

OCTOBER MEETING

A Local Lighthouse

Reported by Terry Sutton

JOHN CLAYTON, the former director of planning and technical services with Dover District Council, was the first of our two speakers at our meeting at St Mary's parish centre on October 15th.

John, who is chairman of the St Martin's Emmaus centre in Dover, is a National Trust volunteer guide at the South Foreland lighthouse, on the cliffs between Dover and St Margaret's Bay, which was the subject of his most interesting talk.

Looking back at the history of lighthouses in the area he said that in 1367 a hermit called Nicholas de Legh,

who lived in a cave, provided a light on the cliffs to guide shipping around the coast. Local landowners helped finance his work, apparently to gain forgiveness for their sins.

This was followed in 1635 by an enterprising Scot, named John Meldrum, who persuaded Charles I to allow him to build lighthouses at the South and North Foreland and to collect a fee (one halfpenny a ton) from passing shipping. His lighthouses were made of wood with a fire on top!

In 1832 Trinity House took over responsibility for the South Foreland lighthouse and ten years later the existing building was constructed. It ceased operating in September 1988.

Mr Clayton explained why there are two lighthouses at South Foreland (one is on the cliff top and in danger of falling into the sea). The original aim was for both to be lit so that passing shipping could line them up and in that way navigate away from the dangerous Goodwin Sands.

At one stage whale sperm oil was used to provide the fuel to create the light but that proved too expensive, so a switch was made to crushed rapeseed but that caused too much smoke.



South Foreland Lighthouse

In 1858 Trinity House introduced the use of electricity, making it the first lighthouse in the world to be powered in that way. It was installed by Michael Faraday (1791-1867) but its use continued for only six months when there was a return to oil. Generators were brought into use in 1872 to provide the electricity to create the revolving light.

He urged those who had never visited the lighthouse to do so and learn the fascinating history that included Marconi's first ship-to-shore radio message in 1898 between the East Goodwin lightship and South Foreland. Even more impressively the following year he exchanged the first international radio transmission between Wimereux near Boulogne and the lighthouse.

Water Matters

Reported by Jeremy Cope

I WAS VERY IMPRESSED by the talk given by our second speaker Richard Sturt on, "Water Matters". Richard spoke from his experience as Southern Region Chairman of the Consumer Council for Water. He surveyed our water supply scene, its problems and some of the potential solutions of a subject that is of fundamental importance to anyone living in this area. A serious shortage of water involves rather more than a hosepipe ban and we should not take comfort from this year's wet summer.

First our deteriorating supply.

It came as no surprise that the Romans sorted things out using aqueducts to bring in the water that enabled them to use 600 litres per day per person. The comparison with our situation was highlighted by pictures of Bewl Water which supplies 17% of Kent's needs; the first when full, the second well nigh empty, each the result of seasonal variation. In Dover we rely almost wholly on water from the chalk

aquifers. Across Kent we consume 160 litres per day, just over a quarter of the Roman figure and we currently have water shortages from time to time.

Second our increasing demand.

Oh dear - the picture gets worse when we look into the future. Population predicted to grow by over 10%, growth in single households which use water less efficiently, additional demands from climate change and a forecast reduction in supplies from abstraction from aquifers. The net result, a potential deficit of around 30% by 2030.

Lastly possible long-term solutions.

What can be done? First if we use more domestic metering, water saving campaigns, more efficient distribution systems and more effective appliances within the home we will still find demand rising.

What of new sources of supply? Bewl capacity can be increased by raising the dam height; building Broadoak