

## Louis' Luton Legacy – by Roger Spear, G4BXM

**With our editor's words regarding the perils of the "silent key" equipment disposal problem ringing in my ears it was strangely appropriate to find myself at the recent Luton Boot Sale wandering around in the midst of what appeared to be the final resting place of some of Louis Varney's electronic effects, including log Books, QSL cards, festering QST magazines and ,most importantly, some actual hardware.**

It was the black crackle box (illustrated) that attracted me, on first glance appearing to be a Panda Cub (always on my shopping list) although whilst having the telltale Eddystone dial, the assortment of WD knobs pointed more towards a piece of Fifties Homebrew and it was on this basis that I negotiated rather a steep bargain price. It was only when I examined the two dog-eared and dusty folders of notes that went with it that I realised it was indeed the handiwork of one G5RV.



Thanks to Jim, G4XWD and Louis' friend Arthur, G3KPJ, I now have all the correct copies of the "Bulletins" to place this particular construction as a prototype for the Mark 2 "Elizabethan", a transmitter published in 1952 to commemorate the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in that year. It followed his earlier 50 watt and 75 watt "TVI proof" transmitters that are the subject of one of the folders of notes I obtained with the rig.(it might even be the rig in the 1952 photograph illustrated). I have all his correspondence with Philpotts for the chassis work and a note from Pye demanding the return of their television that he had on loan for TVI testing purposes!

The other folder I have relates to the Panda PR 120V for which I have complete plans and chassis/front panel details hand drawn by Louis, that show he was in fact the "one of the country's best known highly qualified radio engineers" rather mysteriously referred to in the publicity blurb of the time (illustrated).

Hence my initial thinking that the rig I had was a Panda Cub, although I don't think Louis was responsible for that model or indeed the late

Panda Explorer. I have yet to hear any of these rigs on the air, maybe someone has one somewhere. Certainly the rig I have (The Elizabethan) was the inspiration for the RF chassis of the PR120V as it is pretty much identical. At the time of writing it has produced a healthy 120 watts of RF with 750 volts on the two 807's for the first time in 50 years or so, and I hope by the time this is read I will have applied a modulator and be well into working you all on 80.

The Elizabethan in its original form did not have a modulator as Louis was a great CW operator but there were later articles in the Bulletin featuring a matching NBFM unit and speech processor. There is also some evidence in my version that at some stage (as well as adding a grid-drive meter above the VFO dial) the clamp valve was re-wired as a series gate modulator although this was rather half-hearted and done in "modern" plastic wire, so I have now removed this feature. In fact there is some evidence that this may be the work of his son, Peter who, although not licenced, was always in the shack, and this may also have been the source of my find at Luton, and the chance to preserve and operate a small piece of amateur radio history, for which I am very grateful.



The Chalk Pits Museum at Amberly have been presented with his 'modern' rig (see illustration) and are proudly operating it from their station GB4CPM on a regular basis. Louis had retired to Burgess Hill from his original QTH at Chelmsford (and his employment as a radio engineer at Marconi), to join the Local club and this may also have been a possible source of his legacy lying in a Bedfordshire field.

Incidentally, G3XTZ now has the log books and is

amused to note that Louis made an entry in red against any station he worked using "The" aerial !

And on a similar personal note, two interesting facts emerge from my researches into the "Luton find". Firstly, it appears that Louis was not exactly revered amongst his fellow engineers and amateurs at Marconi as they felt that the Elizabethan series was more of a team effort than is historically recorded, and secondly, he appears to have shared a common interest in painting in oils with another "celeb" from the world of communication- namely Samuel Finley Breeze Morse, who was also a successful and talented portrait painter of some note, founding the 'National Academy of Design' a century earlier in 1852, about the time he was devising his all too familiar coding system. Well - there's a thing.

Thanks to Arthur G3KPJ for his info and this 1952 photograph.



R.S.C.B. BULLETIN, December, 1951.

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*Illustrations:  
Above left: Louis in his 'modern' shack.*

*Above: 1952 photograph, is this the same rig?.*

*Left: 1951 Ad for the PR120V*

*I have to say that this is excellent stuff, and an example of everything that our hobby is really about -research, preserving a piece of history, restoration and operating. Roger is to be congratulated on an excellent find, and our thanks for sharing it with us! - Ed.*