

Radio Caroline:
The Offshore
Radio Station
that Rocked
Britain

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Chapter 1: Intro

A pre-recorded message was sent on the medium wave band: “This is Radio Caroline, on 191, your 24 hour music station. Please stand by...” It was a sunny 28th March, 1964. The time struck 12:00 when Radio Caroline’s first song, Not Fade Away by the Rolling Stones was played. Chris Moore and Simon Dee were aboard the infamous ‘MV Caroline’ an old Danish ship, whom sailing across the south-east of the Essex Coast. They had begun a big step in history, which, still today is very popular amongst Holland, Greece, England and North America. Pirate Radio. Many think it is very hard to start a station, but the life of Radio Caroline shows how fun and popular Pirate Radio is.

Chapter 2: Before Caroline

Radio is over one hundred years old. By the early twenties, technology progressed from simple Morse code to being able to transmit speech and music internationally, with a signal accessible to anyone possessing a home or commercially made radio set. The UK government concluded that this was such a powerful means of mass communication that it would have to be in state control. In 1927 The British Broadcasting Corporation was formed. This organisation can best be described as an extension of the British Civil Service. Raising revenue by charging a licence fee to every home possessing a radio, the Corporation was given the duty to provide programmes of news, speeches, lectures, educational matter, weather reports, concerts and theatrical entertainment. This format was a government edict, not a matter of audience research The UK population had to pay but had no say over what they got for their money. By 1930 there were five million radio sets in Britain, all unavoidably tuned to the BBC, but demand existed for more light hearted and popular styles of programming. To exploit this, a private company, the International Broadcasting Company (IBC) was set up. It hired air time from overseas stations and transmitted popular programmes aimed at the UK market. What is interesting is that while these programmes were perfectly legal, and while no doubt BBC transmissions were covering the continent just as readily as the continental stations were reaching the UK, the attitude of the BBC and the government was implacably hostile.



Increasingly the British population tuned to Radio Lyon or Normandy, Radio Athlone, Mediterranean and of course Radio Luxembourg. The government put pressure on British newspapers not to print programme schedules of the overseas stations and persuaded

royalty organisations to overcharge them for permission to play recorded material. The BBC were encouraged not to employ any artist or presenter who had worked on a continental station.

In the absence of any other reason to explain this hostility it seems that the government were anxious to suppress any means of mass communication over which they had no control. In 1936 a committee looking at all aspects of radio broadcasting stated, 'Foreign commercial broadcasting should be discouraged by every available means.'

All the same, the overseas stations flourished. By 1938 Radio Luxembourg had 45 per cent of the Sunday listening audience against the BBC's 35 per cent and advertisers were spending 1.7 million pounds sterling per annum, a substantial sum for those days. When war broke out in 1939 the practice of commercial broadcasting into the UK obviously ceased. For many years thereafter the BBC had their monopoly again and delivered programmes aimed at boosting the morale of the population and keeping industry running with 'sing along' music programmes and comedy, broadcast over factory tannoy (loudspeaker) systems.

In the fifties the cult of the 'teenager' began to emerge with the appearance of American style 'teddy boys' copying role models seen on American imported movies. With this came American music; rock and roll, blues and rhythm & blues were copied and then modified by young British artists. Opportunity for hearing such music on BBC radio was limited to a Sunday afternoon review of the current charts and a Saturday morning programme, 'The Saturday Skiffle Club,' (later the Saturday Club after the skiffle craze ended.) These 'shows' were hosted by established BBC presenters in the style of a headmaster presiding over a schoolboys picnic.

The only other way to hear modern popular music was to tune to Radio Luxembourg, the only cross border broadcaster to the UK that had been able to restart operations after the war. The Luxembourg signal could only reach the UK after dark when the propagation conditions changed. Even then it faded in and out for long periods. This notwithstanding, Luxembourg was hugely popular.

Station air time was block booked in fifteen minute or half hour slots and taken up entirely by the major record labels of the day; Decca, Capitol, E.M.I., Parlophone etc...

Only their own signed and recorded artists could expect any air play. In order to showcase as much of their product as possible DJ's such as Jimmy Saville would play only one minute of each new release, linking each with a quick fire introduction.

In the early sixties then, all was fairly comfortable for the BBC with their state monopoly and Luxembourg with their commercial monopoly and yet more and more talented British groups and artists were modifying and Anglicising imported music and then developing their own song writing skills. How could this music be put before the public.

Around this time there arrived in London one Ronan O'Rahilly, the tearaway son of a well known and wealthy Irish family. O'Rahilly possessed a number of pertinent qualities; a back ground of generally getting what he wanted, a quick and lateral thinking brain, a maturity and presence which belied his tender years and an Irish naivety which gave him no knowledge or regard for the accepted way of going about things.

Intending to become involved in film making he actually gravitated to the music scene, managing new young artists. But nobody would record his artists and nobody would give him air time. Clearly this could not be tolerated.

Although it seemed unlikely, as Ronan wrestled with this problem, for the BBC and Luxembourg and indeed for all European Radio, everything was about to change.

Chapter 3: Don't Get Mad, Get Even

Young Ronan O'Rahilly trucked off to London to seek his fortune. He settled into Soho and London's club land. Ray Charles was his hero. Soon Ronan was operating his own Rhythm & Blues Club. He bought the Rolling Stones their first set of stage equipment and briefly managed them together with his friend, Georgiou Gomalski, before entrepreneur Andrew Oldham snapped them up. But he still had the blues singer Alexis Korner and northerner Georgie Fame as his protégés. He was influential in the early days of Eric Burdon and the Animals even suggesting the name for the band. Live gigs at small venues were a slow way to achieve popularity, but nobody would record his artists. O'Rahilly created his own record label and paid for his own acetates. When presenting these to the BBC he learned that the Corporation only played music by established artists which begged the obvious question 'how to get established.'

At Radio Luxembourg he fared worse, station bosses laughed heartily showing him the programme schedules block booked by the major labels. Independents had no chance of air play at all. The answer? Give up his artists and hope they could be signed by a major label.

'Well,' O'Rahilly told the Luxembourg directors, 'If after managing my own artists I have to create my own record label because nobody will record them and if I then find that no radio station will play their music, it seems that the only thing now is to have my own radio station.' Radio Luxembourg thought this hugely funny and showed him the door. Soon after, at a party, a girl told Ronan about the station Voice of America which was operating at sea from the official USA vessel the MV *Courier*. He gleaned information about this operation from the US Embassy and also travelled to visit Jack Kotschack, the owner of the marine station, Radio Nord and the owners of Radio Veronica an efficiently run Dutch offshore radio station. Radio law in the Netherlands was as restrictive as in the UK. In Holland as in Britain the law of the land only extended as far as territorial waters, three miles out from the coast. Beyond that lay international waters where there was no law other than that defined by the flag states of ships. A ship registered to Panama for example, whilst in international waters recognised Panamanian law. If the law of the flag state had no objection to international marine broadcasting then the ship could make broadcasts which were not illegal and could not be stopped. Even Veronica was using precedent created by earlier marine broadcasts made off the Danish and Swedish coasts. The UK however with the young population created by the post war baby boom and with burgeoning youth culture and a new pop industry had untapped potential. This was the breakthrough O'Rahilly needed and he had certain advantages to build from.

He was now mixing in the clubs and coffee bars of Soho and Chelsea with the young sons of very wealthy people. With his upbringing, large sums of money did not faze him. His family wholly owned the Irish port of Greenore, an ideal place to quietly convert a ship into a floating radio station.

He soon became aware that quite separately an Australian businessman Alan Crawford had also identified the potential of marine broadcasting to the UK. Ronan befriended him.

Crawford was later to allege that O'Rahilly used his own feasibility studies to further his own plans. Ronan claims that this is absolutely not the case and that the Caroline project was well advanced before he even became aware of Crawford and his parallel business intentions. He also insists Crawford's 'Project Atlanta' ran out of funding and was rescued by his own company. On a fund raising trip to the USA he was captivated by a photograph in Life magazine showing president John F. Kennedy's daughter Caroline playing in the Oval Office of the White House and disrupting the serious business of government. This was exactly the image he wanted for his station. The name had to be Radio Caroline.

With finance in place, the ex ferry *Fredericia* was purchased and taken to Greenore for conversion. Crawford also accepted the offer to take his virtually complete radio ship *Mi Amigo* to the same port for final preparation. Whilst ostensibly helping Crawford prepare, Ronan's team took every opportunity to hamper their rivals and inevitably the *Fredericia*, now renamed MV *Caroline* sailed first.

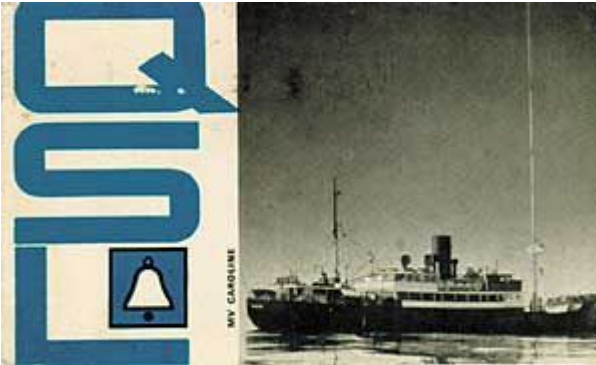
Radio studios had been built on the upper decks behind the ships bridge. In the hold were A.C. generators connected to two 10KW medium wave (AM) broadcast transmitters. The combined power from these was fed to a tall aerial tower near the bow of the ship. To ensure reasonable co-operation between the two projects it was agreed Radio Caroline was to anchor in the Irish sea, broadcasting to Ireland, Scotland and the North of England. Radio Atlanta from the MV *Mi Amigo* was to head for the British coast off Essex, from where it would cover London and the South East. In a move that Crawford described as 'the ultimate treachery', Ronan sent his own ship south.

On Easter Sunday 1964, with their words having been pre-recorded since they were too nervous to broadcast live, Chris Moore and the then unknown actor Simon Dee announced 'This is Radio Caroline on 199, your all day music station.'

Then a Rolling Stones record ('Not Fade Away') was played and dedicated to Ronan O'Rahilly. Caroline was on the air! The monopolies of the BBC and Luxembourg were shattered and UK radio was changed forever.

Chapter 4: The Glory Years

Listening to historic recordings, the early programmes from Radio Caroline now sound bland, awkward and amateurish. But to the population, all day pop music radio was a revelation. No speeches, lectures, gardening tips or cookery suggestions. No 'Woman's Hour' or 'Listen With Mother.' No music shows where massed banjo bands murdered current pop hits. By the autumn of 1964 Caroline had more listeners than the three BBC networks combined.



The furious Alan Crawford put Radio Atlanta on air right next to Caroline's wavelength, but Caroline had the audience and a merger was inevitable. Crawford's ship stayed off Essex and became Caroline South, while the MV *Caroline* travelled to her original intended destination near the Isle Of Man and became Caroline North. Now O'Rahilly had almost all of the UK plus Southern Ireland and substantial parts of the continent in range of his transmitters.



Caroline boss Ronan O'Rahilly (left) with Alan Crawford announcing the merger of Caroline and Atlanta

With Caroline as the catalyst and its audience of tens of millions, new music and youth fashion accelerated at astonishing speed and hundreds of new bands achieved massive and sometimes lasting success. Jonathan King, broadcaster and pop pundit recalls his simple throwaway pop song 'Everyone's Gone To The Moon' that within weeks of initial

air play on Caroline projected him from obscurity to starring on prime time television at the prestigious London Palladium. Unknown actor Simon Dee, head hunted from Caroline, became one of the first superstar chat show hosts on British TV.



Ronan and DJs including Simon Dee

The blatant success of Caroline made imitation inevitable. In December 1964 the American backed and styled **Radio London** arrived on the vessel *Galaxy*. While Caroline could later claim perseverance and longevity, Radio London (Big L) delivered highly professional American programming that temporarily at least captured much of the audience of Caroline South requiring Caroline to quickly adapt its own style and format. Later two more American influenced stations Britain Radio and Swinging Radio England went on air from one ship. Radio 270 started off the Yorkshire coast while Radio Scotland on board the old lightship *Comet* anchored off the Scottish East coast. In the Thames Estuary were various marine structures which had been wartime sea forts. Abandoned by the military they made excellent and stable transmitting platforms and were quickly boarded and claimed by further radio entrepreneurs. Soon Radio 390 an easy listening station and the most powerful of all the sixties offshore broadcasters was on air, while from other structures Radio Essex and Radio King started transmissions. From the day that Caroline appeared the UK government made threatening noises but no serious action was taken. Now there were several independent broadcasters sending programmes into the UK and twenty million people were listening. Further stations were rumoured to be in preparation and for the government things were getting out of hand. It was a delicate matter trying to legislate against a pastime which was providing a third of the population with the best fun they had enjoyed in a long time.

Grumbling about unauthorised use of radio frequencies and the vague potential for cross channel interference cut no ice with the offshore radio listeners who perceived the government and the BBC to be grumpy killjoys. Legislating against the pirates was a vote loser and for some time there was a stand off where the authorities made dire threats but did nothing. As famous Radio London DJ Dave Cash recalled many years later, 'they could not act against us for the reasons stated. They needed something heavy like drugs or murder – we gave them murder'.



Lord (David) Sutch with his manager Reg Calvert in the white shirt behind

One fort based station was started by the flamboyant rock star and self publicist David (Screaming Lord) Sutch. Since offshore radio was news worthy, he founded Radio Sutch but when this had been milked for all possible publicity he sold the operation to his manager Reg Calvert who operated it as Radio City. The sea forts were a no mans land and control of them depended on who commanded the most muscle. After a business dispute another offshore entrepreneur Major Oliver Smedley hijacked Calvert's fort. In a fit of fury Calvert, who was known to be a violent and irrational person, burst into Smedley's home and hurled a heavy stone ornament at him. He also claimed to be armed with a tear gas pistol. Smedley took up his shot gun and killed Calvert. The image of the offshore stations as jolly buccaneers using spare radio channels to provide popular free entertainment was irrevocably shattered. Now the government could portray them as battling, murdering gangsters and now that the Labour Government were secure in power for five full years, losing votes was no longer an issue. It was proposed to silence the pirates using The Marine etc. Broadcasting Offences Act, which would deprive the stations of staff, supplies and most importantly of revenue.

No more was heard about new stations being planned. Those on air began strident campaigns against the proposed law. Having previously embraced the term 'pirate radio' they now wished to be known as free radio stations. Most outspoken on the subject of freedom of the individual against the system was Radio Caroline.

As the days of 1967 ticked away, while the music and happy DJ banter still flowed from the marine transmitters all were aware that the good days were drawing to a close. There was speculation as to how many stations would or could continue in the face of the new law. It was generally thought that the smaller stations would fail but that the major players, London and Caroline, would survive.

Chapter 5: Defiance, Defeat and Retribution

Through spring and summer of 1967 the offshore stations campaigned against the proposed Marine Broadcasting Offences Act. Politicians were deluged with mail from supporters, creating more correspondence on the subject than on any other matter troubling the population. The Conservatives were cautiously for future commercial broadcasting, but Labour in power were implacably opposed to it. Only the veteran Member of Parliament Manny Shinwell said the pirates deserved 'a fair crack of the whip'.

On the question of why licences could not be awarded, the answer, now shown to be spurious was that there were simply no radio frequencies available. Clearly public opinion counted for little and the Act made inexorable progress toward becoming law by midnight on August 14th.

Even before this, using some dubious arguments the government proved, at least to the satisfaction of the courts that some of the fort based stations must close because they were within British jurisdiction. Then came the shock announcement that Radio London who were expected to tough it out had decided to capitulate at 3.00pm on the afternoon of the 14th.

O'Rahilly however was adamant that Caroline would continue, by moving its base to Holland and ceasing to rely on the UK. During August 14th, station after station made their emotional farewells and shut off their transmitters. Radio London made their own dignified departure which Caroline acknowledged with a minutes silence. When DJ's from that immensely popular station reached Liverpool Street station in London furious fans rioted and for some hours chaos reigned.



Johnnie Walker (left) and Robbie Dale (right) stuck with Radio Caroline as the Marine offences Act became law at midnight August 14th 1967

All day, listeners had inevitably been retuning to Caroline. Some of Ronan's men, having pledged to stick with him, deserted the ships, all these years later he still holds them in contempt. On the South ship *Mi Amigo*, only Johnnie Walker, Robbie Dale and news reader Ross Brown remained loyal. At midnight with an estimated twenty million people listening Walker took Caroline into its new era pledging that the station belonged to its listeners, that it would continue and that the legislation had actually acknowledged Caroline's legality. Stirring stuff which created Walker's position as the most famous offshore DJ of all time and which may have caused many to overlook presenters such as Robbie Dale, Carl Mitchell, Spangles Muldoon and Ross Brown who also decided to defy the law. In addition the staff of the North ship and various unsung engineers and crew ought also to have their loyalty acknowledged.

O'Rahilly's gamble was based on his own obstinacy, on his hatred of being told what he could and could not do and on the probability that being the only remaining offshore broadcaster would create such a massive audience that he could attract major international advertisers to replace the UK advertisers that the law now denied him. Tenders ran, quite legally from Holland though the distances were major and the costs huge. As autumn passed into winter discerning listeners could observe that morale on both ships was falling due to isolation, shortages and horrendous tender journeys. The adrenaline rush of defying the government had been replaced by loneliness and hardship.



Radio Caroline director Philip Solomon controlled Major-Minor records, an Irish label which had on its books various folk bands and crooners such as the Bachelors. As the stations money problems increased and Solomon's influence became greater, DJ's were obliged to plug his dire recordings and while The Dubliners, The Bachelors and singer David McWilliams achieved fame by this means it caused enormous resentment on both ships from the staff who had become political outlaws only to feed dreadful music to the listeners.



By March 1968 having survived the winter and with advertising income allegedly increasing it seemed Caroline's circumstances may be improving. However the Dutch company contracted to tender the North and South ships had not been paid and eventually lost patience. Early in the morning of March 3rd 1968 tugs simultaneously approached both radio ships, cut the anchor chains and towed them to Holland there to be impounded for debt. The defiant dream had failed.

Ronan put up a media smoke screen concerning servicing and reinsurance and attempted to purchase Radio London's ship but was defeated by the cost. He tried to buy the Radio 270 ship, *Ocean 7* but was compromised by advance publicity. It gradually became clear

that there was to be no revival for Caroline. Listeners drifted off to BBC Radio One – a watered down pop music service which had been introduced to appease the population.

By 1970 in spite of Caroline's experiences, two Swiss businessmen still considered that offshore radio could be a profitable pastime and equipped at great cost the vessel *Mebo 2* as the base for Radio North Sea International. Arriving off the UK coast they at once incurred the hostility of the Labour government who under the influence of the later to be discredited Postmaster General John Stonehouse, tried to discourage a second proliferation of offshore radio by jamming the incoming signal.



The two Radio Caroline ships impounded in Amsterdam, 1968

After an earlier incident where Prime Minister Harold Wilson had raged at O'Rahilly telling him that he was 'finished', Ronan nursed a healthy hatred of the man. As *The Mebo 2* countered its jammed signal a General Election was looming that Labour and Wilson were expected to win easily. O'Rahilly convinced the Swiss that public sympathy for them would be greatly enhanced by renaming the station Radio Caroline and this done he set about blatant on air campaigning against Labour, targeting marginal seats where control could change if only a few hundred voters switched allegiance. Breaking every law in the book concerning politics and the representation of the people, Ronan likened Wilson to Chairman Mao while Caroline battle buses toured marginal wards and thousands of rapidly recruited supporters fly posted millions of posters suggesting that a vote for Labour was akin to voting for a Marxist state. He instigated a rolling phone call campaign where each supporter would recruit by phone, three more supporters and so forth. He arranged for the phone lines into Labour HQ to be jammed by hoax calls. The government had forgotten or failed to consider that this election was the first in which 18 to 21 year olds could vote and that these people had been impressionable teenagers when Caroline was at the peak of its influence. It was not difficult to motivate them to strike back at the politicians who had so arrogantly ruined their enjoyment. On the day after the election as the votes were counted, shell shocked Labour politicians found that against all predictions they had lost. For Ronan while the score was not settled, the loss of his station had been partially avenged. Soon after on a London street O'Rahilly was baulked by a careless pedestrian. The two men stared at each other, Ronan recognising Ted Short, a senior Labour politician. Short recognised Ronan and said simply 'It's you. Why did you do it?'. 'Listen baby' replied Ronan using his trademark opening phrase, 'if you hurt Caroline, I hurt you'.

Chapter 6: Movies, Mayhem on Land and The Second era of Loving Awareness.

Ronan suggested that when Caroline was off air, the anguish he suffered, adversely affected his health. One wonders how he felt as the sixties drew to a close and the seventies dawned, while his ships lay rusting, vandalised and looted by souvenir hunters. The only temporary revival had been a few days on the transmitters of Radio North Sea. In the time that Caroline operated from Holland, he had embraced aspects of the mellow Dutch life style. The dapper businessman became transformed into a softly spoken guru with beard and flowing grey hair. He was however not inactive and was considered to take over management of the Beatles.

Other O'Rahilly projects included a homeopathic hospital and modular housing for overseas and inner city use. He made the film *Girl On A Motorcycle* which while dated by today's standards was considered Avant Garde for its time and achieved cult status, thus funding various of his wilder schemes such as a water powered engine. He invested in the design of a space vehicle, to the stage of being shown a 'working' scale model. 'It was supposed to just lift up off the ground' he told a friend, indicating that at the time he had been so relaxed that the simplest thing could command his attention indefinitely. 'I watched it for a very long time I never did see it move'.

In the UK, while the offshore stations had been defeated, the radio air waves were not pirate free. Resentment over the Marine Broadcasting Offences act had motivated various groups to hit back. Generally these were young technical college students or apprentice electricians who realised that it was not difficult to build a small AM radio transmitter and have their own pirate station. The first two who appeared, with substantial publicity since the matter was still newsworthy, were London stations. Radio Free London and Radio Free Caroline. Their high profile made it inevitable that they would soon be found and silenced, using existing legislation in the Wireless Telegraphy act. But the fines were not excessive and the operators enjoyed a 'Robin Hood' status. Not surprisingly the weekend and overnight air waves soon crackled with the music and chat of Radio Telstar, Radio Jolly Roger, Radio North West, Radio Pamela and countless more stations who could appear anyplace, anytime on spare radio frequencies which the authorities suggested did not exist. As a cottage industry sprang up, producing pirate transmitters and associated equipment it seemed that two stations appeared for every one that was closed down. It was only the fact that the operators were independent loners that prevented the development of a city wide or regional consortium of pirates, capable of giving the government insurmountable problems.

The task of locating and silencing land pirates was carried out by the British Post Office who sent out teams of technicians who became adept at scaling roofs, climbing trees and chasing miscreants across fields. Sometimes blows were exchanged. The most durable of the land stations was Radio Jackie with its theme tune 'Catch Us If You Can'. Jackie eventually opened an office and operated 24hrs a day before being raided and fined out of existence. A similar fate befell Radio Sovereign who pioneered the Gold format now widely used throughout the industry. With the start of FM broadcasting land pirating became more technically convenient and additional frequencies became available. The pastime, hugely refined in both operation and detection, continues to be an ongoing problem for the authorities.



The two Radio Caroline ships impounded in Holland.
The *Mi Amigo* (left) took to the seas again in 1972 whilst the *Fredericia* (right) was scrapped

By 1972 the tendering company Wijsmuller who had seized the Caroline ships for debt, decided to sell them while they still had some residual value. The larger MV *Caroline* was scrapped but the smaller *Mi Amigo* after being knocked down at auction for ƒ 2,400 became the property of Hofman Shipping Agency acting for a client, soon revealed to be a young Dutchman Gerard Van Dam using funds allegedly borrowed from his Grandmother. Again Ronan challenges strongly this version of the story suggesting that the funds came from another well wisher connected with the same company who had previously towed the ships in for debt. It may be that Van Dam and his 'Dutch Free Radio Organisation' were simply acting as front men and putting up a smoke screen that the ship was to be made into a free radio museum. A team of volunteers laboured through the summer remedying what they could of the decay and vandalism that the vessel had suffered. Again a variance exists between Gerard and Ronan's recollection for while Van Dam suggests he accepted finance from the charismatic Irishman and, perhaps unwisely, then handed over important papers for the ship, O'Rahilly insists that Van Dam was never a major player. Certainly as events progressed the Dutchman found himself and his insistence that the *Mi Amigo* stayed off the Dutch coast being sidelined until eventually all influence and connection which he had with the ship and the station ceased. In September 1972 *Mi Amigo* left her berth at Zaandam and was towed along the canal connecting with IJmuiden which then gave access to the North Sea. The authorities were told that the 'museum' was being taken to England where it would have greater tourist attraction. In fact, once in international waters and, while the ship was still incomplete and unserviceable and as Van Dam says 'never, ever would she be seaworthy' *Mi Amigo* dropped anchor off the Dutch coast near the port and seaside resort of Scheveningen. The second and in many respects more significant era of Radio Caroline was about to commence.

At this time Ronan was producing the movie *Gold, The Story Of The New American Dream*, having previously acted in another piece of alternative cinema, *Universal Soldier*. *Gold*, another Avant Garde offering was to premiere in London's West End. Without funds to mount a conventional publicity campaign, the possibility of massive radio promotion must have been tempting and one can only guess at the degree that Ronan's actions were influenced by this and how much he simply wished to revive his radio dream.

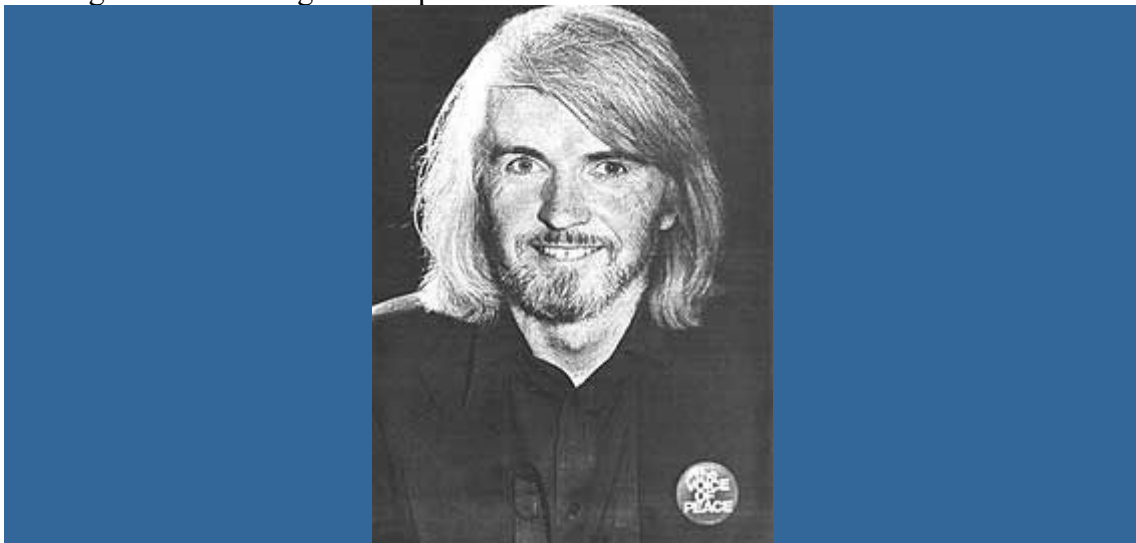
By the same token, he was also questioning attitudes in modern society where it seemed acceptable and commonplace to express feelings of dislike or downright hatred whilst it was difficult and embarrassing to express affection. This was based on his observation of the uncomfortable reactions of a group of adult friends when a child unknown to them all toddled up and told them that she loved them. O'Rahilly decided that love was not getting a fair hearing and that he would redress the balance. Locating a bunch of unknown musicians he told them that they were the 'Loving Awareness Band' and sent them off into comfortable isolation to think loving thoughts until they were ready to produce an album worth of music on the subject. The Loving Awareness band produced only one album which probably forms part of the record collection of every Caroline fanatic, so heavily was it later plugged on the station. However it was not the album that Ronan mostly wanted to promote, it was the whole Loving Awareness ethic behind it. He decreed that the reborn Radio Caroline would sell love and a very hard sell it turned out to be.

Chapter 7: Caroline's Dutch Era

The *Mi Amigo* was rushed out to sea before the authorities could detain her, for being in poor condition. Much time passed until the generators and broadcast equipment could be made serviceable. Before the ship went for auction, engineer Peter Chicago - soon to become a Caroline legend - had removed vital electrical equipment which needed to be reinstalled. In the early days *Mi Amigo* was often unpowered and unlit. However when the transmitter was energised it gave a powerful 50Kw signal covering most of Europe. Caroline fans were delighted. Other organisations were less pleased. By 1972 Radio Veronica had been operating off the Dutch coast for twelve years from the converted lightship *Borkum Riff* and later from the more modern ex-trawler *Nordeney*. Surprisingly there had not been a proliferation of Dutch offshore radio and this, together with the fact that Veronica used only moderate transmitter power and had an impeccable reputation, had prevented the Dutch government from considering hostile action.

In mid 1970 however Veronica had been joined at her anchorage by the ship *Mebo 2*, transmitting Radio North Sea International. Having been part instrumental in creating a new Conservative government in the UK the owners of R.N.I. had expected, indeed had allegedly been assured, that the previous jamming of the signal instigated by the previous Labour government would cease. In fact it continued until the *Mebo 2* admitted defeat and relocated off Holland. Veronica were sufficiently concerned to maintain their own monopoly and carefully achieved status that they paid R.N.I. to go off the air but this arrangement fell apart when record companies made a better offer for the station to recommence transmitting. Motivated by rage, Veronica directors Bul Verwey and Norbert Jurgens paid to have the *Mebo 2* sabotaged so that she would be obliged to enter port. Late in the evening of May 15th 1971 an explosive device set the engine room and stern of the radio ship ablaze.

Veronica's perfect image was destroyed, especially as the perpetrators were soon arrested and immediately implicated Verwey and Jurgens. Further the attack did not even achieve its object as the fire did not harm the transmitting equipment. *Mebo 2* stayed at her anchorage and the damage was repaired at sea.



Ronan O'Rahilly 70's style

Now a third station, Caroline had arrived which was the last thing that Veronica wanted but for a very long time the equipment on the *Mi Amigo* was so unreliable and funds for repairs were so short that Caroline was off air more than it was on. While broadcasts were possible, Ronan's movie *Gold* was heavily promoted but with no discernible effect. The film never went on general release.

Various fortunate events kept Caroline operating. Veronica briefly hired the *Mi Amigo* when their own ship was driven aground in a storm. Then since Caroline was never going to be viable as an English service, deals were struck to hand over some air time to Dutch broadcasters, though this made Radio Caroline a 'Dutch' problem and actually set burning a slow fuse that was not to explode for a further fifteen years. The best remembered Dutch service to operate from the Caroline ship was Sylvain Tack's Radio *Mi Amigo* a wild mixture of Dutch pop tracks, drinking songs and barrel organ music. His involvement provided financial stability and ensured that an overnight Caroline service could continue even if it created no revenue. The *Mi Amigo* was made into a reasonably reliable operating unit. Although the entire period of the ships time off the Dutch coast and indeed the remainder of her life at sea was one of make do and mend. The original transmitter mast collapsed soon after the ship returned to sea, as did a replacement erected soon after. When generators installed within the ship failed, replacement units were craned on to the open aft deck.

The situation settled down with Dutch language and style radio during the day and English Caroline programmes at night, but sadly the elements that destroyed the UK offshore radio boom were also now present in Holland. From just Radio Veronica with a 10Kw signal on one non contentious frequency, the Dutch government now also saw the *Mi Amigo* with one 50Kw and one 10Kw transmitter on board which were sometimes used together for experimental stereo broadcasts requiring two radios. Further, the *Mebo 2* had a transmitter capable in theory of 100Kw plus FM and two short wave channels and lastly there was the vessel *Janine*, home of Radio Atlantis. Another station Capitol Radio on board the *King David* was not at sea since technical imperfections, money problems and the incompetence of the operators collapsed the project after only a few weeks on air but this did not guarantee that some other group might not gain control and use the ship.



Thus Netherlands drafted its own anti pirate law which in spite of intense public protest made progress toward becoming law by August 30th 1974. The other stations announced as before their intentions to close but Caroline and Radio *Mi Amigo* insisted that they would continue. Sylvain Tack was sufficiently determined, to choose exile in Spain to keep his station operating

On the afternoon of August 29th the *Mi Amigo* summoned a tug to assist in raising her anchor and attempted, using her own ancient main engine to head away from the Dutch coast. After some hours of steaming where virtually no progress had been made a tow was requested and the ship headed towards the UK.

O'Rahilly had always wanted the ship close to England rather than Holland. This had been the basis of his original dispute with Gerard Van Dam. Only the convenience of tendering and the requirement of his Dutch customer for the best possible signal on the continent kept Caroline off Scheveningen. Now the Dutch law negated these considerations and Ronan concluded that when day dawned on the first morning that the Dutch law was in force it may be prudent to be out of sight and out of mind. Similarly he did not wish to be in sight of the British and so instead of the usual pirate anchorage off the resort of Walton Essex, *Mi Amigo* was delivered to a desolate anchorage in the Knock Deep at the mouth of the Thames Estuary visible from neither the Kent or Essex coasts. At this location and ostensibly operated and supplied from Playa De Aro in Spain, Radio Caroline and the ship commenced their next six lonely, difficult but remarkable years.

Chapter 8: The Golden Age

By the autumn of 1974 the *Mi Amigo* was the last radio ship broadcasting to Europe. Radio *Mi Amigo* sharing the air time adopted a defiant stance, but still wished to show a profit. Dutch staff did their jobs for wages, not for ideals. Luckily this pragmatic Dutch efficiency produced finance to continue the Caroline dream. Other income came from broadcasting religious material. O'Rahilly also made reference to 'my friend George' as a sympathetic backer and it seems likely that he made use of his contact with the Beatles, to persuade George Harrison to make financial gifts.

Previously *Mi Amigo* had been in sight of land and generally had the company of other radio ships nearby. Now the crew scanned nothing but empty ocean. For some of the British, this was too much to bear, but those who remained or those who replaced the defectors had total dedication. Caroline had long since ceased to be about commercial success which indeed was all but impossible, and was now a survival crusade.

O'Rahilly had decreed that Caroline should now play only album music. A pop service would clash with the output of his Dutch customer and in the UK, such tastes were already catered for by Radio One and various new commercial broadcasters. Further he explained that album sales far exceeded the sale of singles and that his stations output should acknowledge this. However, the tastes of his broadcasters deleted most 'pop derived' album material. Caroline listeners thus could expect Led Zeppelin, Eric Clapton, Jethro Tull, Yes, Lynrd Skynrd, Barclay James Harvest and so forth, together with suitable Dutch bands, such as Golden Earring and Kayak. It is difficult to put into print the spell woven by this music when blended by the determined exiles on the ship. Quite unknown and unsung when they entered the UK on leave, but revered by a dedicated audience they had, in a situation which will probably never be repeated, only two aims. One, to stay on the air and two, to play the most wonderful music.



Tom Anderson on board the *Mi Amigo*

There were some great, if flawed, talents on board such as Tom Anderson, a vicars son, extensively tattooed, previously a Bingo caller at a travelling fair and Tony Allan a tortured, dangerous man but possessing the most perfect voice, vocabulary and delivery. To make the magic complete was Loving Awareness. O'Rahilly, now viewed as a prophet, had devised this ethic in 1970. Mysteriously and perhaps conveniently he refused to define exactly what L.A. consisted of but was persuaded to give some indication in the following words.

'Our brain has both loving energy and defensive energy. We have tapped and used the defensive one but we haven't explored in any serious way the loving one. L.A. is about developing a loving habit. Love is our most natural emotion but is the one we abuse most. Life has become a daily survival of looking after number one. Caroline is showing people that there is another way. Quite simply, if you love people, they will love you in return'. He continued this theme in the press, suggesting that Caroline which he now referred to as 'The Lady' had taken on a life force of its own.' I don't run Caroline' he insisted 'Caroline runs me'. Caroline was L.A. and L.A. was Caroline.

Mike Hagler, then a DJ, now influential within Greenpeace, was one staff member who with Tony Allan produced an emotive selection of Loving awareness jingles including a Hagler voice over on a Moody Blues introduction. Only Radio Caroline would persistently air a two minute promo for love and tolerance.

Even a cynic could put a case for the station having taken on a charmed existence. As Radio Mi Amigo's will to continue ebbed and finances and the condition of the *Mi Amigo* deteriorated, the station was financially supported, despite the Marine Offences Act, by the Caroline Road Show. This rock disco played to crowds often numbering thousands in Kent, Essex and the flat lands of Suffolk and Norfolk. No action was ever taken by the authorities. Crew and essential fuel travelled from various UK ports and inlets on the South coast and while there were token skirmishes and arrests no concerted efforts were made to close these supply lines. A number of times *Mi Amigo* broke anchor and grounded only to survive by lucky chance. The crew endured substantial danger and hardship and the station went off air many times, but invariably returned. The ship sprang various leaks which the crew plugged with wooden pegs and concrete patches.



The last return to air after a long absence due to generator failure happened in April 1979. In a voice full of emotion Tony Allan explained that the station would stay with the listeners.' for as long as humanly possible'. It was his concise way of saying that the end was not far off. The ship was now a wreck, powered by one generator bolted down to the aft deck, the main engine had been run to destruction and a disgruntled supply skipper had stolen the ships wheel. Life boat crews who had brought a sick crew man ashore denounced the vessel as a death trap and a tug captain employed to reposition *Mi Amigo* after a drifting incident complained that he could find nothing solid enough to connect his tow lines to. All that the ship could still do was to float and to produce a radio signal. On March 19th 1980 *Mi Amigo* broke anchor again and while the crew lowered a spare the drift was halted with the vessel in shallow water and heavy seas. As the rising tide lifted her and pounded her old hull on the seabed, many leaks sprang up in the engine and generator rooms at the stern. After struggling for eight hours with portable pumps the crew admitted defeat.

Tom Anderson and DJ Stevie Gordon told listeners 'It's not a very good occasion really, we have to hurry this because the lifeboat is waiting. We're not leaving and disappearing, we're going into the lifeboat hoping that the pumps can take it, if so, we'll be back, if not, well we really don't like to say it. I'm sure we'll be back one way or another. For the moment from all of us, goodbye and God Bless'.

These were the last words spoken on air from the *Mi Amigo's* transmitters. A few minutes after the crew were rescued by the lifeboat *Helen Turnbull*, the ship's lights went out as sea water engulfed the generator and *Mi Amigo* sank. It seemed to all observers that this was the final end for Radio Caroline.

Chapter 9: Bigger and Better than ever

The loss of the *Mi Amigo* was extensively covered by the media with wistful admiration for the station's long struggle. The government was chided for its churlish hostility toward such a harmless and entertaining pastime. However the reports had the style of an obituary 'farewell Caroline, sadly missed'. The possibility of salvage was discussed. For a few months after the sinking, some superstructure remained tantalisingly uncovered at low tide and the aerial mast continued to point skyward for several years. The ship still lies in shallow water on the edge of the Long Sands in the Thames Estuary.

O'Rahilly did not take this chance to put the Caroline saga behind him. In Panama a company was created for the sole purpose of owning a fresh radio ship.

Increasingly Ronan was operating on instinct and 'vibes'. Two mystics, a mother and daughter, gave him advice constantly. Some cynics considered that they told him broadly what he wished to hear, keeping the predictions vague enough to be open to multiple interpretation.

Staff went on ship finding missions around the UK. In Portsmouth an ex-navy frigate was inspected. Tom Anderson went on board the stern trawler *Lord Nelson* and it seemed likely that this would be the new Caroline vessel. Then by pure chance O'Rahilly was told of a ship called *Ross Revenge* lying in Scotland. To the initial dismay of his crew and acting purely on instinct he decided that this was 'the ship'. In fact his instinct could not have served him better. Most radio ships were time expired coasters withdrawn from service with worn out machinery or with hulls that had deteriorated beyond economical repair. One could fill them with ballast and attach a huge anchor and they would be useable, whilst still being broadly unsuitable for their new purpose.



MV Ross Revenge at anchor September 1983

Ross Revenge was a massive side trawler, in good order, available only because the UK's capitulation in the Cod Wars with Iceland had left her with no work. Massively constructed to work and catch fish in conditions that would have other ships running for shelter, she also had excellent stability. Trawlers lay side on to the sea when hauling their nets. Although the occasions when O'Rahilly got it wrong are many, this time he

undoubtedly got it right. With the matter of ownership not entirely settled, *Ross Revenge* abruptly left Rosyth with Caroline staff in charge and, after sailing through a severe storm in the Bay Of Biscay docked in Santander in Spain. The legendary Peter Chicago was sent to America to find good second-hand radio transmitters.

The U.S.A. featured in other areas. Clearly, having watched the painful deterioration of Radio Caroline, no European investors were rushing to finance a revival. Funds would have to come from far abroad where the basic difficulties of operating a floating radio station could more easily be disguised by references to pan European coverage and huge potential audiences. America and Canada were O'Rahilly's hunting grounds.

Self evidently, since through 1981 and 1982 *Ross Revenge* made steady progress toward becoming a radio ship, he did achieve funding, but from persons who caused delay and many problems. Soon, disgruntled investors were trying to hijack the entire operation either by force or court action. These disputes ran over into 1983 and while Ronan's team eventually emerged victorious it was a hollow victory leaving him with no money and an incomplete ship. Although it would now be vehemently denied, it is rumored that Richard Branson came close to being Caroline's new financier only to be turned down when it became clear that his money carried with it the requirement that Branson would have overall authority.

In planning the third era of Caroline O'Rahilly felt that simply to return in the same old form was not good enough. The new Caroline would have to be bigger and better than before. His requirement was a 50Kw signal on 558 Khz and being technically naive he was totally dependent on his engineers advice as to how this could be achieved. It did however suit his bigger and better stance to be told that the ideal aerial height was 300ft. Nobody had put such a tall tower on any ship before but at a reputed cost of £170,000, a giant antenna was made and installed. The pendulum effect of all this weight so high above the ship put its stability into question and required the hull to be counterbalanced with 300 tons of concrete ballast.

In order that his disc jockeys would have the right ambience Ronan wanted the studios built in a caravan welded to the aft deck and had to be persuaded that conditions in the North Sea would soon detach this structure – D.J's and all, who would find themselves in the ocean sans ship. He arranged for *Ross Revenge* to be painted pale pink since this was the colour of healing but his crew rebelled and chose a striking pillar box red. At great cost the hull was sand blasted back to bare metal and repainted to withstand the rigours of the ocean. Clearly money was spent that should have been held back for future emergencies but the outcome was a bright, shiny and totally impressive vessel.

For music policy, Annie Challis, ex-Radio One, was hired to programme a 'Gold' format which would at the time have been innovative. Finance to complete preparation and release the ship from Spain was raised by desperate means and *Ross Revenge* was towed out of Santander in early August 1983. The on air deadline was August 14th, sixteenth anniversary of the law that had been intended to finish Caroline off but incomplete studios and technical problems prevented this deadline being met.



Tom Anderson completing the on-air studio

To O'Rahilly's bewilderment, when the transmitter was first switched on for tests and in spite of the fact that all the construction work had been specifically for the 558Khz frequency, he found that his engineer Peter Chicago had chosen to use 963Khz (319 metres). Further, when programmes commenced at lunchtime on August 19th there was no sign of Annie Challis's Gold format. Tom Anderson whose musical tastes were becoming ever more alternative substituted his own rotation of album tracks and obscure material. The vast majority of the public who remembered Caroline, remembered the 64-67 era and tuned in expecting to hear the pop music of that time which by 1983 would have been regarded as 'Gold'. One wonders what they made of Anderson's programming of back to back albums with perhaps four DJ announcements per hour explaining what had been played and what was to be played in the next sequence.

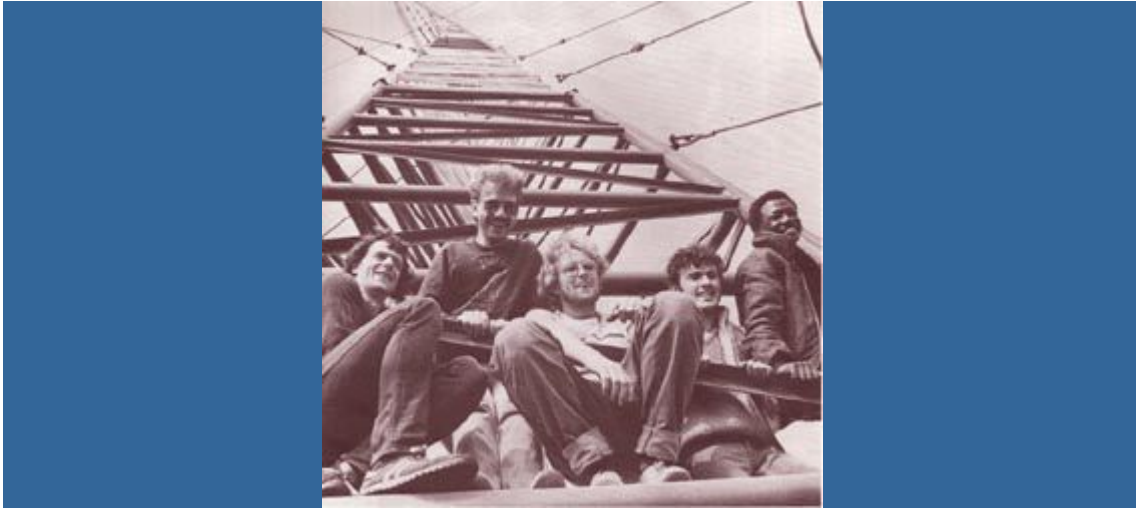
What could O'Rahilly do? both Anderson and Chicago had been intensely loyal to him over the last decade, risking serious injury or death on many occasions. Further, his boast was that in all of the stations history he had never fired anyone and had in fact re-instated staff time after time in spite of their having committed dreadful misdemeanours.

Peter and Tom knew what they could get away with. While Annie Challis wept bitter tears of rage and frustration, Ronan shrugged and assumed that perhaps, in some karmic way, this was pre destined to happen.

So, from the best radio ship ever built, albeit painted the wrong colour, on the wrong date, wrong channel and with the wrong music policy, Radio Caroline had returned. Although nobody knew at the time, the date of August 19th would one day become famous for an entirely different reason.

Chapter 10: What Goes Around, Comes Around

Caroline's re-launch was clumsy but still remarkable and if the actions taken in the planning and financing were to have rapid and ongoing repercussions they probably represented the only means by which Caroline could reappear. People were simply content to have the station back.



Radio Caroline's re-launch line-up in August 1983

Listeners from the sixties were perplexed not to hear hits of that era plus lightweight current pop music, but those who had discovered the station during the seventies enjoyed their expected diet of Dylan, Clapton, and Peter Frampton. Audience figures whilst not dismal were moderate and this probably prevented the authorities and the UK commercial radio industry from being too hostile. It seemed that the station would probably be left to bumble along in its disorganised and very British manner.

The mostly positive coverage given to Caroline's return still voiced the obvious question of whether it could be financially viable. In his fatalistic manner Ronan explained that it was all down to the public. If they listened in sufficient numbers he could attract the major overseas advertisers that were needed to fund the operation. 'If nobody wants to listen' he told a TV interviewer, 'we don't have a ball game'. Just as in the sixties, the big deals never did materialise. Some advertisers such as Nikon and Newsweek Magazine did place campaigns but later it seemed as though these ads were kept on for prestige and the paying ads were from minor players such as cut price holiday firms and overseas couriers.

Other parallels with the sixties were uncannily similar. Just as disgruntled investors who had been excluded from involvement in Radio London fitted out their own ship for Radio England, so various Americans excluded from Radio Caroline were, within one week of Caroline starting transmissions, converting a cargo vessel the MV *Communicator* as their own radio ship. This conversion unhampered by writs and disputes took only months against Caroline's three and a half years and, to the dismay of Caroline staff MV *Communicator* dropped anchor close by them on December 29th 1983 announcing the intention to commence broadcasting as the American staffed and styled Radio Laser. Many technical problems held back the launch but by late May 1984 the station was on air and, to Ronan's anguish, on the 558Khz frequency that he had originally coveted.

With a fast pop music rotation and highly professional American presentation, Laser 558 then swept the board capturing not only a substantial part of Caroline's audience but that of Radio One and the various local commercial stations in the South East.



Laser 558 DJ Brandy Lee

The attitude of the authorities and land based commercial stations toward the hugely successful Laser, was astonishingly hostile and unavoidably Caroline was caught in the crossfire. While both ships alluded to supplies coming legally from Spain it was obvious that the real supply route was by clandestine trips out of UK ports. In August 1985 a ship chartered by the British Department of Trade and Industry anchored close to Caroline and Laser. The plan was to identify any ship approaching either station and to track each one back to its home port where the operator could be prosecuted under the terms of the Marine Offences Act.

Fortunately Caroline did have some overseas tenders and rather more experience than Laser. Small glass fibre boats crept unlit alongside *Ross Revenge* at night since radar did not detect them the surveillance ship noticed nothing. The blockade though had a damaging effect on Laser. Morale on board deteriorated due to food and fuel shortages and equipment failure. In early November after enduring bad weather during which much of the ships systems broke down, the frightened American crew and exhausted Captain gave up and took the *Communicator* into a UK port where the ship was immediately impounded.

'One down and one to go' said British officials but in fact the surveillance operation then ceased and Caroline was left to continue. Staff formed the view that one station which caused little trouble and which had Caroline's long history would be unofficially tolerated. Caroline took over Lasers 558 frequency and modified its format to pop to retain the previous stations audience. Stalwarts such as Tom Anderson who had been through so much, and many of his musically like minded colleagues resigned. Caroline had been rescued by chance from problems largely of her own making but still needed income since the dream of overseas advertising clearly was not to materialise. In another repeat of history the station looked to Holland and soon the 50Kw transmitter on the *Ross* was contracted to play the programmes of Dutch Radio Monique while Caroline continued via a smaller transmitter.

Radio Monique like Radio Mi Amigo before, was not on air to promote some hippie cause of the individual against the system, or to market love and tolerance. Monique identified and targeted its market and started earning Guilders. The Dutch authorities let it

be known that their intention was to trace the backers and discourage the advertisers. They conceded however that this was not easy and Monique continued to prosper. For Caroline staff, sharing the ship with dour Dutchmen was not their favorite option but the Dutch were at least efficient. Large ships from the continent delivered plentiful supplies of food water and fuel. Cash became available for wages and fresh components could be bought to maintain the ship and her broadcast equipment. It was a satisfactory compromise and Ronan at least had his desired frequency and some semblance of his original format played to an audience handed to him by a defeated rival station. In all of Caroline's history, when a situation looked hopeless some lucky solution would always appear and the years 86-87 were a happy time. One dark cloud was that the UK had extended its territorial limit to twelve miles so that *Ross Revenge* left the sheltered Knock Deep to anchor in an exposed location at the South Falls. This was considered to be a minor inconvenience. *Ross Revenge* was a tough ship, O'Rahilly had chosen her well. In mid October 1987 Britain was hit by a hurricane. All shipping ran for shelter aside from *Ross Revenge*. Of the vessels caught at sea one large freighter capsized off Dover and a continental ferry was driven aground on a Kent beach. *Ross Revenge* rode the hurricane out and to her surprise found the next day that she was one of the few radio stations still operating. Power failures ashore had silenced most of Britain's land based commercial stations. This was however a short lived triumph. On November 24th bad weather hit again. At about 4.00am on the 25th the ships crew were terrified as *Ross Revenge* took on a violent list amidst a cacophony of bangs and crashes of falling steelwork. The show piece 300ft tower, weakened by the hurricane had collapsed into the ocean. Neither Caroline or Monique could transmit any signal at all. When the weather settled, many crew packed their bags and quit for good. It certainly seemed that the party was finally over.

Chapter 11: The Hard Fought Road To Recovery, Brought To Nothing By An Armed Raid

The mighty aerial was in the ocean. The ship was silent. Any semblance of being a normal commercial operation was over. Staff, working only for wages or career advancement left. Control of the station passed down to a collection of die-hards and fanatics. These people viewed O'Rahilly as a hero and obeyed him entirely.

The 558 frequency was intended for the BBC and Caroline was desperate to hold the channel. The loyal Peter Chicago strung a cage of copper wire from the ships funnel to its original front mast. This aerial was woefully inefficient, but the point was made.

Incompetent presenters were allowed to play at being disc jockeys. O'Rahilly cared little about programme content, he knew that nobody was listening.

A workable plan to equip the ship with a good new aerial was needed. Increasingly detached from reality, O'Rahilly talked of a new 300ft tower, but this existed only in his mind. For many reasons, legal and certainly financial, the *Ross Revenge* could not go into a port, she would have to be repaired at sea. Radio Monique wished to return to the air. Thus their supply tenders kept operating. Money for new hardware was a problem, the Dutch were less willing to provide cash than materials. Nor could they be persuaded that Laser had produced an excellent signal from a cheap and modest aerial array.

A stop gap measure, consisting of a spindly lattice tower at the stern and a home made structure at the bow was jury rigged. Higher and longer, the new aerial worked more efficiently and the signal reached Holland again, but still the Dutch were denied their channel.



Sad and mastless - *Ross Revenge* after the storms of late 1987

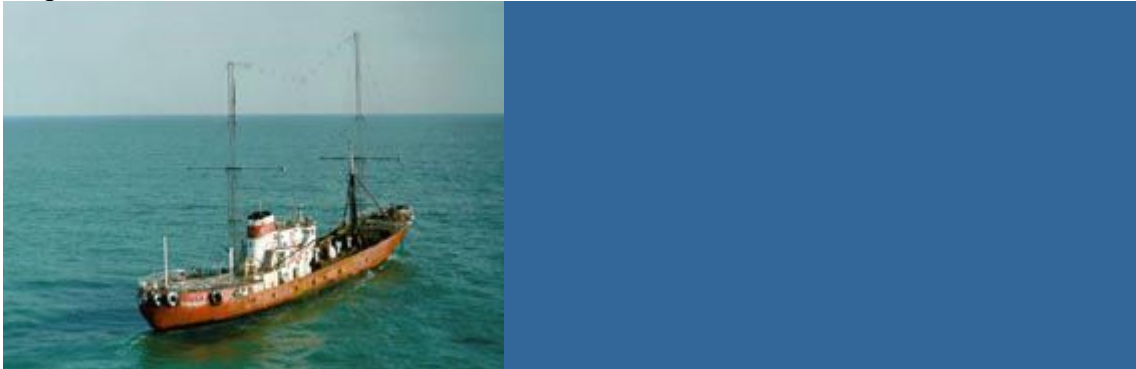
Sophisticated electronics previously enabled two signals to radiate from one mast but this facility had been wrecked. Chicago, insisted that the interim aerial could not accommodate two signals so either Caroline or Monique could be transmitted, but not both. Caroline programmes produced income from religious broadcasts and from advertisements for a Canadian Lottery. This is probably why Ronan sided with the Caroline crew to the detriment of Monique. For a man who had made a life career out of marine broadcasting, he knew remarkably little about transmitters. The ingenious Peter Chicago probably could have combined two signals but technically there was nobody to question him. By being obstructive he hoped to spur his boss into greater efforts. It was a foolish ploy.

Ronan was told of new technology, where thousands of feet of copper wire were spiral wound on to a glass fibre mast and encased in resin. The result was a free standing eighty foot glass fibre tower which electrically behaved like a much larger and taller antenna. He

was seduced by this excellent new idea and surely, he reasoned, if he put two masts on the ship *Caroline* could broadcast from one and *Monique* from the other. Without seeking technical advice he had two towers built.

When the first arrived, Chicago announced that it was totally unsuitable. As soon as the device was erected it swayed alarmingly and months passed while a means was found of restraining it. Then when it was energised it caught fire, broke in two and fell into the sea. In fact the device had a handling capacity of only 5 kilowatts so when Peter fed an experimental 15 kilowatts into it the tower self destructed.

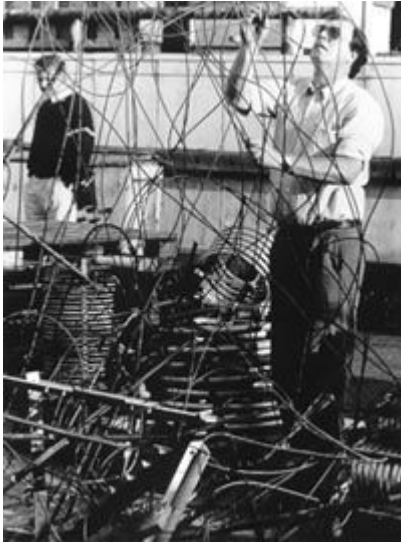
By now nobody in the *Caroline* team wished to be involved in choosing masts and it fell to two volunteer helpers, Peter Moore and Warwick Armstrong, to locate sectional metal towers in a steel scrap yard. These 20ft sections which bolted together end to end were smuggled to the *Ross* on tiny fishing boats. General opinion was that the masts would soon fall down but they are still standing today. All of 1988 had been spent on this saga and eventually *Monique* insisted that it must take the *Caroline* frequency by day, calling itself Radio 558. This loss spurred the technical staff to make more rapidly the technical improvements required for two signals. By 1989 the Dutch had their channel, *Caroline* another, while a third service, World Mission Radio was being broadcast on a short wave frequency. *Caroline's* 25th birthday was celebrated at Easter and it seemed that yet again despite much confusion and wasted effort all was now well.



More modest masts, but at least *Caroline* could be heard again - until...

The conclusion that the UK and Dutch authorities had accepted *Caroline* as a fact of life was bolstered by the fact that the very obvious re-supply of heavy material to the ship both from the UK and France had been totally ignored. Staff found O'Rahilly's obsessive secrecy childish and unnecessary. In fact they were wrong. The Dutch had decided some years ago to take decisive action against Radio *Monique* but halted their plans when the tower collapsed. While the ship was producing a weak signal, action was low priority, but all activities were watched. The British, ever desirous to silence *Caroline*, were very happy to join the Dutch efforts.

On Saturday August 19th the unthinkable happened. The large Dutch vessel *Volans* with armed officials on board closed in on the *Ross Revenge* as did the British launch *Landward*.



By means of violence and force of numbers the Dutch took control of the ship and as chaos reigned, the disc jockeys relayed a blow by blow account of events to the astonished listeners. Then when the transmitters were silenced the Dutch stripped the ship of all broadcast equipment while the British attempted to interrogate the crew under threat of arrest. All this happened in International waters where the boarders had no official powers. In the early evening, Caroline's British tender, posing as a press launch, reached the ship with some genuine journalists on board. The raiders immediately left taking with them all of the records, studios and transmitting equipment and leaving behind some vandalism and deliberate damage. They also left behind the British crew who refused to desert their ruined ship.

On the mainland, in Holland and France Radio Monique staff had been arrested in simultaneous dawn raids. The Monique organisation was destroyed and Caroline heard nothing from them ever again. On the *Ross Revenge* on the morning of August 20th Peter Chicago rallied his shocked crew. In the confusion of the raid he had managed to hide various vital components, with these and items which could perhaps be smuggled out from land it might just be possible to build one working transmitter.

Any normal group of people would have realised that the situation was hopeless, but these were not normal people. Meanwhile Caroline's UK land staff were perplexed that they too had not been arrested, but since they had not they started planning. *Ross Revenge* would need food, fuel and water, studio equipment and a fresh record collection. Obtaining these goods would be the best way that they could counter attack.

Chapter 12: Caroline in Captivity

Ross Revenge, the once splendid radio ship was now a floating ruin. Raiders had sledge hammered the generators and attacked the rigging with an angle grinder. Studios and record library were empty. The transmitters were bare cabinets festooned with cut wires. But Peter Chicago was, with mad determination, trying to patch together one working transmitter out of the parts he had hidden. The crew searched for any records which the raiders had overlooked.

On land Moore and Armstrong were becoming influential among the remaining staff. Their first coup was a protest rally where supporters were asked to bring a token gift. Reading between the lines, Caroline fans brought their entire record collections and tons of non perishable foodstuffs. A French radio station donated £2000 to open a fighting fund. UK commercial radio stations were full of Caroline sympathisers and a tender crept alongside *Ross Revenge* with a complete broadcast studio secretly donated by a Kent radio station.



Armstrong commenced hazardous supply runs in a rubber boat. Moore persuaded the legal fighting fund treasurers to give him money with which to buy precious fuel oil. He felt that while the ship was silent he should send out as much fuel as possible to withstand a later blockade. Meanwhile a serious rift was brewing. Peter Chicago despised Moore and Armstrong, regarding them as enthusiastic fools. Moore obtained agreement from O'Rahilly to stay off air until he had loaded the ship with fuel, food and records. Inexplicably Chicago had been told to get on air the very moment that the transmitter was complete. Unable to grasp the enormity of what had occurred Ronan was obsessed with holding his beloved 558 frequency to the exclusion of all other considerations. Having failed with a law suit against the makers of the useless glass fibre antenna, he now threw himself into mounting, with supporters funds, a case for compensation and damages against the raiders.

On October 1st 1989 the home made transmitter came to life. With only two disc jockeys and a handful of obscure records Caroline was on air again. Land staff were incensed. Hidden at Gravesend was a ship laden with fuel oil intended for the *Ross*, while van loads of records and supplies were stored awaiting transportation. The broadcasts compromised delivery of these goods and open warfare existed between Moore/Armstrong and Peter Chicago thereafter.

Up to spring 1990 Caroline was able to provide regular programmes, income came via a telephone news service, but in May a deliberate confrontation was forced when new station Spectrum Radio were told by the D.T.I. (the agency who were attempting to

silence Caroline) that they must transmit on 558. Caroline was portrayed as the irresponsible party even after having used the frequency for five full years. Spectrum were assured that Caroline's power was too low to cause difficulty, but when a set of new radio valves were donated Chicago quadrupled the power of his signal and both stations created widespread mutual interference. Spectrums launch was ruined and while they were told that 558 was the only channel available, their threat to seek massive compensation from the Broadcasting Authority resulted in them being permitted to simulcast on 990Khz while the 558 transmissions continued, to disrupt Caroline's signal. At this time all British broadcasting was being overhauled by means of the 1990 Broadcasting Act. Caroline examined the draft document but found only minor reference to marine radio. At the last moment however extra pages were added giving the UK armed forces wide powers to board radio ships in international waters and silence them using whatever force was thought appropriate. To block any possibility of legal redress, such as that which O'Rahilly was already seeking after the 1989 raid, future boarders whoever they may be were to be granted immunity from prosecution. It was a dreadful piece of legislation which one would only expect from a totalitarian state. Caroline fought in the British House Of Lords supported by 29 Peers but the government won. The Broadcasting Act would become law in the first moments of 1991. Caroline staff were divided on how to handle their last months on air from the ocean. O'Rahilly now almost impossible to reason with, continued to imagine that he could continue on 558 with the protection of an overseas government. He started to mention a complete 50Kw transmitter which was in store in the U.S.A. More pragmatic staff wanted to shift frequency to avoid early action being taken against them, achieving at the same time a signal audible to the maximum number of listeners. It was generally considered that the British D.T.I. might leave the station alone until the new law was in force. Suddenly there was a flurry of hostile action. Armstrong's inflatable tender was mysteriously sabotaged and two other tenders *Fairwinds* and the *Dreamboat Annie* were boarded by the authorities. Raids were mounted on two large ships that Moore owned in Kent. Every move to re-supply the ship was thwarted and clearly the D.T.I. were mounting close surveillance. Caroline's broadcasts became ever more sporadic as fuel and supplies ran out. In the early hours of Nov. 5th 1990 D.J. Neil Gates closed down programmes for the night but the next morning they did not re-start. This was the last broadcast ever made from the *Ross Revenge* in International waters.



Ross Revenge on the notorious Goodwin Sands

As 1991 commenced, the silent *Ross Revenge* was still anchored in the ocean. All sources of income had ceased. Ronan had nothing to offer. With the possibility looming that the crew may starve, some novel plan was required. The '*Ross Revenge* Support Group' was formed. The doubtful suggestion that this association was just concerned with the ship and not the radio station contained on it, was sufficient of a grey area to enable supplies to be sent out legally. Monthly donations produced enough money for essentials and a small generator was provided for basic lighting needs, reducing the ships fuel requirements from 100 gallons a day to about 15. Essentially this new group bought time for Ronan to pursue his overseas licence dream. His disciples decided that his insistence in keeping the vessel at sea at all costs was preparation for recommencing operation as the authorised state broadcaster of another country. Those with a more jaundiced view suggested his interest was to protect the vessel from creditors and legal disputes. Certainly by the latter end of the year with no means of broadcasting having been found it seemed sensible to bring the ship in voluntarily and take the consequences but still she stayed at sea.

At one stage the demoralised crew abandoned the ship and Peter Chicago nearly died re-boarding the *Ross* before official vessels could tow her away. Then on the evening of November 19th in the middle of a fierce storm the anchor chain snapped. Disorientated by the severe weather the crew had no idea they were adrift until with a terrifying impact *Ross Revenge* grounded on the notorious Goodwin Sands, sixteen miles from her anchorage.

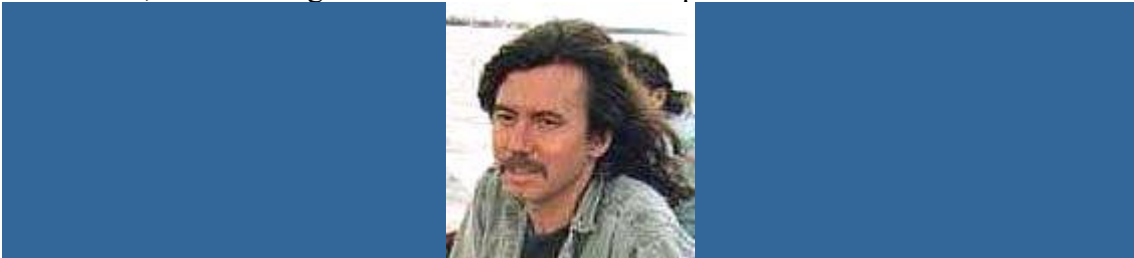
After bravely staying on board their listing, flooded vessel for three hours the crew, concluding that she was about to capsize, agreed to be rescued by helicopter. The Goodwins are a ships graveyard and poor old *Ross Revenge* was left to her fate.

Chapter 13: In Defeat, In Defiance

After being abandoned, the radio ship righted herself and then sat high and dry on the sands with daylight showing under the bow and stern. Usually this causes stranded ships to break in two but *Ross Revenge* stayed intact. For three days at each high tide the salvage tug *Dextrous* attempted to refloat her. On November 22nd the salvors concluded that their attempts were ceasing to be economically viable but had one last try, using a second tug to double the pulling power. *Ross Revenge* slipped into deeper water and was towed to Dover harbour. Some Caroline staff experienced euphoria at this upturn of events while others, worn down by the long struggle, simply felt that the agony would now continue.

Owners of rescued ships usually make contact with the salvors who in this case were Dover Harbour Board, but nobody wanted to acknowledge responsibility for *Ross Revenge*. Eventually two crew agreed, on the grounds that having no possessions they had nothing to lose, to sign papers to prevent the vessel being arrested. The ship however was inspected by safety officials who identified innumerable defects. Describing *Ross Revenge* as the most unseaworthy vessel they had ever seen, they issued a wide ranging detention order.

The crew reoccupied the ship but their happiness was short lived. For the last year they had enjoyed an isolated communal existence, receiving brief visits once a fortnight, from people who provided gifts and comforts. Now they tried to re-create this life style in the middle of a bustling port where the ship was readily accessible. Visitors complained that they were being snubbed while staff delivering fuel and supplies experienced sullen rudeness if they interrupted the crews almost ritualistic routine. Totally opposed to the suggestion that the ship must be thrown open to the paying public to raise money for harbour fees, the crew engineered an unsuccessful coup and were dismissed.



Radio Caroline station manager Peter Moore

Dover Harbour Board adopted a sympathetic and practical outlook. Clearly they had salvaged a wreck with no commercial use or value, but the *Ross* supporters club were trying their best to be co-operative. Salvage was agreed at only 20,000 and, the crisis having created a wave of donations, half was soon paid. Then, by purchasing a low power, temporary radio licence the station was able to celebrate its Birthday at Easter 1992 with a 28 day broadcast. The novelty value of this event produced a decent profit via advertising, merchandising and paid tours and the salvage cost was cleared. After the shipwreck Ronan disappeared and later explained that he was temporarily too depressed to have any interest in his radio station. Far from congratulating those who had devised the Easter broadcast, which enabled Caroline to buy its ship back, he stated that the very idea of broadcasting with a licence turned his stomach, some of the more fanatical supporters shared this view. Peter Moore, now recognised as the owners representative by

all relevant authorities was effectively in charge of the operation. A thankless task, as it later transpired.

During 1992 and 1993 the station was in the unsatisfactory position of being in control of a ship which was indefinitely detained in Dover harbour, where its tourist potential was mostly played out. Engineering teams had greatly improved the ships condition and appearance and the disdain and disgust expressed when the vessel was brought inshore was replaced by a grudging admiration for the volunteers efforts. This, plus tortuous negotiation, achieved permission, in spite of many defects remaining, for the ship to be moved to a wide river in Essex where mooring costs were greatly reduced.

This voyage was a one off concession and *Ross Revenge* was detained again on arrival, but it brought the ship in range of fresh visitors and enabled further one month broadcasts to be staged. Since the organisation had no rights at all, only the good nature of UK officials could enable any progress to happen and Moore went to some lengths to achieve rapport and to ensure that the station paid its bills. While the low power broadcasts and paid visits achieved this aim Moore was reviled by some staff who felt he had sold out and could not understand why the ship should not be spirited away to sea again. Few broadcasts were completed without an explosion of resentment by various factions. Away from the *Ross Revenge*, Caroline programmes were being transmitted by various novel means including the hire of short wave and satellite air time and by guest broadcasts on commercial radio stations both in the UK and France. Surprisingly the Dutch authorities released all the goods they had confiscated which were reinstated on the ship.

In early 1995 the British marine authorities agreed to further concessionary voyages on the condition that income thus raised must be used to dry dock *Ross Revenge* for a hull inspection. Under this agreement the ship travelled to the coastal resort of Clacton to make a broadcast while at anchor two miles offshore. To Caroline purists this was the closest the station had come since 1990 to operating in a way that they found satisfactory. Then the vessel was relocated to Southend On Sea and thence to West India dock in London where yet another broadcast was made, sponsored by the political pressure group, Charter 88.

Accumulated income was considerable but here again disagreements arose via a faction that recognised neither Moore nor indeed Ronan O'Rahilly and who mooted that *Ross Revenge* should be abandoned so that another less encumbered ship might be purchased. After being expensively trapped in London while the dispute raged, Moore eventually organised a tow down river to Chatham in Kent. Just days after *Ross Revenge* left West India dock, the area was devastated by an I.R.A. bomb.



Ross Revenge at Chatham

Dry docking at Chatham's Historic Dockyard, revealed that the thickness of the ship's hull was still adequate but that a substantial dent existed caused by the shipwreck. Whilst high and dry many repairs were made to ensure that *Ross Revenge* would remain watertight. After ten days in dry dock the ship was moved to a mooring on the River Medway where she was detained yet again, but this time for insufficient documentation. If this can be remedied and final repairs made to the steering gear the ship may be free to travel without hindrance but will not of course be free to broadcast. At the time of writing repairs are in hand and marine consultants have been retained to deal with the ships paperwork and certificates.

Chapter 14: The Future #1

The charismatic Ronan O'Rahilly, for whom time has little significance, still haunts the smart restaurants and bistros of Chelsea telling those who care to listen how he brought down governments and changed the face of British radio. He does not admit to having either an address or telephone number and sometimes will not answer to his own name. On the one hand he clearly made various wrong decisions in steering his station and created some damaging situations. Conversely he remains true to his ideals and while he could at any time in the last 33 years have sold the Caroline name and achieved a lucrative directorship in a conventional radio station he has steadfastly refused to do so. It is a measure of his naivety that he did not protect the Radio Caroline name, Moore and his colleagues registered the trade mark to avoid hostile take-overs of which several have been attempted.



O'Rahilly still searches for a country to award him a broadcast licence which, on paper at least would enable Caroline to return to sea and be protected from the Broadcasting Act. After years of searching however this has not been achieved and Caroline fans grow weary. Ronan rarely visits the ship nor shows his face at station events and to more recent Caroline enthusiasts Peter Moore is viewed as the stations figurehead having spent a decade and much of his own money trying to sustain the unsustainable.

Ronan O'Rahilly is intensely supportive of Moore, insisting that nothing could shake his faith in the only man to operate Caroline according to his own Loving Awareness principles. Moore in return, whilst admitting that Ronan's short attention span and tenuous grip on reality exasperate him, still insists on being loyal to O'Rahilly, rejecting any proposals which he thinks would go seriously against 'The Old Mans' wishes. As for operating on the L.A ethic he simply replies "well, Loving Awareness is free, but diesel oil costs 60p a gallon".

The question of what to do in the future looms and is an almost impossible conundrum. Things could continue as they are with a small band of total enthusiasts funding a volunteer crew to make slow and gradual improvements to *Ross Revenge*, while volunteer presenters make sporadic local broadcasts but this is scarcely the type of Radio Caroline which might continue the broadcasting legend.

The station could allow itself be swallowed up by big business. Many commercial radio stations would slaver over the famous name, but here while Moore and certainly O'Rahilly could claim executive posts, their future would only be as secure as the next boardroom coup when the ship, the volunteers and the stations ideals could be ditched in favour of maximising profits. This would be an impossibly sad end to such a long and distinguished adventure.

Caroline fanatics want only for 'The Lady' to broadcast an A.M. signal from the middle of the ocean but can present no workable plan as to how this may be achieved and sustained. There is no question that O'Rahilly's daring and determination in the sixties created in later years a multi million pound radio industry in the U.K. which now benefits countless shareholders, executives, administrators and radio presenters, many of whom were Caroline trained. The advertising industry has also enjoyed many advantages. In an ideal world such people might support Caroline in recognition of what it has given them, but this is not an ideal world and, with some notable exceptions few now wish to acknowledge their debt of gratitude. Anything that Caroline achieves will be via its own ingenuity and by the generosity of the stations supporters.

There is of course opportunity for full time licensed broadcasts within the UK but Caroline could not ideologically cope with the constraints, regulations and operating requirements, let alone the costs.



The best option seems to lie with the relatively new pastime of satellite delivered radio. Many major broadcasters already use this medium and while as yet no independent operator has been able to make the activity sufficiently profitable. Radio Caroline, for the last thirty years at least, has not functioned solely on the profit motive. Tantalisingly, if the station could increase membership of its supporters club to only 2500 people, Caroline could deliver a Pan European service full time without having to seek any advertising at all and those spots filled on other stations with commercials could promote O'Rahilly's Loving Awareness message, Moore's benign anarchy and any number of good causes and crusades. Technology makes it possible for the *Ross Revenge* to be the stations base from anywhere in Europe and a 'listener supported' station of this kind is an exciting prospect.

The breakthrough in satellite radio will come when car and portable reception becomes possible and surely this advance cannot be far away. When it happens much of terrestrial radio will become irrelevant and, just as the transistor radio revolutionised radio listening in the sixties, satellite may well revolutionise it again in the late nineties or the next century.

With a geographical range and potential greater than ever before, it would be fitting for Caroline to be part of this coming revolution and if the stations new influence did enable Ronan O'Rahilly to obtain his 'third world licence' is it just possible that Caroline might go to sea again?.

Certainly there ought to be room in the whole range and spectrum of European radio for just one station to have the delightful eccentricity of presenting excellent music programmes simply because they enjoy doing so, whilst promoting freedom of the individual against the system and giving their listeners the 'hard sell' on love.

Chapter 15: The Future #2

Having made ten one month broadcasts during the nineties to try to keep some semblance of Caroline on air, this pastime was losing its appeal for Caroline's staff. The novelty had mostly worn off for both the media and the listeners. Further, within the limits of navigation of Ross Revenge she had been to just about every place that she could be taken.

Fuel costs for the ship were rising and the vessels caretakers, whilst being well meaning, were breaking the ships machinery as fast as the volunteer work crews could repair her. On the broadcasting front, the organisation Merlin Communications offered Caroline (and other broadcasters) some analogue satellite air time as a free sample. So the once mighty Caroline had two hours a week of satellite time sandwiched between Country Music, Heavy Metal and ' Zoo Format ' talk shows.

Peter Moore's protestations that this was ' better than nothing ' or ' better than we had before ' were starting to wear thin with the supporters. He was particularly vulnerable when businessman Peter Leutner started the satellite station European Klassik Rock. E.K.R. musically was Caroline with a different name and Moore's own staff told him angrily ' This is what WE should have been doing '.

Sadly for Peter Leutner his assessment of the income that his station might create was very over optimistic. He did not seem to grasp or want to grasp the fact that independent satellite radio was not then viable in the real commercial sense.

As fate would have it when after many months Merlin started charging for their satellite hours, Peter Leutner decided that he would reduce his losses by sub letting some of his broadcast hours. A soul station, Solar Radio took the overnights and Caroline left Merlin and found enough money to buy an eight hour block each Sunday. The four fold increase in weekly air time helped Moore regain a little of his lost credibility.

This arrangement continued during the autumn and winter of 1998 and while the modest income did not correct E.K.R's financial situation it was thought that the station would survive at least until May of the next year. It came as a shock then when E.K.R announced that transmissions would cease on the last day of 1998.

The satellite channel which thus fell silent had been leased to E.K.R. by the company Flextech Television Ltd. Without much hope of success, Caroline approached that organisation, attempting to convince them that having at least some income from the channel was better than having none at all. Surprisingly, Flextech agreed with this and a deal was struck where Caroline would buy air time direct by the hour and would rent the vacated E.K.R. studios on the same basis. The station returned to the air in the early months of 1999 with a weekend service of 12 hours duration each Saturday and Sunday. For some time thereafter it seemed that fate may at last be playing into Caroline's hands, since Merlin also realised that their satellite channel, a tiny part of their over all operation, was a commercial white elephant and a decision was made to close it. A few independent broadcasters had bought air time on the service, namely Dell Richardson's specialist rock and roll programme, Bryan Chalkers programme of country music and a progressive music programme presented by the Staffordshire Broadcasting company. Caroline was able to absorb these and other broadcasters into it's output and by degrees the station increased broadcast hours from 24 to 63 hours a week. The new hours were mostly weekday evenings, which in terms of satellite radio were considered to be peak times.

In the summer of 99 Ross Revenge was taken to Southend pier for a summer stop over and at this notable tourist location it was difficult not to make money from guided tours and merchandising. A one month AM broadcast was carried out and when the ship left the pier in the late autumn the stations finances were unusually healthy. The next venture for Ross Revenge was to be to travel up to London and become a temporary base for the re-launch of Radio Luxembourg.

The possibility of being in a safe location such as West India Dock for the winter was very appealing. British Waterways, now in charge of the dock even suggested that Ross Revenge may be the centrepiece for their planned Millennium celebrations.

Whilst awaiting the call to sail for London the ship was taken to an exposed anchorage in the River Medway, the only anchorage that was available. Autumn passed in to winter and the order to sail for London never came. The Radio Luxembourg re-launch turned out to be a flight of fancy.

In dreadful weather on Christmas Eve, Ross Revenge broke the last of her five mooring cables and drifted down river, going aground off the container terminal at Thamesport. Only slightly damaged she was salvaged and taken to Sheerness Docks but the salvage and docking fees wiped out the income from the Southend venture.

In another disappointment, agents working for Chatham Dockyard asked that Ross Revenge be brought to that location to be part of the traditional Navy Day celebrations that were being revived at the old naval dockyard. Workers prepared the ship for display but the participation of the Ross was cancelled at the last moment and the agreed attendance fee was not paid.

A decision was made to close the ship down until further notice to save the costs and damage of keeping a crew on board. Ross Revenge was only energised when working parties went on board. To many purists, still dreaming of a return to the ocean to broadcast, this was seen as a betrayal and the Caroline organisation crystallised into those who were solely interested in the ship and those who felt that making radio broadcasts was the main reason for Caroline's existence.

None the less, the satellite operation was now running all weekend and each weekday evening. The station tinkered with some Short Wave time from an overseas location and there was a test day of broadcasting on an AM frequency with the power of 500KW, ten times greater than Caroline's previous highest ever broadcast power. Sadly, funds could not be found to take this channel on a regular basis.

Early in 2001 Flextech warned Radio Caroline that they may soon cease their analogue satellite activities and that they did not have another platform to put the station on. After a flurry of activity and with time running out, the station found one practical and affordable alternative and after one month of silence in April 2001, Caroline returned on May 1st with a full time service in digital via the Astra 1G satellite. Coinciding with this, Radio Caroline also secured airtime weekend evenings on The Rock Of The Riviera 88.4FM to the French & Italian Rivas. In addition to the rebroadcast of shows from our Maidstone studio, programmes from the Riviera are also broadcast in these slots and are identified as [Caroline South](#).



DJ Bob 'Buzby' Lawrence in Radio Caroline's studios at the Maidstone TV Centre

For the UK, this was not the ideal channel since Astra 1G is at 19.2 degrees East of South, while the Sky channels used by most UK viewers are at 28 degrees East. However the dedicated UK audience re-equipped to hear the station, with the bonus that it was now full time. A new audience built on the continent where 19.2 is the standard.

With income from merchandising, sponsorship and donations, Caroline had reached a plateau where she could continue at this level indefinitely. The now careworn Peter Moore is still in charge, stating that he regarded the IG service as a test and training operation while the station refined both its musical and presentation standards. However, listeners and colleagues continually posed the question of 'where do we go from here', while some diehards had still not forgiven him for downgrading the role of the ship.

The obvious next step was to take an audio channel via Sky and thus have the potential of reaching 7 million households. The decision to move to Sky was decided for us when our uplink to the 19.2 Astra 1G satellite closed when the Maidstone studios were sold to a new consortium who decided to shut the uplinking operations from the broadcast centre. Meanwhile in August 2002, Radio Caroline launched on a new satellite platform.

[Worldspace](#) satellites are audio only and send down a signal, which can be received on a specially designed portable radio. Putting Caroline on one beam of the Afristar satellite gives coverage of all of Europe, Africa and the Middle East. Radio Caroline is now part of a prestige subscription package of stations that includes Virgin Radio, Talksport and National Public Radio (NPR.)

November 2002 saw the end of our transmissions via the Astra 1G satellite at 19.2 degrees and preparations to launch via the Sky Digital position at 28 degrees east. As an interim measure, our new satellite uplink partner [World Radio Network \(WRN\)](#) provided a temporary channel on the Eutelsat 13 degrees east satellite. In February 2003 Radio Caroline launched its new outlet at the [Sky Digital](#) position of 28.5 degrees east via the Eurobird satellite. In our 40th anniversary year 2004, Radio Caroline also launched nationwide on Italy's DAB network through a licensing deal with the Milan based national network [RTL 102.5 Hit Radio](#). Radio Caroline also broadcast throughout the month of August on medium wave via a restricted service license (RSL.) For this broadcast Ross Revenge was towed from Strood, Rochester to Tilbury where she is

berthed today. Occasional broadcasts from the ship take place some weekends. 2004 also saw the 'beefing' up of Radio Caroline's streaming on the [Internet](#). Of course there have been many more adventures since then, some of which we hope to bring you soon.

Fin...

By Dean Denton