

PRESS BULLETIN from

THE FRETTED INSTRUMENT GUILD

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OLD LADY OF GLOUCESTER JOINS
THE BATTLE OF THE BANJO BANDS

83 year old Mrs. Tyrwhilt Walker is tuning up her banjolin and on Saturday June 30th will travel to London's Conway Hall with her fellow members of the GLOUCESTER BANJO, MANDOLIN AND GUITAR ORCHESTRA, to compete in the first CLUB CHAMPIONSHIP CONTEST organised by the Fretted Instrument Guild. Every Thursday evening she leaves her home at 21, Lansdown Terrace, Cheltenham, and with five other local players travels to Two Arts Studio, Kings Street, Gloucester to join the rest of the band under the baton of the broadcasting and variety banjoist Phil Barker, of 272 Linden Road, Gloucester, for their weekly rehearsal for concerts and other engagements.

The Gloucester B.M.G. orchestra also have the youngest player competing in the contest, 16 year-old Graham Beard, 60, Riversley Road, Gloucester. Every day when he returns from school he picks up his banjo for a tune.

LEADING BANDS COMPETING

At the Conway Hall, some of the leading Fretted Instrument Clubs will compete for an illuminated calf-skin vellum which will be won outright by the band which stages the best 20 minute musical show. There are Banjo, Mandolin and Guitar Clubs in most towns throughout Britain, and the first Club Championship Contest, which is comparable to the International Contests held on the Continent has attracted some of Britain's best fretted instrument bands. Three of them, The London Banjo Club, The Grafton Estudiantina and the Watford B.M.G. orchestra have been heard on the air in B.B.C. variety programmes. The Watford B.M.G. orchestra with a playing membership of 34 has won cups at musical festivals for the past 3 years. It's conductor is Billy Bignell, 21, The Green, Chorley Wood, Herts and Hon. Sec. Rex Morgan, 276a, Baldwins Lane, Croxley Green, Herts.

GIANT BANJOS SMUGGLED FROM NAZIS

Three giant contra-bass banjos will be played in the contest. They are 6ft. long with vellums 3 feet in diameter. One of them, owned by the West London Club, with its slightly smaller brother the bass banjo, was smuggled out of the Channel Islands as the Nazis invaded during the war.

The West London Club was formed from students at the first ever Fretted Instrument class held by the L.C.C. in their Evening Institutes - at the Warrington Road Institute, Kensington, in 1938. It is conducted by the original instructor A.W. Jeffery, 66, Chepstow Road, W.2. Bayswater 6856, a professional banjoist, still meets at the Institute every Monday and includes an old-age pensioner, 72 year-old Frederick Goldsby of North Kensington.

A new all-plastic ukulele, recently developed in Britain will also be featured at the festival.

BAND OF VETERANS

The Croydon B.M.G. Band is a band of veterans. "Baby" of the band is 32 year-old Mr. A.E.J. Selley of 46, Waverley Road, S.E.25 who has been playing the banjo for 20 years, and "Father" is 72 year old Harold Brisby of 3, Eldon Avenue, Croydon, who has played the banjo for 55 years. The band was formed in 1932, and Mr. J.F. Masters, 47, Downlands Road, Purley, Surrey, Uplands 5384, has been secretary since its formation.

But youth will be well in evidence too, and among the young players of the Grafton Estudiantina are 20 year-old Enid Bishop, mandolinist, of 365 Hillcross Avenue, Morden, and the electric guitar section led by 22 year-old Tony Reavey, of 1 Evelyn Terrace, Bury Street, N.9.

ADJUDICATORS

Mr. Charles Skinner, A.I.U.M., 29, Bathurst House, White City, W.12, Shepherd's Bush 5148, professional player and teacher of all fretted instruments who in his 73rd year is approaching his 1,000th broadcast. Regularly heard with Troise on the air, he is the only person to have broadcast Mandola solos in Britain.

George Beaumont, 19, Great Newport Street, W.C.2., TEM 4287, was the founder and original conductor of the Skyrockets. Formerly producer at Drury Lane, and Musical Director with Gaumont British Pictures Corporation, he now has his own Theatrical and Band agency.

THE CLUB CHAMPIONSHIP CONTESTS commence at 3 p.m. at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1., on Saturday June 30th, but there will be additional facilities for press photographers at 11 a.m.

MAN OF GUNS

121 players

6 Bands

PHIL BARKER
CONDUCTOR