

May 2018

Paul Rusling writing:

At a meeting in Yorkshire two weeks ago, Peter Clayton, Carl Kingston, Graham Hall and myself were discussing well-known offshore radio author Paul Harris and his books and I mentioned that I hadn't seen him for a while; we pass close to his home in the Scottish borders quite often and he is always glad of a natter about the golden ages of offshore radio.

I called him a few days later to be told he was in hospital for a short stay - no great concern, as he was nearing 70, but I was horrified just two days later when I got this chilling message from his wife: "my darling Paul passed away at 11pm last night".

Paul was from Elgin, a small town in the far north of Scotland and he attended Aberdeen University where he read police and international affairs. While there, Paul was chief instigator of the university's rag week station Kings Radio, which they planned to take offshore. The authorities leaned on the University dons and had the funding and other support services pulled.

Paul had written the definitive offshore radio book called "When Pirates Ruled the Waves" but the impending MoA meant that most mainstream publishers wouldn't distribute the book, and eventually Paul set up his own imprint, Impulse Publications.



*Paul Harris (collection Paul Rusling)*

Ever the rebel Paul made several trips to Holland and got embroiled with the International Broadcasters Society, run by Tim Thomason and his wife Bertha, who were planning an offshore station. Paul was key to finding a suitably high-powered transmitter and arranged to pick up lots of equipment previously used by Radio 270. Launched in 1970, Capital Radio had lofty ideals politically and played mainly easy listening music. It was also unique in that most of its crew were female and formally enlisted in

the Liechtenstein Navy!

The ship seems to have been sabotaged by rivals and ended up grounded on the beach at Noordwijk that November. It proved so expensive to reflect it that the company went bust. One of Paul's books tells the inside story of the station and its trials; called *To Be A Pirate King*, it is rarely found available these days.

Paul wrote further books about radio, including a translation of Jack Kotschak's story about Radio Nord. He also undertook a series of tours as a journalist, first to the Middle East, then to India and some hairy trips to Ceylon where the Tamil Tigers took exception to his journalism and had him arrested and later deported. Paul had a keen interest in oriental art and regularly visited Vietnam and other countries in south east Asia. He continued his writing on international affairs and was a renowned expert on African politics. He is the co-author of the standard reference work on Scottish painting, *The Dictionary of Scottish Painters*.

Paul had visited over 100 countries; and has been a professional lecturer (usually on Chinese art, but also on modern history) for the last twenty years, often on cruise ships with Cunard. His lectures covered shipping, art history, counter-insurgency, terrorism and politics. Only last month he was in France but could usually be found tending his ever-growing collection of art and antiquarian books at his gallery.

Paul was a staunch freedom fighter for radio, had an endless fascination for independent and novel types of radio project of all shades. He always found time to keen to help novice writers such as myself and offered limitless advice and encouragement. An intriguing and beguiling man, the world of radio is much poorer for his loss and I for one shall miss him and his help and chats.