

Hans Knot International Radio Report 2025(3)

Again we can mention the fact that summer has arrived in our part of the world and so we will enjoy some fine time on holiday later in August. Thanks for all response and questions from the readers. Main part of these are answered in personal mails. So let's go with another edition of the International Radio Report. First we have the Robbie Dale's Diary

Robbie Dale

Everyone within the radio community's followers has their own favourite or favourites. You can list by intensely listened-to station or by the decade in which you listened to one or more stations. My first intense listening took place in the 1960s, listening to quite a few stations with regularity until mid-August 1967. After that, only the offshore radio stations Radio Veronica and Radio Caroline remained. Regarding Caroline, I had been listening to Robbie Dale with some regularity since April 1966, which continued after the introduction of MOA until he was last heard on Caroline.



Photo OEM collection

Then there was a period when he worked for Radio Veronica and later for TROS Hilversum 3 and also got his own television programme "JAM on tv". And in that period after 14 August 1967, he was the favourite English-language deejay for me. Robbie Robinson,

as his full name was, collected a wealth of articles published about him in various newspapers during his rich career, as well as articles he wrote himself in the broadcasting magazine TROS Kompas. Let's see who Robbie Dale was, and to do so we take a look at our radio friend Jon Myer in London who wrote the following on his site Pirate Hall of Fame, among other things:

The Admiral recalls Caroline days

Those final days

THROUGHOUT my stay on Caroline, I must have been fired at least three or four times. On one occasion a barge came out from Ipswich with a crowd of students on board. There were some good looking girls among them so I decided to swim across to the barge. After an hour or so I had to get back to the ship, and again, I decided to swim. But, by this time, the tide had changed and I got washed away past the ship in the direction of Big L.

They had to launch a life-boat to bring me back and when the Captain made a report of this I got fired. However, at the time we were very short of staff so after a few days I was rehired.

The most important decision I ever had to make was whether or not I would return to the ship after August 15. At this time I was senior Disc Jockey so I asked all the other Disc Jockeys whether they would return — some said "yes" and some said "no"—and I said "yes".

Fans

I will never forget August 14 leaving Liverpool Street Station with thousands of fans wishing us well, then again the same thing at Ipswich Station, and the Docks at Felixstowe. When we eventually

got to the "MI AMIGO", Johnnie and I discovered we were the only two who were going to stay after all, and all the other boys left on the tender, some with promises that they would return via Holland. So it was all left to Johnnie and I, and we made the best of it.

After a few weeks we recruited some new boys. Roger Day returned, and before long we were again swinging with a full complement of Disc Jockeys — Spangles Muldoon, Bud Balloo, Karl Mitchell, Andy Archer, Steve Merike and others.

The problems we all had trying to find somewhere to live in Holland and then the Dutch police checking on us and finding out who we were and what we were doing all the time—we did not belong anywhere.

After a time the Dutch authorities started to accept us as being freaks from the North Sea, rejects from the English pop world who really were harmless. But to tell you all about the troubles we had during the last six months when Caroline was illegal would take up too much time and paper. The main problems of course were in getting food and equipment to the ships, the sea was our main enemy but we managed to cope. Then the day came when the unforeseen financial enemy struck. Caroline was broke, no more money for food, records, or fuel oil and a considerable amount of debts.

This was the end, but not the death, for this was the beginning of a new era when Caroline's Disc Jockeys travelled to the four corners of the world to seek a new life, leaving The Admiral in Holland!

Future

I tried to keep the memory of Caroline going by joining Veronica and doing radio shows in the style I used to use on Caroline with jingles that we all know so well. Things got better and better as the days went by, and I am slowly but surely realising a position where, one day, I will be able to play my part in the re-establishment of free radio.

I am a living part of Caroline. All the Disc Jockeys I have mentioned are also a living part of Caroline, for they owe all they have and all they had to the station and her millions of listeners. They have by no means stopped giving what they want to give, and the future has got to be better than the past.

So don't give up hope—free radio IS coming!

ROBBIE DALE
— The Admiral



Tony Blackburn in the Mi Amigo's old studios.

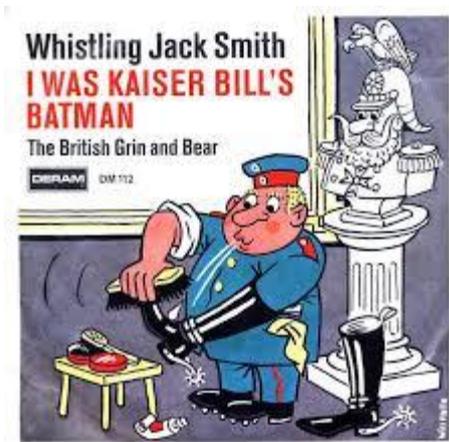
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'Robbie Dale was born in Littleborough, Lancashire, on 21st of April 1940. After spells as an antiques dealer, press agent, salesman, bellboy and serving in the army, Robbie was working as a DJ in a discotheque in Kensington, west London, when he was spotted by Radio Caroline's Gerry Duncan. Gerry suggested that he should audition for the station which resulted in Robbie joining Caroline South in April 1966.



Garry Burke Collection Robbie Dale

He took over the evening Caroline Club Request Show, which became known as Robbie Dale's Diary. He appointed himself 'Admiral' when he founded the 'Beat Fleet', an organisation which doubled as free radio supporters association and fan club. Robbie used both sides of the same single as his theme tunes at different times. The A-side was I Was Kaiser Bill's Batman by Whistling Jack Smith but he also used the B-side The British Grin And Bear. Previously he had also used Yellow Jacket by The Ventures and for a brief time it was Fugue no.5 in D Major by the Swingle Singers.



After the Marine Offences Act became law he elected to stay with Radio Caroline and was joint Programme Controller and Senior DJ for the South ship with Johnnie Walker. He presented the morning show until a stomach ulcer forced him to leave the ship in January 1968, although he continued to work for the station on shore. After

Caroline closed down in March 1968 he joined Radio Veronica, the Dutch pirate, later moving to Hilversum radio and TV.

He returned to the UK in 1973 and ran an office-cleaning company. He was involved in a failed bid for the Belfast commercial radio franchise, which went instead to Downtown Radio. He later went to Dublin where he operated the very successful Sunshine Radio until government legislation closed it at the end of 1988. He then moved to Lanzarote in the Canary Islands having bought a holiday complex there. He and his wife Stella continued to live on the island after retirement but sadly Robbie died on 31st August 2021.'

It was Martin van der Ven who visited his widow Stella on the island Lanzarote and got permission to make photos from Robbie's scrapbooks.

So let's dive in the Dale's Diary and see what can be found there.

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/offshoreradio/albums/72177720298475224/>

Radio Antwerpen: the wreck of the Uilenspiegel



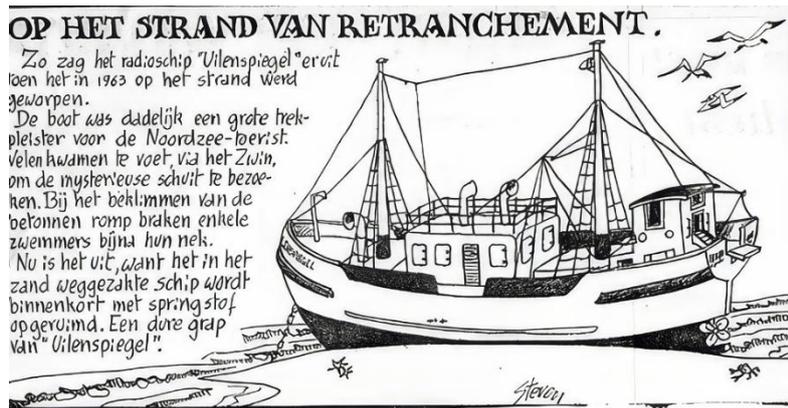
I have written about practically every offshore radio station in book form, but Radio Antwerp, from the Uilenspiegel, I left out. Over the

years, many documents came to me and were added to the Uilenspiegel file. And such a file then goes back into the archive again and again. Thanks to follower Albert Pleijsier, I pulled out the file. He had a request for me to see if there were any programme listings of the station. But neither on the internet, nor on my external disk could such an overview be found.

Spending half an hour going through the archive file, I managed to find a few things, but also came across a newspaper cutting that caused wonder and where I wish to share its contents with my readers. A date and source were not mentioned and so the first thing that needed to be resolved was when the 'publishing' had taken place.

It was a clipping with a message on the back that took me further. Using a search engine, I typed in some keywords that led me to a hostage-taking by some Yugoslavs at their country's consulate in Gothenburg, Sweden. They were members of the Croatian neo-fascist Oetasjl organisation and they wanted the release of their leader Hkrac from prison in Belgrade plus a cash sum of \$100,000 from the Swedish government.

Rapid intervention by the Swedish police ended the occupation on the morning of 11th February 1971, and it was clear to me, through this report, that another report in the same, unknown newspaper, was also of the same date. The headline read: 'Stranded radio ship gets blown up'. Let's follow the full text of this notice: 'The remains of the Belgian radio ship Uylenspiegel, stranded near Cadzand in 1962, will be blown up with dynamite and then cleaned up. The wreck poses a danger to the seawall and poses a danger to tourists clambering aboard at low tide. Several serious accidents have occurred in the process since the beaching. The Uylenspiegel broadcast pop music and advertising messages off the Belgian coast for four years. During a winter storm in 1962, the ship ran aground on the Zeeland-Flemish coast.'



I presume an apprentice journalist was active in making this report and any supervisor did not intervene properly. Obviously, the name of the station ship was wrong. In addition, the journalist wrote that the radio station had broadcast pop music and commercials for four years. How about 1962 pop music? No way. Amusing and mildly informative programmes for the whole family and certainly not music from the 'pop music' category that we were only introduced to on a limited basis from mid-1963 onwards. Moreover, during the period when Radio Antwerp was broadcast from the concrete transmission ship Uilenspiegel, advertising messages could be heard sporadically.

Above all, there was the huge error to read that the station had been broadcasting for no less than four years. This while Radio Antwerp began its broadcasts from the Uilenspiegel on the 15th of October 1962 and on the 16th of December that year the transmitting ship ran aground on the beach at Cadzand, off Retranchement. But the big question is whether in the spring of 1971, the planned blow-up of the Uilenspiegel was a success. No less than 22 years later, in June 1993, a message reached me from Zeeland revealing that remnants of the former concrete transmission ship could still be found, and on the beach near the village of the same name.

This was because it was important for beach visitors and sun worshippers to know that when the water was low, one's feet could be torn open by sharp remnants of the Uilenspiegel. According to the

article, these were remnants of the concrete blocks, with which the radio ship was weighted. In reality, they were remnants of the concrete ship.

To prevent unnecessary injuries, employees of the water board 't Vrije van Sluis' drove wooden stakes in the preceding weeks to demarcate the remains of the wreck of the Uilenspiegel. The cost of the demarcation was borne by the water board and the municipalities of Sluis and Oostburg and was estimated at over 20,000 guilders in the PZC article.



Photo SMC Archive

The remnants of the Uilenspiegel were thus 3 decades of pure nostalgia, not only for Flemish and Zeeuws-Vlaanderen people but also for the many holidaymakers, who visited Zeeland in the summer

and thus also went to have a look at the beach of Retranchement. Returning to the article in the PZG of 14 July 1993, it also became clear to me where that mistake came from that Radio Antwerp was on air for no less than four years. The unnamed journalist in question told that owner Georges de Caluwé had started broadcasting from the MV Uilenspiegel as early as 1958 and not, as real history tells us, on October 15th 1962, the first time he was on air with Radio Antwerpen from the radio ship.

RADIO ANTWERPEN

2 0 1 , 0 7 M

VANAF HET SCHIP UILENSPIEGEL OP DE NOORDZEE

de zender waar ook u naar luistert

PUBLICITEIT	PROGRAMMADIENST	ADMINISTRATIE
PUBLIFORADIO Nerviersstraat 10 ANTWERPEN Tel. (03) 39 32 52	ENVORA P. Jegers Mechelststeenweg 108 EDGEM Tel. (03) 51 20 99	ENVORA G. De Coluwé Mercatorstraat 17 ZEEBRUGGE Tel. (050) 546 09

WEEK VAN ZONDAG 18-11-1962 TOT ZATERDAG 24-11-1962

ZONDAG 18-11-1962

7.00 Morgenroos 7.05 Muziek bij de koffie 8.30 Mooie stemmen door Louis Somoy 9.00 Tijd voor de melodie 9.30 Muzikale ABC 9.45 Varia 10.00 Ritmo, charme en fantasie met Will Ferdy en Ralph Flanagan 10.30 Varia 10.50 5 + 5 = 10 door Terry Rendall 11.30 Zondagspoor door Philip 12.00 Citeien van Uilenspiegel 12.30 Dans dans 13.00 Varia 14.00 Vrolijk zondagmiddag door Fred Steyn 14.45 Claxon in si bemol door Terry Rendall 15.30 Hier Fred Steyn 16.00 Promenade door Ferdinand	16.30 Ya de la musique 17.00 Radio Lyrica <i>Die Fledermaus</i> (Joh. Strauss) 18.00 Zeg het met muziek 18.35 Theater varia 19.00 Varia 19.30 Een plaat per week <i>Left hand Jack - door Eddy Wally</i> 19.35 Varia 20.00 Zondagavond festival 21.00 Vrolijkheid en goed humeur 21.30 Bd Cassa door Louis Somoy 22.00 Varia 22.30 Een orkest 22.45 Om de beurt 23.00 Dans tot middernacht met Eddy Barclay, Donna Hightower, Stanley en Colette Decal 23.55 Afsluiting 24.00 E I N D E
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HET BESTUUR VERONTSCHULDIGT ZICH VOOR EVENTUELE WIJZIGINGEN

It was two months later, 16 December 1962, that a severe north-westerly storm raged off the Belgian and Zeeuws-Vlaanderen coast and knocked the Uilenspiegel off her anchors. Nine crew members made every effort to save the ship but the force of the water prevailed and large waves of water also slammed into the ship's hold. Finally, the crew members were disembarked with the help of a lifeboat and the Uilenspiegel stranded on the beach near Cadzand. Already in the following days, many hundreds of people from both Flanders and Zeeland came to watch the stranded broadcasting ship.

And during that long period, the necessary small and big accidents happened. For instance, a tourist lost his balance and fell into the

space of the ship. An ambulance team was deployed to stabilise the injured person from the hold and transport him to a nearby hospital. It was eight years after the grounding that the said water board reached an agreement with the insurance companies and a sum of money was released to clear the ship from the beach.

Contractor Van Wijnen from the Zeeuws-Vlaanderen town of Groede was commissioned to demolish the ship. But complete demolition had become impossible partly because the Uilenspiegel had sunk deeper and deeper into the sandy bottom in the preceding years, with part of the ship's keel even lying heavily in a layer of clay.



Photo Theo Hoekstra 1963 Uilenspiegel

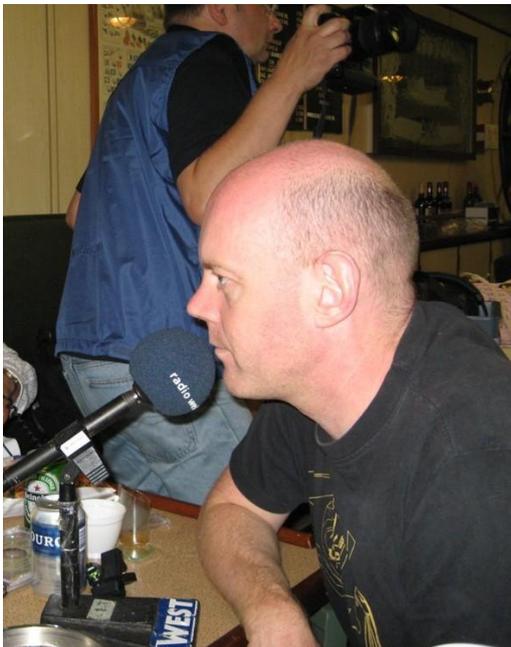
In 1973, as parts of the beach had been washed away, it appeared that the concrete debris had again become a visible problem. It was thought that it might be possible with the use of burners, among other things, to finally solve the problem. A few years later, a new beach head was constructed and the remains were encapsulated and

large nets stretched over them. This was to prevent tourists from walking over the demarcated area anyway. Wind and water then caused large amounts of sand to wash over the remains.

Finally, in 1993, the wreck became clearly visible again and it was decided to fence it off with wooden posts. And so the remains of the radio ship remained a visible reminder of Radio Antwerp and Georges de Caluwé for decades.

@ Hans Knot 2025

'Offshore Radio Replay' is our new offer with a selection of interesting offshore radio-related audio recordings. The material comes from the archives of Martin van der Ven and Hans Knot. About 2 programmes are added every week. Here are the most recent uploads: <https://offshoreradio.info/replay/>



Herbert Visser Photo: Hans Knot

Herbert Visser I have an awkward story about writing letters. While highly involved with landbased illegal broadcasting in the Netherlands in the mid 1980's (Delta Radio covering a significant

part of the eastern part of Netherlands from a flat in Nijmegen) I also listened a lot -of course- to Radio Caroline. At that time not really understanding the economics ("money needs to come in to ensure continuity") of (pirate) broadcasting, I wasn't happy when Radio Monique took over the 963 KHz in December 1984. Caroline's weaker daytime signal on 576 khz didn't come in really well near the German border where I lived and the moment darkness set in (about 4pm) a Spanish station became stronger than Radio Caroline. Thus I wrote an angry letter to Caroline's New York address expressing my disdain about Radio Monique and urging Caroline to retake the 963 khz and stop renting out airtime to Radio Monique. Fast forward 1,5 years later and I ended up on board the Ross Revenge working for Radio Monique. And I believe it was Kevin Turner who dug up that letter I sent at the end of 1984 and which apparently they'd kept on board, and showed it around. That did feel a bit awkward.'

Thanks Herbert for sharing this memories with my readership.

Since the early 1960s, I have collected all kinds of things about radio. Many thousands of photographs have been taken. Created complete files of various radio projects. 47 books have been written by me and hundreds of articles. First from 1971 t/m 1976 Pirate Radio News then 1976 to present RadioVisie, 1996 to present Radio Journal in Germany. And 1978 to 2014 Editor Freewave. Many years for Monitor Magazine and almost four decades for OEM in London. Also nearly 25 years writing for the online magazine Soundscapes at the University of Groningen, occasionally for Media Pages.nl, at www.hansknot.com until last year but also contributions to the joint site with Martin van der Ven <https://offshoreradio.info/> No, I will not stop writing. However, it was about time that part of my archive got a proper place and so Jaap and Jacqueline Schut came to Groningen from Hoek van Holland for the transfer to Museum RockArt. At a later date, the remaining part will also go there.



Update on our Flickr Photo pages. In 2008 there was a special program about offshore radio on the regional station Radio West from a ship in the harbour of Scheveningen. Hans Knot was there too:

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/offshoreradio/albums/72177720324802872>

In 2019 in Belgium the event Memories to 45 years Radio Mi Amigo. Now 14 photos from the collection of Alfons Monte are in our on line archive:

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/offshoreradio/albums/72177720324824929>

Yes, next to the report we have our SMC Page for memories and Gavin McCoy wrote in April: What an incredible experience to be on that ship and broadcasting "From somewhere in the Mediterranean".

I can remember flying to (Ben Gurion) Tel Aviv. Abie's assistant 'Schlomo' driving a little sign written van transported us to the office to get 'seaman's papers' then onwards to little fishing boat.

In a couple of hours we set off from Jaffa to the MV Peace. I came from London at exactly the same time as ex Radio Caroline presenter James Ross (Kelvin O'Shea). As we got closer to the Peace Ship, the antenna mast loomed larger and the sound of the generators grew louder. Suddenly, I was hauling myself up the rope ladder and onboard. I think I was on air the same day, and work onboard sometimes meant a double air shift.



Voice of Peace photo: Paul van Onzen

Unlike today, there were no mobile phones... no automation playout computers or screens, we played songs from real records, jingles on NAB cartridges, and sometimes reel to reel tapes and all this in a studio that was constantly moving as the sea swelled. This could range from absolute mirror flat calm, to a force 9 gale. Working onboard the Voice of Peace, was an adventure I'll never forget.'

In last issue there was that most interesting article about jingles by Norman Barrington. Something went wrong with the links so here are the correct ones:

But more importantly, you have entered incomplete links to my JAM 50th three part sampler plus they are not hot links.

Please replace what you have with

<https://www.mixcloud.com/norman-barrington/confirm-name-normans-salute-to-jons-50th-at-jam-sampler-part-1/>

<https://www.mixcloud.com/norman-barrington/normans-salute-to-jons-50th-at-jam-sampler-part-2/>

<https://www.mixcloud.com/norman-barrington/normans-salute-to-jons-50th-at-jam-sampler-part-3/>

Next it's e mail time from Leeuwarden in the Netherlands and Theo Bakker: 'Hello Hans, I have now read the report. Very interesting again that new facts from the past and present keep popping up. I found the Elfstedentocht story related to Radio Monique and Frits Koning very funny. I had never heard of it before. I don't know whether there are ever recordings of it somewhere. It would be nice to hear it.' So anyone who knows if that item was recorded please take contact with me versus HKnot@home.nl

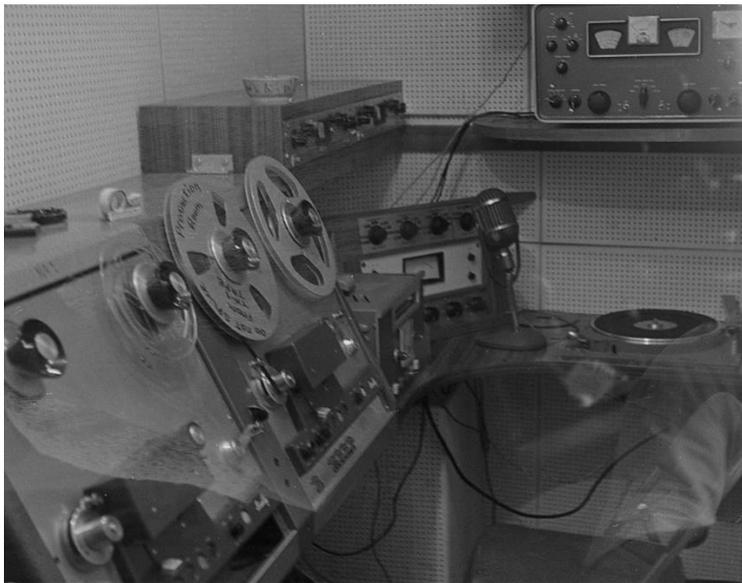
In a later this year published book by Ferry Eden more will be told about this special program featuring Frits Koning.

In our SMC Spot Facebook group, with more than 2000 members, news, questions, photos and more are shared on a daily basis. Halfway May I shared a lot of photos from the Joseph Verbeke collection regarding the Laissez Faire. Stations like Swinging Radio England,

Britain Radio, Radio Dolfijn, Radio 227 and Radio 355 were aired from this radio ship between May 1966 and August 1967.

Joseph Verbeke was a technician from Belgium, who worked for the organization. Many of the photos are in the category 'unique'. Of course there were reflections by readers like Rob Ashard: 'Seeing a whole load of pictures in this collection that I've never seen before. Is this a little extra studio somewhere? Or is it just in the corner of one of the two main studios? Two Scully tape machines on the left, and the turntable to my eyes looks like it has a 12" platter and all the other turntable pictures I've seen had 16" platters. Nerdy observation, admittedly.'

Ian Bigger answered with: 'The layout suggests a production studio but I'm only guessing.' At one point I thought to ask a former Radio 355 deejay Martin Kayne (Andy Cadier) what we see on the photo.



Andy Cadier answered with: 'It was a newsroom and production studio located on the main deck level and not with the other studios in the ships hold. I was interviewed for the deejay job at Radio 355 by Tony Windsor in this very studio. Had I failed it I would have been back on the waiting tender. I had previously sent them a home recorded audition tape including a brief excerpt from one of my shows on fort based Radio Essex.'

Well another mystery solved and let's go back to Rob Ashard, who started listening to offshore radio in the seventies. 'Rob

An Anorak Was Born!

By the age of 11 in 1971 I was connecting loudspeakers to a couple of old valve radios that I had in my bedroom. Dad had taught me a lot, and went on to teach me to solder, along with basic battery and bulb theory. I had one of these radios on a table by my bed and had discovered RNI, -Radio Northsea International, and loved it. Not because it was on a ship, I'm not even convinced that I knew it was, but just because of the music it played, which I guess I couldn't find anywhere else. I remember that me and my best mate Pete (my oldest friend) loved Man Of Action, RNI's theme tune.

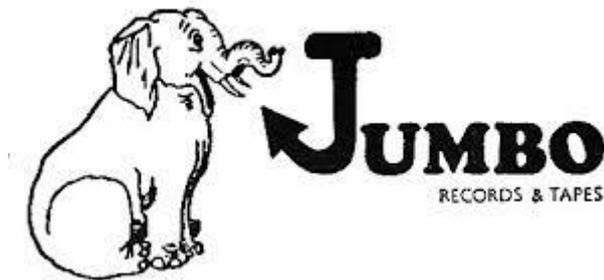
One night I went to bed I carried on listening to RNI when I shouldn't have been. Next thing I know it's been bombed and is on fire. I'm listening to the Mayday broadcast live!

This presented me with somewhat of a quandary. Do I tell dad that I'm hearing this even though I should have turned the radio off and be asleep, or do I go downstairs and tell him, as they're asking listeners to phone the Coastguard. Being an essentially honest chap I chose the latter. Dad came up to listen. He came to the (correct) decision that the world and his wife would be phoning the coastguard and that he needn't bother. I now can't remember if I was allowed to listen for a bit longer, or turned the radio off and went to sleep.

What I do remember was at 9pm the following evening he came up to my bedroom and said to come downstairs as there was film footage of the MEBO II on fire which I was fascinated to watch. Pretty decent of him!

Fast forward to 75/76. Not sure which. I left school in 1976 and we'd all listened to Caroline at school and then everyone at College in Ipswich did too. Again, not because it was on a ship and we were

Anoraks, but because we all loved the music. I now realise it formed my musical tastes.



Then I noticed this advert for a radio documentary double album from Jumbo Records and Tapes called 10 Years Of Offshore Radio. Within that ad was a sequence from that RNI Mayday broadcast with Alan West. I had to have it to hear it again so I got my girlfriend at the time, Allyson, to buy it for my birthday. I still have it in the brown cardboard envelope that it arrived in.

Hearing that broadcast again sent tingles up my spine, but what really blew my mind was the Gatefold sleeve covered in pictures of 60's pirate ships and forts that I'd been totally unaware of, along with a few others from the 70's.

The fort stations Radio 390 and City fascinated me, and I loved the pictures of Big L's fabulous studio on the Galaxy, which was fantastically ergonomic, way ahead of its time, and must have been a money-no-object project, I now realise. As I poured over all these pictures and recordings, an Offshore Pirate Anorak was born.

And still going strong 50 years later! Heavily involved in Caroline now looking after some of the studio equipment and doing a regular Monday night show, 7-9pm, and a highlight for me was being on the Ross Revenge with the Mi Amigo DJ's last year. If you'd told that 16 year old listener that this would happen in 50 years' time. That was just amazing.

Thanks Rob and to you the reader tell us too how and when you became an anorak. Mail me at HKnot@home.nl

A lot of memories are changed with the members of the SMC FB group and on May 21st Brian McKenzie and Norman Barrington talked about special sandwiches for newcomers on the Mi Amigo and Mebo II in 1973. Let's see what Norman wrote: 'the story of Andy Archer, and the Sambal sandwich: For the edification of the uninitiated into the delights of this Dutch condiment: Sambal Oelek. A ridiculously hot pepper paste, the tiniest amount to be used by the Dutch to enhance saté sauce, a peanut sauce for on pork skewers.

Andy Archer would put a thick layer in a sandwich, and give it to unsuspecting new recruits, saying it was a traditional Dutch pirate radio delicacy. A very red face would ensue, lips would go numb, sweat would pour, eyes and nose would stream, and smoke would emanate from all orifices. The rush to drink water only doubled the inferno. Everyone else in the mess room would be in paroxysms of hysterical hilarity. The victims who did not leave on the next tender, generally were allowed to join the team.

My post is not sponsored.'



Unbelievable but reality. There is a Chinese Indian wholesaler that could be a paradise for Andy Archer. In Groningen bigger than a football field with at least 60 different kinds of Sambal in one of the avenues of shelving. Especially the one from Suriname had done well on MEBO II and Mi Amigo.



Not a thumb sucker but a failure, Radio Condor

I want to take you back to 1973 when there were all kinds of plans to set up new radio stations from the sea, two of which could actually be heard on medium wave. First Radio Atlantis and later Radio Mi Amigo, which in 1973 only broadcast test programmes before officially launching on January 1st 1974. A reconstruction of a radio project that failed completely, namely Radio Condor.

But there were also a number of projects that were not realised, including that of Steph Willemse from Haarlem, who thought - together with others - that he could start an idealistic radio station from international waters. One of the goals was to purchase a ship, so he visited all kinds of ports to see which ships were for sale or for rent. Decades ago, Steph Willemse was keen to talk at length about the purpose of his radio station: 'Various people I spoke to were very enthusiastic about what Capital Radio had achieved and believed that such a station could undoubtedly be successful. I then came to understand that there were certain needs in that direction,

and we later took those needs into account when developing our programming.'

When it came to purchasing a ship, Steph Willemse, who passed away in July 2004, met the right man at the right time and in the right place: "Well, when I was looking for a suitable ship, I came across the Haarlem salvager, Gerrit Elfrich, who did an excellent job and was very committed to our project. He ensured me that we could purchase the MV Emma for a bargain price. Once the ship was in IJmuiden, he unfortunately had to withdraw because he was commissioned to salvage a huge ship from China. The salvage of the ship, the Wang Chung, was unfortunately a huge failure, and I would have preferred him to have been involved in our project for longer."

A lot of work had to be done because the ship, which dated from 1957, had been used for fishing for many years and had been owned by Rederij Ouwehand. Willemse: "The ship we bought looked terrible; it was like a worn-out tub where vagrants had found shelter in recent months. It was incredibly dirty and there were no windows left. Over a period of nine months, ten of us worked on it to make it somewhat live able and, above all, usable. Once the ship was reasonably clean, we installed some electrical wiring. The old wiring had all been cut through and, on top of that, the sanitary facilities were missing. Then it was time to equip it as a broadcasting ship. Unlike other offshore radio projects, we didn't have half a million guilders at our disposal, so we had to make do with very little money. At one point, we bought the transmitters from the King David (Capital Radio), which was then moored in Heerwaarden. These were both the 10 and 1 kW transmitters. The 10 kW transmitter was a half-empty, looted cabinet, which we decided to use only as a linear stage.



1973-08-03 - Radio Condor - Steph Willemse - Noord-Hollands Archief, collectie Fotopersbureau De Boer - NL-HlmNHA_1478_12118K00_08



Photo Rob Olthof

At the time, there were many stories about whether or not Radio Condor had been on the air. The late Rob Olthof was on board the Emma, renamed Condor, when the transmitter was switched on and immediately blew up with a big "boom". Even the most avid radio enthusiasts never received test broadcasts from Radio Condor, but Willemse insisted that they had been on the air: "We didn't even need 1 kW because with the 500-watt transmitter we used with Condor, we even received reception reports from England and Scandinavia. All in all, we were on the air for a few weeks, but with a lot of bad luck, because everything went wrong. The first time we were outside, we got the transmitter working after about ten days.'

Was Willemse a 'dreamer' after all? On August 9th 1973, the organisation announced that it also wanted to broadcast via FM on 98 MHz in the future. Initially, they planned to make a T-antenna, as used by Radio Veronica, and later they came up with the idea of building a transmission mast, like the one on the MV Mi Amigo. It was also announced that Willemse was not only a television dealer, but had also played in the Oscar Benton Group in the 1960s and had been a radio technician on board Capital Radio. The fact that not all the information provided by Willemse was correct is proven by "Nederpop", an encyclopaedia listing all the line-ups of Dutch pop groups between 1960 and 1985. Step Willemse is not listed among the names of the members of the Oscar Benton group. Pessimists had already predicted that a ship without an engine and equipped with a Rhine anchor, as was the case with the "Condor", would not be able to survive long on the North Sea. They were proven right, because on August 11th 1973, disaster struck. During a strong wind, the ship broke loose from its anchor, which was simple for the North Sea, and had to be towed into the port of IJmuiden. The boat had started to scrape and after the technicians had disabled the transmission equipment, it was decided to bring the Condor in. The strange thing about the situation that followed was that the ship had been towed in and moored in the Buiten Spuitkanaal without informing the National Water Police or the Velsen Municipal Police of the reason for the mooring.



Ron de Loos in the studio Radio Condor. Photo: Rob Olthof

Willemse continued to exaggerate: 'When we weighed anchor, we drifted around the North Sea for about five days and then sailed the Condor to the port of IJmuiden, while leaving the transmitter on. We even received reception reports from that broadcast.' Steph also had a spokeswoman, Fietje van Donselaar, with whom he was living at the time.



1973-07-30 - Fietje van Donselaar - Noord-Hollands Archief,
collectie Fotopersbureau De Boer - NL-
HlmNHA_1478_12095K00_24

She stated: "On the ship, they saw the IJmuiden pier getting closer and at one point Mr. Willemse, who was on board at the time, asked for help. Later, he went to IJmuiden with the tender to fetch a tugboat. Two tugboats later towed us to the harbour. Then we were caught between two fires, because the harbour authorities understandably wanted us to leave quickly. On the other hand, we didn't have the money to pay for a new anchor. Afterwards, we borrowed money to buy one, which left us with a new debt of f1500."

Decades later, it seems that Willemse had a vivid imagination. Consider the following: "We later discovered through police investigations that the anchor had been sabotaged. The anchor chain had been cut from the outside, which would be attempted again later. When we entered the port of IJmuiden, we threw certain parts into the water so that they would not fall into the hands of the PTT. Certain items were also "stored" with an employee. She thought she had to lend them to acquaintances, who also thought they could start something. When they heard from us that the items had to be returned, they brought them back. However, the items had been expertly converted into "unusable" products.

He did not want to discuss the police investigation into the broken anchor any further. However, he did want to say something about the approach by another organisation: "After we had dropped anchor, certain people asked us to move a little further away. At first, we didn't understand why, and a few days later we were even asked to turn a blind eye if certain ships were to anchor in the vicinity of our Condor. We were even offered a lot of money for this. Later, it turned out to be a supply route for hashish. Since we did not comply with the various requests to anchor elsewhere, I think they attacked us violently. Of course, it would have been easier at that moment to take the money and hire a tugboat to tow the Condor elsewhere, but

none of us knew that sabotage was going to take place and why exactly it was happening."



1973-09-25 - Radio Condor - Noord-Hollands Archief, collectie Fotopersbureau De Boer - NL-HlmNHA_1478_12285K00_01

When, in 1973, more and more stories about the new offshore radio project appeared in various newspapers, all kinds of requests were received from various groups wishing to rent airtime. For example, The United Family, the Association for Voluntary Euthanasia and the Association of Well-Wishing Motorists responded. Steph: "We were going to play music non-stop as much as possible, without commercials, which these organisations liked for spreading their message. However, we did not yet have prices for renting airtime, as we first wanted to wait and see how any test broadcasts would go. Unfortunately, the project never really got off the ground. I can say that Fiet van Donselaar put in a lot of work during that period, for which I am still very grateful to her."

After the Condor was towed into port on August 11th 1973, things remained quiet for some time. One of the reasons for this was the poor financial situation within the organisation. There were also some organisational issues. It was not until September 13th 1973 that

another article appeared in the Haarlems Dagblad. 'The radio ship Condor will be towed out of the port of IJmuiden to be taken to a scrapyard. Since the day the ship broke anchor, problems have continued to pile up for the aspiring radio pirate. First of all, being towed back from sea was a huge financial setback. Then the shipping inspectorate banned the owner from sailing the former trawler again because the ship's papers were not in order. The port authorities of IJmuiden made it very clear that the ship could no longer remain in the Buiten Spuitkanaal. According to Willemse, it would take more than a year to obtain the necessary ship's papers through a notary: 'We really can't wait that long. As a result, we are forced to sell the ship to a scrap dealer.'



Photo: Rob Olthof

A few weeks later, the owner declared that he had a contract with a Belgian-Panamanian company, which would initially tow the ship to Zeebrugge and then to Bilbao in Spain. He did say that attempts would be made to find another solution to the sale, but that for the time being, the sale would have to go ahead. A towing contract to a scrapyard was the only way to get the ship out to sea. The first time the Condor was towed out without permission, an official report was drawn up and handed over to Willemse by a representative of the Public Prosecutor's Office in Haarlem.

And what did Steph say? "I really don't understand any of this and see no reason to be charged. First of all, the Condor did not sail out under its own power, but was towed there. You don't even need to have a captain's licence because in such cases there is no requirement for a captain to be on board a ship. So, in fact, I was a kind of "runner" on the Condor when the ship was towed out."

Everyone in the free radio world had already given up hope of another offshore radio station when, on the 25th of September 1973, the Condor suddenly dropped anchor again off Zandvoort. The ship was towed there, and a demolition order with the port of Dordrecht as its destination was shown to the port authorities beforehand. This was sufficient for the authorities to grant the tugboat, towing the Condor, permission to leave the port of IJmuiden. Once offshore, Willemse abandoned the demolition contract. On the high seas, he bought back his barge and dropped a new, heavier anchor at the spot where the Condor had previously been anchored.

Once again, he declared that the station would start test broadcasts via the 270 metres within ten days. The costs of the tugboat, the Pirahna Famagusta, were paid by the owner of a chain of bars and restaurants in Haarlem. Willemse himself had financed the anchor, which he claimed could withstand wind force 12, and said he was not afraid of getting into trouble with the authorities, as the cancellation of the demolition contract had been done completely legally. He also announced once again that there was an FM transmitter on board at the time, but that it was incomplete, otherwise customs would never have let the ship leave. They could have left the port illegally, but despite five offers, he had no interest in doing so.

Even before a single signal had been transmitted, although they would always deny this, the end had come for Radio Condor. Lack of funds and a lot of bad luck put an end to the plans. The ship was

later sold to Adriaan van Landschoot, who gave his Radio Atlantis a new start.



Hans Knot (August 2016, newly edited June 2025), with a lot of thanks to the late Rob Olthof and Martin van der Ven.

For this story, including soundbites follow this link:

<https://offshoreradio.info/radio-condor-en/>

Graham Gill, born in 1936 in Melbourne, Australia, worked during the 1960s for offshore stations such as Britain Radio and Radio England, broadcasting from the ship *Laissez Faire*. In the 1970s, Graham was on air with Radio Northsea International (RNI) and Radio Caroline. After 1974, he joined Radio Netherlands. Hans Knot collaborated with Graham on a book about his life and career in radio. In addition, Hans regularly published documents that were not included in the

book. Illustration in the story are from Martin van der Ven and Hans Knot Archives.

In the year 2010, I have worked very closely with Graham Gill to produce a book about his life and radio career. So let's return to the memoirs that I wrote - in parallel during the production of the book - in numerous issues of the Hans Knot International Radio Report. Graham's book has been enriched with a wealth of photos, no less than 40 of which have never been published before. The book can be downloaded as a gift - 15 years after publication - at the end of this article. Photo 2006 Graham Gill @ Martin van der Ven 2006

Read more <https://offshoreradio.info/graham-gill/>

Many people reflected on above message, which appeared of the first day of summer in several fb groups. Let's see the message I got from Hans Borghols in Amsterdam: 'I shared Hans Knot's story and added my photos from the Radio Noordzee days in the early 1970s. I attended DJ parties in Amsterdam, where Graham Gill, Andy Archer and Brian Mackenzie were regular guests. Graham and Andy made a guest appearance at my place in the Jordaan district, with a huge audience. The payment, which was consumed immediately, was a crate of Guinness beer and two bottles of Jägermeister. Guinness was not easy to find in liquor stores in Mokum at the time.'

Hans Borghols visited in 1974 the MEBO II and here are some of the pictures he made:



Roger Kent, Graham Gill and Hans Borghols Graham Gill



Hans Borghols in the RNI studio on board the MEBO II 1974

At the end of this summer edition of the International Radio Report we go to Andy Green: 'Hi Hans. I worked on the VOP back in 1981 and with the present political situation I wondered would Abie Nathan be mentioned at all since he was an Iranian Jew. I found this interesting article about him that may be of interest.

The diplomacy of spectacle: Abie Nathan and the limits of Israeli peace activism, 1966-1993:

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/14725886.2021.1929394#abstract>

Well till the next issue I wish you all the very best. Let your memories come in as well as photos and questions versus e mail:

HKnot@home.nl