

THESE ARE THE TIMES



London Gangshow Fellowship
Founder: Ralph Reader CBE
Spring 2017

CHAIRMANS SPRING MESSAGE

We enjoyed another great night at our reunion although were disappointed that our President, David Catt-Camfield, and Doug Gordon, our benefactor, and both great friends and supporters of Ralph and Gang Show were unable to be with us.

Phil Philips provided music throughout the evening and, as usual, helped everything go well. Ray Lowe entertained us well with a mixture of the legends of swing and a rock 'n roll tribute. We were treated to a great surprise performance by Peter Straker.

We were delighted to welcome a party from Edinburgh Gang Show, particularly as earlier in the week we had said our last sad goodbye to our dear friend Gordon Blackburn.

Lorna Walker, on behalf of Gordon's sister Moira Moyes, made a presentation of £650 to the Ralph Reader Memorial fund being some of the money donated at the retiring collection after the service celebrating Gordon's life. The money was shared between two charities. Further donations to RRMF totalling £200 have been made in Gordon's memory.

The large congregation at the service and the donations made in his memory are a reflection of the high regard in which he was held by so many people. He will be missed by very many folk, not only was he a huge influence on Gang Show but also on very many amateur theatre companies in Scotland in his role as Scottish councillor for the National Operatic and Dramatic Association.

The toast to the memory of Ralph and to the London Gang Show Fellowship was proposed with great warmth and affection by Geoff Bengé who also set everyone the task of recognising how many song titles were hidden in his speech.

The Ralph Reader Memorial Fund benefited from an additional £500 from the raffle, Tec Evans sale of memorabilia and the auction of two London Gang Show cartoons donated by Alan Bailey, having been in the ownership of dear Jeannie Bailey.

Sadly Dink Rew passed away on 28 December after a short period of illness. He had been diagnosed with terminal stomach cancer just a few months earlier. He was in no pain and died peacefully at home in the company of three generations of his family – which is exactly what he would have wanted.

As Del, one of Dink's sons said "Dad was a truly remarkable man and will be sorely missed by us all. Although very talented in lots of ways, he was always incredibly modest. We're just so grateful that he was able to lead such a long, full and rewarding life and we know he was always grateful for that too"

Bob Reader added:

“Sad news yes, but Dink had a wonderful life with many, many happy memories. Sadly his passing marks the end of an era, an era some of us were privileged to have shared in.”

Don't forget to send your top ten GS song titles to Bill Ives billiveson@ntlworld.com, Remember - The choice would not include “Crest” and “These are the times”. Nothing could compare with these two!”

Mike Hoffman and Barry Thurston are making great progress with the new website. Please send your ideas for content to mikeh25@waitrose.com.

Our next event is the camp at Hurley, details elsewhere in these pages. Do try and come even if only for a day visit, it really is a good reunion with time to share. I hope to see you there.

David Clay

FUTURE EVENTS.

ANNUAL CAMP Friday 23rd – Sunday 25th June 2017, Hurley, Berkshire

AGM Sunday 29th October 2017

ANNUAL DINNER AND DANCE Saturday 27th January 2018



FELLOWSHIP CAMP 2017 circa 2011

Excerpt from original piece in Winter TATTS.

“I have reserved our usual field, and all we need now is the names to place on the individual pitches. Hurley, as you know, is becoming evermore popular. So much so that last year they requested back any pitches we had not filled, two weeks before we were due to arrive. This is the first time they have done this, and come the weekend there was not a single pitch available and people were being turned away. It is therefore almost essential that you book early, particularly if you wish to extend your stay, either before or after, so that you will not have to change pitches. To make things a little easier for you, perhaps I should tell you all when we have booked for. **This year's Fellowship Camp will be held on Friday 23rd June until Sunday 25th June 2017.** The earlier you book, the more chance you have of pitching up next to a particular party. We are asked to **arrive at the site no earlier than 1.00pm.** This is because pitches have to be vacated by NOON, and those arriving as others are leaving, will have great difficulty passing each other in the narrow lane access to the site. You will be asked to pay £10 for a Key fob to get into and out of the Park during your stay. This is for security reasons and will be repaid in full on departure. When you book I will let you know what pitch you are on, which you will state at Reception on arrival. Looking forward to seeing you all again.
Regards

Tree One

(Peter Bessell) Tel: 0115 9656531

(If you need to contact me during the week prior to the camp, I can be reached on 0785437515).

This article was sent to the Editor last year by A A Reeve, known as Fred and I thought after all the sadness of the last 12 months this will make a few of us remember and all of us smile.

In 1949 the Boy Scouts Association (as it was then) organised the first Bob-a-Job Week. There had been a Bob-a-Job Day a few years before but this was to be a major national event. The staff of Scout Headquarters of which was a member (Imperial HQ, to give it the correct title) wanted to do something as a team and Fred Hurl, the General Secretary, asked his friend Ralph Reader to come up with an idea for us. The result was a musical play called "*We'll Live Forever*".

It concerned an ordinary Scout Troop in which three PLs – Tom, Dick and Harry – were in the last stages of gaining the King's Scout Badge and also, of course, the Troop was putting on a show. It was understood by the staff of HQ that the members of the Troop would be supplied by Ralph but it wasn't so acceptable that he would also bring in Charlie, the adult male lead. All the HQ staff knew Ralph by sight – he was after all, a Chief Scout Commissioner and was frequently in 25 Buckingham Palace Road – but they knew little of his reputation. I had been in *Boy Scout* at the Albert Hall the year before so already knew Ralph but it was with some wariness, even resentment, that we all got together for the first rehearsal and to meet the Scouts and Charlie.

He proved to be a fair-haired young man with the most engaging grin and a personality that had everyone asking at the end of rehearsal 'Who else could have played Charlie?' His name was – Dink Rew. The rehearsal went swimmingly although there was a blip when Dink had to drop out for family reasons. Ralph brought in a replacement, a big chap even bigger than Dink who endeared himself to everyone especially when it was found that he was the brother of an up-an-coming actress called Eleanor Summerfield. He was, of course, Bill Summerfield. Fortunately Dink was able to return to the show after a couple of weeks.

It was a good show with some good songs, the best being *It's great to be young* (the original title of the show), sung by Tom, Dick and Harry, and the haunting "*In my dreams I'm going back to Gilwell*", beautifully sung by Dink.

We were booked to run for three nights at Battersea Town Hall and the show was so successful that it had to be staged again a week or so later at the Rudolph Steiner Theatre. In all a critical and financial success.

The idea led to another of Ralph's shows a couple of years later when he was asked to produce an entertainment for the first post-war Commissioners' Conference to be held at Butlin's Holiday Camp at Fife in Yorkshire. By now the *Gang Show* was once again under way and some of the senior members of the cast joined the HQ staff for the production of *Great Oaks*, a history of Scouting seen through the eyes of one man. We all arrived at Butlins on Friday night, the last night of the season, and so joined in the jollities (!) the Happy Campers! We staged the show on the Saturday night and there was no doubt of the appreciation of the audience.

As the *Gang Show* became established some of us slightly more mature ones were asked to take part in other projects most notable being the chorus in a TV series called "*Ralph Reader Presents* and backing singers on records, the best being with Vera Lynn when she recorded a *Gang Show*" song "*The One Beside You*". We also appeared on her TV show for the same song. Vera must be one of the nicest people in show business – and we met a lot over the years.

Another time we recorded with the Beverly Sisters. We all met at a studio where the backing musicians were gathered and I, as a member of the Ted Heath Club (still am!) was delighted to see some of the Heath musicians there. We sat around chatting and then the bass player started plucking out a boogie beat. It was picked up by the pianist and suddenly the whole *Gang* was roaring out "*The Lady Jives!*" The bandmen looked at each other and gradually everyone was either playing or singing, picking up the tune from the *Gang* in the jazziest jam session I have ever heard! I don't know how many choruses we played but suddenly the Bevs were there and everything died away. They were bright, breezy totally the centre of attention and ignored us completely!

The record we made was so memorable I can't even remember its name and my 78rpm waxing got broken years ago. The week it was released Ann Shelton brought out a similar song backed by Army singers and simply swamped the Bev's effort.

Incidentally, because we were amateurs we could only be paid expenses – no fee – so for each appearance on either TV or records we received 10s. (50p) – My mate Ted Seward and I carefully worked out that if we managed to keep our Underground fares to the various venues at sixpence each way we would end up with a profit of 9s (45p). Not bad for an evening's work!

Thanks Fred – I will include the other snippets you sent in the next edition.

Note from the Editor

I have been talking to Peter Bessell recently and he tells me he hasn't heard from anyone about 2017 Camp weekend which is why I have included an excerpt from Peter's original information. Come on everyone you don't want to be disappointed!

Don't forget to send your 10 favourite GS songs to Bill Iveson. If you don't have an e-mail please feel free to send to me and I will pass them on.

We continue to contact members of the gang but this depends on your support in passing on information to help us. TATTS is being received both by e-mail and post and I can only hope that the numbers grow as more people get in touch. However, if anyone has any ideas how we can reach some of our past show members or knows of any members who would like to be contacted, please let Richard or myself know.

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Many thanks to all those people who keep me up to date with happy and sad events around the globe and for ideas to keep TATTS more interesting. It is difficult to include all the features as they come in as TATTS would be too long, but keep them coming please and I will include as many as possible.

Brenda

TATTS is sponsored by ATL