



GB NEWS

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The Official Newsletter of the George Best Foundation

THURSDAY 18th MAY

The weekend kicked off with Norman and me attending a fun filled evening at the Hastings Group "Culloden Hotel" on the outskirts of Belfast. It was Northern Ireland's first 5* hotel and a place where George



stayed on many occasions. He always had the suite overlooking Belfast Lough and loved it there. The event was BT "Golden Eye" Business Awards, and www.georgebest.com won the website of the month award for May. This is such an achievement considering we have only been "live" for less than eight weeks!

We are delighted to have achieved so much in such a very short time. Our website had been hugely successful with an average of 5,530 hits per week and growing. My sincere thanks to Ronnie and his team at iDream Products Ltd. for all their hard work. Our thanks also go to all of you who have taken the time to leave lovely personal messages. I read each and every one of them and they have brought a great degree of comfort to me and my family.

FRIDAY 19th MAY

The weekend started officially and what a start! We had been invited to four different fundraising events but unfortunately it just wasn't possible to go to them all. In the end we finished up going to two. Firstly, we went to the Cavehill MUSC, which is off the Upper Crumlin Road in Belfast. We were warmly welcomed and met former Man U stars Paul Parker, David May and Cork's own Denis Irwin. We accepted a cheque on behalf of the Foundation and our thanks go to Stevie, Dennis and all the committee and members.

We then went to the Ulster Sports Club in Belfast, where my Dad has been a member for over 40 years. Approximately 150 people attended a great evening of music followed by an auction and ballot.



We were absolutely staggered by the huge amount of money which was raised for the Foundation from a relatively small number of people. There was over £3,500 raised from those warm hearted folk. But that wasn't all! The Foundation also received a further cheque for £1,000 from John Lawrence who, besides being an old friend of my Dads, is the producer of the tribute CD "Georgie Boy". The generosity of people never fails to amaze me. Our thanks to David Wilkinson, (chairman),

So much has happened since I wrote the first "Newsletter". It would take far too long to explain everything in this issue so I have decided to concentrate on the period surrounding what would have been George's sixtieth birthday on Monday 22nd May. There were many events over that entire weekend, all very positive and great fun. As I mentioned before, George always had great plans for his birthday with events taking place both in London and in Belfast. Sadly, he was not able to fulfil his dream, but rest assured that many people joined with us and celebrated on his behalf.

MONDAY 22nd MAY

George's birthday... and what a day it turned out to be. It was so full of emotion, but a day which I will never forget. It started off at our Belfast City Airport, which is now proudly known as the George Best Belfast City Airport. The event was attended by 240 invited guests from friends and family, as well as the sporting and business world. It was a pleasure to have Pat Jennings, Martin O'Neill, Chris Eubank, and Gordon Burns all there on such a momentous occasion. Professor Roger Williams and Dr. Akeel Alisa, who tried every medical way known to keep George with us joined in with the celebrations as well. It was also a privilege to host our International Patron George Costacos, who flew in from New York to attend. If it had not been for his generosity we would not have acquired our domain name, which George Costacos selflessly donated. It shows yet again, the esteem in which George was held by people around the world, whether football fans or not.

The renaming of the airport? For me this the ultimate accolade. To have my brother's name up there with the likes of Charles de Gaulle, John Lennon, da Vinci and John F. Kennedy. How special is that! I don't think that I will ever stop smiling each time that I drive past the airport, which is very close to where I live. A massive thanks to Brian Ambrose, CEO of the George Best Belfast City Airport and his staff, who have worked tirelessly to ensure the family's wishes were taken into account in all phases of the venture. The management team of the airport are totally committed to helping the George Best Foundation in any possible way, and has decided to have a permanent donation point on display which will enable people to contribute to the Foundation's support for research into liver disease and youth football. Three million passengers pass through the George Best Belfast City Airport each year, so there is a huge potential. The management from the airport also placed a huge billboard with the George Best Foundation logo and web-site address at the exit from the airport.

Francis McKee, (secretary) and everyone involved.

SATURDAY 20th MAY

On Saturday my Dad, Dickie, husband Norman and I flew to for yet another amazing evening. The Manchester United Supporters Trust (MUST) and the Independent Manchester Supporters Association (IMUSA) joined forces and put on a splendid evening in Sam



Platt's which is just around the corner from Old Trafford. There were approximately five hundred happy revellers, who sang and danced into the small hours. The hilarious Paddy Crerand, a long time friend of George, and the guest speaker with Sammy McIlroy former Man U and Northern Ireland star, both turned up to see Dickie. There was musical entertainment from, amongst others, Don Fardon (of Belfast Boy fame) and Manchester's very own Cracked Flag, all of whom are committed to the George Best Foundation. This was shown by the fact that ALL their profits from their respective CDs (Belfast Boy and Farewell to the Belfast Boy) are being donated to the GBF.

One very special moment for me was the close of the auction on eBay for the most beautiful mosaic, which was so kindly designed and donated by the Manchester artist, Mark Kennedy. The mosaic was a head and shoulders of George and was so lifelike. The bidding closed at 9:00 in the evening and raised £875, no less!! My sincere thanks go to Margaret Orhan (Company Secretary MUST), Duncan Drasdo (MUST), Stuart Parish (IMUSU), Emma, Dickie's personal bodyguard that night, Eric Halsall and indeed everyone who worked so tirelessly to produce such a brilliant evening. A special word of thanks for those who picked us up at the airport and dropped us back safe and sound.

Speaking of Dickie...He had been a little bit reluctant to go to Manchester as he has been to so many events since last November and finds it a bit tiring. However he had an absolute ball!! In fact, we have



photographic evidence of him jiving well after midnight. Not bad for a man of nearly 87 years old. He also arrived back home with many phone numbers in his top pocket from some lady admirers. I was planning to use them for a bit of blackmail in the future but Dickie, being the sort that he is, laid his cards on the table when he arrived back in Belfast and told the family. Anyway, look at this photograph and tell me he wasn't enjoying himself!!

We had an interesting talk with both Tony Banks MP and Phil Woolas MP about how the cities of Manchester and Belfast can team up through the medium of the George Best Foundation to improve the quality of the lives of young people in the two cities. We will certainly be returning to Manchester to meet our many friends and I believe that a lot of positive things are ahead for the George Best Foundation in Manchester. Anyway, thank you to Manchester, the city which adopted George as one of their own, all those years



And that was just the morning!! In the afternoon, I spoke live on BBC Radio Ulster's "the George Jones Show". Besides the radio broadcast there was also a live-cam internet link. So it was in front of a truly global audience that the first George Best Faberge Egg was revealed for the world to see. I was so emotional when I saw it that I was unable to speak. It really is truly remarkable, and even before the radio show had ended, a bid of £25,000 had been received. George is only the fourth Westerner to be honoured in this way, the previous three being Admiral Nelson, Thomas Jefferson and Jimmy "Jinkie" Johnstone. This was the idea of Jeff Healey who was also the driving force behind the Jinkie egg. As you probably know Jinkie, one of the Lisbon Lions, sadly passed away the 13th March this year from motor neurone disease. I received a lovely reply from his widow Agnes to my letter of condolence and all our sympathies go to her in her time of trouble. As I say Jeff was the driving force behind the "Best" Egg and 68 are being produced raising a least a quarter of a million pounds for the George Best Foundation.

From there I went to the Belfast Visitor and Convention Centre, where an amazing photographic display was opened depicting George's life from the age of 16 until his sad death on 25th November 2005 aged only 59. Yet again, without hesitation, it was agreed that a donation box would be

ago...

Dear Barbara, Norman and Dickie,

I would just like to thank you on behalf of everyone one of us at MUST and IMUSA, for not only attending our night on Saturday, but for making it truly a night to remember, I have spoken to dozens of people in the last couple of days, each have said that you have given them so many memories, be it by signing an autograph, telling us stories, posing for photos or even Dickie's dancing feet at the end!, it really was a celebration of everything George gave to us, and that makes me deeply proud.

You and your family will always have a place in the hearts of all Man United fans, we don't forget our heroes easily and we will make sure George's name is sung forever more.

Thank you so much, from the bottom of our hearts, for making our night so special, and a happy 60th birthday George, thanks for the memories.

Regards,
Stuart Parish, IMUSA

SUNDAY 21st MAY

On the morning of the 21st, we flew back to Belfast and drove straight down to Warrenpoint, Co Down. Warrenpoint is a beautiful little town overlooking Carlingford Lough. The local Manchester United Supporters



Club (MUSC) was celebrating its 15th year in existence. They had a football tournament in the afternoon with teams representing Warrenpoint, Newry, Downpatrick, Belfast, Banbridge, Ballymena, Dublin and Castlereagh with the final between Ballymena and Castlereagh. Ballymena ran out the winners and lifted the trophy. In the evening they hosted a lovely dinner at one of the local hotels. Guests of honour were...Denis Irwin, Paul Parker and David May. Those boys sure get around!!

TUESDAY 23rd MAY

The weekend of celebrations was rounded off with a great evening in the fishing village of Portavogie, where George lived for a while with Alex, and where he was loved and protected by the



local people. The local restaurateur Francis Adair from the Quays worked closely with William and Eleanor McDowell, who ensured that yet again a great night was had by all. Again, local radio personality George Jones gave so freely of his time and conducted the evening. There was a table quiz, which I certainly didn't win, (but at least I got some of the Manchester United questions correct). Norman got the rugby ones right, being an egg chaser but George Costacos, to his eternal shame, got a question on the States of the USA wrong. Will we let him forget it? I don't think so. Yet again, a very substantial amount of money was raised from very generous people.

Newsletter Subscriptions

displayed for the duration of the exhibition. Belfast received over 6 million visitors last year and approximately one thousand people per month are still requesting directions to George's grave.



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The day was rounded off with a gala dinner in the Great Hall of our beautiful Belfast City Hall. It was organised on behalf of the Foundation by the George Best Carryduff MUSC, and they did a remarkable job. Guest of honour was Sir Alex Ferguson, who flew in with David Gill and Paddy Crerand. We were also delighted once again to have Martin O'Neill, Pat Jennings and Chris Eubank there to witness such a successful celebration of George's sixtieth birthday. The evening started off with some rousing music from a Northern Ireland based group called Different Drums of Ireland who, with Lambeg drum and Bodhran, made everyone sit up and take notice! There was other musical entertainment provided by Laura McGhee from Scotland, Don Fardon and Cracked Flag with the evening hosted by George Jones.

There were many items auctioned but the highlight of the evening was the auction of the Fabergé Egg. It was number 60 which was so special. The earlier radio bid was quickly surpassed and the final bid was TWENTY EIGHT THOUSAND POUNDS. The evening was a great success, and we intend to make it an annual event to coincide with George's birthday each year. We are still waiting for the final figure to come through but it is estimated that the evening raised £50,000.

So to conclude, all in all the weekend surrounding George's birthday with the theme "Sixty of the Best" was an undeniable success, and once again I cannot express my gratitude enough to everyone who was involved in such a wonderful occasion. Thank you all once again for your continued support, and be assured that the work of the George Best Foundation is progressing extremely well.

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