

James Hartley in **BLACKPOOL** International clairvoyant sees his future in Blackpool

INTERNATIONAL clairvoyant Zaraeda is seriously considering forsaking his delightful haven east of the Pennine Way and coming to settle here in Blackpool. As a clairvoyant his reputation is especially strong in the North East where he has lived for much of his career. But suddenly he's got the urge to move — and a feeling that there would be greater scope for his



Zaraeda

particular gifts in the entertainment mecca of the North. Mind you, leaving his present home would mean parting with so many of the treasures acquired over a long time and now lavishly displayed in his mansion-like stronghold in rural Yorkshire. He has been a collector of antiques all his life and one wonders if his powers of clairvoyance have helped him trace so many bargains, some of which are well nigh priceless — and irreplaceable.

However, Zaraeda feels that he would command a much wider range of audiences if he were based at Blackpool. His fame has of course preceded him, apart from the fact that he has already had three much-applauded seasons in the resort.

He and his manager-partner Johnny St George (the singer) have their eyes on a suitable property belonging incidentally to a top entertainer, and when they have disposed of their Yorkshire hideaway they expect to clinch a deal for a desirable Blackpool holding.

What does Zaraeda foresee? Oddly enough he is not able to predict his own development and fate, I'll chance my arm: success is his and will be increasingly so when he becomes a denizen of Blackpool.

□□□□ The late Noel Coward's oft-quoted words of wisdom for Mrs Worthington cut no ice with Helen Jane's mum who is just as ambitious for her gifted daughter as the lovely teenage herself, stagestruck since she was three.

Like many other promising youngsters, 13-year-old Helen owes much to the encouragement and experience she found at Blackpool Ivy Leaf where her distinctive vocal style and striking personality first arrested attention in the club's famous Junior Showtime competitions.

There it was, at the invitation of entertainment-manager Freddie Bent, that Jess Yates saw her and signed her up to appear alongside



Helen Jane

Anne Niegler and Webster Booth, and John Lawrenson, in a recent celebrity show at St Helens Royal.

Other notable dates for Helen Jane this year have included "Opportunity Knocks," Sunday shows with the Bachelors in Bridlington, and a midnight matinee with Ken Dodd at Blackpool Grand.

Tomorrow night (October 20) she is billed with Tony Monopoly, Bernie Flint, Lori Wells, Johnny More, John Anthony, etc., in a marathon charity effort in aid of the Pat Seed Appeal at Blackpool Opera House.

□□□□ YORKS CLUB favourite Derek Franks (balladeer, singalong star, chat-up merchant) who first appeared in a Fiddle Gold Coast summer show at St Annes way back in '73, has been back sampling the Blackpool season, touring the Bassmore Charrington showbar circuit — an exhilarating experience which has well and truly whet his appetite for a return visit in '79.

Meanwhile he is fully booked with a five-day week residency running things at the new Jollies Club in Shipley, plus a heavy daytime schedule looking after business for Dave Berry and the Cruisers, Gerry and the Pacemakers (sole booking) and Diana Dors (northern cabarets and personal appearances).

Also he is looking forward to Christmas and a special bonus in the shape of a Duggie Chapman pantomime season with Blackpool star Duggie Clark opening for a season on December 19 at the Preston Charter Theatre. I hope it keeps fine for him — his Preston show comes down at 9.45 and he's due on stage at Shipley (about 70 miles away) at 11 p.m.

□□□□ TWO RATHER special one-nighters displacing Saturday film fare at Blackpool ABC Theatre this month — the Grumbleweeds (October 21) and Hylda Baker (October 28) — now booking. As usual, your news and views are welcome at 144a Reads Avenue, Blackpool.

DOROTHY'S DENIAL

CONTRARY TO a report published in a national daily paper on Monday, Dorothy Squires states that she has not entered into any agreement to manage Joan Turner. Dorothy Squires is at present spending all her time preparing for her concert at the London Palladium on November 5, in which she will be singing numbers from her score of her forthcoming musical "Old Rowley."

A Scottish singer—but yet to play a home date

Gordon Irving in **SCOTLAND**

"THOUGH I'm a Scot, I've never worked there!" How often does one hear that comment? Well, I have heard it from several performers I have met on my round-Britain and round-the-world travels.

In the case of vocalist Gary Gordon, originally from Coatbridge, Lanarkshire, it is due, I'm sure, to his having been away from his home area for so long. At 16 he joined the Argyll and



Gary Gordon

Sutherland Highlanders as a band-boy, five years later transferred to the band of the Scots Guards, then left the Army to become a professional musician, working in pit orchestras, dance bands, groups, and touring the world in ships' orchestras.

He settled down in the Midlands, and now does a multi-instrumental act mixed with vocals, playing the saxophone, clarinet, flute, piccolo, penny-whistle and the bagpipes. Gary has played most Midlands clubs and has done broadcasts.

He tells me: "This year did a world cruise on the 'Canberra', and met John Taylor, the artist, of Seal Island, Oban. I wrote the music for his poem 'Islands of Beauty'; recorded this for him, and the record is selling well. I've also been to San Francisco for club work."

Now Gary is interested in playing the Glasgow area, and is at 114 Moorcroft Road, Moseley, Birmingham. I'm sure this is one Lanarkshire lad who'd love to appear before his own folk some time.

□□□□ KILLED JOCK MCCONNELL, from Falkirk, now resident mainly in San Diego, California, a globe-trotting ice-skating performer, has just made a bit of showbusiness history in Japan. Skating in "Las Vegas on Ice," a night-club show in Atami, near Tokyo, he was suddenly handed a 1,000-yen tip by a Japanese customer.

"I was doing my Scots soldier act wearing the tartan and the kilt," he said. "In my 30 years in showbusiness I've never had a tip from a customer before. The truth is that the 1,000-yen is currently worth only £2.50 in British money, and the rates of exchange for the dollar are all

against visiting performers. Somehow that day in the audience took pity on the wee Scotsman from Falkirk."

It seems that overseas entertainers in Japan — singers, dancers and musicians — are all suffering from the dropping value of the dollar since most arrive to work on dollar contracts. Jock says: "The foreign entertainers here are cutting down on all living expenses. Net incomes have decreased. Some dancing girls can't afford to eat in restaurants. They buy milk, bread, cheese and other foods at the supermarket and eat in their apartments."

Even the bank manager in Atami felt sorry for Jock's unit, and asked him to take along to the bank five girls from the show. They had afternoon tea in the boardroom.

Jock McConnell, who is in Japan with his wife Margaret until December, is company manager as well as appearing in two shows nightly and gets one day off per month. He will be home in California for Christmas, then goes to Miami next year. He has been all round the world on skates since he went to the ice rink in Falkirk and decided to be a professional funny-man on ice.

"But Japan," he stresses, "is one of the dearest countries I've ever landed in."

□□□□ OFF TO Australia flew Glasgow entertainer Glen Daly with accordionist Billy Little, their first stop Perth; the pair waited two days at London Airport for the flight out via Frankfurt and Bangkok.

Billy Connolly has just completed a tour of Australia... Arrivals include singer Peter Morrison, Scots comedy man Ron Dale and veteran accordionist Jimmy Shand... In "Those Wonderful Scottish Girls," due on ITV at Hogmanay for Scotland-based Bryan Izzard, will be Janet Brown, Una McLean, Almi McDonald, Moira Anderson, Marie Gordon Price, Eve Graham, Annie Ross, Annette Crossbie, Colette O'Neill and Beryl Reid; they rehearse in London this month.

Billy Crockett of Edinburgh joins "Music Hall" at Theatre Royal, Norwich, week of November 13.

□□□□ DANCE PRODUCER Trudi Danks of Glasgow has, after a lot of hard work and perseverance, got together an entertaining half-hour floorshow of varied modern dancing. The boys

and girls, ages 16 to 19, have been doing weekend and some midweek shows. Nice work. I'm sure we'll see them on TV soon.

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INTERESTING VENUE is "The Scotsman" restaurant in Norway's capital Oslo, where singer-guitarists Ian Campbell and Denny Cairns, from Clydebank, who call themselves Sandpiper, are resident as musicians... The Valentino Show



Willie B. Wilder and his wife Kim

has been playing clubs from Perth to Glasgow... Young Scots actor Jim Byars of Glasgow, who is touring in "The Slab Boys," will be the baddie in Glasgow Citizens' pantomime with Mary Ann Coburn as Polly... Jeff Norton, who works clubs and cabaret with his wife Jane Lindsay, is to make his acting debut in "The Camerons"... Willie B. Wilder, comedy magician, and his wife Kim (Miss De Meaurio), play the Tom O'Connor Show in Southampton in December.

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BETTY VIVIAN, of Norwich, East Anglia, is a theatre buff. She likes Scottish music, especially that of Tom and Jack Alexander. Which is why, the other week, she found herself at two second-house performances in the front stalls at the Gaiety Theatre, Ayr, thus making a round trip of 700 miles. Betty is also a keen reader of THE STAGE.

Talking of Ayr, hundreds of performers will remember Leslie Popplewell, elder son of the late Ben Popplewell, who with his family ran the Gaiety for many years. Leslie and his wife Edna have just celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary. Edna was Edna Flavell, one of the fabulous Manhattan Girls who came to the Gaiety 54 years ago last month, presented by the great Fred Duprez. She married Leslie on September 27, 1928. Happy memories, happy days. Congrats from showbiz to both.

Elaine is currently looking for a name for the quartet, who must surely accompany her to the top. After three encores Elaine sang "I'm feelin' good cos' you want me to stay." The sentiments were very true indeed.

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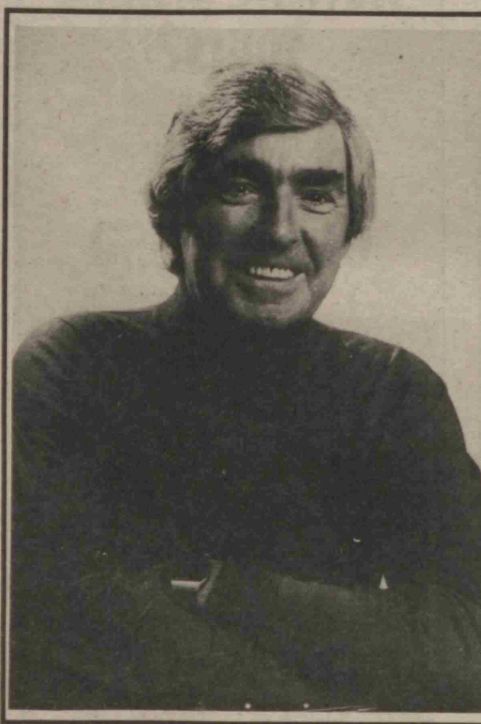
ALTHOUGH THE tourist season is now almost over for another year, Northumbria's rural nightspots continue to provide first-class and varied entertainment for late season visitors and residents alike. Clubs like Dintons and Club Fandango in Hexham continue to offer everything from star cabaret to speciality evenings while one of the newer nightspots in the shadows of Hadrian's Wall, The Castle, which is actually situated in the centuries old Blenkinsopp Castle at Greenhead on the Northumbria-Cumbria Border, continues to attract patrons from a wide area.

Recent visitors included a showband called Nessie who made a big impact, comedy showband Justin Funn and speciality fire eaters Tonic. A band constantly in demand for various functions at The Castle are The Ron Atkinson Four, an extremely versatile quartet.

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THERE SEEMS to be a definite 1978 revival for the big ballad and that is sure to please one of the most respected of Geordieland's male vocalists Richie Slater who returned recently to do the rounds of his native North East.

Richie first appeared in these notes more than five years ago during his time at such venues as Greys and Roy's Two Rooms in Newcastle-Upon-Tyne. I said then that here was a guy who could go right to the top. Though international stardom is still in the offing, Richie's career has nevertheless continued to progress. Though his image has changed slightly — for the better I think — he has lost none of his panache and vocal interpretive skills as a recent cabaret cruise on the Queen Mary proved.



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Ron Turnbull in the **NORTH-EAST** Triumphant return for Elaine

IN JULY this year I waxed lyrical in these notes about a lively Scots lass named Elaine Simmons who came to the North East from her native Edinburgh and took Geordieland by storm. At the time I advisedly used the word charismatic to describe the effect Elaine and her band, of only six weeks standing, had on her audience.

Such was the impact of that one visit that the mere whisper of a return had the cabaret rooms of the North East buzzing with anticipation.

She duly returned in October to underline my first impressions that here is an artist destined for the heights of stardom. She gave her enchanted audience 80 minutes of material which ranged across the whole spectrum of the music world from current chart toppers like 10 cc's "Dreadlock Holiday" to standards sung with tremendous sincerity.

New ingredients included medleys of the hits of Stevie Wonder and Elton John and a superb rendition of the Travolta/Newton-John smash hit "You're The One That I Want" with bass guitarist Neil Hay playing the part of Travolta. And while on the subject of backing support, praise cannot be placed too highly upon Elaine's band, made up of Neil-Travolta-Hay, Colin Mitchell from Edinburgh on electric piano, Kenny Scott on lead guitar and Dave Cantwell on drums.