On different wavelengths **Stephen Foster**

Our September meeting began with the formalities of the AGM but swiftly continued in the capable hands of Stephen 'Foz' Foster speaking to a packed audience about his 50 - year career behind the microphone working for the BBC and independent local radio as a broadcaster and commentator.

His entertaining talk covered his career in radio, starting with Radio Orwell and running through to the present day currently with Radio Caroline, the station that inspired his love of radio and music.

An Ipswich boy, he attended Copleston school and began work at Willis, Faber and Dumas (now Halo), the iconic black glass town centre building. By chance he saw an ad in a local newspaper for presenters for Hospital Radio Ipswich which helped start his broadcasting experience. At that time, he regularly listened to Radio Caroline in the evenings, broadcasting off the shore of Felixstowe from the ship Mi Amigo. Andy Archer was a favourite DJ with his reel -to -reel tape recorder, records and cartridges of jingles.

Six years later, after a rather unusual interview in the Great White Horse hotel and 4 pints of Abbot Ale, Foz was amazed to be informed that he had landed the job of trainee news reporter at Radio Orwell. His first assignment was in the Falkland Islands, after an eventful 18-hour plane journey. Not the office job he might have expected!

He spent 8 years at Radio Orwell covering memorable events such as the sinking of the European Gateway and Margaret Thatcher's visit to Felixstowe Dock. One of his favourite people to interview was Peggy Cole who did a gardening slot and together they attended Chelsea Flower Show. His Home Run programme from 4pm-7pm meant that he could interview people such as Cilla Black and Jimmy Greaves during the day and broadcast the interviews during the evening.

Subsequently, Foz joined Saxon Radio in Bury St. Edmunds and later Radio Broadlands. In 1990, BBC Radio Suffolk began broadcasting. He has fond memories of colleagues such as Julie Reinger and co-presenter Bob Shelley.

Along with his love of radio, Foz has always been a keen ITFC fan and helped produce the first team players' own version of Tommy Steele's 'Singing the Blues'. 5000 copies were pressed but before they could be sold, he had to get permission to change the original lyrics to football based ones. A fax from Nashville arrived at the eleventh hour to okay it. A personal ITFC favourite was Kevin Beattie.

Early musical memories included Chas and Dave performing at an open- air concert for the Queen's Jubilee. His own performances at the Spa Pavilion included singing Delilah dressed as Tom Jones with The Martells for Children in Need and singing Tiger Feet and Wig Wam Bam with the Glamtastics at a charity night concert.

Foz has also been involved with Speedway for many years, particularly in the John Louis/Kevin Jolly eras, as stadium announcer providing the commentary. Another opportunity was being asked to narrate Peter and the Wolf at the Corn Exchange. Five years ago, he was awarded an Honorary degree at the University of Suffolk.

Friends from Felixstowe and Offshore Radio also came along with a display of The Who memorabilia to commemorate the 60th anniversary of their appearance at the now demolished Pier Pavilion. This attracted a sizeable crowd.

Foz can be heard broadcasting his show on Radio Caroline 648 AM every Tuesday morning between 10am and 2pm.

We have booked Foz to return next July to speak to us on another topic close to his heart- football 'The Ipswich Town Years'
Don't miss it!!

Ann Sanderson 1292