

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 2006. 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 DX-listening, 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 “Vaihtoehdoisen 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 Liedenpohja on route 66 just north of Virrat in Western Finland (N 62°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, Dr 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 Goesta 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 increase to 100 watts as the station increased its broadcasting range.

2004

The year 2004 would prove to yet another busy year for the SWR crew as two major projects would be under taken 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 there own programme. (Not an April fool) Also a very large group in fact a big bus load of International Students who where 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 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.

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 apologise no slight was intended. For the moment the story is based on the photographs' which are on the website and covers the years 2000/6. The station currently has 13 members and four supporting members plus several programme 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 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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