

# THESE ARE THE TIMES



*London Gangshow Fellowship  
Founder: Ralph Reader CBE  
WINTER 2020*

## **WINTER MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN**

We have not had a year like this since we established the Fellowship after the last show in 1974. Having cancelled the summer camp, been unable to view the Promise Path and cancelled our 45<sup>th</sup> AGM; we have now been forced to cancel next year's Reunion.

However...

“...Leave the dreary blue days all behind  
Soon as you begin you'll find  
Oh, the sun is always shining, shining in the sky,  
If you walk round this funny old earth, **With a Twinkle In Your Eye.....”**

So, inspired again by Ralph, let's look forward to a brighter 2021 and continuing with all our usual activities.

I would like to thank Brenda for compiling and editing “These Are The Times”, John Masters for emailing it (and all the other items he so helpfully sends to members) and Richard Micklefield for copying and mailing it. And thanks to Michael Hoffman for managing our website and to Barry Thurston for his generous help in setting it up and hosting it.

I also wish, having missed the opportunity at the AGM, to thank the committee for their support and help during the year, particularly Brenda and Phil for keeping our records and funds in good order and Richard for maintaining our membership records.

I hope that you and your families will find a way to enjoy the Christmas holiday safely and that we all have a much more settled and peaceful New Year.

David Clay

## **PLANNED FUTURE EVENTS.**

**ANNUAL CAMP** Friday 25<sup>th</sup> – Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> June 2021

**AGM** Sunday 31st October 2021

**ANNUAL DINNER AND DANCE** Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> January 2022



circa 2019.

## FELLOWSHIP CAMP 2021

**Good News re 2021: Friday June 25<sup>th</sup> June – Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> June**

Peter Bessell has been in contact with Hurley and has secured the usual weekend for next year at last year's prices. WELL DONE PETER!! However, he does need to know sooner rather than later who will be attending, **particularly those members who would like to book either side of the weekend. ("The Early Birds")** The site is always busy around that time of year, particularly with the Henley Regatta happening the weekend after our rally. **If you are interested in 2021 Camp please contact Peter as quickly as possible so that he can confirm our sites.**

We hope to see as many people as possible next year.

**TREE ONE (PETER BESELL) TEL: 0115 9656531, MOB: 078 543 75515,  
email: sylvia.bessell@btinternet.com**

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### Memories from a friend of the Show:

Many thanks for your reminder about the patriotic song written by Ralph Reader - *Wave The Flag*. In the County Archive Cabin at Well End, the County holds the sheet / album music for this and all his other London Gang Show music and for performances he held at various locations over the years, and of the Pageants he produced at The Albert Hall.

In case you did not know, Ralph visited Hertfordshire many times in his search for suitable young people to star in his shows (Freddy O'Hare and Martin Hart included). On 18 April 1949 he made his first visit to Phasels Wood Campsite where he used the piano in the Wardens bungalow to score and write some of his more famous numbers.

The first London Gang Show was in 1932 and this closed in 1974. I was fortunate to attend the final performance and took Freddy and Len Spikesley as my guests. Ralph also produced shows at the Albert Hall. The Musical Pageant / Play "Boy Scout" was first produced in 1936 and had several repeats until 1959. The cast of over 1000 included many Scouts from Hertfordshire at various performances. "The Boy" was often chosen from Hertfordshire and Michael Manders was "The Boy" in 1948. For many years Fred North a Hertfordshire Scouter was the Choir Steward and Bert Moreton from South West Herts District and later Warden at Well End Campsite was also a choir member. There were also several hundred people in the choir

On one of his visits to Hertfordshire in 1970 Ralph was asked to "lay" the foundation stone at the HQ of the First Abbots Langley Scout Group. The event coincided with the 100th edition of the Group Magazine, *Woodsmoke*, now the longest continuously running Group Magazine in the UK.

In 1954, Ralph attended the National Conference at Filey Holiday Camp where he received a Chief Commissioners Plume from Chief Scout Lord Rowallan.

The cast of the Gang Show were guests on the stage at Sunday Night at the London Palladium. This is possibly because Michael Hurll the Producer and his father were former Scouts. Members of the Royal Family were often in attendance.

In his later years Ralph was the organiser of the Albert Hall *Festival of Remembrance*. When Ralph died in 1982 he had produced 142 shows there, more than anyone else. He also produced a Scouting play "*Great Oaks*" at

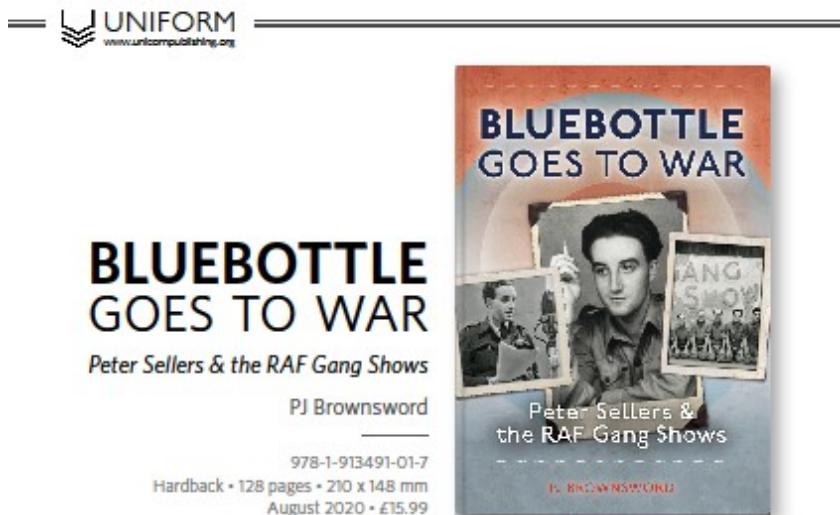
the Golders Green Hippodrome. He was twice a guest on *Desert Island Discs* in 1954 and 1962. His luxury items were a typewriter and paper, and the book, "Goodbye Mr Chips". He was awarded an MBE and later a CBE in 1957.

He died on Thursday 13 May 1982 having attended a celebratory dinner for the 50th anniversary of the Gang Show two months earlier. This dinner was held as a tribute to Ralph and had 600 guests. These included former members of the Gang Show, representatives from provincial shows, wartime fellows from the RAF Gang Shows and brothers from the Grand Order of Water Rats of which Ralph was a member. The former Chief Scout Lord MacLean (then the Lord Chamberlain) and his wife Lady MacLean, Ken Stevens and many other old friends attended.

### FRANK BRITTAINE Archivist & Historian, Hertfordshire Scouts.

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The following has appeared on our website, but for those of you who have not seen it may be of interest.



Peter Sellers was one of the biggest stars of the 1960s and 70s. His career began with characters such as Bluebottle on BBC radio's The Goon Show and he achieved global fame as Inspector Clouseau in the Pink Panther series.

What is less well known is that he served in the Royal Air Force Entertainment Units (known as Gang Shows) for over three years. Now, for the first time, this story can be told, a tale of the formation and education of his remarkable talents, as well as a small corner of Second World War history that seems uniquely British (groups of servicemen and women sent around the world with hampers full of theatrical props and costumes, to rally the troops in distant outposts of Empire).

This book reveals previously unknown film footage, photos, performances, broadcasts and recordings, from the very beginning of Sellers' career.

PJ Brownsword was born in Sussex and studied music history at Oxford, with an avid interest in research for local history publications as a student and other diversions of photography, cars and cricket - these are by coincidence also listed as Sellers' hobbies in "Who's Who", 1967.

Bluebottle Goes to War will be available in all major bookshops and online retailers or direct via [www.uniformpublishing.org](http://www.uniformpublishing.org). To order please email [orders@uniformpublishing.org](mailto:orders@uniformpublishing.org)

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## **Editor's Notes**

Another short version of TATTS, but I felt we needed to say hi to everyone and make it a little bit more interesting.

As our Chair has said a strange and difficult year for everyone! The Committee has continued to keep in touch in the hope of arranging dates however, this was not to be. We are hoping with the recent news of a vaccine and what seems to be a dim light at the end of the tunnel, 2021 will be better. TATTS will try to keep you updated as things unfold, fingers crossed for a celebration of the Promise Pathway at Gilwell and the annual camp at Hurley.

Please don't forget to look at the website and encourage others to do the same. There are some amazing photographs and fabulous memories, which are updated as and when new material is found. Have a chuckle at yourself and remember old friends and the great fun we all had. [lgsf.org.uk](http://lgsf.org.uk).

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 would be great to hear about your shows, when they resume so that we can publish details and any locals or those wanting to catch up with friends to visit and of course any great reviews or relevant information about members. Although it is difficult to include too many features keep them coming please and I will include as many as possible.

I hope you are all coping with the current situation and staying safe. Looking forward to meeting again soon.

Brenda  
**“Keep looking for the Bluebird”**

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