

The History of Scandinavian Weekend Radio (SWR)



“Nothing happens unless first a dream”.

(Carl Sandburg)

This is the brief history of the founding of an amateur commercial radio station Scandinavian Weekend Radio (SWR). Starting with the original concept idea of the station to the success of making the first broadcast. Plus reality of the ongoing running of a radio station between the years 2000 to 2012. The events recorded here are an attempt to record the history and development of the station.

By

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The idea and birth of Scandinavian Weekend Radio (SWR) was the brain child of a group of 9 radio hobbyists which between them had many years' experience in DXlistening, ham radio, and free radio, electrician and scanner radio. Who decided to set a challenge of forming an association with the objective to build and run a new short wave radio station? The Association behind Scandinavian Weekend Radio (SWR) is “Vaihtoheitoisen radiotoiminnan tukiyhdistys ry” or in English the "Association of supporting alternative broadcasting” Some of the original founder members are still actively involved with the development of the radio station and still continue to broadcast from the station on a regular basis.

The association was founded in December 1999 and in only ten months the founding group members planned and built the radio station which became known as “Scandinavian Weekend Radio” and is Scandinavia's first private shortwave station. In that time they raised funds, filled out the licence forms, built up the transmitter devices and the studio complex. The location for the station was an old disused chicken farm at Liedempohja on route 66 just north of Virrat in Western Finland (N62°23' E 23°37'). SWR is Scandinavia's first private purpose built shortwave radio station. Pictures of the original building work can be found in the photo gallery for the year 2000 on the main SWR website.

The original founding members of SWR where Dj Tex Willer, Dj Haka, Dj Frank, Dj Radiojack, Dj Turo, Dj Laso, Tech Esa, Janitor Pasi, Webmaster V-V (Ville-Veikko), a new member Dj Madman joined the group at the end of 2000.

2000

The year 2000 proved to be a momentous year for everybody involved with SWR apart from the building work for the studio and sleeping accommodation which was necessary as the members come from various parts of Finland. There was the main problem of building a transmitter and getting it through the testing and approval with the Finnish Authorities. The design and building of the transmitter was carried out by Esa Saunamaki. Approval was granted in June 2000 and with the main antenna mast now in place everything was ready for the first transmission which would take place in July 2000. In July SWR took to the airwaves for its first ever show which hosted by DJ Tex Willer on the 25m band using by 50 watts of power and the station continued to broadcast on the first Saturday of the month for the rest of the year.

The schedule for the first historic transmission is listed below:-

*Schedules: Timetable for the 1st transmission: 01.07.2000
(SKA-Finnish Summer Time)*

00 Nyt se alkaa - It starts now, Tex Willer

01 Frank & Jack Show

- 02 *Radio related songs by V-V*
- 03 *HÄKÄShow TechoHour by Dj Häkä*
- 04 *Lasol Show by Dj Lasol*
- 05 *Frank & Jack Show*
- 06 *Continental Night Shift by RadioJack*
- 07 *History Of Finnish Radio part 1 by Tex Willer*
- 08 *Lasol Show by Dj Lasol*
- 09 *Demotorio by Dj Frank*
- 10 *Virrat tänään - Virrat Today by Dj Häkä*
- 11 *Soundcheck & Hottentotti by Frank*
- 12 *Rockin'Rhythm Show by Tex Willer*
- 13 *Hevitunti by Dj V-V*
- 14 *Hottentotti by Dj Frank*
- 15 ?
- 16 *HÄKÄShow VinylMania by Dj Häkä*
- 17 *Lasol Show by Dj Lasol*
- 18 *Lasol & Turo Show*
- 19 *History Of Finnish Radio part 2 by Tex Willer*
- 20 *Turo Show & Ekoratio*
- 21 *HÄKÄShow SoulTrain by Dj Häkä*
- 22 *Radio Top 20 by Tex Willer & Dj Kirsi*
- 23 *Radio Top 20 by Tex Willer & Dj Kirsi*

2001

The arrival of 2001 saw more technical changes as in June of that year the station went live on the 48m waveband for the first time and powered by 100watts. This meant that the station was now broadcasting on both the 25m & 48m wave bands simultaneously plus June was the 1st birthday of SWR. In August of this year and at its annual conference the Finnish DX Association awarded SWR a Diploma as station of the year in recognition of the achievements of the station and its contribution to the short wave radio community. Also in this year SWR received and verified its first QSL reception report from the USA. Work on the buildings continued with the renovation of the old sauna a must in Finland. DJ Haka introduced a current affairs programme called Virrat today which meant that the station was not only playing music. The year ended with a Christmas Special broadcast on Christmas Day yet another first for SWR.

2002

The new year of 2002 opened quietly but this was not to be the case for long as there is always something going on when the SWR crew around. The crew engaged in some tree felling around the studio at which a poor old tractor got hit fortunately not the antenna masts. The station also staged a live music jam and broadcast it from the front terrace of the station "SWRFest" featured Humantush" and some members of the station crew. The station also took part in August in an EDXC Special broadcast in co-operation with FDXA at which Esa Saunamaki and DJ TrickyTrev gave a presentation on SWR. By far the most spectacular event of the year was in August when DJ Miki dropped in by parachute to host his show and the 48m transmitter celebrated its first birthday in June. The year ended with the traditional Christmas Day broadcast with Father Christmas in attendance at the studio and the introduction of yet another first for SWR Wine and Cheese tasting on air!

2003

2003 proved to be yet another busy year for SWR with lots going on in and around the station. In April Goestea and TrickyTrev manned an SWR stand at the local trade fair held in the sports hall in Virrat. In June the height of the 48m antenna was adjusted to give wider transmission coverage and in August the antenna had a close call as lighting stuck tree very near the antenna. The summer season saw the SWR open doors or "SWRfest" with live music from a local group "Relention" who are still going strong and a group called Mental Hospital all of which was broadcast live. After the August show the old 25m antenna was taken down as it was in need of some repairs. Once again the year ended on a very high note with the Christmas Day transmission and the by now traditional wine and cheese tasting. This brought to an end another successful year for SWR judging by the number of QSL, SMS messages and phone calls received by the station from all over Europe. By the end of the year the 25m transmitter had been increased to 100 watts as the station increased its broadcasting range

2004

The year 2004 would prove to be yet another busy year for the SWR crew as two major projects would be undertaken in the course of the year. Firstly a new transmitter room would be built in one of the out

buildings and secondly the launch of a medium wave transmitter on 1602 kHz. However, before this in February SWR transmitted some live ambient music by the artist "Sarana" once again this was a first for SWR. Still in the spring with snow still on the ground Radio Jack did an outside broadcast from the front of the main building and at the same time the height for 48m antenna was increase again. With snow still on the ground the station received a group of visitors from Jyvaskyla on a day trip to SWR. In May SWR suffered a power failure which took them of air for 20 minutes before an emergency generator restored normal service. RadioJack and Pasi continued work on the new transmitter room throughout the summer. The old 25m antenna was replaced with a new 3 element one and on the 30th October SWR went live with is new transmitter on the MW using 1602kHz powered by 100 watts. This produced another first as this now meant that SWR was now transmitting on three different frequencies simultaneously yet another in the long line of firsts for the SWR crew.

2005

As SWR entered 2005 the New Year brought some new faces to the station, firstly radio mad DJ Janne he was followed by Dj's Jiri & Jari who brought a different type of music to SWR. Also later the work continued and was completed on the new transmitter shed and all the transmitters where moved out of the main studio building into their new location. Work carried on thought out the summer on laying the coax cable for the MW antenna and building the antenna base. The laying of the coaxial cable involved running the cable from the transmitter shed underground for about 250mts to a nearby field where the MW antenna would be located. Perhaps the most ambitious project by SWR was the hosting for the first time of the FDXA's annual conference. It takes place in August and was held in the local town of Virrat and gave some members their first chance to visit the SWR radio complex. At the conference Esa Sauamaki received an award and the members where entertained on the Saturday evening by TrickTrev doing a one man show on "Brit humour" The event appeared to have been well received by the members and more people attended than originally forecast. In the autumn the new MW mast arrived at the station and was just awaiting completion of the mounting base which had been delayed due the amount of rain on the location site. The rest of the year passed along without any other major events taking place.

2006

The new year of 2006 brought even more changes for SWR starting in February when a large group of international students paid a visit to SWR. Around about the same time a TV crew for the local cable channel came and did a report on SWR. April saw some more new faces in the shape of two lady DJ's Waquera & Vikki who took to the airways doing their own programme. (Not an April fool) Also a very large group infact a big bus load of International Students who were on a conference locally in Virrat paid the station a visit; it would appear that SWR in now on the tourist map. The final work was completed on the new MW antenna base over the summer and on 23.09.06 under clear blues skies and a sunny day the new 40m high MW mast was lifted into place. (See SWR photo gallery 2006/3) This was now the completion of the most ambitious project carried out by SWR in its short history. October saw more new faces at the Station when the "Brits" DJ Martin & Luke took to the air for a couple of hours of music and British humour. In December the wine tasting jury consisting of DJ's Esa Miki, Peeveli and Penta-setä (Uncle Ben) reappeared to give it verdict once again and round off another very successful year for everybody associated with SWR.

2007

The year 2007 started out quietly in January & February with Esa & DJ Miki carrying some much needed repairs to our some of our antenna cables and making a new half wave gage dipole aerial was completed in the time for the broadcast. The March broadcast started out with DJ Peeveli & Miki playing a board game live on air. This proved to be a very busy broadcast session as the station was invaded by the "Brits" as Dj TrickyTev was again joined by Martin & Luke but time they were joined by Laruel making a total of four Brits in the studio at once which once again produced hours of British humor. In March more improvements were made to the technical side of the studio by the fitting of new microphones. In June Radio Jack created another SWR first by hosting stag party live on air. The start of the summer season saw us move to our OB venue with DJ's Miki & Peeveli & Penta-Seta broadcasting from the station grill area. The summer also saw the arrival of a motor bike club at the station and Peeveli been tattooed live on air and yet another live wine & cheese tasting. Once again SWR provided a live studio for the summer FDXA meeting which was held in Ylojarv and. Also the Koskenoran radio celebrated their 10th anniversary in the SWR studios over the weekend. October provided SWR with its biggest news story as a local sports hall was set ablaze and SWR where the first news outlet to report this incident live. The incident was covered by Dj's TrickyTrev & Hakka and the photos are in the gallery. A new broadband connection to the SWR studios was completed and this lets us do programming in remote studios. First user was Madman near Polar Circle, Rovaniemi. Also we increased the power of our 25mts & 1602 kHz transmitters from 100-400 watts. The rest of the year passed quietly with yet more wine & cheese tasting on air in what had proved to be another exciting and momentous year at SWR.

2008

As 2008 arrived nobody at SWR was sure what the New Year would bring after the last momentous year. It started at a gentle pace then exploded in March when we had over 40 visiting International students from 12 different countries who were attending a local conference visit the station all at the same time. In May we had two quest presenters on air. Bart & Sander who were Dutch students studying at the local college in Virrat. Also as the summer approached the whole studio area was cleaned up and our last analogue TV set came to a fiery end & our OS broadcast moved into the grill area where Pasi could be seen grilling lots of nice things This summer all so saw us doing a Midnight sun broadcast to coincide the Midsummer celebrations held in Midsummer town of Virrat. The station also provided the studio for the EDXL 2008 conference which was held in the Hotel Silvero, Vassa and was run by DJ's Hakka & Madman. DJ TrickyTrev gave a presentation in English on SWR and he also provided some standup comedy on a Brit living and working in Finland. Towards the end of the year DJ Mkki seemed to catch some bug called Geocaching from which he seems to have recovered The year ended with our last couple of broadcasts and we sat down to plan for the next year 2009.

2009

The year 2009 brought us some technical challenges in particular damage to our 1602 KHz antenna which lost its top section and having a live acoustic session in the studio. The live acoustic was by

Dimitrios a visiting Greek student who gave us an unplugged version of his music. On the same day we had two more Dutch students Erik, Johan who were on air with DJ TrickyTrev. All three of which we managed to get to model our SWR tee-shirts. In March SWR was subject of a program presented by YLE Tampere Radio at breakfast show 6.3.2009. Where they interviewed our technician Esa and DJ Peeveli about the history of SWR. Once again the Mid night summer radio took place and was supported in the studio by our good friend from Koskenoran Radio and we also celebrated our 9th birthday with the big one coming next year. We were honored once again to provide the live studio for the Summer FDXA meeting which this year was held in Turku and representing SWR Where DJ's Hakka.; Madman & Penta-seta. This year for a change two young DJ's used our live studio to do their own shows live from the conference center. On a sad note Dj Haka also did a tribute show to the late Michael Jackson. The year ended with SWR introducing the "Kitchen" show was our attempt to do a live cookery show in the studio kitchen yet another first for SWR. In break with our normal practice this year we decided not to do a Christmas broadcast this decision was to have far reaching consequences for us in 2010.

2010

The year 2010 started off very badly firstly once again our medium wave antenna was damaged but worse was to come as when arriving to fix it we found the main studio building had suffered from a burst water pipe which had flooded the whole building. The result of this damage meant we had to clear the studio building of everything so that repairs could be carried out and this meant that we were off air till April.(See the gallery) The April broadcast went ahead in our new studio complex although not everything was completed we just wanted to be back on air. On the 3rd June we threw open the station doors to celebrate our 10th Birthday which was well attended by over 30 visitors on a beautiful sunny day. Despite a major setback we had made it to 10years and still going strong (who wants to live forever). Having still some problems technically and with studio it was decided that November would be the last broadcast of the year to allow time to fix these problems.

2011

The new year of 2011 would bring many changes to SWR with a host of new people making their radio debuts. Also due to maintenance requirements a shortened broadcasting schedule. The spring also saw some students from the PIRKO College in Virrat joining us on air for the day. In June we did a two day Midsummer broadcast with various visiting DJ's taking part. July saw DJ Janne testing some new outside broadcast equipment from the newly renovated grill area & TrickyTrev was having a funny hat on air at the same time & Haka bumped into a load of German tourists visiting the local area. August saw the annual SDXL-FDXA conference & broadcast this year from Korpilahti. September saw the launch our new Facebook pages under the watchful eye of DJ TrickyTrev who hoped to provide listeners with a more interactive way of contacting our listeners. The October broadcast was the last one of the year due to urgent maintenance requirements, however we had the pleasure of welcoming some new presenters from the TAMK the local college the students taking part where Lyydia , Paulina, and Hendrik who would later became part of our dream team.

2012

The year 2012 may have proved to be the most significant year for a few days due to the large amount of new happens at the station. Firstly over the Christmas break & ready for our January broadcast the station had taken delivery of & installed a hot tub much to the delight of DJ Miki. February saw our Dream Team increase from 3 to 5 with the arrival of Lotta & Aapo. In March we installed a new mixing console in the main studio. The April broadcast saw a lot of work on our 25mts mast in preparation of installing a new FM mast. In the May broadcast the Dream Team held the fort on air while we installed the FM mast & made our first FM transmission on 104.20 MHz. The June broadcast once covered a lot of engineering work as we replace the 2 element FM & upgraded it to a 4 elements giving increased coverage around Virrat. In November all the decking around the hot tub was completed & a team of new presenters four in total broadcast for the first time. The team of Tiia, Evelina, Aarne & Joni, were joined for the December broadcast by Essi, Sini & Eeva making 8 in total. Also at the same time a film crew arrived to record a program for our local cable TV channel which will be shown on the 13 March 2013.

2013

This year started with our first broadcast taking place in February the reason for no January transmission was due to a large amount of engineering work carried out in the shutdown period. Our first transmission of the year saw us launch our new FM transmitter on 94.9 MHz packing a mighty 1Kw ERP and covering the whole of the VIRRAT area. The honor of making the first FM broadcast on the new frequency went to TrickyTrev & the station also received a donation of 50 Cd's covering various styles of music. We also had a studio visit from three Hungarian students Hajnalka, Gabriella & Petra who were studying in Virrat. In March we increased the power on our FM transmitter and this in turn increased our broadcasting area to 40-50 Kms from the studio. On the same broadcast Esa also introduced his new Golden Microphone & the news item on SWR was aired on 12 March. In April we published some pictures taken from the top of our 25Mts mast & in May due to some technical difficulties we had stop transmitting four hours earlier than scheduled. June saw us with our regular & Midsummer transmissions. In July as part of our birthday celebrations we left the studio and made a three hour outside broadcast from the Rantaterassi in Virrat. Unfortunately our August broadcast was cancelled due to lack of paper work arriving from Helsinki. However we bounced back in September with a live broadcast on a boat from one of the local lakes. This broadcast was a delayed celebration of Radio Caroline. October saw us return to the studio where a retro theme was taking in place with both DJ's Miki & Radio Jack playing 33 & 45s. Some 78s played also. In November we celebrated 50 years of Finnish radio by using a newly built Tube amplifier & December saw Eesi & Tiia return with information about the local TV cable channel plus Milja making radio debut & fulfilling one of her dreams.

Finally

In compiling the history and story of this radio station I have not mentioned all of the staff of SWR if your name hasn't been mentioned I apologize no slight was intended. For the moment the story is based on the photographs' which are on the website and covers the years 2000/13. The station currently has 13 members and four supporting members plus several program assistants all of whom have made this station the great success that it is today. This success can be seen by the number of QSL in the studio by our good friend from requests received by the station from all around the world. But also by the amount phone calls and SMS messages received by the station mainly from Europe. To

some people the risk was too much to contemplate running a station where the DJ's are free to do what they want and not restricted by record company play lists, the other material or politics. These could be the things that has made the station so successful and very entertaining listening.

The radio website can be found at www.swradio.net

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