visit from Crewe and thoughtfully brought along husband Colin, who was "Putting On The Style" with partner Alan Chenery. From North Wales, Jean Nadin brought friend Dorothy with husband Val. Also from Wales were the famous Penyffordd Plonkers, Frank, Deg and Phil (and Mrs Phil—sorry about that! - must make more effort to get the names of our guests) Frank was a little under the weather, but Phil and Deg were in good form with "Blackpool Rock" and Mr Wu's A Window Cleaner." What a happy smiling bunch they are. Phil Jones, (first appearance in Timperley) includes Irving Berlin songs. Tonight's was "Dancing Cheek To Cheek." Great stuff.

Mike Barret found his way from Liverpool with some difficulty and couldn't be persuaded to play on this occasion—perhaps next time?

It's always nice to meet old friends (or, rather, friends of the past!), so thanks to Les Pearson for bringing Bob Walsh, an early member at Sale. A favourite of Bob's was "I Do Do Things, I Do." - not often heard. He had a natural mischievous glint in his eye, appropriate to that song. In contrast to the first time visitors, Ron Kelly got a round of applause for his 100% attendance in the two years since he first appeared at Sale. We must be doing something right.

The evening went really well—there were many expressions of appreciation our visitors left for home. Walter Kirkland opened with "Happy Go Lucky Me" - and of course, he never does stop laughing, even when rattling those bones. Alice makes a good partner for Walter. Her laugh, as with Connie Edge, can send the whole room into hysterics, and who could want more? Alice expressed her feelings with "(take) All Of Me" and "If You Were The Only Boy In The World" (If she had Walter in mind I think "boy" is stretching things out a bit!)

Connie, risking a damp posterior with, "Sitting On The Sands All Night," followed with "Lambeth Walk." (to dry out) Husband Brian sang Walter Langshaw's comic "Robin Hood and how "You can have a lovely day on "Wigan Pier." Some folk annoyingly throw their weight about, but Alison Nadin throws her voice about, this time having a hilarious conversation with granddad Alf. Then, before she could leave the microphone, Alice surprised her with a birthday cake, which Alison duly cut to the strains of "Happy Birthday." Throughout the evening there were songs in nice variety, familiar songs mixed with those rarely sung. Two show songs were "You're Just In Love." in a bones medley from Jim Knight, and "Oh What A beautiful Morning" sung by Paul Kenny.

The other singers were Alan Southworth, Jon Baddeley and Jack Valentine. Their songs included "The Lancashire Lad And His Uke" (Alan,) "When The Waterworks Caught Fire" and "Our Fanny's Gone All Yankee" (Jon,) "Wrap Your Troubles In dreams" (Jack,) Can it be true? All this for only 1 pound sterling. *Thanks Cyril.*

Wigan May Dayze—Stan & I, “The Past Its” (Well & Truly, -

I’m well and he’s truly) were there to get the crowd warmed up for the George Formby Players, - but what a job it was. We were set up in Market Street, - stone cold canvassing, - having to attract the attention of passing crowds who were busy doing their Saturday afternoon shopping. We had no props, no posters, no stage, no introduction, no shelter from the rain and cold winds. Just us and our disk jockey who was tucked under his 8 foot X 8 foot plastic canopy.

As soon as we announced that we were about to give them a few songs, we were verbally attacked (in yer face stuff) by a gang of teenagers who were demanding Kylie Monologue songs. Fortunately they decided to move off to make some noise further down the street. It’s not an easy task warming Wiganers up on a cold day and especially if they’d been beaten the night before by Bradford.



“Proud of Wigan”
said George.

Now Wiganers are very fast movers when they’re dashing for the try line with a rugby ball in their hands, but they were slow when we were urging them to come forward to create an audience for us. They were all parked a 100 yards down Market Street. However Stan & I crashed on and very slowly the crowds began to creep forward. One or two of them attempted to join in with the singing and a young couple gave us a few dance steps.



Connie braved the
extreme cold

It was a very cold and windy day and our problem was that we couldn’t hear the backing coming out of the speakers. However, the other entertainers about 200 yards further down sent a message to tell us to turn it down as we were blasting them out of Market Street. Next time we’ll play down stream with the wind. Connie Edge was so cold she had to nip round the corner now and then to get out of the wind. But, with true British grit she soon got back on stage again. Boater hats were blowing down Market Street followed by singers chasing after them.

After our half hour spot, the George Formby Players took over the cobble stone stage and entertained the crowds for the next 90 minutes. They belted out George’s usuals: Windows, Lamp Post, Mr Wu, Nightshirt, etc. and bigger crowds started to gather. There were shouts of “More” creeping through after every song and very shortly they wouldn’t let them off stage. There’s no doubt about it but the quality of our performances are improving every time we do a show.

After the two concerts we were invited to sandwiches and drinks in the nearby Council Information building and then the gang dispersed to make their ways home. Our thanks to all who took part and to the Council gang, led by Nicky Matthews, for the invitation.

Quote in Dutch café— “Hey waiter, why is our a ‘minute steak’ taking half an hour?”

Judith Townsend of Sheffield Writes—Thanks for the



article Stan in the last issue. If someone had told me ten years ago that I would get up on stage, singing and playing the ukulele, I would have said that they were mad. I was not the sort of person to have the confidence to do anything like that.

It all started with a young man who came entertaining in our local pub. Many of you will remember him. It was Mike Warren and he did four George Formby songs as part of his act. My husband Bob, and I, struck up friendship with Mike and his wife and they brought us along to Blackpool in 1992. Bob bought a cheap uke and started to play a little. He enjoys getting up for the thrash. When he bought a new uke from Gordon Markendale, I decided to have a go at playing the old one.

Five years ago we started the Sheffield meeting and Kath Hammond and I gave each other the support we needed to go on stage by performing duets together. I don't have a good singing voice but I get a great deal of pleasure from playing the uke.

I am really proud to be a member of the GFS and enjoy meeting so many like-minded people. We don't have a car so it is difficult to get to other meetings, but Phil and Janet Hatswell were kind enough to bring us to Sale. I thoroughly enjoyed the meeting and hope to visit you all again. Best Wishes, Judith Townsend.

Thank you Judith. I thought were performed very well at Sale. You were great!!! Don't worry about the quality of voice. George's songs don't require anyone to be able to sing like Caruso. He didn't have a good voice himself but he was oozing with character, and his timing was perfect. Tessie O'Shea had a dreadful voice, and murdered the uke, but she was loaded with personality. We look forward to seeing you all again.

Olwen Gale has been searching through the archives again and sent in the following article.



Chris Morris's 1994 TV satire, "The Day Today" featured a brief sketch claiming that 'Singer—songwriter, George Formby, actually wrote Bob Dylan's songs in the 1940s. Stock wartime footage of the great-coated George Formby, who was entertaining laughing troops, was accompanied by a convincing soundtrack impersonator warbling 'Subterranean Homesick Blues' *Thanks Olwen. Always nice to hear from you.*

There was a young Scotsman named Andy
Who called in the pub for a shandy
As he lifted his kilt, to wipe up what he'd spilt
The landlord said, "My, goodness, that's handy."

There was an old farmer named Burke
Who pulled up his cart with a jerk
The load of manure, which was most
insecure
Left him up to his neck in his work

HAVE YOU ANY LIMERICKS?

Beware! - If ever you are asked to do a show for a political party, be careful. Stan Watkinson & I, THE PAST ITS (Well & Truly—I'm well and he's truly) were asked to do a show for a party—I won't say which—in a large pub.

It was the worst venue we've ever played at. It was a two tier room and we, along with an audience of six, were performing on the top shelf. Underneath us, completely out of sight, was the main audience but we couldn't see any of them. Our audience of six, up on our shelf, were attentive and joined in the singing, but down below, in the pits, there was a lot of shouting, - to each other— I don't think that they knew we were there. I have never heard so much noise coming from a crowd. We thought, "Stick at it and the excitement will eventually die down, - but it didn't! It went louder! The only time there was hush was when we stopped singing. It was dreadful!

REVENGE! - However, we did get one spot of revenge. A couple of years back I wrote to UNCLE JOES MINT BALLS to tell them that our favourite "Mint Balls singer, Jim Bramwell, was having difficulty in obtaining mint-balls—to hand out at the meetings and old folks homes - and how's about sponsoring Jim to the tune of say, a couple of tins each month. After about three months I finally received a reply stating that they can't supply mint balls to everybody who sings the song. Well, the owner of Uncle Joes was present at this gathering and it was requested that we sing "Mint Balls." - "Sorry," I told em, "Jim's not with us tonight. He's out looking for mint balls."

Actually, the organisers made a blunder with their printing. I told them several times over that we are "THE PAST ITS" and we sing all the old songs including some of George Formby's. But when we arrived at the pub they'd got us down as THE GEORGE FORMBY APPRECIATION SOCIETY and some were expecting an army of GF players to turn up to entertain them.

Fortunately, Anthony Mason was available on the night so, with his arm up his back he volunteered to do a GF spot. By the time Anthony arrived the noise had got louder and I was expecting him to walk out. However, in true professional style, he got them under control and in a few minutes had them singing their hearts out. For the next 30 minutes it was Blackpool Rock, Windows, Susie Susie, Sitting In A Shoe Shine Shop, War time medley, and The William Tell Overture, followed by Lamp Post. Anthony was great and very experienced.

Andy Eastwood—and more on experienced youngsters who have developed together over this past 10 years, Andy Eastwood is appearing at the Warrington Parr Hall on Saturday 29th December and at the Liverpool Philharmonic Hall on Sunday 30th and Monday 31st December 2002. At all three shows Andy is doing warm up spots for none other than KEN DODD. Good for you Andy, we are all very pleased.

Blackpool's Rob Brissott

IASH CLU

Rob was born and raised in Bury, Lancs, and was fortunate enough to grow up in the sixties era with artists like, Roy Orbison, Billy Fury, Elvis Presley and many more who left a legacy of sounds and songs that will never be heard again.



Rob has been a singer for as long as he can remember and at an early age realised that he had a talent for imitating certain singers. At 14 he built himself an act with an old Vox P.A. System and an old guitar and headed for the working men's clubs—a tough trade. He started learning to play with a banjo uke but soon switched to guitar when the neighbours banged on the wall shouting, "Shut that XXXXXX row."

He bought his first guitar on the Monday and on Friday he was earning money it. This was because the guitar and uke are similar instruments so the transition was easy.

In his 26 years as a semi professional he has had the pleasure of meeting and playing with famous stars as: Marty Wild, The Bachelors, Bill Haley and His Comets, and many more.

OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS—During the early 70s he entered Opportunity Knocks with Hughie Green and actually passed the audition. But then fate stepped in when the show was closed and taken off the air. He has since auditioned five times as Jim Reeves in Star In Their Eyes but received no response.

Currently he is part of a tribute duo with a friend of his, Dave Martin, who was a top session guitarist during the 60s. He played with such groups as The Tornados, Gerry and The Pacemakers, Freddie and The Dreamers, and also formed The Ivy League. In his act Rob impersonates Roy Orbison, Billy Fury, Buddy Holly, Slim Whitman, and has now added GEORGE FORMBY to his act.

At Christmas he took up the uke again and, as he admits, he was rubbish, but he worked hard on George's voice. His big break came when he discovered and turned up at the Blackpool monthly meeting. Watching others play the uke helped him to the extent that his wife now says that he plays fluently and no longer effluently.

George Formby has been one of the great joys of his life ever since he watched his films as a kid. Playing GF songs brings back very happy memories. He now includes George in his act and finds that wherever he entertains, young or old, they still laugh at his songs and shout for more. The name of the duo is "Buddies" and they've just brought out a new George Formby CD which is now on sale. Rob can be reached at the Blackpool monthly meeting or on 01253 313876.

Dutch Trip CDs for Sale

—Paul Woodhead has done a great job in producing CDs on the Amsterdam Concert with the Dutch Players. He has tried to make it as humorous as possible and also included about a dozen photos on the sleeve. The British players have been limited to part songs while the Dutch are in full. "Well," as Paul said, "We have a lot of opportunities to hear the British players but it might be the last time we'll hear those from Holland." Good idea, Paul. You can ring Paul on 01952 598840 or on mobile: 07748 182203.

Hope House Hospice for Children—Geoff

Shone, Penyffordd Chairman, sent in the following letter of appreciation from the management of the Hope House Group:

Dear Geoff and Dolwen, I would like to convey sincerest thanks to yourselves and the N. Wales George Formby Society for the wonderful evening Keith and I had at the Penyffordd British Legion. We both thoroughly enjoyed the entertainment and I was delighted to receive a cheque on behalf of Hope House for £520. 00. Your support, help and enthusiasm for the hospice is greatly appreciated. Please thank everyone concerned with the event Margaret Eves, Secretary Mold & District Friend of Hope House group.

Well, Penyffordd you've done a grand job there. I've spouted for years that George & Beryl would have been chuffed to support children's hospitals and hospices. They loved kids but never had any of their own. Let's have more of these events for the unfortunate kids.

What A Great Chap Des Is—"NO PROBLEM—

I'LL TAKE MINE" said Des Redfern when I asked who would supply the P.A. Equipment for the Dutch coach trip. Isn't it grand to have people around who are willing to help because it's no easy task lugging this heavy equipment around. Good for you Des. You and John Taylor might be the worst organised couple in the country (I wouldn't like to be your manager) but you are both good-hearted. You deserve medals.

Steve Evans at the Crewe Meeting sang a good old favourite, "The Irish Were Egyptians Long Ago" and after singing it claimed that it was written by a GFS member, but he wasn't quite sure who it was. Well I'll bet my right arm and my bike that it wasn't written by any GFS member but it was introduced by Ray Ellington who, around the 50s—60s had regular radio shows with the "Archie Andrews Show" and "The Goon Show."

Relegated to the Back Kitchen!

Stan Watkinson & I—"The Past Its" (Well & Truly—I'm well and he's truly) were invited to put on a jubilee show at one of the old folks homes in N. Wales and when we arrived we found that the main hall was filled to capacity and a young lady was playing keyboard for the pensioners. Her husband was the singer.

When I queried where we were to perform I was told to set up camp alongside her keyboard and every half hour we would switch over entertainers. Good idea in theory but there was absolutely no room whatsoever for us to set up. We would have completely blocked the doorway.

We stood there for 20 minutes wondering what to do when suddenly the lady boss came up with an idea. "You can set up in the back kitchen and entertain the ladies as they walk back and to serving the meals. This we did and very soon we had the ladies singing, jiggling and dancing while they were washing the dirty pots. Our songs echoed through the building which brought all the younger folk to join in the dancing. It turned out to be a very good concert and everybody was very happy. They had two shows running at the same time and IT—as usual—TURNED OUT NICE AGAIN. Good Old George!

George Formby 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 —Timperley Liberal Club, 43 Park Road, Timperley. Every 3rd Friday in the month - Ring Cyril Palmer 0161 748 6550 Adm £1. Inc. Tea & Biscuits.

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 George Formby Society Meetings:

Sat & Sun 14th & 15th Sept 2002

Sat 30th Nov & Sun 1st Dec 2002

Concerts usually start around 1.30pm each day.

Please Ring the Secretary, Steve Wylde on 01773 763353 for details on the GFS or Wintergarden meetings.

Web Site —Two Lancashire Lads:

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

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

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