

## Chapter 4

### Spies Everywhere.

During 1973 people began to take more notice of the shop in Prescott Street, and we had a few oddballs' turn up, asking for jobs as DJs.

Another visitor was the late Bob Wooler, a well-known DJ, at the famous 'Cavern', in the 1960s. He knew the 'Beatles' very well, and the late Brian Epstein, their manager at the time. Bob was very interested in the roadshow, and our dedication to revive and maintain, the memory of Radio Caroline.

The bookings began to improve in the meantime, with some of the larger venues starting to take notice. Liverpool gigs in 1973 included, the Cabaret Club in Duke Street, and Gulliver's, off London Road.

Of course, many of the theatres and clubs have long since changed hands, some more than once. The names I have mentioned throughout this story were the names they were known by, then.

At each gig we attended, the night's program was always recorded on tape, so that we could analyse the format and continuity, to see if improvements could be made, to maintain the high standards, worthy of the famous radio ship. We were now, after all, her official representatives in the NW.

As early as April 1973 we decided to do some Radio Caroline Roadshow interviews with any artists that were appearing in Liverpool. One of the most memorable was the interview with the lovely Olivia Newton-John, who was appearing at the old Shakespeare Theatre. She welcomed us all back stage, to her dressing room. John Shannon, Eric Day, Carl England, and myself all traipsed in. I was carrying the big Ferrograph recording machine, leads, microphone and earphones.

John Shannon had, had a 'schoolboy crush' on her for some time, and to come face to face with her, became too much for him. He started 'blathering' his words, in an attempt to say something to her. Because when I asked Olivia to do a sound level test, for the Ferrograph machine, she had to say to Shannon, "Shush, Shush". And with that we all burst out laughing. Eric Day actually asked the questions, based mainly on her present 'tour', and also future plans, including her latest records. Shannon told us later, that he had been knocked for six by her, and was in love.

That's why he had a fit of the 'jitters', and couldn't get his words out. It was quite funny really, because after all the build up to meeting Olivia, John only managed to get told to 'shut up' by her, because he was slobbering. And by the end of the interview, only managed to say "Bye bye" properly, when we parted company. Still, I don't suppose he washed his hands for weeks after that, treasuring the moment when she shook hands with all of us. She was so relaxed with our company, and we with her, that after we had several laughs about this and that, She said she didn't mind at all, doing a few 'I/Ds', and DJ promos for Radio Caroline and the roadshow. One she made for us went like; "This is Olivia Newton-John, and I would like to wish all the DJs on the Radio Caroline Roadshow, and all the DJs on board the MV Mi Amigo, all the very best, and hope you like my latest record". The old interview recording is still in my archives.

During the summer and autumn of 1972, letters and telephone calls began to arrive from some well-known companies, enquiring about bookings for staff parties, and Christmas dances etc. The roadshow started getting bookings for famous names such as: Westminster Bank, Marks and Spencers, Adelphi Hotel Lime Street, Liverpool, and Hygena Kitchens.

These Christmas staff dances were really 'grand' affairs, and we ran contests, with records for prizes. We were able to get promo discs from one or two record producers, but most of the

records wouldn't have got into the 'Top 500', let alone the 'Top 20'. Still, they came in handy for give away's.

The 'Don Allen Fan Club', held one of their annual reunions at the Redmans Park Hotel, Blackpool in October 1973. This was our second, or third visit to one, but this time Don asked us to bring the Roadshow along, to provide the music. We thought it a great idea, because the Radio Caroline Roadshow would obviously go down well with Don's fans. Our usual roadshow crew, including 'roadies' went along. Carl England was to be one of the roadshow DJ's, that night.

During the evening, a hairy legs contest was organised, and Carl was teased into joining in. They were all asked to line up, including any ladies, if they qualified. There's no need to ask who won. If I recall also, somebody had brought a transistor radio, which was tuned to Caroline. Although the reception wasn't too good it was still audible. The radio was held in front of the roadshow's microphone for a few minutes, and when the radio DJ mentioned Radio Caroline, everybody cheered.

The Roadshow soon began to receive good coverage in the media, from newspapers like; *New Musical Express*, (*NME*); *Record Mirror*; and, *Disc & Music Echo*. All of who had, at some time or other mentioned us in their editorial columns. We still maintained a good liaison with the ship also. Unfortunately we couldn't ring the office in Holland any more, because they were having to relocate to Spain. This was due to the impending Dutch Marine Offences bill, soon to be introduced there. Another odious, gagging 'act', similar to this country's, 1967 version.

The Radio Caroline ship *MiAmigo*, meanwhile, remained in the North Sea, approximately 1 mile away from RNI, (Radio Northsea International), which was still broadcasting from the *Mebo II*.

One of the best 'rock' bands in Holland, *Golden Earring*, were getting a lot of airtime, on both RNI, and Caroline, due to their popularity.

This was the only way the band could get known over here. Because, needless to say, the pompous BBC and IBA, wouldn't play any of their album tracks. The reason being, (although they would never admit it), was that the band didn't record for one of the big record labels, that virtually control, or at least influence, the music played in this country. Or, there was an undercover 'reciprocal agreement'.

The laugh was on the BBC and IBA however, when a track from the Golden Earring's, '*Moontan*' album, called Radar Love, entered the charts. Because it became a chart climber, they had no choice but to play it. However, in the February of 1974 the band was playing in Liverpool, at the now demolished Stadium. By arrangement, we took our recording gear to meet them back stage. It didn't surprise them that they hadn't been heard on British radio before. They agreed with us about the difficulty for any foreign band, even American, to get any airtime on British radio, because of the cartel, and 'payola' rackets, that go on here, in blatant disregard for the law. Is it any wonder that the letters BBC, in Free Radio circles means, BRING BACK CAROLINE.

Another good band in 1972 was a local band from Maghull, on the North side of Liverpool, called *Skyfall*. They appeared jointly, with the Roadshow on several occasions, one of the best, long running gigs being at the Park Hotel Netherton, Liverpool. Both the band and Roadshow played to packed houses. Many of our 'followers', were 'Rock band' enthusiasts, although we did play Motown records for the girls to dance to. John Shannon played mostly 'heavy' stuff, which caused some of the 'rockers' to get on the floor, and do some serious 'head banging' to. All great fun, and when it was my turn behind the microphone, I would balance the music for the girls. Carl England and sometimes Eric Day also sat in the 'hotseat'. Because of the volume of work, both Carl's 'Caroline 2' roadshow, and my original 'Caroline 1' roadshow, became 'sister roadshows', and shared the gigs between them. In the event of long running gigs, for example the Park Hotel, we agreed to alternate the two 'sisters', which prevented either road show getting stuck in a groove. (Sorry, another unintentional pun).

Radio Caroline, at that present time, had an album track format. Playing many well known artists, such as, *Pink Floyd, Electric Light Orchestra, Deep Purple, ZZ Top, Supertramp, James Taylor,*

and *David McWilliams*, to name just a selection. Radio Caroline was the only station giving airtime to David McWilliams, an Irish ballad and folk singer. As with *Golden Earring* previously, the same circumstances again reared its ugly head. The BBC and IBA were once again shamed into playing a track from an album, which was on a record label, excluded from their cartel. But which made it into the charts anyway. *The Days Of Pearly Spencer*, was the track title, taken from the album, *David McWilliam vol. 1*. I still, have a copy of the album.

1974 also saw the opening of the long run at the Fleece Hotel in St Helens. The dance floor and large music lounge could accommodate 600, and each week, more than that, queued up to get in. There weren't many places around St Helens for weekend entertainment. A couple of cinemas, and small clubs, mostly for members only. Therefore, it was no surprise, that as soon as the adverts for the Fleece Hotel, 'Radio Caroline' nights, appeared in the local papers, the place was packed like sardines. Especially as membership was not required, so anybody could go.

Less than a year later however, we were to regret not vetting everyone who went. Unfortunately we didn't have a crystal ball to see into the future, and neither could we cover for every eventuality, especially when none at the time, was anticipated. The management of the Fleece Hotel was so pleased with the obvious upturn in profits, that he asked us to do two nights a week. This was alternated between the two sister roadshows, for the same reason as the Park Hotel. It's a good job there were two roadshows, because further gigs were booked for the Deeside Leisure Center, in Queensferry North Wales, and the Cartrefle College in Wrexham.

The gig at the Cartrefle College was one, our 'roadie' John, wanted to forget. John had always been 'cackhanded', and awkward, when doing things. So when the gig had ended, and we were loading the heavy rig sections back into the van, John decides to pick up one of the tall, heavy speaker columns, in both hands. The handles of which, are fitted on each side of the vertical columns, for the ease of two people to lift. He was trying to walk backwards, looking over his shoulder, to see where he was going. He couldn't walk forward with it, because the column was taller than he was, and he couldn't see past it. He hadn't taken more than three steps back, down the path towards

the van, when he tripped over a raised paving. John Shannon and my-self came out of the stagedoor seconds later to see two arms and two legs protruding out from beneath the speaker cabinet. The hands and legs began to move, so wondering who it was, we both lifted it off him. He wasn't hurt, only his pride, and stood up. We couldn't contain ourselves any longer, and both Shannon, myself, and a couple of others, by now, burst out laughing so much, I had tears in my eyes.

Our 'roadie' couldn't half eat. Whenever we stopped at an all night diner, after a gig, he would order nearly everything on the menu. I Couldn't eat so early in the morning, the most I could manage, was a bacon butty. On this particular occasion, after a late night gig, we all arrived at our regular cafe. The 'roadie', John, must have been hungry, because he ordered 'double' of everything. Double egg, double chips, double beans, and double sausage. Needless to say, the plate was piled high. The rest of us sat around the table with sandwiches. We watched, as John poured lots of tomato sauce on it. He then proceeded to break the runny eggs up with his fork, then mix it all up, into a disgusting mess. Ravenously, he picked up his knife and fork, ready to eat. However, he had overlooked one thing. The plate was overhanging the table, where he sat, and the second he stabbed at it with the knife and fork, the whole lot tipped over into his lap. We couldn't stop laughing at the mess, as it spread over his knees, soaking into his trousers, at the same time, slowly oozing down his legs, onto the floor. I think the rest of us had to be picked up off the floor, that night.

The Fleece Hotel gigs continued during 1974, still playing to capacity crowds, unaware of storm clouds gathering. We managed to secure a very unusual booking in the October, on board

the Mersey ferryboat, *Royal Iris*. We were jointly 'billed' with the band, *Skyfall*, who had played previously, at the Park Hotel. The ferry was on charter for the night, by the promoters of a 'Floating Dine & Dance', event, and tickets were soon sold out.

All evening the *Royal Iris* sailed up and down the River Mersey, and people either took a nighttime stroll around the decks, or enjoyed the dancing in the music lounge. A buffet was also available. During the evening the '*Royal Iris*' captain, came down to the music lounge and introduced himself, to the lads. He was amused at the scaled down, 'ships bow' shape, of the roadshow. He made us all laugh when, just before he departed, he said, "The *Royal Iris* looks like she's having a baby".

In February 1975 the roadshow was appearing at the, now defunct, 'Baileys Club', in Liverpool city centre. The 1960s group, 'Fortunes', were also appearing, so we had a chance to take our recording gear back stage. One of the questions Carl England asked was, how they felt about Radio Caroline, still using their 1964 recording of 'Caroline' as its theme tune, 11 years on. They said they were 'made up', and felt highly honoured, that Caroline had picked their record for its theme tune.

One month earlier, on the 14th January 1975, an incident took place at the Fleece Hotel, which was to have repercussions 12 months later.

Carl England, John Shannon, Eric Day, the 'roadies', and lady friends of our group, were all sat, drinking and talking, at a table behind the 'rig'. I was behind the microphone doing my show. The place was packed as usual, and you couldn't find a square inch of space on the dance floor. John Shannon was due to take over from me shortly, and had gone out of the room temporarily. Five minutes later, he suddenly came rushing back to the stage, with an extremely worried look on his face. He hurriedly told us about a group of suspicious, 'official looking' vehicles, all yellow, all parked outside the front of the hotel. There was also a couple in the rear carpark.

Furthermore, there were some furtive looking characters lingering by the entrances, and fire doors. They stood out like 'sore thumbs', and it's a wonder we didn't see them earlier, because they were all dressed in dark, pinstriped suits, and white stuffed shirts. In complete contrast to everybody else on the dance floor.

We realised immediately that they were spying on us, and were probably Home Office personnel, a guess we later found out to be correct. Apparently they had portable cassette recorders hidden in their coats, and definitely all had cameras. They were obviously trying to collect evidence by devious methods.

John wanted to make an announcement, so when the current record came to an end, I informed the crowd to that effect, apologising for the interruption, and handed the microphone to him. The hall went quiet and all eyes turned towards him. He told the crowd about the unwelcome visitors, and what they were here for. After speaking quietly to the crowd for a few moments, he then came out with a venomous tirade aimed at the spies, who were still lurking about. In words, that newspapers usually print with broken lines, he let them know, they had been rumbled. And told them in no polite words what to do. There was a crescendo of cheers from the people, and I reached for the handle of the powerful 500-watt spotlight, we had, mounted on one side of the bow. I rotated the beam around the dimly lit dance floor, and picked up at least four of the Home Office spies, trying to pretend they were dinner suited 'Motown', or 'Rock band' fans. They just didn't 'fit in', somehow. It was a joy to see them scatter in seconds, when the spotlight fell on them. Within minutes they had jumped into their vehicles, with tails between their legs, and sped off out of town, as though a posse was after them.

Meanwhile we thanked the crowd for their kind participation, and briefly told them about the harassment, the ship has to put up with also. What with spotter planes flying around the ship, and little boats that sneak alongside her, with faceless Home Office people on board, trying to take photographs, of anyone on board the *MiAmigo*. And this is apart, from actual raids on the ship. All of this harassment taking up thousands of man hours, because the police have to travel with

them. The public, finally, having to foot the bill, for this extravagant, diabolical waste of public money. This short speech received a rousing cheer, and applause. I then put a good Tamla Motown record on the turntable, which got everybody dancing again, and handed over to the John Shannon Show.<sup>1</sup>

Although the gig returned to normal that night, we had no idea that this raid was only a prelude, to a joint operation, planned by the Home office<sup>1</sup>. A good coverage of this event is printed in the excellent booklet entitled, *The Caroline Roadshow*, (North). Printed by Radio Caroline Sales 2002, in which Carl England gives a very good graphic account.

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On that very same evening, at least twenty-six Home Office Telecommunications, or Radio Regulatory Officers, as they were also known, were stationed all along the Kent an Essex coast. Each one of them was either, plotting navigational chart positions, of the *MV MiAmigo*, or monitoring and recording transmissions, from Caroline, all evening, and throughout the night. I think the last time there were occurrences similar to these, was during, World War II, when the Nazi Gestapo, (German secret police), used direction finders to locate the whereabouts of British agents trying to send clandestine radio messages back to London. It's a poor state of affairs, when the British Government had to resort to the same underhanded methods.

As I recall reading somewhere, I believe the Gestapo shot these agents for broadcasting, if they were caught, as spies. Perhaps, we were to be hung in manacles, and chains, from some filthy dungeon wall instead.

On the same night that the Fleece Hotel was infiltrated by spies from the Home Office, several vehicles also descended on Carl England's old home address, and the Caroline Roadshow studio in

Prescot Street, Liverpool. Both of these raids were simultaneous with their other operation at the Fleece Hotel. They were hoping to photograph posters, stickers, and anything else related to the station. They took photographs of everything in the shop window. Tell me again, how much all of this spiteful operation was costing the taxpayer. It seemed to us, that the government, thought it more important, to persecute those responsible, for the 'dreadful crime', of being ardent Radio Caroline fans. A crime 'so bad', that they would use whatever foul means, they had at their disposal, and no matter how much it was costing the taxpayer, rather than use the, want only, wasted money, to build a large hospital.

Because we knew nothing about the spies operating in Kent and Essex, we eventually dismissed the Fleece Hotel incident, and chalked it up to an, 'occupational hazard'. Eric Day has had many similar experiences, in his own 'particular field' of radio, during his time with, *Radio Jackie North*.

As 1975 progressed, the incident was forgotten about altogether, and we continued at the Fleece, as before. We also appeared at the Camelot, Park Hall Leisure Centre, Charnock Richard, and at a novel one, on the side of a miniature 'lagoon', at the Cranberry Fayre Hotel, situated on the top of the moor, near Darwen.

The Music newspapers continued printing short articles, on the latest *MiAmigo* events, or the odd roadshow feature. Several 'Free Radio' societies, and 'Free Press' newspapers, were also interested

in our 'cause'. One such broadsheet was, *The Liverpool Free Press*, dated November 1975, that had printed an interesting article, which I cut out, (and still have). After reading it, I thought, 'that's so typical of how low, British radio has sunk to. It was so pathetic, that I have included the text of the article, written by a *Free Press* reporter, in this story. It was in regard to a financial report, concerning the local IBA station, *City*, losing £100,000 in 1975, and was implementing a cost cutting exercise '*Radio City used faked sound effects, to pretend they had radio reporters at*

*the scenes of disturbances, where shootings occurred. Archive tape recordings of 2nd world war, machine gun fire, was used to simulate 'live' action. On another occasion that year, they decided not to cover the VIP wedding in Chester, of Lord Lichfield. Considering it, "not important enough" Unfortunately for them, several other news media thought it was. Realising their mistake, City, frantically got a senior member of staff to sit in the studio, and switch, on & off, the sound effects of church bells on a tape recorder, while breathlessly describing the scene...20 miles away'.*

We all had a good laugh about this article; however it only convinced us all the more, that local radio was a load of overrated rubbish, where profits come before professionalism. The listener, unfortunately, doesn't come into the equation.

At the regular gigs, such as the Park Hotel Netherton, or the Fleece Hotel St Helens, it was only natural, that we made some new friends. This led to many social gatherings, on our 'days off'. A few of these friends became true, Free Radio fans, like ourselves. One or two of them, soon became actively involved, with Eric Day's other occupations, *Radio Jackie North*. Helping out, 'In the field', so to speak.

Several 'Pin striped gentlemen', started to take a keen interest in Eric's weekend 'activities', and many is the time, Eric and friends, were chased across fields, by these people. He often had 'lookouts' climb trees, so they had a good view of the narrow lanes. Alert for any strange vehicles, moving slowly, or stopped, containing these pinstriped, 'zombie' like occupants. They were easy to spot, because they were, consulting maps, wearing binoculars, or had odd looking radios on their laps.

Eric knew where every nettle patch was, in those fields, because he had fallen into most of them, during his many previous, hasty retreats. His recounts, of these 'raids', were like reading from a 'Boys Own' adventure book. And, although I never got involved in them, his regular, weekend radio programs, were actually very good. Certainly better than anything local radio could do, and for a lot less money.

Although things, were still going good for the two roadshows, unfortunately, the same couldn't be said, for the Radio Caroline ship, *Mi amigo*. In August 1974, she had left her anchorage, a mile away from RNI, off the coast of Holland, and moved over to her new position, in the Thames estuary. She dropped anchor approximately 25 miles from the nearest Kent and Essex coastline, in international waters of the North Sea. The North Sea is not the calmest of waters, being more notorious for gales and storms. Therefore, life on board could become a tad uncomfortable.

The program format on Radio Caroline, throughout 1974/75, was mainly album tracks, with an emphasis on new artists, who were denied access to British radio, for reasons stated earlier. During this period, the format attracted many listeners. For once, they could hear music, that wasn't dominated by the charts. By November 1975 those on board included, DJs Simon Barrett, and Mike Lloyd, also Pete Chicago, Dutch Captain Werner, and Jan the 1st mate.

Also in November, we had spoken on the telephone to Radio Caroline's boss, Rhonan O'Rahilly and a meeting was arranged for a week later, at his flat in Chelsea. Problems were looming, aboard the *MiAmigo*. Apparently, the Home Office spies had been out to the ship, in a small boat. One of the officers had asked to go aboard, but was met with a flat refusal by the ships captain.

The problem had only occurred, because the *MiAmigo* had lost her anchor in a recent gale, and had allegedly, drifted within 'territorial limits'. But this was disputed outrightly, by the captain. However, the Home Office had used this as an excuse, and the next day, again raided the ship. This time, they turned up in force. There was about twenty of them, including police, on this small boat. They all climbed aboard illegally, and started ransacking everywhere, looting in the crew's cabins, tipping out lockers, and drawers. Their generally behaviour was atrocious. Acting like, modern day pirates, that maraud the South China Sea. They were obviously looking for evidence, and took away some articles, including personal effects, and even clothing belonging to the crew. Not finding anything else, they then arrested the captain, two DJs, and Pete Chicago,

the transmitter engineer, for allegedly, broadcasting inside territorial waters. According to Their 'elastic' navigation charts, anyway. The ship's mate stayed on board as 'acting captain'. Most of the general public never got to hear, about these vile acts of oppression that the government was guilty of.

The arrests only attracted a couple of column inches in the local newspapers.

All of this was causing concern for Ronan, because when we arrived for our meeting with him, shortly afterwards, he quickly ushered us in to his apartment. There was nobody else there, and I think he was glad of the company, and soon began to tell us about the latest events on the North Sea. We also went on to discuss the roadshows, which he had a great interest in. He was impressed by the photographs taken, of the roadshows, at Wigan Casino, showing the tall mast on Caroline

The discussion returned to the recent events on the ship. The Home Office's piratical raid, had only occurred about ten days earlier, but the ship had now been moved back to a new anchorage. This time, undisputedly, outside territorial limits. The ship was not broadcasting, we were told, because the radio crew had been taken off, and there was only the acting captain, and another Dutch crewman aboard.

Neither of these had sufficient knowledge to work the powerful transmitter, which had been switched off, since the raid. Ronan then asked me if I would go out to the ship, and sort out the transmitter, to get Radio Caroline back on the air again, "Provided it wouldn't interfere with running the roadshows". Carl England assured him it wasn't a problem, as Carl England could take over, on Caroline 1, while he continued as before, running Caroline 2. He asked Carl about his diesel engine experience, and suggested he might like to spend a bit of time, overhauling the ship's main diesel engines, which weren't working very well. It was agreed, this work would be held over until the weather was better.

I made final arrangements for going out to the ship, and later that day, we parted company, after a very interesting meeting. We all had a lot to talk about, on our return journey to Liverpool. In the following days, I bought a few essentials I would need on board, including a brand new holdall. The lads were telling me, not to forget to 'plug' the roadshow gigs a lot. I had some phone calls to make, to London, and one or two other enquiries to make. Then finally, the day came to leave, the start of a long series of secretive manoeuvres, was about to take place. I was advised not to write too many details down, but to try and remember them. If the worst came to the worst, I shouldn't

get caught, carrying evidence. I didn't see any of the lads that morning, in November 1975, because I had to be at Lime street station early, to catch the 7am train to Euston. My head was jammed with all the verbal instructions I had been given, on the telephone, the night before. Some of the instructions were in a sort of code, using a phraseology that only we could understand. This came about, because the London end had good reason to believe their telephones were 'tapped'. And if that was correct, it would be safe to assume, that all our phones might be also John Shannon's, Eric Day's, Carl England's, the studio in Prescott Street, and anybody else's, that were involved in the roadshows.

Even before London had brought up the subject of 'phone tapping', we had our own suspicions, since the Fleece Hotel affair. Strange 'clicking noises' on the line or a 2-way conversation would suddenly sound 'hollow', as if another telephone had been picked up. All these things were going round and round in my head, as I boarded the train, and settled into a comfortable seat, in an empty carriage compartment.

The train got into Euston about 11am. I gathered up my holdall and walked down the platform, to the ticket barrier. With all this secrecy involved, more fitting to a spy novel, I must have been getting a little paranoid, because I found myself looking over my shoulder, in case I was being followed. I stopped off at the station buffet, for a snack, and consulted some notes I had written, 'For my eyes only', reminding me of the next part of the plan. Paranoia set in again, what would I

do if I was suddenly surrounded by MI5 agents, swallow the paper I had in my hand, like they do in the movies. Musing on the thought, I left the buffet, and strolled over to the Underground railway escalator, on the station concourse. I studied a wall map of the network, and paid for a ticket to get me to Sloane Square, which was near to one end of Kings Road Chelsea, the next stage of the operation. I couldn't shake off this feeling of dejavu, walking down Kings Road. Even now, I can't remember why, or when, I had walked down this road in the past. Perhaps I had dreamt it, or it was a premonition, because I only vaguely recall, wandering into several unusual shops, especially one shop, that had an old sailing ship's 'figurehead', for sale. However, I had to concentrate on the matter at hand, and continue with the plan, if this 'operation', was to go right.

I had another look at my scrap of paper, which had the name of a pub I was to be at by 11-30am. The pub was further down Kings Road than I thought, but I got there with a few minutes to spare. In the 70s, as I recall, pubs didn't open till about 11-30am, so when I walked in, the bar was empty. The bartender glanced at me, then up at a wall clock, and carried on cleaning glasses. Putting my holdall on a seat, with a good view of the entrance, I waited by the bar until the bartender decided to serve me. Taking my drink back to the table, I sat down, unfolded a newspaper I had bought earlier, and pretended to read. I was the only customer in the place, which made me feel like the proverbial 'sore thumb'. Now and again the bartender glanced at me, suspicious like, so I pulled the newspaper open in front of my face and ignored him.

After twenty minutes had passed, I was beginning to wonder if all of this was a wild goose chase, and whether or not, to 'haul ass' back to Liverpool. When suddenly, the door opened and a woman, in her early thirties walked in, on her own. She was about five feet six inches tall, slim build, short fair hair, dressed in a smart costume. She looked straight at me, and I thought, she's either my London 'contact', or thinks I'm 'looking for company'. I dismissed the second alternative, when she walked over to my table, and introduced herself. "I'm Oonagh, are you Ronnie from Liverpool?" When I replied, she sat down facing me, looked quickly around her, and satisfied everything was alright, reached into her handbag and pulled out an automatic. She lifted it up, and deftly flipped open the little safety cover, and lit a cigarette with it, explaining to me that it was one of those gimmicky types, you can buy in most gift shops.

Politely turning down a drink I offered to get her, she quietly told me, that she couldn't stay long, but was a friend of Ronan. She reached into her handbag again, and pulled out some folded paper, and an envelope. "Ronan told me to give you these", she added. There was a Folkestone to Boulogne sea ferry ticket. (I noticed it was a single, one way only ticket. They mustn't be expecting me to make it back again, because the plan was so dangerous. Perhaps I could contact the French Resistance who would smuggle me back through Switzerland). I was getting paranoid again. The envelope contained English and French money, something small slipped out of the envelope, onto the floor. A cyanide capsule perhaps? I picked it up; it was a small locker key, which she asked for back. It was to open a locker at Victoria station containing a suitcase to take out to the ship, but a change of plan had preceded that. She told me that there was more than enough money in the envelope to pay for the train journey to Folkestone, and meals etc, for the rest of the day. She stood up, saying she was in a hurry, and, "Couldn't be seen hanging around, because they had her description". I think I knew who 'They' were. We shook hands, and she said I'd get further instructions, when she 'saw me later', whatever that meant. With that final comment, she walked to the door, looked furtively up and down the road, and was gone.

I waited a few more minutes, before I got up, ready to leave. As in most *Secret Agent* stories, couriers meeting in bars, never leave together, so I had to keep up the tradition. I stepped out onto the street, and glanced at my watch. I had about five hours to waste before the Folkestone train departed from Victoria, so I strolled back along Kings Road, window shopping. To take up more time, I took in a movie, and afterwards, dined at a cheap cafe. Victoria Station was very busy when I arrived, but I had no problem finding the right platform, and without a second glance at the numerous notices, boarded the long train in one of the rear carriages. About an hour later, I was woken up by the carriage, being jolted. The compartment was empty, and it was pitch black



outside when I looked through the window, to see where we were. A few minutes later somebody walked past outside, shouting some garbled information. I only heard one or two words, "Passengers for...(crunch-jolt)...should be in the first four coaches...anyone travelling to...(grind, bang). should make sure they are in the rear six coaches." Not having read any of the signboards on the platform, at Victoria, I was unaware that this train was in two separate halves. The jolting was another engine, being coupled up to the last half of the train. From what I could ascertain, we were approximately thirty miles from Folkestone, at some dimly lit, railway junction. It would be just my luck to be in the wrong half, I thought. I stood up to see if there was a guard in the corridor. There wasn't anybody I could see, or hear, for that matter. It was like a ghost train. I looked out of the window again after a few minutes, just in time to see the dimly lit platform slip away into the distance.

The train thundered on into the night for nearly half an hour, by which time I thought I'm at least thirty miles in the wrong direction. Eventually it slowed down, and came to a halt, in a cloud of steam. Out of the window I saw the welcoming station sign, 'Folkestone'. Was I imagining it, or was that a smaller sign beneath, saying, 'Turn back now, and save ass while you still have a chance?'