

THE

# GEORGE FORMBY

## Newsletter 97

Vol. 9

No. 1

July 2003



Specially Produced for George Formby Fans  
by Stan Evans, The Hollies, 19 Hall Nook, Penketh, Warrington,  
Cheshire WA5 2HN

Tel or Fax 01925 727102

Welcome To Newsletter No. 97 and in this issue we have a full account of the Trip To Dublin which was the first of the events in the COUNTDOWN to George's 100th Anniversary. Trippers comments in the centre pages.



And what a grand time our merry band of Formby songsters had. Eve Stewart and her car crew are missing from the photo as they travelled by car and were booked in on an earlier boat.

## Report by Christine Wood.

It was a beautiful morning for the start of our trip to Dublin. After making all, the now popular pick up points, we made our way to Holyhead to catch the 14.15 Fastcat ferry to the port of Dublin. On our journey, Stan Evans brought along the now infamous box of sweets. Even though we all kept taking the sweets, the box never seemed to get any emptier. Maybe this was because during his walk down the bus, it was being constantly filled up by our friends. Thank you Stan. Also, Paul and Jill Woodhead had on sale red or white wine. They were selling it by the glass in aid of the Telford Hospice. They raised quite a few pounds. We made a stop at Llanfairpwllgwyngyllgogerychwyrndrobwlantysiliogogoch (don't ask me say it) Craft Centre. Where we could be fed and watered. Then on the final leg, to the ferry port.

As would be expected, no sooner had the bus come to halt in the ferry queue when everyone got off the coach and the ukulele players immediately started to play. Within minutes, we had quite an audience. All enjoying the music, singing along, applauding.. What a start to the weekend. The 90 min. crossing was like a mill pond. The ukes came out once again. I am sure that the Irish Ferries had never experienced anything like it.

We all got back on the coach, landed at Dublin and made the short journey to the Regency Hotel. And what a hotel, 210 rooms. Our keys were all ready for us, so after unpacking, a short rest, it was time for us all to meet in the dining room for the evening meal. We were all pleasantly surprised at the quality of the meals. Really delicious! We were even more surprised when the hotel allowed us to use the residents lounge for our concerts each night. The room was quite large, but it did get hot during the evening We had 13 artistes all raring to go. They weren't disappointed We had quite an audience, many of the fellow guests joined us: Especially a party of ladies from Northern Ireland and two chaps from near Dublin. Troy and Kieron. They were actually at a wedding being held at the hotel, but were enjoying our music



more than the their own disco. Their wives couldn't believe that their husbands had had to make "so many journeys to the loo."

The next day, we were taken to Dublin. A day to leisurely explore the city. Most opted to jump off one bus and get on another. An open top tour bus. It was a good way to see the city as places of interest were pointed out to us. The day got hotter and hotter, so we were all quite tired and pleased to see the coach for our return to the hotel later in the afternoon. Again after a rest, wash and brush up, it was time for another delicious meal and another equally entertaining concert. Everything was certainly going to plan!!

We were told next morning by Norah Meredith, that her husband Tom had once again mistaken the room door for the bathroom door and gone onto the landing. Consequently locking himself out and getting lost. Only Tom could do that! He came to no harm, although Norah contemplated sleeping with the chair by the door to stop it happening again.

Up early again next morning to wade through a wonderful choice of food for breakfast. Our trip today was to the wonderful Wicklow Mountains and Avoca (Ballykissangel - of the TV fame) via Meeting of the Waters. A truly spectacular day!! Unfortunately it never stopped raining, so we were deprived of seeing some of the most beautiful scenery on the eastern side of Ireland.

Not to miss everything, some of us waded into Ballykissangel - needless to say the pub. The famous "Fitzgeralds" We kept expecting the 'vicar or Quigley' to pop in. The not so brave looked around the Mill where the coach was parked, enjoyed a snack and a look around the craft shop. Time to board again for our return to the hotel, via the Meeting of the Waters. It still hadn't stopped raining so couldn't see this beauty spot at it's best.

Just as we entered outside Dublin, you've guessed it, the sun came out. Not to worry, our spirits weren't dampened! After our day excursion, we all needed our usual rest. Alice and Walter were enjoying their rest - Walter lying on the bed in his undies, when the door opened and in walked a member of the hotel staff. I don't know who was shocked the most!! Our final dinner was just as good, so to was our final evening of entertainment. It got better and better. MC for two evenings had been Alan Newton. Who had made an excellent job. He was entertaining with his jokes and wit. Thank you Alan. Our music engineer was Paul Woodhead who also made a great job. Thank you Paul.

Unfortunately, all good things have to come to an end. Before we knew it, it was time to pack up and make our return journey home. The crossing was a little rougher, but no one suffered from sea sickness, so once again, out came the ukes. Our fellow travelers had yet another treat, and all for free!!! We arrived back at Holyhead at 14.00 and made our way home. Delivering people to their designated drop off points.

In summing up, we had a wonderful party of people, and so had a great 4 days. It will be hard to follow next year. Thank you for your support. Chris Wood.

*And thank you Chris for your report. On behalf of the Merry Trippers, Eva & I must say that you did an excellent job in organising the trip and all your merry helpers didn't do a bad job either. We are all looking forward to the next one.*

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**Christine** is looking for suggestions for the next trip. After a 2 month break she will be asking for any ideas. Scotland has been put forward. What about the Isle Of Man where George made "No Limit." Or another attempt at the Busking Competition in Southern Ireland. Or similar. Any more ideas?



## Another Great Show at Crewe

Resident drummer Steve Hassall opened the May Crewe Show with two popular Formby numbers, *"They Can't Fool Me"* and *"She's Got Two of Everything."* Steve demonstrates just how to get the most from the banjo with his fast distinctive style of playing. Also I think it is pretty fair to say that Steve's uke is about the scruffiest in the society, which goes to prove that it doesn't matter what your instrument looks like - its how you play it!

Connie soon had the audience singing along with *"Bless 'em All"* and *"Enjoy Yourself."* Connie was on good form too as she clearly enjoyed her stint at the mike.



Cliff Royle (Felix personified) - the man who just keeps on walking has been on the march again. I have been told that he has just had a walking holiday where he covered an average of 17 miles a day in some terrible weather conditions. I can just imagine Cliff with his faithful uke strapped to his back, on the Pennine Way, leading his party, who are walking in jungle fashion behind him, battling on and using him as a windbreak. Then later, when sheltering under a tree, the members of his party pleading "Give us a tune Cliff!" Or possibly "If you don't put that bally thing away Cliff we'll wrap it round your bicycle seat! Or other such carefully chosen words. Actually I'm only joking Cliff, I really am a fully paid up member of your fan club! One thing about Cliff he is a faithful supporter of our Society and what is more he gets better with keeping. On this occasion he gave us a great rendering of the *"Wartime Medley"* and then concluded with Dickie Speake's own composition *"The Formby Fans are Meeting Tonight."*

Alice Cronshaw gave us a pleasant break from the ukulele with a couple of numbers that included *"You made me Love You."* Alice has a nice voice and works hard at putting her songs over. Jim Knight gave us *"With My Little Stick of Blackpool Rock"* a true Formby favourite followed by a bones medley with other Osseologists. It is always a treat to have the Penyffordds on stage at Crewe. The trio look good, sing well together and certainly always seem to be thoroughly enjoying themselves. On this occasion they gave us *"Mr Wu's a Window Cleaner Now"* followed by *"Sergeant Major."*

I guess it was my turn next and I went for *"I'm the King of the Swingers"* from "Jungle Book". The last time I did this was at Sale when Alan Southworth, dressed up as a monkey, appeared in the room whilst I was performing. All the ladies screamed and Alan looked around at several possibilities before selecting his wife Hilda and he sat her on his knee. Of course nobody knew who he was and they were very relieved that it was not them that Alan had picked. It was a bit of fun but perhaps a bit frightening for some!

Vera Jones then gave us *"It Had To Be You"* and *"Who's Taking You Home Tonight."* Vera is all the time gathering confidence and has to be admired for her progress. It is pretty daunting up there I can tell you. Cyril Palmer plays an instrument that looks like a guitar but actually it is a Baritone Ukulele. It has four strings where a guitar usually has six. Cyril lives in Flixton but our MCs often introduce him as coming from all sorts of places around Manchester. Cyril certainly has an affinity to Salford as he made the point pretty strongly in his prelims that Salford was *not* a part of Manchester but a City in its own right. Cyril performed *"Maggie"* and *"Barefoot Days."* The first half of the show was concluded by our own Jonathan Baddeley who gave us the rare Formby number *"When the Waterworks Caught*



Fire" and this he followed with "The Lancashire Toreador."

Arthur Newton the night's Concert Producer, who it has to be said did an excellent job of the show, opened the second half with "Sitting on the Top of Blackpool Tower" This song caused considerably controversy, as Arthur slipped in a verse which is currently being closely scrutinised by the Society Censor. (Results of the tribunal will be published in this journal in due course). For his second spot he sang a song, which has become synonymous with Oo-Ar -thur - "I wish I was back on the Farm." Arthur is a performer with a very pleasant stage presence.



Drums: Steve Hassall

The versatile Alison Nadin then came on stage with a wooden box marked Danger Wild Animal. Mary Newton was convinced that it must be her daughter Linda's Springer Spaniel pup that was in the box, but no, it turned out to be a psychedelic bird that could actually talk and sing, and do tricks with pieces of rope. I have written many times marvelling at Alison's skill in throwing her voice and at the same time convincingly following a complicated script where she often plays three parts, works two dummies, and all without moving her lips. Very clever stuff and always very welcome at the Crewe Variety Show.

Bill Turner of Werrington, Stoke on Trent, then gave us "It's a Crazy World We Live In" and "Memories" the latter from the Musical "Cats" both to his own backing music and accompanied with his ukulele. He's a Good'n! as they say in the Potteries. Margaret Moran got a great reception. Always very popular at Crewe, Margaret gave a splendid performance of the lovely ballad "With a Song in My Heart" and as a second number the "Homing Waltz". Les Pearson aka Les James then gave an impromptu stand up performance of his very own type of humour and he followed this with a Rob Wilton monologue which was very funny.

Walter Kirkland sang what he described as his favourite number namely "The Isle on Man," followed by a Jim Reeves song as backing for a bones recital. Des Redfern then performed a number that could be entitled "Great to See You, Sit you Down" followed by "Wigan Pier". Stan Evans gave a rare performance of his signature tune "Bananas" followed by "Daddy's Girl" and then it was Ashley Caldicott's spot where Stan accompanied Ashley with "Blaze Away" and "Playing on me Uke Banjo." Ashley loves being a Star. Tom Meredith then demonstrated his brilliance in miming to the voice of Al Jolson. From the front row of the orchestra stalls I can confirm that it was impossible to say, with certainty, whether Tom was miming or whether he was actually singing. Tom can no longer black up for his act but that mattered little, as his act was true perfection.

The top of the bill was Master of Ceremonies, our very own Alan Newton. What a splendid job he did for us introducing the acts along with his own type of humour. Alan was obviously all geared up for his trip to Dublin as he gave us a very rapid performance of "McNamara's Band" which left us all breathless followed by the "Ballad of Molly Malone". It was a great night in which everyone played his or her part well. Two visitors from The Netherlands, guests of Fred and Dilys Dykes, confirmed before they left what a great show they had just seen.

Thanks Brian. It was another great Musichally Night with loads of variety. You mention Alan Newton singing about Molly Malone, - Travelling through Dublin on the coach we passed Molly Malone's wheelbarrow which was on display in the street. Everybody shouted, "Oh there's Molly's Barrow" but by the time I'd cried out, "Where, where, where," the driver had shot past it.



## N. Wales June Meeting by Young Cliff Royle

**How nice** it was to have some new visitors, especially when they came to perform. From Yorkshire we had: Joe Hodkin, Vice Chairman of the GFS, with Wife Alice, Colin and Gladys Reed, and Phil and Janette Hatswell. In addition there was Bernard Young (Honorary Member of the GFS) with his Wife who live fairly locally and Eve Stewart and Thelma Cartwright from Blackpool. Also present were Alan and Pat Chenery from Fleetwood. Alan is always ready to join in and help, and it was no doubt due to his enthusiasm that we managed to raise over £900 for the Hope House Hospice for Sick Children when we played over the recent Bank Holiday Weekend at Llandudno and Colwyn Bay.



Anyway so now to the concert.

**Joe Hodkin sang** "If I had a girl like you" and "I've got a girl friend", and Alice followed with "It's raining in my heart" and "Dream a little dream of me". They both had great voices, but was here a message behind their songs? Colin Reed sang "Blackpool Belle" and "Bless em all" while wife Gladys played "The old kitchen kettle" and "I'm going to marry a far nicer boy". It was great to have a few new songs especially to have the ladies playing.

**Walter Kirkland** gave us a great medley on the uke, and then had the "bones" gang playing; this included Alan (Handsome) Newton with his Castanets. He said that! Quite a change. Alan also did his bit with a couple of new songs "Grab your ukulele and sing" (a Dickie Speake song) and "MacNamara's Band" which he had apparently played in Dublin. Both songs went down well. Jonathan Baddeley played "Pleasure Cruise" and then, without the uke, sang "Emperor of Lancashire". After due adjustment of his appliances (not my words) Cyril Palmer played his Baritone Uke and sang "My Maggie" and "The sunshine of your smile". A really nice change from hearing the ukulele. Then Connie Edge was introduced by Phil Hughes as that "very talented and lovely lady". Did it do her ego good? Must have done for she did a great job on "Double Dare You", and "Enjoy yourself it's later than you think". There was then a change of tempo with Gregory Simister showing us just how to play the uke when he sang "Lads of the village get cracking" and "Out in the Middle East". Good lad Greg; you were great. He was assisted of stage by Jonathan and Alan who did the usual dance routine and got the audience involved with the rousing words and actions.

**To end the first half** the "Past-its" put on their usual good show. Stan Evans had already bribed the audience by passing round a tub of sweets a few times, and then Stan Watkinson wanted a big cheer for his home town Liverpool for having won the accolade of "Capital of Culture".

**Tom Meredith** kicked off after the interval with two of George's songs. Tom always puts over a good act and even takes everything in fun even if he misses a few words. Not to be outdone this part of the concert had performances by three ladies. Pam Baddeley from the Crewe Branch with "Live in a world of our own" and "Island of dreams"; Alice Cronshaw from the Sale Branch, always a crowd puller with her love songs, sang "If you just smile" and "Love letters straight from your heart", and Vera Jones, also from Crewe, with a medley of old time songs. We are proud of our ladies who perform; hopefully we may have more in the future.



Jim Knight. What a jolly MC





A Happy Band of Songsters from Yorkshire

**What a change** of tempo when Jim Knight played his own version of "Alexander's rag time band" which just keeps going faster and faster until eventually he either cannot go any faster or runs out of breath and all played to his own accompaniment. He followed this with his usual team in another Bones Thrash. Brian Edge, always ready to perform a rather different style of song, gave us "Give me a chance to be twenty again". A great song Brian and well performed. Some of us would perhaps just welcome a chance! We had still more bright spots when Alan Chenery came on to play one of Frankie Wood's compositions "The Boogie Woogie Ukulele Man". A great song composed by a man of so many talents, and performed in Alan's usual jovial style. Alan followed this with "Wigan Boat Express".

**Phil Hughes**, who had done an excellent job as M.C. during the first half of the evening, came on as the last turn and played "Mr Wu's a window cleaner now". Phil plays as part of the three Tenors. Unfortunately one of them was away in Belgium and another has a broken finger so he was on his own. We knew he could do well as a solo artist, and he did. First time on his own at Penyffordd, and he was great. Having also just learned a new song " Little back room upstairs" he had played this earlier in the evening with Alan Chenery and myself. So congratulations Phil.

#### **There were a few special announcements.**

1. The September meeting will be in the Village Institute, as the Legion have a special event on that night.
2. The Staff at the Legion will start providing light meals in July from 8.30 to 10.30 PM for anyone wanting one. This will be for a trial period. The meals will be something in the form of chips with chicken, pie etc. See how it goes.
3. Our next practice night is to be on Monday 7th July at the British Legion starting at 7.30 P.M  
All welcome including learners.
4. We have been invited to support the Penyffordd Carnival on 21st June.
5. Thanks were expressed to all those who made the evening such a success, and as an after-thought can we say thank you to all those who brought raffle prizes. These are always welcome and supplement those that are provided each month from the Branch Funds. Our grateful thanks also go the British Legion and their staff for the support they so willingly give to us.

**So we came** to the end of the evening with a THRASH at which our Yorkshire friends took the lead on the Mikes. We hope they and all our visitors enjoyed their evening. *Thanks Cliff.*

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**A Special Thank You** from Pat & Alan Chenery for the lovely flowers she received from the Happy Dublin Trippers.

## Blackpool Night and what a GREAT NIGHT

it was!!! As it was Bank Holiday Monday the place was packed and people came from everywhere. It was a record crowd of 52 and perched dead centre of the room was a host of talent from the Sale meetings: Les Pearson, Margaret Moran, Alice Cronshaw, Cyril & Sheila Palmer, and that brilliant Mr Wonderful himself, the ever smiling, heckling, full of fun, Young Walter Kirkland, who sang George Formby's "Happy Go Lucky Me" better than George did—only kidding George.



Happy 99th Anniversary George

**HAPPY BIRTHDAY**—It was a special night because our late inspirer and mentor, George Formby, was born 99 years previous on that very day: May 26th 1904. Assuming that he was looking down on us from his heavens we honoured the occasion with a hearty **HAPPY BIRTHDAY GEORGE FORMBY**, and I'll bet he was as chuffed as little mint balls. Good old George. May his memory live forever. And let us not forget his driving force also, Beryl.

We were chuffed also to be graced with the presence of the late Les Dawson's wife Tracie. What a dear soul she is. Ever ready for a bit of fun, always looking brilliant, and I'm pleased to see that the touches of sadness that she bore a few years back have left her.



Tracie Dawson, Stan (Past It) Watkinson and Eve Stewart

We are always pleased to see dear Tracie at our meetings as she carried in with her an aura of pleasantness that, no doubt, dear Les must have recognised.



Les Dawson

Tracie told me:

"Stan, I've got a nice surprise for you. Charlotte, now aged 11, is studying to play the piano." "Do you mean like her dad?" I asked. "Not yet," she answered, "But you never know."

Wouldn't it be wonderful if Charlotte entered the entertaining world as a pianist with touches of humour like her dad who was a most brilliant and natural comedian. No doubt many will be watching Charlotte for Les's talents.



Charlotte

Can you see the resemblance in the two photos? Charlotte has the same look of seriousness but I wonder if there's a comic genius behind it waiting for the cue call? Let's face it. Les was one of the funniest comedians this country has ever produced so she must have some of this talent.

Already she is popular. In the photo she is presenting flowers to The Queen on Her Majesty's Golden Jubilee visit to Preston in August 2002. Les would have been proud.



**MORE ON BLACKPOOL—Peter Brown** has a unique act. He walks on stage carrying a Coffin shaped Uke Case and when I asked him why it was shaped like that he said, "If I'm going to die on stage I'll be ready for it."

Peter begins his spot with a number of jokes and one lines, - "I see the French have got new war tanks. These tanks have six reverse gears, - for going backward. And one forward gear. That's for if they get attacked from the rear."

He then goes on to sing his favourite Formby number, "Why don't women like me" which always goes down very well. I admire Peter's attitude to being an entertainer. "It's all fun," and that's how we should recognise it also. Anyone who carries a coffin on stage, as part of his act, deserves a good round of applause before he starts. Good for you Peter. Keep it up.



Here's Peter ready for dying on stage

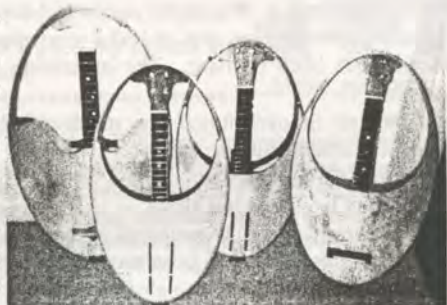
Our thanks to all who give their support to the Blackpool meeting. Charles & Eve & helpers, go to a lot of effort to put on a great night for us. It is very much appreciated.

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## Ken Smith writes—

Dear Stan, Thank you for your interest in my newly made RIM UKE. I have completed the 6th prototype UKE which is a significant improvement on the previous five and compares very favourably with other ukuleles currently in use.

On my basic test, using a sound meter at approximately 1 meter distance, I am recording an average 92Dbs (as against a powerful Wendle Hall Banjo UKE 102 Dbs). Other wooden ukuleles are in the Range 75- 89 Dbs. There is a bridge transducer connected into a 1/4" jack on the rim which gives plenty of controllable volume via an amp if needed. Because the body is "dynamic" rather than static a good test period is very important. The 7th prototype on which I am currently working is a steel string guitar and will, I think, determine whether the general idea is valid or not.



Ken's new design has an outer space look. Hope you do well with them Ken.

I am still doing the odd charity show for NSPCC but prototype work has reduced my attendances on the "playing circuit". However, your Newsletter keeps me in touch! Thanks.

PS If anyone wants to play the Rim UKE, give me a ring on 0113 2679613 and I will see what can be arranged.

*Thanks Ken. Not seen you for many months. Pleased to know that you are still keeping up with the Children's Hospital Work.*

**George's 100th Anniversary is getting closer**

## Great Trip To Dublin They all agreed. Let's do it again.

**Brian & Beryl Fisher** said: Absolutely superb trip. We thoroughly enjoyed the excellent music.

**Colin & Christine Wood**: Super, absolutely super, yes super, it was super, super, super. Thoroughly enjoyed it, super crowd, super lot of passengers, no problems, went super.

**Kay Walsh**: Great, all went great. This is my second trip and we enjoyed every minute.

**Jackie Mullock**: Third trip and it was brilliant.

**Cynthia & Peter Whittaker**: Had a wonderful time and it's been brilliant. No problems. Enjoyed the company, the music, and the hotel and driver, all brilliant.

My name's **Des**! (Des who?) Des Battersby, alias Des Redfern, and I'm having a rough time in Coronation Street at the moment. Thoroughly happy, good food, good music, let's do it all again.

**Bill & Sheila Found**, as in Lost & Found: We've had a wonderful time and I didn't even fall out with him indoors. Bill said: I'm her husband and we've lived together for 45 years. Really enjoyed it—the trip I mean—and we must go again.

**Jack & Margaret Davies**: A really nice holiday and we are looking forward to the next one. Had a very wonderful holiday.

**Tony & Marge Elsdén**: We've had a grand holiday thanks to all who organised it. Wonderful music and hotel which would normally cost a fortune. We've had a marvellous time and the company has been brilliant. The organising has been really fantastic.

**Jean Parkes**: Enjoyed it and very much and made lots of new friends. Entertainment was great

**Joan Cain**: Enjoy every minute and we just hope we were going the other way back to Dublin.

**Jim & Myra Knight**: We enjoyed it very much and the company of friends. If it had been any better we wouldn't have been able to stand it.

**Alice Cronshaw**: I've only got one complaint—too much sex, ha, ha, ha, it's tied me down, ha, ha, ha, but I enjoyed it, ha, ha, ha. Can't wait for the next trip.

**Walter Kirkland**: I've had too many headaches but I overcome them, accompanied by ha, ha, ha, from Alice.

**Valentine & Dorothy Wood**: Very good, great entertainment. Thoroughly enjoyed the trip and especially Alice singing, "I've Got A Boyfriend Teaching Me How To Make Love."

**Betty Cox**: Terrific trip—all of it.

**Molly Smith**—not Malone: I thoroughly enjoyed you singing "It's Only Friday".

**Paul & Jill Woodhead**: Thoroughly enjoyed bringing my mother-in-law on holiday with us, and I didn't think it could go any better until we brought her sister as well. Enjoyed your regular delivery of sweets. You had the variety just perfect

**Alan Newton**: I Wish I Could Play The Ukulele, just like



Beryl & Brian Fisher



Jackie Mullock & Kay Walsh



Peter & Cynthia Whittaker



Tony & Marge Elsdén



Dorothy & Valentine Wood



George Formby used to do. First class trip. Thoroughly enjoyed the wonderful trip. When's the next one?

**Chris & Margaret Volp:** It's been fantastic and we've thoroughly enjoyed every minute. We've had an excellent time, good company, the Sweet Round was great.

**Ted & Ruth Kennedy:** We've enjoyed it very much and enjoyed the very good company.

**Charlie Penman:** I am the real Charles Penman and I didn't get lost this year.

**Chrissie Bussingham:** No complaints whatsoever apart from Charlie who never stops talking.

**Tom Meredith:** I don't kiss & tell.

**Nora Meredith:** I've got Tom sussed out now. I'm having him micro-chipped so he won't get lost.



Margaret & Chris Volp



Tom & Nora Meredith

**Car crunch**—All praised the driver, Martin, and thanked him for a most careful trip. Well done Martin. Our lives were in your hands. However Martin did have one problem as he was driving through the village of TVs Ballikassangel. Typical of laid back Ireland, one young man parked his car on double yellow lines, in the narrowest part of the village, and on a bend outside the local pub. The gap was so narrow that Martin couldn't get through with the coach. After several horn blowings the young man came out of the pub and argued: What? You can't drive a bus through there? "No," said Martin, "Coaches don't bend in the middle." The young man finished up with a bump in the side of his side.



Martin, our driver

**Regret** that we couldn't print all of the photos. Like Walter, my camera also had a few headaches and the snaps turned out very dark.

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## The News 50 Years Ago

doesn't mean a thing to you but it soon will, because we're going to be hearing a lot about this young man. Norman's just burst forth as one of Britain's top comedians. He first hit the headlines at the London Casino, where he was so nervous that a huge sandwich he was eating when the curtain went up refused to be swallowed. For a minute he couldn't speak. But for that minute he had the audience eating out of his hand. Norman, who's only 27, became a comic by accident. He'd served with the regular army off and on since he was 15.

One evening during the war, it was decided to put on a regimental concert. Norman volunteered, went on and started clowning. He was so good that it was decided to build a show round him.

Out of the Army, he started at small music halls, was spotted by a scout and recommended to the Casino. After that, there was no stopping him. On stage he finds that he doesn't have to tell jokes to get laughs. He just clowns.

He has an Indian rubber face that can be twisted into any shape, plays the clarinet (from his army band days) and piano, and also has a good voice. His props—a stringy tie, and old shirt, an evening suit several times too large, and Norman Wisdom. Already he's made a start in films. He had a part in, "A Date With A Dream", a new musical where he appears in a Collins Music Hall sequence. Oddly enough it was with Collins that he made his first professional appearance at £5 a week.



Norman Wisdom



## Malcolm Palmer sends in an article from the Lytham Gazette SECRETS BEHIND GEORGE'S UKULELE

EXCLUSIVE by Martyn Corner

A ST ANNES antique shop has uncovered a ukulele once owned by George Formby; the town's most famous former resident. Brian Chesters from Janet's Antiques on Park Road bought the instrument from a local dealer and has since been able to verify that that it did indeed once belong to the world famous entertainer.

"The dealer informed me that it was once George Formby's property," said Brian, and was presented to the late owner, a Mr Tony Heaton of Blackpool, but he knew nothing more than that." With a little detective work from The Express Brian discovered that the instrument was given to a Fylde based entertainer called Tony Heaton, who, as Brian discovered, led a colourful life. Tony Heaton was born in 1905 and began work in the entertainments industry; Over his working years he appeared in more than 30 pantomimes and once boasted that he could do a full change of costume and wig 40 times in one night!



He visited 14 different countries in 14 months and worked with George Formby and his wife Beryl during these tours. They had a lot in common, they would have been about the same age and lived in the same area of England and were in the same business. In January 1945, he flew with George and Beryl to Burma to entertain the troops for the last few weeks of the war.

**Problems**—Sadly, after a few problems in his personal life, Tony Heaton's body was found washed up on the sands at Blackpool in August 1965. His funeral was held at St Johns Church where he was a chorister and was attended by 200 people inside and many more who couldn't get in.

When George died in 1961, his entire estate was sold at auction which was held in a marquee in the grounds of his St Annes home, including his remaining ukuleles. According to the George Formby Society, there are 19 instruments known to have been his property and most are cherished by their owners.

Brian added: "It would appear that George gave the ukulele to Tony Heaton during the war years and it has laid forgotten since his death. "It is nice to know that St Annes has unearthed the 20th of George's ukuleles."

*Thanks Malcolm for the article. I wonder if there is any truth in the tale that the uke belonged to George? Somehow, I have my doubts. However, it's not for me to judge. Let's hope for Brian sake that he can get the story confirmed. I hope he didn't get overcharged for it on the grounds that it was George's.*

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ANOTHER MALCOLM Emails—Hello there, I know that you supply a Formby Newsletter to your members. I've met you at the Cricket Club in Blackpool. Well there is an article in one of the Blackpool papers and someone has bought one of George Formby's ukuleles. Do you want a copy if I can get one?

*Thanks Malcolm. You'll not believe it but your Email came through as I was typing out the ukulele article from Malcolm Palmer. How's that for a coincidence? All Malcolms must think alike. Thanks to both Malcolms. You should form a "Think Alike Malcolm Club."*



## The Reverend John Jordan Emails—Hi Stan,

Many thanks for the Tuition Book & Tape, they are fine and should help me to get started. Thanks for your George Formby magazine - I shall keep an eye on your web site.

Reading in it about some of the stars reminded me of being a theatre chaplain at the Southport Theatre complex a few years ago. No doubt George would have appeared in Southport although it would be long before I was ordained. However, Ken Dodd, Guy Mitchell, and Ronnie Hilton were some that I came across. Best wishes, John.

*It's nice to know that we have a rocking Rev.*

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**George Forrest** writes—Hello Stan, could you let your readers know that the Gt Yarmouth Potteries is producing a George Formby Tankard for next year. It will be a limited edition and probably ready for George's 100th Anniversary. For more information ring 01493 850585, or write to them at 18 Trinity Place, Great Yarmouth NR30 3AH.  
*Thanks George. I contacted them and received the following Email:*

REPLY—Dear Stan, Mr Forrest contacted us regarding a George Formby Tankard. We are hoping to do a limited edition later this year. It will be heavily carved and maybe a yukalaly for a handle. It is still in the design stage so if you would like to send any information you think might be suitable.

For a maximum 500, a rough price would retail at approx £25.00 each and if you look at our web site you will see an example of the quality and workmanship. If we started a design this month it would take till Xmas to get the first ones into production. We will keep you informed if you would like to let some of your members know. Yours Karen Childs.

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A BIT MORE ON GEORGE—On the Ebay Computer Auctions I noticed that there was a George Formby Mug offered. It had a great picture of George playing "Licence" from the film George In Civvy Street so I put in a bid and was fortunate in winning it.

Within two or three days it turned up on the doorstep and here it is.

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**Appeal from D R Hampton**—Of Branden Lodge, Station Rd. Legbourne, Louth, Lincs LN11 8LL. Dear Sir, I would like to know if you have any video tapes of "George Formby, The Ukulele Man" It is a tribute to George and was presented by Eddie Waring. The first song on the tape is: If You Don't Want The Goods Don't Maul Em" followed by 13 more songs.

*So has anyone got a copy to spare for DR.? He'll be pleased to hear from you.*

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**Daily Mail Cutting**—A UKULELE BAND, name of "THE UKES" have been denied the opportunity of recording Kate Bush's 1982 No.1 hit Wuthering Heights. Her publishers have refused permission and Bush is protective of the song written in her teenage years. *Thanks to all who sent copies in.*

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**Low and Behold** the same Keech uke (see page 12) is now in the Ebay Auctions. With another five days to go the price has reached £175. Being advertised as one of George's has attracted 15 bidders. Normally a Keech would bring around £40 to £50, and about 4 bidders.

## Sale Report by Les Pearson—An Octogenarian

Night, well hardly, but we did have at least 4 x 80 year olds with us on the night. Many thanks to Alan (Wigan Boat Express) Chenery for bringing along 84 year old Frank Bennett of Blackpool. Frank sang "Lonesome me", which is not quite true because Frank, with all his friends, is never lonesome. Also we had 82 year old George Cheetham who performed "Abie" and "Heart Of My Heart" with his old pal Dickie Speake.



With visitors from far and wide of the country we had variety at its best, with Roy Fielden playing harmonica, Jon Baddeley on clarinet, and Alison Nadin from Rhyl with her fearsome bird puppet. Walter (bones) Kirkland and Alan Newton gave us a good selection of Irish songs while Brian White performed that good old favourite which was written by our own Walter Langshaw, "The Bowler Hat my Granddad Left To Me."

Once again we had a treat listening to Yorkshire's Judith Townsend, while at the younger end we had Greg Simister and Paul Kenny. Our concert ended with one of George Formby's oldest, "I Promised To Be Home By Nine O'clock" and we all wandered off home near to midnight. However, by the time I'd transported George Cheetham and Bob Walsh home it was nearer to 9am. Many thanks to all who supported the concert and to our brilliant artists.

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AND THERE'S MORE—Margaret & I are radio volunteers who go round the hospital wards asking for requests and then search the studio for the record or CD.

Recently I went round the men's ward B1 and met a man with one leg man by the name of George Booth - *(No Les, I hope it's not that old joke: "What was the name of the other leg?" It's not! Oh OK then.)*

*He was surprised when I told him that George's surname was also Booth, and he asked for George singing "When I'm Cleaning Windows."* In the next bed lay Albert Legg and I noticed that he also had one leg only. "Don't worry," he said, "At least we've got a pair of legs between us." How's that for great humour? At the studio we had difficulty in finding Cleaning Windows so I mentioned it at the next meeting. This resulted in a CD being donated to the N. Manchester Gen Hospital.

On Ward B2 I met Maud Booth who was surprised also when I told her that George Formby's name was Booth. She asked for "Leaning On A Lamp Post." At the end of the day we have a prize draw when all the requests are put into a box and the winner receives a dinner for two at the Cleveland Hotel, Crumpsall Lane. Imagine my surprise when the winner chosen was Maud Booth. How's that for a coincidence?

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AND THERE'S MORE—This is a short report on THE WAR WEEKEND at Ramsbottom Railway Station. Thanks to Alan & Hilda Southworth, Walter Kirkland, Alice Cronshaw, Alison Nadin and Jean Nadin, with Frankie Woods, Cyril & Sheila Palmer, and Margaret Moran, we had a most excellent and sunny day out when we entertained many people on the railway station. All the people joined in with our sing alongs but we had to stop each time a steam train came.

We were fortunate to speak to ex-soldiers who were entertained by George during the war. One said that he had a photo at home of George at the front. Maybe next year he'll think to bring it along.

*Thanks for your report Les. Sounds as if you had a great day at Ramsbottom.*



# Andy Eastwood at Blackpool and

here's the programme

## THOSE WERE THE DAYS

All-star variety as it used to be

TV comedy favourite - STU FRANCIS

Ace piano star - MIKE TERRY

Musical maestro - ANDY EASTWOOD

From 'Friday Night is Music Night' - BERYL JOHNSON

Dynamic Dance Duo - CASTLE & KING *plus...*

Blackpool's own - TIPTOES KIDZ

Pavilion Theatre, Blackpool Winter Gardens

AND HERE'S THE DATES

4th July Private function, Blackpool Winter Gardens Ballroom

7th and 14th July *The Good Olde Days*, Embassy Centre, Skegness

15th/16th July *Those Were The Days*, Pavilion Theatre, Blackpool

21st July *The Good Olde Days*, Embassy Centre, Skegness

22nd/23rd/24th July *Those Were The Days*, Pavilion Theatre, Blackpool

26th July *The Ken Dodd Happiness Show*, Futurist Theatre, Scarborough

28th July *The Good Olde Days*, Embassy Centre, Skegness

29th/30th/31st July *Those Were The Days*, Pavilion Theatre, Blackpool

2nd August *The Ken Dodd Happiness Show*, Pavilion Theatre, Worthing

3rd August *The Ken Dodd Happiness Show*, Congress Theatre, Eastbourne

4th August *The Good Olde Days*, Embassy Centre, Skegness

5th/6th/7th August *Those Were The Days*, Pavilion Theatre, Blackpool

9th/10th August *Danson Park Country Fair*, Bexleyheath, Kent

11th August *The Good Olde Days*, Embassy Centre, Skegness

12th/13th/14th August *Those Were The Days*, Pavilion Theatre, Blackpool

18th August *The Good Olde Days*, Embassy Centre, Skegness

19th/20th/21st August *Those Were The Days*, Pavilion Theatre, Blackpool

23rd August *The Ken Dodd Happiness Show*, Futurist Theatre, Scarborough

24th August *The Ken Dodd Happiness Show*, North Wales Theatre, Llandudno

25th August *The Good Olde Days*, Embassy Centre, Skegness

26th/27th/28th August *Those Were The Days*, Pavilion Theatre, Blackpool



**UKE BANJO For Sale**—Chris Metcalfe, who operates on the door at the Crewe meeting, is selling a DALLAS Uke Banjo complete with case. All in very good condition with eight Tension Rods. You can ring Chris on 01270 662390. We've known Chris for many years. Whatever he sells will be very genuine.

**And Also a Big Thank You** from Christine & Colin Wood for the lovely flowers received for their effort in organising the Dublin Trip. They wish to thank all who took part in making it a huge success and they are highly delighted that all went well so perfectly.

**Barry Cordingley** was wondering if any of our Songwriters could put music to the George Formby poem he Wrote and which was featured in last month's issue (No.96). Now if you've not got that particular issue I have printed below the first verse for you to work on. Here goes. Make a good job of it.



*1st Verse*

*I was strolling down the promenade, on Blackpool's golden mile  
When I heard the strains of a banjo-uke, it made me want to smile  
My mind went back to the good old days, when variety was king  
And people would flock from miles around, to hear George Formby sing*

There are 5 verses in total but I would suggest that a chorus is added and I'm sure that Barrie would be pleased to write the lyrics for it. A simple way to write a tune is to sit down with a uke and play the 3 basic chords: D G and A7 over and over again, in different order, to the lyrics. If you don't have any success, then add another chord or two. But keep it as simple as possible.

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## Martin Thomas Emails

Dear Stan, Do hope this email finds you well?

With reference to your article in the last issue on the George Formby poster that was auctioned on Ebay. Well this was purchased by Chris Webster who is currently living in London. I think, you know him.

*Thanks Martin, I most certainly do know Chris. We've done one or two shows together, and when he was residing in his home town of Liverpool he regularly turned up at the Blackpool meetings. Chris is a very good Keyboard and Uke player and a dedicated George Formby fan.*

*There was a very funny story about Chris. Some years back he was very concerned because his ukulele had been stolen from his house. I was the Vellum Editor at the time so he contacted me and asked if I would put a report in the next issue asking the GFS members if anyone had been offering a uke for sale. Poor Chris was very concerned about having lost his uke.*



*I was all set, and ready for going to print, when the phone rang. "Hello Stan, Chris Webster here. Don't bother with the appeal in the Vellum, I've got my uke back." "Oh, that's good" I said, "Where was it?" "Well" he said, "Whoever stole it dumped it in my dustbin,—it must be one of my neighbours."*

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## Do You Remember Dear Old Chic Murray?

One of Scotland's finest comedians. Here's a few of his one line jokes:

**So there** I was lying in the gutter. This man stopped and asked "What's the matter, did you fall over?" I said "No, I've a bar of chocolate in my back pocket and I'm trying to break it."

**My wife** went to a beauty parlour to get a mud pack. For two days she looked marvellous, and then the mud fell off.

**This chap** said to me: "Did you know the Battersea Dog's Home?" I said, "I didn't even know it had been away."

**My girlfriend's** a red head. No hair, just a red head.

**I told my wife** that black underwear turned me on. She didn't wash my underpants for a month.



Chic Murray



**George Forrest writes**—Dear Stan, may I through your George Formby Newsletter, thank everyone in the Penyffordd GFS for the wonderful night Pat & I had on the 2nd May at the British Legion in Penyffordd. We enjoyed the show immensely.

The people were so friendly and we made a lot of new friends. We wish also to thank Alan & Eunice Evans for the lift from Llandudno. Without their help we may not have made it. We also had a wonderful time in Llandudno over the weekend, where we watched the show that the group put on. Also in Colwyn Bay and at the hotel at night.

A special thanks also to Cliff Royle who invited us to come along for another Formby session at the Legion. It was a great occasion which we really appreciated.

*Thanks for your letter George. We are pleased that you and Pat had a great time.*

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**Ray Bernard writes**—Many thanks Stan for the last

Newsletter, which, as always, I enjoy reading, as it keeps me up to date with friends and the meetings, which, due to circumstances I am unable to attend as often as I'd like to.

I was especially interested in the photo of Paul McCartney and the uke given to him by George Harrison, as, unless I'm mistaken, that uke was once mine!

A few years ago, a month before Christmas, I received a phone call from Olivia Harrison (George's wife), - Karen & I were good friends of George & Olivia and were fortunate enough to spend weekends with them at their home, Friar Park at Henley on Thames. George would also call at our home in Alsager when visiting relatives in Liverpool.



Olivia asked if I could check out a uke that was for sale at £2,000 by the owner of a South Staffordshire music shop, which he claimed, once belonged to George Formby. Olivia wanted to buy it as a surprise Christmas present for George, and she asked me to check out its authenticity.

Unfortunately there was no evidence to confirm its association with George, so I had to suggest to Olivia that it was most probably not genuine and only worth about £100, and certainly not £2,000. She conveyed her disappointment to me and asked if I knew of any other uke that she could buy for George.

I told her that the last time George visited me he was very impressed with my "Gibson" tenor ukulele as he didn't have one. As much as I liked it, I told Olivia that she could have it for what I paid for it. She was very pleased and I packed it off to her the following day.

A few days later I received her cheque and a very nice letter (which I still have) also. On Christmas Eve, Karen & I received a beautiful display of flowers from Olivia and George—quite the most impressive display we'd ever seen! I still have the "oasis" container in my greenhouse as I just can't throw it in the bin!

To my knowledge the "Gibson" was the only one George owned, - if he gave one to Paul McCartney it must have been the same instrument—it couldn't be in better hands. Regards to all. Ray Bernard. *Thanks for your article Ray.*

## One of the Best Ever at Liverpool Well quite

a number of regulars were missing on the night but that didn't stop us from having a grand meeting. It was BACK TO THE PIONEERING NIGHTS when we discovered that the sound system had blown a fuse. We've known for some months that there is an electrical fault there that constantly blows the fuses on the amp, but we've had no luck tracing where the fault is.

Either there is an electrical fault or, we've got a ghost that doesn't approve of George Formby.

Anyway, it didn't matter. We said that "Tonight Is Back To The Pioneering Nights" when artists appeared on stage without the aid of a microphone. George Formby Senior entertained full houses and he didn't have a mike. So we did the same and it was really enjoyable.

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**Stan & I** (The Past Its—Well & Truly) entertained at the Vagabonds Sports Club, Queens Park Drive, Liverpool on Friday May 16th. It was organised by Beryl & Brian Fisher, - who attend the Liverpool meetings, and was held to raise funds for The Zipper Club to buy hospital equipment.

The Zipper Club is a group mainly consisting of people who have had a surgical operation (hence "zipper"—zipped up again) and, on the night they packed the place out. Every seat was taken.

The problem with Vagabonds is that the room is a long and narrow hall and the only convenient place to set up shop was at one end near the entrance. This meant that we had very good rapport with the crowd at our end but heavens knows what was happening at the other end. They appeared to be having a concert of their own. Anyway, they all had a grand night and over £400 was raised for the hospital.

**FUTURE STARS**—As part of the programme we had two young 13 year olds who came to entertain. After a warm up by the Past Its, we invited them on

and they sang their hearts out like a couple of veteran artists. They were really great.

Samantha sang a modern numbers while Rose sang good old Fred Astaire jazz favourites from the 1930/40s. They went down very well with the crowd.



Smartly dressed Sam & Rose



John Shreeve

**JOHN SHREEVE**—Next on the bill was Liverpool's John Shreeve who delighted the crowd with his uke playing. After singing four George Formby numbers: Windows, Wu, Blackpool Rock, and Lamp Post, he gave a first class demonstration on how a uke can really be played. His "William Tell Overture", which left the crowd shouting for more, was brilliant. John received the applause

IT'S COUNTDOWN TO GEORGE'S 100th ANIVERSARY



## Dates For Your Diary—Building up to George's 100th

**Sat June 21st**—Alvis car, George's Beryldene House, Lytham. (Alan Chenery—01253 681439 or Mobile 07967 665069)

**Sun June 22nd**—Alvis Car Show (George's car is on show here.) Houghton Towers, Blackburn (Alan Chenery—01253 681439 or Mobile 07967 665069)

**Sat July 12th**—Paul Woodhead House Warming Uke Party, Paul Woodhead—01952 598840

**Sun July 20th**—Fleetwood Tram Festival. 60,000 people expected. We will be entertaining from 12 noon to 5pm. Alan Chenery—01253 681439 or Mobile 07967 665069.

**SUN 27th July**—Alison, Jean and Frankie are holding a Garden Party at their home, 29 Marina Drive, Rhyl. 1pm. Ring 01745 330668.

**Sat 15th May 2004**—Grand Show at Frodsham Community Centre, Cliff Royle 01928 731088

**Wed 26th May 2004**—George's 100th Birthday—Wistaston Memorial Hall 7.45pm  
Jonathan Baddeley presents the "GEORGE FORMBY STORY" possibly followed by a film show.

**Fri 28th May 2004**—Exhibition of George Formby Memorabilia in Wistaston Memorial Hall followed by A GEORGE FORMBY CONCERT.

**IMPORTANT**—If you are holding any events leading up to George's 100th Anniversary, please send details in. Don't Forget. As soon as we have sufficient dates we will be notifying the media: TV, Radio, Press. Let's make it an anniversary to be remembered.

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**Funny Email**—Received an Email last week: "Hello Stan, I'm Desiree and I'd like to play with you." I thought, "that's a funny name for an entertainer, I wonder if he wants to become a Past It?" Maybe he wants to join us.

**I Emailed back:** "Hello Desiree, with a name like Desiree you don't sound old enough to be a Past It. Do you play the uke, or anything. What do you do and where are you based?"

**REPLY**—Stan darling, I can play just about anything you wish.

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## Swedish GFS Branch Members to visit Crewe

Jonas Svensson and his partner Janet Grootoonk have made a special effort to attend the Crewe Branch's June meeting. They are flying over from Sweden and will be staying the night locally before taking their onward journey to Blackpool for the George Formby Convention the following morning.

We offer them hearty greetings and are delighted to have them with us. Jonas speaks perfect English and loves singing George Formby songs. Janet who hails from The Netherlands is also an accomplished performer on her ukulele. It is their first visit to Crewe but I know you will all enjoy their particular brand of entertainment. I am equally sure that they too, will enjoy their time with us.



Jonas and Janet run the Ukulele Club of Göteborg and they hold their meetings in that fine city which is located on the west coast of Sweden. On Saturday the 24<sup>th</sup> May they held a Ukulele Festival in the city and on the following Monday the club put on a special show of Formby songs in a very nice theatre. Three hundred and fifty attended the show and Jonas reported that it was great success and everyone said how much they had enjoyed the music.

GEORGE'S 100th IS MAY 26th 2004. ARE YOU GETTING READY FOR IT?

## George Formby Meetings

**North Wales Branch** - British Legion, Penyffordd (10 miles from Chester) Every first Friday in the month. Tel Jim Knight 01978 358472 Adm 50p. Where can you get a better bargain than that?

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**Liverpool** - Broadgreen Conservative Club, Every 2nd Friday in the month - Ring Tom Bailey on 0151 289 1711 - Bring Your Uke

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**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.

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

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

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**Blackpool.** SOUTH SHORE CRICKET GROUND, Common Edge Rd, Blackpool. Every last Monday in the month -Tel Eve & Charles Stewart on 01253 768097. Wonderful Buffet—Always in need of players.

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## Wintergardens George Formby Society Meetings:

Sat & Sun 28th & 29th June 2003

Sat & Sun 13th & 14th Sept 2003

Sat & Sun 15th & 16th Nov 2003

Concerts usually start around 1.30pm each day.

Please Ring the Secretary, Sylvia Roe on 01142 846245 for details on the GFS or Wintergarden meetings.

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**Web Site**—Two Lancashire Lads:

[www.thehollies.u-net.com/formby](http://www.thehollies.u-net.com/formby).

E Mail: [stan@thehollies.u-net.com](mailto:stan@thehollies.u-net.com)

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For George Formby Newsletters by post please send a cheque for 50p plus 25p postage (or £2.25 for 3 months) - (£9 for the year) payable to S. Evans - Address Front Cover.

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It was a terrible day! Even our breadman had a cob on.