



FOLKESTONE & DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

www.folkestonehistory.org

NEWSLETTER No. 72 – Autumn 2017

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT by Alan F Taylor

At the June meeting we welcomed guest speaker Bob Preedy who presented his talk entitled "History of Pirate Radio". Bob said the way the BBC was working left a huge hole in the spectrum for the pirates to come into broadcasting. European monsters like Leon Hilson, Bordo, and Terloos were broadcasting music programmes before the BBC started. The first public broadcast was from Amsterdam in 1921, they were broadcasting live concerts. Post WW1 a lot of amateurs were starting to get together with transmitter valve radios, but it was more of a hobby. They listened to Morse code because there was nothing to entertain them.

In 1922 a group including Marconi and GEC got together and broadcast proper programmes so as to sell more radios, they went on to become the British Broadcasting Company. They published a radio station magazine, and Radio Times started in 1923, so the local radio came before the national radio. Bob went on to talk about all the radio stations around the country and he said the BBC didn't start until 1927 with John Reith as manager.

Bob then told us about the steam yacht "Seco", she was the brain child of the publicity manager for the Daily Mail. He worked out if you were three miles off the coast you were in international waters so it wasn't illegal to broadcast - so his idea was to take this steamboat round the coast from July to September in 1928, and broadcast in each town, unfortunately the mast was a piece of wire stretching from the bow to the stern, and if the bow was facing the shore the signal went both sides and not ashore. The radios at the time were not transistors, so after the first day he scraped that idea, took the transmitter out and put in four massive speakers. He then went along the beach 100 yards off the shore with somebody talking on a microphone, possibly Stephen Williams. Bob said the ship probably came to Folkestone, but it certainly went to Thanet.

Bob went on to talk about Leonard Plugge who was an MP for Chatham in 1935 - he had a sports car in which he built and fitted with a car radio. His hobby was driving round the Normandy coast listening to amateur broadcasters. He discovered the Fay Camp in Normandy went off the air at midnight, so Leonard Plugge asked them if he could broadcast after midnight, which was agreed, so he started Radio Normandy in 1930. Stephen Williams, Bob Dambus Walker and Roy Pomley worked for him. They got up to 20 kilowatts and reached Birmingham.

In 1933 Radio Luxemburg started up; they were amateurs and were broadcasting on long-wave which travels a lot further than medium-wave. In 1939 it all ended with the German's taking over the transmitter in Hungary. In 1946 Radio Luxemburg re-started still on long-wave with Stephen Williams back as manager.

In 1955 the BBC monopoly for radio and television since 1922 was broken. Bob went on to talk about the following pirate radio stations; Radio Nord, Sweden (1958); Veronica, Holland (1960); Radio Atlanta (off the Essex coast) (1964) and also stations on the Forts in the Thames Estuary; Radio Sutch; Radio London; Radio Invicta (whose offices were in Bouverie Square); Radio Astrid, Radio Essex, Radio North, Radio 355 and Swinging Radio England. The seven forts were serviced by Harry Featherbe better known as "Tom Pepper" who was drowned along with disc jockey Simon Ashley in December 1964 when his boat foundered on a sand bank.

In 1967 the Government banned pirate radios with a Marine Offences Bill, which made it not impossible, but more difficult to broadcast and most of the stations closed down. Radio Caroline continued until March 1968 - but that wasn't the end on pirate radios they returned in 1983. The government tried to frighten people by saying it was illegal, but if you are 3 miles off the coast you are in territorial waters, which the government has no jurisdiction over.

Radio International was broadcasting from Belgium so the government jammed it with two transmitters, one at Rochester and one at Chatham. Lazer 558, was launched in 1984.

Bob said Caroline started 50 years ago and will be returning because Ofcom has allowed it to broadcast with a 1 kilowatt transmitter.

Sixty people attended the meeting eleven of whom were visitors.

At the July meeting we welcomed member speaker Terry Begent who presented his illustrated talk entitled 'A Folkestone Roman tale – written in the Landscape'. Terry started by talking about Alfred Watkins who published a book in 1921 called 'The Old Straight Track'. What Watkins did was to go round the country looking at ancient monuments and he observed that they were in straight lines and he noticed that these straight lines carried on through forests and things even though you couldn't see the other end, so he got it in his mind that they were some kind of path setting the way, so if you wanted to go from Wales to Scotland you set out on the right Ley Line and off you went. At the end of his book he was firmly convinced that the old god men with their sticks laid Ley Lines and sometime later people came along and built monuments such as Stonehenge. These Ley Lines were adapted and said to be connected to the Earth's energy. Terry thought today we would call them 'desire paths' where people keep going from A to B and leaving a trail.

So what Watkins did was to get an old map and draw a line between two things and ask, have we have a Ley Line? Terry went on to demonstrate this method locally by drawing straight lines from A to B to determine the ancient track ways in our area.

Forty-eight people attended the meeting three of whom were visitors.

At the August meeting we welcome guest speaker Bronwen Sadler who presented her illustrated talk entitled 'Battle of Trafalgar'. The Battle of Trafalgar was a naval engagement fought by the British Royal Navy against the combined fleets of the French and Spanish Navies, during the war of the Third Coalition (August – December 1805) of the Napoleonic Wars (1796 – 1815).

Twenty seven British ships of the line lead by Admiral Lord Nelson aboard HMS *Victory* defeated thirty three French and Spanish ships on the line under the French Admiral Villeneuve in the Atlantic Ocean off the south west coast of Spain, just west of Cape Trafalgar, near the town of Los Canos de Meca. The Franco-Spanish fleet lost twenty two ships, without a single British vessel being lost. It was conclusive, ending the French plans to invade England.

The British victory spectacularly confirmed the naval supremacy that Britain had established partly through Nelson's departure from the prevailing naval tactical orthodoxy. Conventional practice, at the time, was to engage an enemy fleet in a single line of battle parallel to the enemy, to facilitate signalling in battle and disengagement, and to maximise fields of fire and target areas. Nelson instead divided his smaller force into two columns directed perpendicularly against the enemy fleet, with decisive results.

During the battle Nelson was shot by a French musketeer, he died shortly thereafter, becoming one of Britain's greatest war heroes. Villeneuve was captured along with his ship *Bucentaure*. Admiral Federico Gravina, the senior Spanish flag officer, escaped with the remnant of the fleet and succumbed months later to wounds sustained during the battle. Villeneuve attended Nelson's funeral while a captive on parole in Britain.

Forty people attended the meeting three of whom were visitors.

We would like to welcome new member Mark Hourahane

The Folkestone & District Local History Society is a very successful and forward looking Society, both with its monthly meetings, talks & photographic displays. However, in order to continue in this vein we would like to take this opportunity to invite more members to participate in the management of the society by becoming committee members/officers.

The involvement required would be attendance at four committee meetings through the year and occasional assistance at monthly meetings. I hope you will consider the above.

Memoirs of Pauline Bricknell.

I was born in 1938 at No. 7 James Street, Folkestone then we moved to a flat at 57 Canterbury Road, it was over my Uncle Fred's coal & corn factory at 57 & 59 Canterbury Road, (now Crystal Clear UK) - he was my father's brother. I started school at George Spurgeon, from there I went to Mundella, Park Farm, and finished up at the Technical College. I then moved to Morehall Avenue.

I wanted to be a dancer so started to learn to dance at The Priory Hall, The Bayle (now the Dance Easy). Ballet shoes and costumes cost a lot of money so after school I would go to Jim Roland's rock shop at the bottom of the High Street and roll rock. I then moved to Mrs A Glass for my dancing lessons - she lived at No. 1 Kingsnorth Gardens. I got my diplomas in tap and ballet; my bronze, silver, gold medals and gold bar for tap. I also got a certificate from the International Dancers Association for ballet.

In 1953 at the age of 14 I worked in Bobby's as an apprentice window dresser and interior decorator. When I left school I joined John Bereman's Evening Stars at the Marine Gardens Pavilion. I worked at the Pleasure Gardens Theatre in the pantomime "Robinson Crusoe" with Averill Angus and George Martin (1955-56), then in "The White Horse Inn" also at the Pleasure Gardens in 1959. I worked in pantomimes at the Theatre Royal, Exeter and Hull; in variety shows at Peterborough, Manchester and all round there; and the last season I worked in Blackpool with Des O'Connor.

I then went to join the Ringling Bros. and Barnum and Bailey's circus in Paris and we then went right through Europe. I then joined Althoff circus in Germany, the Sarrasani circus, the Spanish National Circus which was Carola Williams'. Then I went down to Madrid and worked in the Lido of Madrid as principal dancer; then to Portugal where I worked in circus and theatre. I then went to Africa which was a mistake and then I came back and worked in theatres in Germany where I broke my leg which finished my dancing career. The orchestra there the Rheinische Philharmonie asked me if I would open up a canteen in their big rehearsal rooms for them, which I did and stayed there eleven years then came back to the UK in 2001.





The White Horse Inn pantomime at the Pleasure Gardens Theatre, 1959, Pauline Bricknell is in the front row 6th from the left – hand side.

Registered Charity No. 295994