



AUGUST '26 NEWSLETTER

Greetings to all Come Singing friends

Dear fellow singers,

The holiday season is in full swing this month. Children are no longer in school, the days are long and the weather often too hot for comfort! A lot of people are now on holiday in our region. Stretching over 90 miles, the Norfolk coast is famous for busy seaside towns, vast sandy beaches, dramatic dunes, cliffs and nature reserves. It spans from The Wash in the west to Great Yarmouth in the east.



Great Yarmouth

One of the most popular, traditional seaside resorts in Norfolk is Great Yarmouth, about twenty miles from Norwich. With its two piers, the Britannia and the Wellington, as well as the Pleasure Beach with fairground rides and amusement arcades, making it an attractive destination.



Cromer

In North Norfolk, Cromer and Sheringham are both seaside resorts that are Victorian in origin. Cromer is well known for fresh crabs along with its pier and golf course, while Sheringham's promenade and Blue Flag beaches along with its Heritage Railway attract many tourists. Other well known seaside destinations in our county include the ever popular Norfolk Broads along with Hunstanton and Wells-next-the-Sea.

"Oh I do like to be beside the seaside" (c.1910 Florrie Forde)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KPQ3cpn-Unc>

Summer holiday expectations have changed a lot during our lifetimes. Many of us will have nostalgic memories of the holidays we had in our youth.

Until the 19th century, the towns and villages along the coast of Britain were working ports for fishermen and merchants or health retreats for the upper classes seeking to relieve the symptoms of conditions such as gout or tuberculosis.

George III helped to popularise the seaside at the end of the eighteenth century. On medical advice, he stayed in Weymouth, Dorset over the summer, bathing in the sea and generally relaxing with his family. The Royal Court accompanied him! George III was the first to use a bathing machine on wheels which evolved into the more static present day beach huts. Sea bathing benefitted the King so much he returned each summer for several years. As a result Weymouth and seaside “holidays” got the Royal seal of approval!



A replica of George III's bathing machine on Weymouth seafront (2012)



Royal Dipping - George III goes sea bathing in Weymouth - 15 July 1789 published by William Holland & hand-coloured by JC Nixon (died 1818)

“We’re all going on a summer holiday” (Cliff Richard and the Shadows)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oYk48j-uD0g>

Eventually, the railway revolution in Victorian times offered ordinary people the opportunity to travel. Very soon an escape to the seaside became an accepted summer activity. The great British seaside holiday came into its own after the Second World War in the 1950s and 1960s.

As Britain recovered and holidays became more affordable with paid annual leave (thanks to the Holiday Pay Act 1938), the destinations of choice depended largely on where you lived. In the north, those from the mill towns, like Manchester or Glasgow would probably go to Blackpool or Morecambe: People from Leeds would head for Scarborough or Filey and Londoners might choose Brighton or Margate.

For those families lucky enough to own a car, travelling time was shortened by road especially after traffic improvements in the 50s and 60s. One of the first motorways to be opened was the M1 in 1959.

In the 1950s and 1960s it was unusual for families to holiday abroad, most stayed in the UK. Those lucky enough to have relatives living by the coast might holiday with them, some would rent a flat or house, others stay in a guest house, a B&B or an hotel. Many would choose a holiday camp such as Butlins or Pontins for a more economical holiday.

Whether it was a day out at the seaside or a fortnight, all British resorts offered fun and escape from daily life. There were amusement arcades, candyfloss stalls and seafood shacks selling cockles and whelks in paper cones. Cafes, with Formica tables and wooden chairs, serving fish and chips accompanied by mugs of hot tea and white bread and butter. Donkey rides on the beach, crazy golf, helter-skelters and dodgems were among the varied entertainments offered. Along the promenade you would find shops selling rock, postcards, buckets and spades, plastic windmills and packets of flags to decorate your sand castles.

Away from the beach, in manicured, ornamental public gardens there might be a bandstand surrounded by striped deck chairs and even a pavilion where a Wurlitzer organ would play when it rained.

On the beach, whatever the weather, you would find families sheltering behind windbreaks. While adults would relax in rented deckchairs the children might be playing ball games or digging sandcastles, rock pooling or paddling in the sea. Some families rented beach huts by the day or week; these were great places to shelter from the weather and for changing into swimming costumes.

Ice creams are still enjoyed today. But did you know that as early as the mid-19th century, ice cream had become popular and inexpensive in Britain. Street sellers of ice creams were known as "hokey-pokey" men. Nobody is quite sure where the name comes from, but it was used in a chant by the vendors to sell their wares: 'Hokey pokey penny a lump, that's the stuff to make you jump.' As many of the ice cream sellers were of Italian descent, the phrase may come from the Italian 'Ecco un poco' ('Here's a little piece').



Ice cream vendor 1921

The ice cream was sold for a penny and served in small glass cups which were returned to the vendor after use, given a quick wipe and were then ready for the next customer! More environmentally friendly than cardboard tubs, but not as hygienic!



Perhaps you remember licking an ice cream and watching a Punch and Judy show on the beach? This traditional British seaside entertainment goes back nearly four hundred years and also has Italian origins. Today's glove puppets were originally marionettes (puppets on strings) operated by one man known as the "the Professor" or "Punchman". The show is always performed from a gaily coloured, portable booth where the operator is hidden.

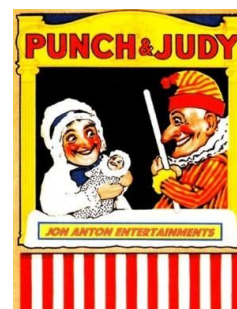
Punch and Judy shows were intended for adults as a release from Puritan times in the 17th century, when any entertainments were prohibited. Hence the anarchic behaviour of Punch. In later Victorian times it became more directed at children.

Punch, with his hooked nose and a hunchback, speaks with a squawky voice produced by the puppeteer with a swazzle, a small device held between the tongue and the roof of the mouth. Punch carries a large stick called the Slapstick.



A swazzle

The expressions "*Pleased as Punch*", "*That's the way to do it!*" and "*He's behind you,*" all come from these famous shows. Well known characters include Mr Punch's wife, Judy, the babe, the constable or policeman, the Crocodile, Joey the clown, the skeleton and the doctor.



Swim wear on the beach was varied. Bikinis made their first appearance in the late 1940s and by the 1950s were popular with women. Men wore boxer-style swimming shorts, and children might be seen in rubber swimming caps and hand-knitted swimming costumes or trunks. These were fine until they got wet! Of course, the headgear of choice for many men was the knotted handkerchief!

"Itsy bitsy teeny weeny yellow polka dot bikini" (Brian Hyland, 1960s)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oJW7p1M_i-o

Sunburn was not considered a health risk at that time, in fact quite the opposite. Sunscreen had not been invented and a mahogany tan would show people you had been away on holiday! In the evening there was the cinema, pubs, bingo, dancing or live entertainment in the theatres. Seaside entertainment is a very British tradition: all the great seaside resorts would feature popular entertainers of the day, for example Ken Dodd or Des O'Connor, in the end-of-the-pier style shows. (If you had been in Margate at the Winter Gardens in the early 1960s, the Beatles were part of the summer season bill!).

The first seaside piers were built in the early 19th century. Although they were originally intended as places to moor boats or disembark when the tide was out, they soon developed into impressive feats of engineering and became places where holidaymakers could go for entertainment and relaxation. The oldest pier in Britain is at Ryde on the Isle of Wight and was opened in 1814.



Ryde Pier today with road, rail and footway

One hundred years later, there were over a hundred pleasure piers around the UK, often with impressive pavilions, penny arcades, refreshment and other entertainment. Today about half that number survive.

The glory days of the great British seaside holiday came to an end with the arrival of the jet age and cheap package tour holidays. Holiday souvenirs were

no longer sticks of rock and seashells. Today however, with the increasing popularity for 'staycations', the seaside resorts are reinventing themselves once again as great family summer holiday destinations.

Beside the Seaside Quiz

1. *"How high is the sky?"* Ella Fitzgerald sings about how much she loves him.
2. Where does this famous group live below the sea?
3. Acker Bilk and his clarinet had a hit with this in 1961.
4. Someone stood waiting for Bobby Darin on *"golden sand"*, but where exactly?
5. This energetic seaside activity is particularly popular in America and requires a board.
6. In 1963 Nat King Cole sang about *"rolling out those?"* But what?
7. Where exactly on the beach did the Drifters meet up to have fun?
8. Where in the Caribbean is a famous holiday destination for Harry Belafonte?
9. *"Hey ho!"* What could you ride on the beach in this traditional song?
10. Charles Trenet sang this unforgettable classic about the sea.

We hope you all enjoy the month of August!



Answers to the Seaside Quiz

1. *How deep is the ocean?* (Ella Fitzgerald)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1pYdGALjfEI>
2. *Yellow submarine* (The Beatles)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uct80aLfTLY>
3. *Stranger on the shore* (Acker Bilk)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dFaH1KFmLyl>
4. *Somewhere beyond the sea* (Bobby Darin)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m8OIDPqYBLw>
5. *Surfin' USA* (The Beachboys)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8JEiJDGHsX0>
6. *Lazy, hazy crazy days of summer* (Nat King Cole 1963)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sFQHeSt0oPA>
7. *Under the board walk* (The Drifters)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EPEqRMVnZNU>
8. *Island in the sun* (Harry Belafonte 1957)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AWim13vqnUY>
9. *Riding on a donkey*
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kbeHdj5TxeQ>
10. *La mer* (Charles Trenet)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8MLzjipQkJI>

As a supplementary quiz question: which two songs are basically the same tune?



Your contributions to future newsletters, in any form, will be very welcome.
Please send them to: heatheredwards.music@gmail.com