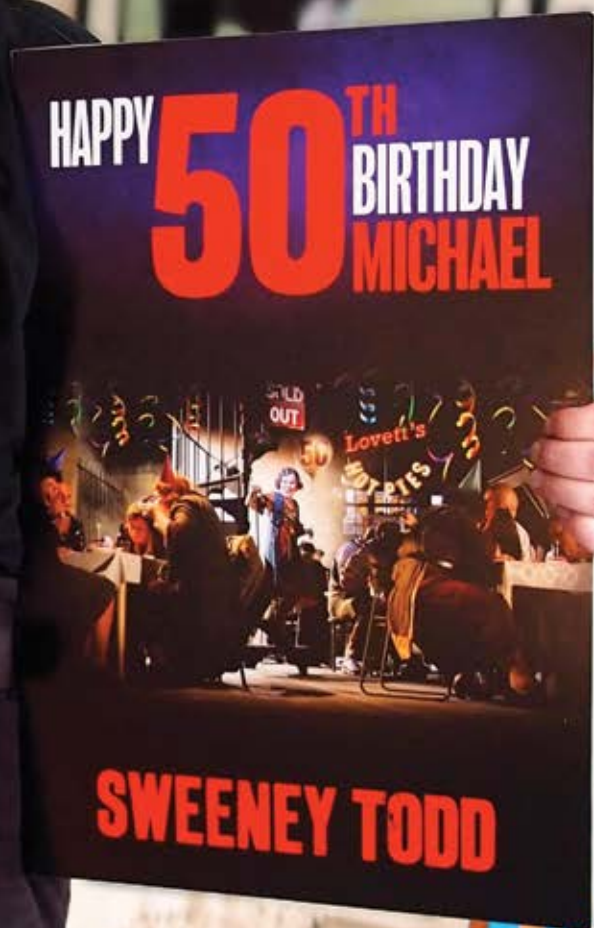


ON THE BALL

Issue 61



Hi Everyone

Well, it's been a busy and exciting couple of months, with one of the highlights being the Fan Club's Event which you can read all about in this issue. We hope you enjoy reading all the articles, especially James' tongue-in-cheek piece - just as well we love him, no one else would get away with being so cheeky to us!

As it's nearly time to say goodbye to Sweeney Todd we can tell you about a few things that will be coming along. Michael will be going into the studios to record a new album which will be released next March, to coincide with a UK Tour which will take place in April and May. Dates are still being confirmed and we will send out a News Update just as soon as they are known.

We asked Michael if Sunday Brunch would be returning soon and he said, not at the moment, but hopefully it will be back some time next year. However, he will be standing in for Steve Wright in the Afternoon on Radio 2 from 2pm to 5pm everyday for two weeks when he is on holiday towards the end of the year. We don't have the exact dates yet but will put them on the infoline/internet.

Thanks to everyone who has contributed to this issue, and who supported us at the Event, it was a big undertaking but well worth it to see so many happy faces. Roll on Christmas and the next On The Ball!

Love

Maureen and Gill

Dear Everyone,

Well, the last letter was all about the things that were looming on the horizon for us, like birthdays, anniversaries and celebrations of different events and now I think is a time for reflection on those events.

What a week I had starting on the 25th of June. THE EVENT!!! It was a triumph for Gill and Maureen and their team and families. So many of us gathered together again from all over the world and so many able to feel a part of it, even if they couldn't be physically there, via the internet and twitter. It was an afternoon for remembering, for catching up with old friends, for making new ones, for sharing a laugh and, at times, even a tear. In short it was exactly what it should be. A gathering of like

mindful people for the sole purpose of having a good time together. I loved every minute of it.

The outpouring of generosity and love throughout the week of my 50th was staggering. All the cards and cakes and presents and flowers decorated my dressing room and left all the cast of Sweeney speechless... and when the audience on the 27th stood and sang happy birthday to me, my heart just swelled with pride. I felt so lucky and special and loved. It will always be one of my greatest memories.

So now with only a few weeks left before we say goodbye to Sweeney I can't help but feel a sense of sadness that this magical time in my life is coming to an end. And even though there will be many more wonderful times for us all to come together and celebrate, this will always remain

one of the most extraordinary periods
of my life and I am so happy that
I was able to share it with so
many of you.

So now its into the studio
for a new album, planning a new
tour for next year and a new
musical for the end of 2013-but
lets talk about that another time.

For now I want to smell the
roses and relish this moment and
thank you from the bottom of my
heart for being such an important
and constant part of my life.

I can't wait to see you and
I send you all my love as always

Rock Bloss

Mike
X



HOW TO PLAN THE EVENT

BY GILL & MAUREEN



We would say that planning for the Event probably began a couple of years ago when we realised (and many people kept pointing out to us!) that there would be a double celebration in 2012 – our 20th anniversary and Michael’s 50th birthday. We could hardly ignore these two momentous occasions so it was in the back of our minds for a couple of years. We needed to know that Michael would attend, in fact he was one of the people most anxious for us to do an Event so that was no problem, and then we had to decide where and when. We looked at many different options and searched hundreds of hotels, but when it came down to it the Ibis at Earls Court, which had been the venue for the two previous Events, turned out to be the best place to have it.

We know there are always some people who find it difficult to travel and as much as it would have been a change to have it outside London, it really is the easiest place for everyone to get to. Our

dream was to have it in Colchester (and we still think our Castle Park would be a great venue for an outdoor concert!) but it wasn’t to be. Deciding on the date was another difficulty, but availability of the venue, and making it convenient for Michael, meant that it had to be held during a weekday. We know there are some people who couldn’t attend because of not being able to take time off work, but it’s very difficult to please everyone, and we hope those who couldn’t come understand that holding the Event on Monday 25 June really was the best option.

Our great friend Keith Harris was eagerly on board, even though he had retired from his job at Arena Travel. He managed to get Chris Perkins of Cue Media involved, the Mercury Theatre in Colchester agreed to do the ticket sales, James Gaden was working on the Event Logo, and we had our dream team set up. All we needed to do now was to decide how we were going to fill 5 and a half hours of entertainment and activities!

Michael’s fans are such a diverse group of people it’s quite a tricky balancing act getting the mix right so that everyone can get something out of the day, so we asked opinions from fans, and had many discussions throwing around ideas and suggestions until finally we came up with a programme that we felt would ensure everyone had a good time.

Our aim was to sell 400 tickets so that no one would be out of pocket and we managed to sell 409 so we were very happy with that as it meant we could go ahead and put all of our ideas into practice. We had several meetings with Michael (it’s a hard life but someone’s got to do it!) and he was thrilled with everything we were doing and wanted to make his own contribution. He knew he would be spending an hour with us at the end of the afternoon and asked us what we wanted him to do. Errr... we said very tentatively “Sing!” and he said “Yes that’s what I thought I would do. What do you think is the favourite song on my Heroes album, as I have the backing tracks?”

We were a bit flabbergasted as Michael has never sung as such at an Event before - only a *capella* on the spur of the moment. We had already done the survey for our Event competition “100 said” so decided to adapt one of the questions so that we could ascertain what was the most popular song on that album. Those of you who were there know that it was “Weekend in New England” which pleased us as that’s one of our favourites too!

The six months leading up to the day were taken up with really thinking about not much else other than planning everything, like doing the table plan, ordering goodies such as the Event pens and mugs, setting up the competitions, deciding what video clips we would show and generally making sure we had thought of everything.

Michael said he wanted our raffle to raise money for Shooting Star CHASE







and he said he was happy to donate some prizes. We couldn't believe our eyes when he brought in an array of very special items including Count Fosco's ring, Edna's perfume, Mrs Lovett's meat pie dish(!), Michael's bathrobe from the *Hairspray* tour, his choker that he was wearing in a famous photo of him with Yogi, a tour bag, just so much stuff we were overwhelmed with his generosity from his personal collection.

All too soon the Event was upon us and we drove up to the hotel on the Sunday evening and were able to have access to the London Suite that night – when we walked in we were totally gobsmacked. The room had undergone a massive refurbishment since the last time we were there and it looked stunning. Seeing all the tables laid out gave us more than a few butterflies in our tummies! Chris and his techies were already setting up the giant screens and we soon set to work getting our merchandise/raffle table ready. We should take a moment here to thank the hotel staff at the Ibis – they were professional, friendly and couldn't do enough for us. We would recommend them to anyone.

Eventually we went to our rooms and tried to sleep knowing we had such a big day ahead of us. We were both awake by 6 am and made our way to breakfast to get some fuel inside us before we started work. The rest of our family arrived, plus our helpers Ellie and Carol and we put the final touches to the room which involved Chris and Ellie filling over a hundred balloons with helium! It was worth the effort as the room looked fabulous. The time went so fast and it seemed like no time at all that we were opening the doors and everyone poured in. There were quite a few first time Eventers and we think they were quite



surprised at everything that went on.

Keith did his usual excellent job of hosting the day and we were kept busy talking to people – lots of whom we hadn't seen for a long time. We were in contact with Andrew and he sent us



a text to say that Michael was going to sing two songs instead of one – wow – we were so thrilled! Our nervousness increased as the time Michael was due



to arrive loomed up, and eventually we got the word that he had arrived and was waiting out the back in the corridor – really glamorous – not! We sneaked out to see him and he looked gorgeous and was really excited about going on stage and seeing everyone. As usual he managed to calm us down, and even took time to sort out Gill's hair extensions so they looked good!

As soon as Michael was on stage the time flew by, and it included a moving film and speech from Karen Sugarman of Shooting Star CHASE, during which she presented us with some beautiful star earrings. There are many reports of the day in this issue, so we will leave it to others to give their views of Michael's appearance, all we can say is a huge thank you to him for supporting us throughout the 20 years of our existence.

The day was a huge success and judging by the comments and thank you cards we received afterwards a good time was had by all. Our thanks go out to everyone who was involved in putting together Event 2012.



HAPPY BIRTHDAY MICHAEL!

Michael kindly asked us if we wanted to put these fabulous pictures from his birthday in *On The Ball*. We didn't need asking twice!



CUTTING EDGE ENTERTAINMENT

by James Gaden. Photos by Nancy Garcia, Wendy Corbridge and Gill Oakley.



There had been a theme of sharp blades running through the weekend I recently experienced in London. There was of course Michael's razor wielding barber in *Sweeney Todd*, a role I was particularly looking forward to seeing. There was my rapier like wit, which was honed and on full display over the course of the weekend like the fabulous raconteur that I am - and finally there was the double-edged sword that is the Michael Ball Fan Club. On the one hand, it is tremendous for keeping up to date with everything Michael is doing and there are some lovely people in it. On the other side there are the two ogres who run it, the tyrannical Gill and Maureen who force me to create *On The Ball* for them with very little notice, a complete

disregard for organisation and a frankly rude manner if I dare speak aloud about their wanton unprofessionalism.

Nevertheless, with 2012 being a big year for fans of Michael, I planned ahead and spoke to my girlfriend Sara about maybe having a break in London over the weekend to attend our first Fan Club Event - a long awaited get together which would celebrate not only Michael's 50th birthday but the Fan Club's twentieth year in existence. We both decided it was a must - we had talked about going to see *Sweeney Todd* and The Event factored in made it a no-brainer. There had been a six year gap since the last Event - in fact, I had only been in the Fan Club a couple of months before the last one happened,

and not really knowing what The Event was, I didn't go. It was only when I read the stories in the following issue of *On The Ball* that I realised how much fun it sounded and vowed to go to the next one. I was amazed that so many years had passed, and even more amazed to realise the Fan Club had survived for fourteen years without me doing their artwork.

Sara and I arrived the day before and enjoyed London before heading off to The Event at the Earl's Court Ibis the next day. As we made our way into the foyer we found it was already packed. After a few minutes I started recognising one or two fans I had either seen on the forum or who were my friends on Facebook, but I had yet to meet in person. Before I got chance to really chat to anybody, we were shown into the huge room which had been superbly laid out with big screens and a staged area. Sara and I found our places and introduced ourselves to our table mates, which included Laura who had come over from Ireland, Craig from Edinburgh, Claire, Elaine and Alana with her mum and dad.

Maureen and Gill started doing the rounds, ordering people to sit down and shut up so they could begin - it began to feel like Stalag Ibis and I wondered if they would curb their ferocity or if we would just all have to keep our heads down. Maureen stayed at the far side of the room snarling while Gill strutted over toward our table. I was initially worried that because I have such a great head of hair, a lovely singing voice, boyish good looks, charm and charisma, whether Michael would feel threatened by my presence, especially as he's so much older than I am. However, Gill put paid to that by commanding me to stay inconspicuous, as this was all about her, Maureen and Michael. She then taunted me by showing off her sparkly new iPad, sneering about how I, a true Apple fan, didn't have one and she did. She even took my picture with it to rub it in, the witch.



The Event kicked off with Gill visibly snatching the microphone from hapless compère Keith, so she could take centre stage and indulge herself in the spotlight. She made some preposterous claim that Keith had “forced” her to make a speech, before introducing some vintage footage of Michael at an airport which fans had not seen before, where both Maureen and Gill sported, as Michael put it, “hideous perms”.

Perhaps aware at how amusing this fashion howler was, Maureen quickly shut things down in order for the first quiz to take place. Keith announced each team should elect a captain - while I am usually quiet and unassuming, the decision to make me captain by unanimous agreement from all of my table-mates proved to be sound strategy. As I went to

collect the answer forms, I had a chance to talk to the lovely Nikki who had been on my friends list on Facebook for some time, but I had never had chance to speak to. I said hello and we spoke briefly, then she went back to her table - I was content I had sabotaged her concentration as she left with nothing more than her answer forms and the vision of my piercing steel blues eyes. She would no longer be a threat in the quiz.

As I collected the goodie bags I’m sure I heard Maureen mutter “Enjoy them, you won’t be winning anything else!” With that in mind, I returned and named our team ‘Norfolk And Chance’. Laura seemed confused, so I told her to say it aloud quickly, and in her Irish accent it could not have sounded better.

I was very proud of our team as we did very well on the fiendishly clever ‘Similar But The Same’ segment, where you were given literal clues to Michael’s song titles. We were less fortunate on the ‘100 People Said’ segment however. When the question arose about what it was about Michael that attracted you, I hit a bit of a wall. Laura, Claire, Elaine and Sara gushed about dimples and eyes, but I was filled with indecision and asked “I don’t know, what about you Craig? Dimples? Or was it his eyes for you? I know it was for me.”

Craig and I were similarly useless in the ‘If you were stuck in a lift with Michael, what would you do?’ question,



as I had a feeling none of our perfectly decent and respectable answers had a cat in hell’s chance. The quizzes resulted in two tables being tied in second place – Maureen and Gill hadn’t banked on this, so I thought it was probably going to be down to me to bail them out as usual. However, my suggestion of “Make the tied teams fight it out!” went unheeded and Gill ended up asking an extra question instead.

Fortunately these conundrums were interspersed with an interval, which allowed some mingling. I went to get some refreshments and as I made my way out of the room I heard someone call my name (with an undercurrent of longing in the tone if truth be told, although that could simply have been her Newcastle accent). It was the delightful Emma Lunt, sat with her husband Steve. She waved at me with an expression that seemed to suggest she’d much rather have been sat at our table, so I made a point of going to speak to them on my way back. We spoke briefly and then they came and talked to us at our table. Sara and I made our way to check out the merchandise and who should we bump into there, but the Lunts! Stalkers.

I asked Emma what she wanted to win in the raffle and Steve announced he wanted to win Michael’s sparkly tie. With the Euro Championships raging, we inevitably got on to England’s football team and Steve and I are as different as chalk and cheese on our views - for



example I'm right and he's wrong. He was very pro-Redknapp whereas I stuck up for Hodgson's appointment. It was clear there was no middle ground, so after fantasising about strangling him with said sparkly tie and leaving him twitching in the foyer, I was the bigger man and simply smiled and wished him well.

We were all treated to some great footage during the day, including promo videos from the singles taken from my favourite Michael album 'One Careful Owner' and a real treat - a chance to see the pilot episode of *The Michael Ball Show*. I really enjoyed seeing this. It featured the hilarious segment with Emily and her mum doing the pottery with the 'Ball Boys' and the always amusing Bradley Walsh giving a fun interview. I thought this made the pilot a stronger show than some of the ones that were broadcast - a cruel irony when Michael later announced it looked like there wouldn't be another series.

Speaking of Michael, he came out to entertain us all for the last part of The Event. He arrived looking healthy and not a day over 49, demonstrating his classy nature as he fielded questions from all over the room. Sara wanted to ask him if he got tired of being mistaken for Michael Bublé, a question prompted by the fact her mother will insist on texting to inform us whenever Bublé is on TV (not to mention she thinks Michael Ball is Michael Bolton). I personally think Michael should wait until Bublé has an album coming out and then record one himself with all the same songs on and a similar cover photo, just to blow everybody's mind. However, two of our table mates did get to ask questions - Laura went first, asking for a hug as she couldn't go to *Sweeney Todd*. Then there was a magical moment as Alana was able to ask a question via her computer for Michael to hear. He came over to speak to Alana personally, answered her question about song writing and accepted a birthday gift from her. I don't think there was anybody in the room who wasn't touched by that moment.

As Michael made his way back he fired a wink in my direction which Sara

ludicrously thought was meant for her, before singing 'Misty' and 'Play Me' for us all. His voice was perfect and he bravely wandered the aisles while singing, causing a few ladies to have hot flushes. He also made the youngest fan in the room, three year old Emily, a star by giving her a hug on the stage, before Karen Sugarman from *Shooting Stars* moved everyone again with a stunning video about the work they do, which Michael supports so fully. He received a card from some of the children there, along with a fabulous cake made by Barbara Mills.

After drawing the raffle (where I won nothing... hmmm) Michael made his way to the theatre. As the Event wound down, Sara and I left to get something to



eat before attending *Sweeney* ourselves. As we were leaving, I saw Claire Patrick, another of my Facebook friends I had yet to meet, just in front. She was with her husband Andrew and we spoke before she delivered another of her trademark lead balloon type 'jokes' that she so likes to clutter Facebook up with.

After a lovely Italian meal Sara and I went back to our hotel. I had wisely booked one just around the corner from The Adelphi so we strolled across to see the show. We had fantastic seats in row D, right near the middle - and who should be sat on my right? Claire and Andrew! We talked some more before the show started, then it was lights down and a chance to see Michael as a darker, nastier

character. He didn't disappoint! There have been enough reviews of the show and most people have seen it, so suffice to say I loved its dark tone and performances. Imelda was brilliant, Michael proved that there seems to be literally nothing he can't portray convincingly and I loved the relish he showed when 'slitting' throats. One woman visibly flinched every time he 'killed' someone, which I thought was a little strange, as they all take a bow at the end - he doesn't really kill five people a night (although James McConville as Tobias tried to up that tally by hurling himself off the platform that constituted Sweeney's barbershop). It was a perfect show save for the small mishap with Tobias - well, that and the insistence of the Patricks during the interval to go to the toilet, meaning Sara and I had to get up out of our seats to let them pass. Honestly, some people.

After the show I went to the stage door to see if I could say hello to Michael. Quite a crowd had gathered and I looked over my shoulder to see where Sara was. It turned out she was stood well at the back with Claire looking into the upstairs window of the theatre, where one of the cast members was brushing his teeth. Every time he passed the window, he waved to them and they waved back. Dirty peeping toms. I didn't get to speak to Michael this time, which I'm sure disappointed him as much as it did me.

It was a phenomenal weekend and I must confess I enjoyed The Event even more than I expected to. Maureen and Gill do such a fantastic job with it - it wasn't until I walked in the room, so vast it was almost as big as my ego, I realised the true magnitude of what it is they take on when they put together an Event. Even with my penchant for skewing reality for the sake of amusing people, I'll take a brief moment to be serious and say I'm sure I speak for all fans when I say we can't thank them enough. The Events, like the ladies in charge, are wonderful.

I would like to point out however, that the merchandise desk was being run by Gill's bosses, so they obviously fear her as much as I do.



THREE TIMES – THAT'S THE SECRET!

by Barbara Mills. Photo by Nancy Garcia

This normally confident cake maker was not so confident when it came to Michael's 50th birthday cake!

I decided on a trial run but smaller. Not too bad so Andrew ate it. A few days later I made the real one - but – when I turned it out after cooling,

it overhung my cake rack and to my horror it split down the middle due to size and weight, so that was also eaten.

A third try... and success! When it was decorated, I took a photo and I e-mailed the picture to Maureen and Gill who were wondering how it was

getting on – and they approved it!

Getting it to London was the next problem but Andrew decided he would drive me and the cake as he did not trust me to get it there on the train!

Maureen & Gill kindly asked me to give it to Michael at the Event and I have to admit that I was very nervous and the first part of the Event went over my head.

When the moment came, nerves fled as Michael is always so good at putting us all at ease. From the moment he hugged me as I went on stage, I was fine. It was a very special few minutes and I know it made everyone laugh when I held up the knife I had put with the cake but it fitted so well with the blood red handle. I hope Michael didn't think I was about to plunge it into him!

Thank you Maureen & Gill for the opportunity to make Michael's cake – it was a great honour, and thank you Michael for being such a lovely person to do it for. A day I shall never forget!

R.I.P. CLAUDIA NATARELLI by Lila Lindemann

I think perhaps a lot of Michael's fans will remember my sister-in-law Claudia Natarelli, especially from the 'Chitty' days.

Claudia lost her fight with diabetes and its complications on June 30, 2012.

We were very close and "best friends" since our teen-age years. We knew everything about each other, and when I married one of her brothers, we considered ourselves to be "sisters". She was a sweet, funny lady, and she will be greatly missed by a lot of her friends and family.



As long as I knew her, Claudia said she would NEVER fly in a plane, and especially over water! Then, in 2000, we discovered Michael appearing on our TV on the Andrew Lloyd Webber 50th Birthday concert. Well, things changed, and she/we gladly flew over to see our first Christmas concert at the Dominion in 2001. She never had a problem flying across the pond to see Michael! We had twelve years of following Michael as much as we could, and loving every moment of it!

Claudia is and will be greatly missed. I know she left a big gap in my life!

My Day At The Event

by Zoe Grimwood



First of all many thanks for organising such a brilliant Event, I came along with some trepidation as it would be my first one without my beloved sister Mandy (also long time fan) who sadly passed away during 2010. But I was accompanied by my other best travelling companion Sue Heath, who has been a tower of strength throughout. We arrived in some style I must say as we were driven from

Swindon to London by chauffeur, (who also happens to be Sue's husband!) and we pulled up outside the hotel around 11.00 am. We were on table 27 along with some other ladies from Kent and Yorkshire.

It was with great anticipation that we had decided to come along to the Event, having not been for five years,



plus even though I am a long time fan, I actually had not seen *Sweeney Todd* yet so we were doubly excited. The morning passed very quickly, we chatted to our new friends and wandered around the Event just looking at all the things laid out. I had brought with me one of Mandy's old programmes from *Passion*. I thought somebody else could get some joy from it as it had sat in my living room collecting dust all this time.

Finally Michael showed up, I had my new camera with me and it proved very good, much better than the old one. Unfortunately we did not win one thing, not a sausage on our table, but we were not too worried. Then came the time to meet up with our chauffeur again and have something to eat before the show. So we were whisked off to Central London and found our way to Garfunkels which seemed to have been taken over once again by Michael fans, everywhere we looked there were discreet groups of women with their purple wrist bands on! We chatted to a lovely lady who had come over from Arizona especially for the Event, she had a lot of photos with her and was happy to share them with most of the restaurant!

Afterwards we headed to the theatre, as luck would have it we ended up in row A and Sue took great delight in teasing me about the blood spurting out onto me, as I was so near! I didn't believe her (much)... then came the show. I have to be honest and say it was not one of my favourites, but I did like some of the songs and of course there was no blood spilled anywhere near me. We witnessed the poor boy falling off the stage and at first thought it was supposed to be in the show, but of course it wasn't. We were relieved to see him back on stage shortly afterwards, looking none the worse for wear.

All too soon it was over and we were back in the car heading back down the M4 to Swindon, we were back home before midnight, which was very good. All in all, I really enjoyed it, cannot say what was the best part, maybe Michael showing up was lovely, but then again I always enjoy the camaraderie that the Events bring.



“Cloud Nine is now occupied again!”

By Laura Craig

As soon as I knew I was going to the Event, I started thinking about what to ask Michael. And then, with only about four weeks to go, I thought to ask for a hug. I knew which way I was going to approach it, but didn't know the lead-up would be so easy.

When Keith Harris was asking him about *Sweeney Todd*, Michael asked if anyone had been to see it yet. Quite a few hands went up. He then asked if anyone had not been to see it yet. A few hands went up including mine.

When it came to my turn to speak to Michael, I said, “Michael, you were asking earlier if anyone had been to see *Sweeney Todd* yet? I'm one of the ones who haven't, and I won't be able to go and see it either... so I was wondering if I could possibly have a hug?”

“Of course you can, come here,” Michael said. Now as I was sitting on a table with people I didn't know, I asked the lady sitting beside me to take the photo for me. Now one more explanation, I have cerebral palsy, which

means that my balance isn't good.

Anyway, as I got to Michael, I said, “I'm sorry Michael, but you're going to have to come down here.” He said, “Will I step down here?” I think he was anxious about stepping down that way without the steps. But he did it anyway, and I got my hug, and as we were pulling away from each other, he said, “Shall we have a photo?”

Telling this story again makes me relive it all over again. And I have a permanent grin plastered on my face!



“When Can I Go Up?” by Clair Heward

In On The Ball 54, we reported how nine month old Emily Heward met Michael at the stage door of Hairspray (below). Now a bit older, Emily was very keen to meet Michael again! Emily's mum Claire takes up the story...

Emily's day started in Middlesbrough at 6.30. My Dad was picking us up to take us and my Mum and Auntie to Darlington Station to get the 8.30 train to King's Cross. Luckily our train was on time and arrived at Kings Cross and we got a taxi to the Ibis Hotel at Earls Court.

Once we got there we made our way to our places and went to see the goody table, where Emily managed to find a



picture of Michael from *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*, which is her favourite film.

She then sat through most of the Event very well and behaved herself. She enjoyed watching the videos of Michael, but kept asking why he had long hair and “When is he coming?” At the interval she had a run round the area outside and then it was back to wait for Michael.

When he finally came onto the stage she kept asking, “When is it my turn to go on stage?” Then came the section about Shooting Star CHASE, while they were playing the video of the hospice and the work that they do, she said, “She is not talking anymore, when can I go up?”

Then when he started asking people questions she stood on my knee with her hand in the air. At one point she started to wave Minnie Mouse in the air to catch his attention. He finally asked her what her question was and she went shy. So I asked if it was possible for her to have a cuddle from him. This was something which she has been wanting for a long time and when she watches his DVD's or sees him on TV she always say's she wants to go and see him.

Michael told me to take her up to the stage. He picked her up and I was surprised that she spoke into the microphone and answered his questions. She got her cuddle and then she went back to her seat. As she had got what she wanted she just said could we go on the train again! We waited until the raffle were my Mum won Michael's pass from the Heroes tour and a can of hairspray. She wore the pass all the way home. Once the Event had finished, we made our way back to the station to get the 7.00pm train back home. We finally arrived back home at 9.30pm and she was still awake. The next morning I had to print her picture off, so that she could take it to school and show her teacher. And now we have to look at the pictures, which other people have taken of her and are posted on the Fan Club forum.

Her aim for next time she sees him is to tell him that she loves him... but who doesn't!

We have decided that as she was so good at the Event we will be taking her to some of his concerts, which are local to us in the North East area. So if you see us there, please come and say hello!

Thank you from Shooting Stars

This lovely thank you message came through from Karen Sugarman who was in attendance at the Event...

On behalf of everyone at Shooting Star CHASE children's hospice, we would like to take this opportunity in thanking Maureen and Gill and all Michael's fantastic fans for such an incredible day in London on 25th June. It was such a privilege to be invited to attend and share with everyone there our work. Thanks to you all, we raised an incredible £3,318.83 in celebration of Michael's special birthday.

To have Michael as a Patron is truly wonderful. His continued commitment and passion to the children and families makes a real difference to our work. We are very proud of Michael and all his wonderful fans. We certainly feel we are part of the MBFC family now and we cannot thank you all enough.

Thank you for everything you do for us. It is as ever, truly appreciated and we look forward to seeing you very soon.

With love and warmest wishes,
Karen Sugarman
Director of Specialist Fundraising



Michael receives his card from the Shooting Stars children.



Gill and Maureen open the gifts they received from all at Shooting Stars



Karen thanking Michael after making her speech at the Event

My Moment To Shine

By Sue Wilde



Long term Fan Club member Sue Wilde had the honour of carrying the Olympic Torch recently - here is her account of her amazing achievements...

At the latter end of 2011 my husband Graham nominated me to carry the Olympic Torch in Herefordshire as a surprise for my hard work, determination and efforts in managing to lose 11 and a half stone in body weight. In January 2010 I decided to completely change my life around and set myself a goal

to lose weight and get fit for my 40th Birthday. It was a 2 year goal as I wasn't 40 until December 2011, but with such an incredible amount of weight to lose it had to be a realistic goal at the same time. I enrolled at my local gym and began a program of both weight training and cardiovascular exercise. On top of that I found my love of swimming again. Diet wise I didn't do anything faddy, just simply reduced my calorie intake to create a deficit to lose the pounds. As the months passed the weight was dropping

off and finally in May 2011 (7 months ahead of schedule) I had lost 11 and a half stone going from 20 stone 1lb to 8 stone 7lb. Since then I have been maintaining my weight between 8 and a half stone and 9 stone whilst keeping up my fitness and weight training.

Graham wanted my hard work to be recognised which is why he put forward the nomination and had completely forgotten about it until he received an email in January. My details had been passed on to LOCOG's regional committee and assessed and they agreed that it would be a fitting tribute for me to carry the Olympic Torch! I was speechless and so honoured to be able to be part of such a prestigious occasion and was very much looking forward for my day to arrive.

Carrying the Olympic Torch was a wonderful experience. The crowds were amazing and the weather (shock horror) was glorious and everything just fitted into place. I only had to run 300 meters or so, but it was all uphill and with my guide dog Ena on one side and torch on the other I thought my arm was gonna drop off by the time I exchanged torch kisses. Speaking of which, the woman I passed the flame over to was none other than Olympic Swimming legend Sharon Davies! The most ironic part is that Sharon's dad, Terry, used to be my swimming coach when I was part of the blind British squad back in the 80's. It was lovely to be able to speak with Sharon about her Dad and share some stories from when I used to train.

My torch stands with pride in the house and is a constant reminder of not only what I've achieved with my own personal goals, but to also symbolise what an outstanding Olympic Games London put on this year. A once in a lifetime opportunity and one that I will never forget as long as I live.

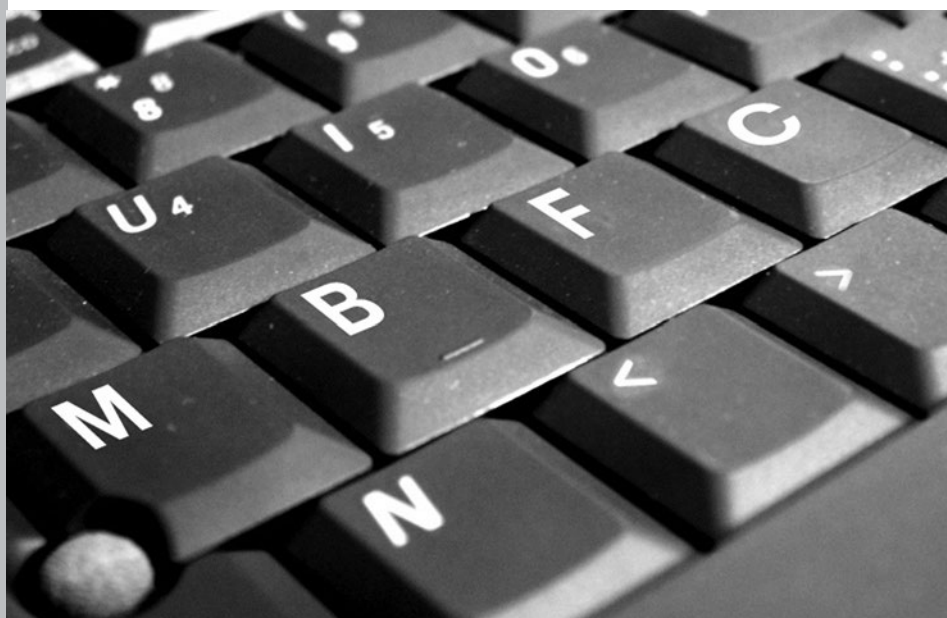
Next on the agenda is the wait to see whether I'm selected to run the London Marathon next year for Guide Dogs for the Blind. Training is going well, so here's hoping...

THE MICHAEL BALL FAN CLUB ONLINE

You can find our website at
www.mbfcc.co.uk

Our site features a very active forum where many a debate has gone on between fans from all over the world. You can also find all the latest news and photos - why not check it out today?

There is also a Fan Club Members Forum for fan club members only. The password to access it is 'silver'.



MOVING HOUSE?

Don't forget to let us have your new address so you don't miss out on any important information.

Please remember to enclose a stamped addressed envelope if you want a reply to your letter.

IMPORTANT!

Please remember to use the correct postage when sending items to the fan club, especially if your envelope is larger than 240mm x 165mm as it costs more than the standard size!

**INFOLINE
NUMBER**

0871 221 7811

PEN PALS / TRAVEL TALK

This section is for those of you who either want to meet up with fellow fans in your local area or get in touch with people from further afield. Maybe you want to find a travelling companion or maybe you simply want to arrange a get together to chat about Michael. To be included simply drop us a line with your details at our usual address.

**Jeannette Kelly
"Morhild"
North Park Villas
Saltash
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PL12 6LP**

Jeannette would love to hear from anyone who took a photo of Michael at the Event when he went down on one knee while singing 'Misty'. She was sitting on Table 14 and her friend Nora was the lucky lady that he was singing to at that moment.

