

Channels

Radio Caroline offers two distinct channels, receivable via our two websites (addresses on back page) or smartphone apps. Our main channel may also be heard on 648 kHz AM and some DAB radios in certain areas of the UK. See our main website for DAB coverage.



Our main channel plays music from all of the decades in which the station has broadcast.



Caroline Flashback, plays music from the 60s and the 70s when the station broadcast from the high seas.



Radio Caroline is a not-for-profit organisation whose main running costs come from Support Group subscriptions and donations. You can join the Support Group or make a donation via our main website.

How to receive us

On 648kHz AM

- If you live within the reception area of our AM (medium wave) transmitter, primarily Suffolk and North Essex, then you can tune in as you may have done back in the day when the station was live from the North sea.



Listen online

- The internet is everywhere and internet radio is now a serious player. Radio Caroline can be heard at the internet's furthest reach.
- Probably the easiest way to listen is via Radio Player, an industry wide pop-up player accessed from the "Listen" button on our website.
- Listen to Caroline on any iPhone, iPod Touch, iPad or Android device with the Caroline App – just £1.99 from Apple's iTunes App Store. See our website for the Android version.
- Many people are purchasing stand-alone 'Wi-fi' radios that plug directly into a broadband wall socket without the need for a computer.



radio Caroline

The world's most famous offshore radio station.
On 648kHz AM, online and on your mobile



See the Streams Guide pages of our websites for more information on how to listen on-line
www.radiocaroline.co.uk
www.carolineflashback.co.uk

Radio Caroline's Remarkable Story

In the early Sixties, Britain was climbing out of post war depression and the baby boomers born in the late forties were now teenagers with money in their pockets, seeking new lifestyles, fashion and music. The BBC, in sole control of radio broadcasting, was providing programmes still linked to the Music Hall era, together with crooners and Big Bands, comedies, lectures and gardening tips. They would only use established entertainers and saw no need to reflect new music trends.

Young Irishman Ronan O'Rahilly, trying to promote new talent such as singer Georgie Fame, encountered a wall of refusal to award air time to his artists. He saw that the remedy was to have his own radio station. British law prohibited any such thing.

Ronan obtained a ship, placed a radio station on it, and anchored it beyond British jurisdiction. Radio Caroline, named after Caroline Kennedy, was a revelation to the listeners who had never heard all day pop music before. Audience figures quickly outstripped that of all the BBC networks combined, as Caroline placed one ship in the South and another in the North.

Youth culture, behaviour, fashion and music exploded. London and Liverpool became pop capitals of the world. In what was called the 'British Invasion' UK bands dominated the American market.

As the Sixties progressed towards the Summer Of Love in 1967 everyone was happy aside from the Government. Following Caroline's example, other marine stations had appeared, all beyond jurisdiction. The monopoly of the BBC was broken. But the Labour government had only a slim majority and acting against the pirates was a sure vote loser.

It was to be three years before the re-elected Labour government produced their Marine Broadcasting Offences Act. While not being able to silence the ships, it outlawed every activity connected with the stations and made it possible to arrest and imprison any British subject who worked for the stations from abroad when that person returned to the UK.

The planned new law, coming in to force in August 1967, made offshore broadcasting unprofitable by criminalising the advertisers. On realising this, all the other stations closed down, but Radio Caroline vowed to continue.

Sadly, the greatly increased costs of supplying the ships at sea, now that UK ports could not be used and the loss of revenue, damaged the station so

that after eight months of defiance, Caroline ran out of money and both ships were towed away. In the minds of many of the public, even to this day, this is thought to be the end of Radio Caroline, but it was not.

In 1972 a radio enthusiast, under the guise of creating a radio museum bought one Caroline ship, the *Mi Amigo* and though barely seaworthy she was taken and placed off the Dutch coast. This produced what may have been Caroline's Golden Era, playing album music as an alternative to pop which stations on land were now playing. Caroline was mostly untroubled by the Authorities aside from minor skirmishes.

But, the *Mi Amigo* was old and by 1980 was in very poor condition. The ship seemed charmed and survived so many drama's that she seemed indestructible, but in March 1980, during a fierce storm, she sank. The crew barely escaped with their lives, but the ship and all her equipment, was lost.

This may have been an honourable time to admit defeat, but no. Over a three year period, the large and massively strong ex-deep sea trawler *Ross Revenge* was obtained and converted. If she had alone broadcast from off the British coast the situation may have been different, but as before she was joined by another ship, bringing the very popular programmes of Laser 558. This station captured the audience of the now many commercial stations in Britain and their protests caused the authorities to blockade Laser out of existence.

Radio Caroline was also targeted but not so directly and when Laser capitulated, the blockade ceased, leading many to think that due to longevity and determination, Caroline was achieving tacit acceptance from the authorities, but this was not so. The basis on which all offshore commercial radio stations operate is that they are beyond the jurisdiction of the territories they broadcast to. Various actions can and have been taken to discourage marine broadcasting, but always stopping short of direct action against the ships, as this breaks International law.

In August 1989, the British and Dutch governments, colluded in an armed raid on *Ross Revenge* where the ship was stripped of all broadcast equipment and effectively wrecked. Then a law was drafted awarding astonishing powers to the authorities for future action.

Radio Caroline had returned to the air after the raid, but mostly as a token gesture of defiance and as a holding exercise as there seemed to be just one remaining legal loophole that would allow broadcasts to continue unhindered. But in 1991, while this possibility was being researched, *Ross Revenge* broke anchor and grounded on the notorious Goodwin Sands. Again, loss of life was barely avoided.

Of the hundreds of ships that have been wrecked on the Goodwins, *Ross Revenge* is the only one known to have been salvaged intact and she was brought to the port of Dover, albeit derelict and badly damaged. Again there was the option of giving in, but this would hardly have been bowing out in a blaze of glory and would have been the acceptance that authority always wins in the end.

Radio Caroline had, at that stage, no money, no broadcasts and only possessed a ruined ship. But, an informal supporters club was formed from which flowed a trickle of income and so it was decided to see what, if anything, could be saved. Minor ship repairs were commenced, along with very local short term broadcasts, both of these activities, whilst representing some progress and recovery, were considered demeaning as compared to what the ship and station had once been.

Nonetheless, in 1993, *Ross Revenge* was deemed fit to leave Dover and for the next decade visited various locations, often carrying out more short term broadcasts, but the number of fresh places to visit dwindled and each broadcast had less impact than the one before. Fortunately the opportunity to broadcast full time via satellite was identified and while this was a specialist means of listening, it covered all of the UK affordably and in good quality. Caroline also experimented with Internet broadcasting, though at first both the radio industry and the public did not take this new listening opportunity very seriously.

The fourth era of Radio Caroline has seen the station stay on air longer than any other period in its history. As internet broadcasting became mainstream and satellite broadcasting became old technology it was abandoned in 2013. The station is now achieving 300,000 hours of listening per month, rising by 8% per annum. Reception is also possible on mobile devices.

Ross Revenge spent 10 years at Tilbury Docks, Essex undergoing major renovation. In 2014 she was moved to a new location on the River Blackwater where special broadcasts can once again be made from the ship.

The Radio Caroline Support Group that saved the station in 1991, continues to fund the running costs today. All staff continue to work as volunteers.

In 2017 Radio Caroline was awarded an OfCom licence to broadcast on AM to Suffolk and North Essex – 53 years after first hitting the air as a 'pirate'.