



Well Done Everyone!



Peter Tooke presents the cheque for £2,500 to Sas Freeman, Volunteer Ambassador of the Stroke Association.

As you know, the club supports a different charity, selected by us all each year, by raising funds from its performances, at street collections and also a large proportion of appearance fees. Our nominated charity for 2014 was the Stroke Association and we all helped raise the magnificent sum of £2,500. This has set the standard and the challenge now is to beat that figure this year, for the joint benefit of MacMillan Nurses and Motor Neuron Disease. The Club presented a cheque for £2,500 to the Stroke Association, prior to a performance at Stanfield Nursing Home. Also present was Richard White, Director at the Home, which provides music therapy as part of its programme of dementia care.

This Edition

This is the first edition of **Jumping Flea, The Newsletter for Worcester Ukulele Club.**

To be published twice a year, it is produced entirely from ideas and contributions from members of the Club. Your contributions are vital to its future, so please keep them coming, contact details are on the back page.



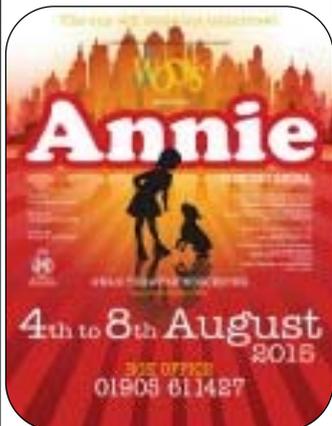
Keys Uke-Clear Powered

Our intrepid fellow member **Kevin Kilmartin** completed the **London Marathon** last April in a time of 4:30:31, a great effort made harder by the fact that he carried his ukulele all the way. Maybe some kind of record! Another challenge Kevin had to face was to raise at least £2000 as a pre-requisite to his participation. This he did including some help from his fellow WUC friends. The inclusion of his ukulele no doubt attracted much attention and encouraged onlookers to donate. His final total was a massive £3333, wow! Kevin said: "I know a number of people including my 95-year-old grandad who have suffered strokes. The work of the Stroke Association therefore is a cause close to my heart and its work is very important to a lot of people." Well done Kevin!



From WUC to WODYS

BEING voluntary publicity officer for WODYS - Worcester Operatic and Dramatic Society Youth Section - is fun, frantic and full of surprises. One day I can be interviewing stars such as Sheila Hancock and Barry Manilow - celebrities involved in publicity to help sell tickets for the society's annual show - and the next day auditioning eight dogs for the part of Sandy in WODYS latest production, **Annie**, at the Swan Theatre, Worcester, August 4-8. WODYS began in 1982 with 30 members, today membership averages 70, with a waiting list of 60 youngsters aged 8-18. Each year we put on a very professional, six performance, musical at the Swan Theatre and raise money for local child-based charities. Over the years we have raised more than £21,000 and our shows have ranged from Les Miserables (School Edition) to Half a Sixpence. Come and see us at the Swan this summer - Beverley Abbs.



Worcester Ukulele Club Newsletter

How Many Do You Have ?

Most avid ukulele players seem to have an affliction known as UAS (Ukulele Aquisition Syndrome), well Bill has got it bad. He currently owns twelve and has had more in the past, Bill describes them all, each one has its own individuality, from left to right.

- Unnamed banjolele bought for me by Lucy for my 22nd birthday, *ed - thats an antique now !*
- A Columbian plastic ukulele, dates from 1965, was going to be thrown away - couldn't let that happen !
- The Lark, a really cheap ukulele, similar story.
- First "posh" ukulele, flamed spalted maple/spruce top Kala concert has, held its tune well from day one.
- Next the one I normally use at WUC - another Kala, spruce top and super thin body gives a very good driving sound - sorry, if you are sitting next to me!
- A venture into baritone world - a Mahalo mahogany baritone.
- My all time favourite - another flamed spalted maple/spruce-top Kala, it rarely sees the inside of its case - it's at my side as I type this and the one I pick up first by choice.
- The one against the middle of the front wheel is yet another flamed spalted maple/spruce-top Kala, but a tenor.
- The latest one at the front is a soprano bambookulele as devised by the Moseley (B'ham) ukulele club - made from bamboo stripwood with an arched back.
- There's two others that fell by the wayside - sold to good homes - an Ashbury Banjolele - and a Kala exotic mahogany electro-tenor.



That's the ukuleles done. I also play the baritone horn in a brass band and have a cornet, but that's really hard to play (tiny mouthpiece). The cornet is out on loan to a 6 year old friend who plays it effortlessly - as well as my Mahalo soprano uke. - Bill Burton

A Teaser



We asked a well known member of the club six questions. For amusement only, can you identify this person, see back page for the solution.



Any other ukulele activity outside of the club ? - I have definitely contracted UAS, and now have 10 ukes - 3 purchased, and 7 self made... of varying quality!

Any other interesting hobbies outside of the ukulele ? - errmmm it used to be 'computing'... but

now, outside of *playing* ukes, I seem to have a thing for *making* them. I am aware of 2 other uke makers... Patrick and Gary and 'no' I don't do commissions; however, I will happily take anyone's old oak kitchen doors away (as Pete will testify :-)).

An interesting story you know about a fellow member, who is too modest to submit themselves ? - So many good memories... I recall one of the first gigs I ran (Inkberrow), where Eric Jackson turned up without his uke! - luckily Mark Farrow turned up trumps with a spare.

Any Hints or Tips ? - Get a strap for supporting your ukulele!

What's the Best thing about the club ? - Meeting newbies on their first night, seeing their playing improve, come to gigs, go solo, lead a club night, then lead a gig; all, whilst having fun with friends.

Your most embarrassing moment within the club ? - By mistake, I sent an email meant for the committee... to the whole club instead - doh!

Friday on Free Radio

One very early friday morning last May, six members of the club left Worcestershire for the big city of Birmingham to appear on a top Midlands radio station. They ended up playing three songs live, including 'Friday I'm in Love', of course.



Jumping Flea

A Poem

I have been getting back into poetry a bit recently and here is something I wrote:

Mind races,
Heart beats,
Feet, jittery,
crackling,
Stabs of heat.

Scalp throbs,
Shoulders ache,
Breaking with pain.

Face flushed,
Eyes wide,
Spine tingles,
Alive with the light.

Body floats,
Joy and pride,
Inside, bliss and pain,
Side by side.



Mods & Rockers

Well I don't know if Phil Edwards has mentioned this; but he and myself are scooterists! We ride Vespa's or lambrettas, often vintage like ourselves and belong to Lucky Severns Scooter Club. Our club, like Worcester Ukulele raise funds and this year it is for Air Ambulance. So if you see 2 mods arriving to play our ukulele's it is us!!

- Rosemary Henman

This love,
And I would do it
again. Lisa Sullivan

Starting Them Young

On Monday 13th April, Oldbury Park Primary School in Worcester had a very special visit from a canine friend. Solo is a beautiful Golden Retriever and he belongs to Patrick who is also a member of Worcester Uke Club. Patrick took Solo to the children's assembly to tell them about his work as a 'Nurture' dog and demonstrate Solo's skills. Patrick was also accompanied by two other members of WUC (Myself and John H) who played their ukes at the end of the children's assembly - we sang 'She'll be coming round the Mountain' about ten times I think!! The Head Teacher at the school is now keen to get the children involved in playing ukes too and wants some help to launch a club at the school. The club will be run as an after school event once a week from 3.15 to 4.15 probably on a Thursday. If you would like to help on a regular or occasional basis then please contact me, my email is: rob_p55@hotmail.com Rob Phillips.



How Times Change !

When the history of the Worcester Ukulele Club is written this photo needs to be included. It records the very first gig performed by the Club, about fours ago. It was a wedding, four was all we could muster, but we got paid !



The Power of "Mans Best Friend"

Je adore le ukulé

It all started with my dog Solo. We had him when volunteering for Guide Dogs – we were puppy walkers. Solo failed his final training (algebra was never his strongest subject) and I was asked would I become his owner. I did, and wondered how I could use this magnificent dog to help in the community. I had him assessed as a 'Pets as Therapy' dog, and offered his services To Acorns Childrens Hospice in Worcester. Solo was an instant success with the children, he had found his true role in life. Then something odd happened. One day when visiting the Hospice, I saw an acoustic guitar in one of the playrooms. I picked it up, ran my fingers through the strings that were horrendously out of tune. At the time, I didn't play any instrument, but attempted to tune it – completely unsuccessfully. The following week I was asked if I would play the guitar again and make it a regular part of my visit with Solo. It turned out that my 'tuning' attempts were listened to very attentively by some of the children, and the sound had 'reached the parts that other sounds couldn't reach' to paraphrase a well-known TV advert. To cut a long story short, I made my way to Music 47, asked "what is the easiest stringed instrument to learn to play" bought the recommended ukulele, went on YouTube ukulele tutorials and learned the basics. The kids loved the sound, and a little later I started attending Worcester Ukulele Club, with the result that now with three other members (Sue pictured, with Patrick, Richard and Chris), we have formed the 'Acorns Ukulele Rock n' Roll Band' and play there twice a month.



A short time ago a neighbour who is a teacher and knows that I go to Acorns every week asked if Solo and I would do an Assembly at a primary school with a difference; it's a school (12 pupils) for children who are either temporarily or permanently banned from attending mainstream schools. We did, and now we visit every week; the Head has bought six ukuleles so we have a six-piece primary school ukulele band – and the kids love it. It's the only time during the week that there is no disruptive behaviour by the children.

You never know where life is going to take you. While on holiday in France I was wandering around a 'Bric a Brac' sale. As we passed one of the stalls my wife noticed a ukulele for sale. She nudged me and said "You said you'd like a ukulele – there's one, find out how much it is". True I had said something about ukes a while ago so I approached the stallholder and enquired 'Combien?' 'Trent cinq euros' was the reply. Too much for me so I started to haggle and beat him down to 'Vingt' euros. I walked away with this new instrument that I had not a clue about and set to wondering what I was going to do next! When I got home I started to search for uke related stuff on the internet and picked up a few basics but needed more in order to learn..... I had heard about a Uke Club run through the U3A organisation so I contacted them and eventually got in touch with John (Stafford) who told me that his group was full until after Christmas but why didn't I come along to WUC on a Monday! I was a bit apprehensive about that since I didn't know how to play a uke having only played a few guitar chords in the past. Anyway, I eventually plucked up the courage to come along and am I glad I did! The rest is history and apart from learning about playing a uke, I have also made a whole load of new friends too!! What a great club it is and so friendly and accommodating. Long may it continue. Oh.....and after a fairly short time I replaced my 'Bric a Brac' uke for something a little more up market, but it got me going and was worth every Euro! - Rob Phillips



The Fun Stuff

Biggest & Smallest playable

Biggest: 40 lbs and is 6 1/2 feet tall



Smallest: 5 1/2-inch



Gallery of Famous Ukulele Players



My biggest fear when I die, is that my wife will sell my ukuleles for what I told her I bought them for !



Can you name these famous ukulele players and also identify the two, who maybe are not, or were not (players that is), but who knows ? Answers on the back page.

The Technical Stuff

Structure, Chords and Keys.

Recently at one of our Monday evening sessions it was proposed that an 'F' minor chord at the end of that old 60's classic, 'The Night has a Thousand Eyes', seemingly had no purpose and might be removed without harming the song and who could possibly care if removal was actioned ? Well I care because I wonder why people want to simplify things to the point where songs start to lose intrinsic identity. If you want C, F, and G, or an equivalent in any other key to be the sole constituent chords of any song, that's fine but we'd never have had Wagner's Ring Cycle or any kind of Jazz. Just try playing Fm and then C, then try F and then C, you'll notice the difference. The F to C gives one nothing much to think about, conversely, the Fm to C sequence has the mind brought to contemplating Puccini's Madame Butterfly without any use of the minor chord and some jolly C, F, and G chords as she slashes her wrists to the sound of Tammy Wynette's 1969 hit, 'Stand By You'r Man', when the man in question has got on his boat and gone back to the good old US of A. I hope you're getting my point now - chord choice, no matter the genre, changes the song – and by taking out the 'Fm', in 'The Night has a Thousand Eyes', weakens the end of the piece by removing the drama. In the same way Jazz would be interminably dull without the odd diminished chord, chord inversions and all those usual musical tricks.

On the opposing tack I have to mention the act of inserting chords into a song, and even changing an intro or two, of which I'm guilty. If Steve Knightly, and his partner, in Show of Hands, had a reason to complain it's my inclusion of a made-up intro in our WUC version of Cousin Jack, which reprises after the completion of each verse and chorus. The bit which starts the song - Em, Em7, E6, and CM7 – I cobbled together because I hadn't a clue how the song went and there was nothing I could find on the internet. I also mention, in this context, my WUC arrangement of Rufus Thomas', 1963 trademark song, 'Walking The Dog'. This has been covered by Green Day [1993 – Demos Tape for Dookie], The Flaming Groovies [1971 – Teenage Head], Mitch Ryder and the Detroit Wheels [1966 – Breakout!!!] and many others, so WUC is in good company, but it's not their version we're playing, or the structure of the original.

In conclusion I might add some comments on the use of keys when songs are brought to the Club. Of course, since we're all lazy and the Club plays with the 'C' tuned ukulele [G, C, E, A] most versions of songs we play are in the key of 'C'. Nevertheless, we do play many songs in G, some in A, a few in F, even fewer in D and that's about it. Never do we play anything in E because the first position of the chord [1402] is unattainable to the novice and a bit of a struggle to the competent player, when changing chords. The original key of the song is often quite a signifier of it's origin. Rock and blues go for 'E' and 'A' because of the way a guitar is tuned. Country goes for 'C' and 'G' and 'D' and because of the way the Ukulele has developed as a singing club instrument, key usage, as I have noted, is biased towards 'C'. But singing in 'C' with a Uke is often difficult and hard. For lower voices use of the key of 'F' is really useful and 'D' also, with 'G' being very popular. 'F' is very useful for jazz type numbers like WUC 'Paper Moon' and other more subtle songs, as opposed to the full-on onslaught of the higher octave WUC repertoire like Urban Spaceman, Putting on the agony and the like. The key of 'A' is really the best for basic blues playing being the guitar equivalent of 'E'. My recommendation for the rest of the 2015 Uke Year: try playing songs in a different key and stop thinking 'C' is the best thing since sliced bread, incidentally invented in 1912 by some bloke in Iowa, USA, a long time ago. - Tom Watson

Teaser Solutions: The mystery member answering questions is our Chairman Lorry Weston. The famous ukulele players are Paul McCartney, George Harrison, Joe Brown, George Formby, Frank Skinner, Eddie Vedder and Marilyn Munroe, the two we have no record of being ukulele players are Brad Pitt and Sir Edward Elgar.

Thanks to everyone for your contributions, please send any comments or more contributions for the next edition to: chris_everton@live.co.uk (editor).

Practice Makes Perfect

There appears to be no magic secret to improving your playing, here are five pieces of advice.

1. Practice Yes, the dreaded P word. But, all the greats practice for many, many hours to become accomplished musicians. You'll be happy to know that you don't need to spend quite that many hours practicing to strum along with your chums down the pub, but to play the songs well, you should take some time playing on your own at home.

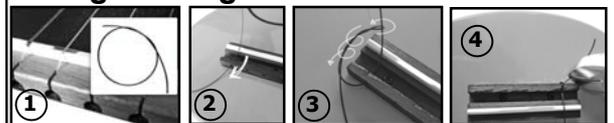
2. Practice the things you find hardest most often. It's all well and good to keep playing a song, but getting stuck on one bit. Practice the point that you get stuck on so that you don't get stuck and you can play that song you love in it's entirety, well.

3. Strumming (and singing). "It's a bit like patting your head and rubbing your tummy." It's also like driving a car and chatting to your passenger, when you first pass your test. These things are possible, but first you need to get comfortable with the first thing, and introduce the second as soon into it as you can. In the case of strumming, strum in a regular even tempo, repeating the strum so you are comfortable, and then sing as soon as you are able to stop concentrating on what your hand is doing. Keep trying to take away the focus from your hand.

4. Chord changing. If that's the bit that you're finding difficult, take the two, three, or however many chords in succession that you're hesitant on, switching between and keep looping them until you find it easy to switch between them.

5. Timing. Most important when you are playing in a group, so if you're struggling to keep in time, try playing along with the track you like, or grab a metronome (there are free apps available). Play along and keep in time with the track or metronome and don't let the previous stumbling points stop you!

Fitting a String



If your ukulele has a slotted bridge ①, tie a knot at one end of the string. Feed the knot into the slot or pass the open end of the string through the hole. If it has a tie-bar bridge ②, pass the string through the hole. Loop the string behind the end of string that leads into the hole ③. Loop the string twice over the top of the tie-bar. Pull the string along its length to tighten it. Snip off the excess piece of string ④.



Pull the string over the fret board and thread it into the tuning peg, loop it round and thread it through tuning peg hole again ⑤. Put the string into the slot of the nut and pull it tight. Wind the string around the peg, press the string down with your other hand ⑥, so that it winds down in a spiral ⑦, tune it ⑧.