

World Radio TV Handbook 1947-2022

Alan Pennington

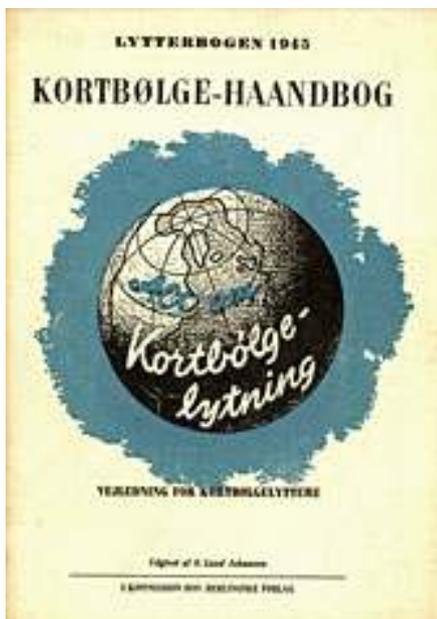
The 2022 *World Radio TV Handbook* (WRTH) is its 76th edition but may also be its last, as the current publisher, Nicholas Hardyman, has announced it will be the last edition to be published by his Oxford based company, WRTH Publications Limited which has published the WRTH from 1999 to 2022:

“Having produced this book for the past 24 years, we are very sorry to announce that WRTH 2022 will be the final edition of World Radio TV Handbook produced and published by WRTH Publications. This has been an extremely difficult decision and was only made after a lot of thought and discussion. We know that many people rely on WRTH and greatly enjoy getting the new edition every year. We realise that this news will be disappointing for many people. We wish to thank you all for your loyal support over the years. Good DX and Happy Listening, Nicholas Hardyman (WRTH Publisher)”



For many DXers and SWLs, the WRTH had become the essential reference book for our hobby. Often referred to as the “DXers bible”, it will be greatly missed if no new publisher is found.

The first edition of the handbook was published in November 1947, then titled *World-Radio Handbook for Listeners*, the idea of Dane, Oluf Lund-Johansen. Born in 1891, Lund-Johansen had worked in radio telegraphy, publishing several textbooks on the subject. He became well known in Denmark as a publisher of radio literature in the 1920s, including magazines *Radio Lytteren* [Radio Listener] and *Populær Radio*, plus annual books *Radio Aarbogen* and *Radiolytterens Lommebog*, containing all the information the radio listener of the time needed.



In 1945, Lund-Johansen had published *Lytterbogen 1945, Kortbølge Håndbog* [Shortwave Handbook], with the subtitle *Vejledning for Kortbølgekyttere* [Guide for shortwave hunters]. This 40-page book is perhaps a forerunner of the *World Radio Handbook*, containing shortwave station frequencies plus practical information for the shortwave listener.

Left: *Kortbølge Håndbog*.

Below: O. Lund-Johansen in 1950. (<http://oz6qh.byethost33.com/>)

the title, introduction and ads in Danish). The first Handbook, published in November 1947 is a rarity nowadays, but was made available on a CD-Rom in 2005 by WRTH Publications Ltd and ADDX, a great historical reference to the global radio scene just two years after the end of WW2.

The wealth of detail in this first edition already impresses. The bulk of the book is headed “The Voices of the World”



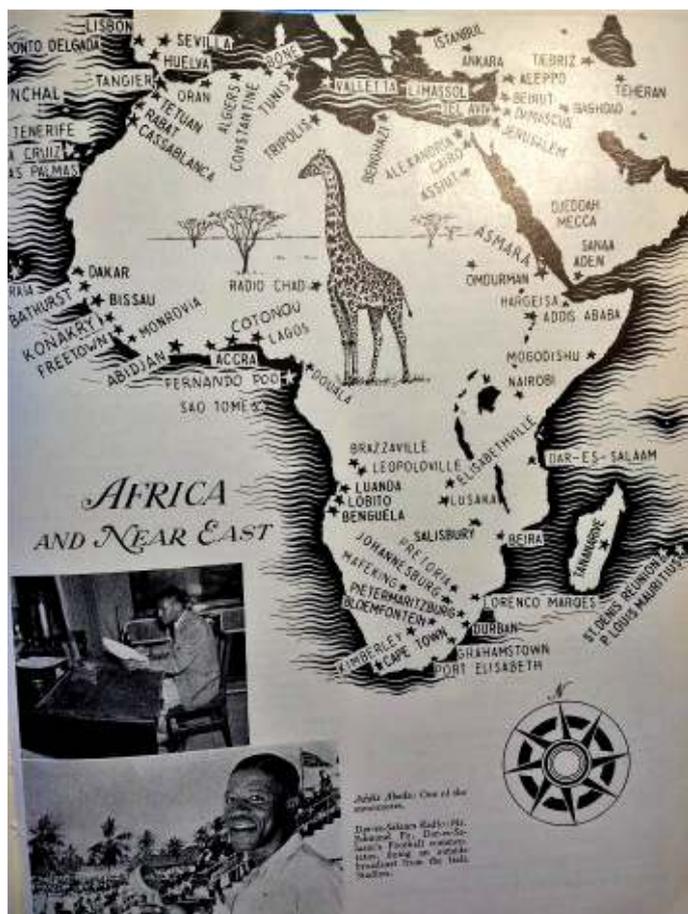
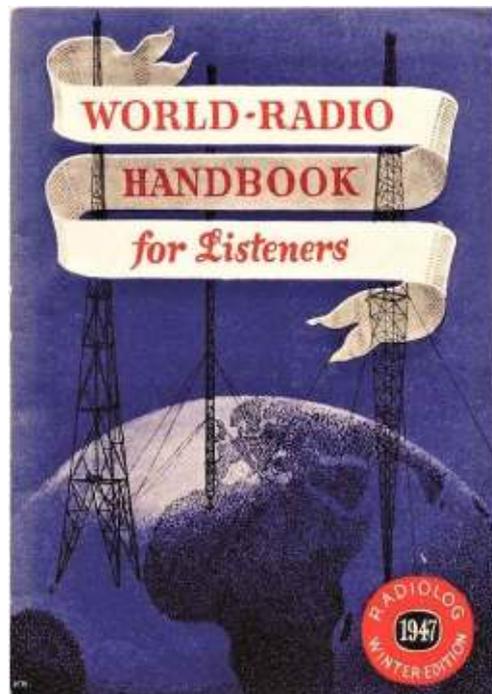
with entries for each country included within sections for Europe, Africa, Near East, East, Pacific, North America, Central America and South America. Each country entry includes local clock time, addresses, leading personalities, station frequencies, wavelengths and powers, announcements, interval signals (some with musical staves illustrating the melody), languages and even summary lists of daily programmes. Messages to listeners are also added by some stations. All country entries include their shortwave stations, also listed at the back of the book in a frequency order list.

But medium wave stations were only included in this first edition for those countries in Europe, Near East and North Africa, with a MW frequency order list just for those regions at the back.

World Radio Handbook 1st edition – “Winter Edition” 1947

The second edition of the WRH was published in May 1948 and the third in November 1948, early ambitions being to publish twice a year. But the fourth edition didn't appear until October 1949 and thereafter it was published just once a year. Medium wave stations were

included for all countries of the world from the fifth edition, published in November 1950.



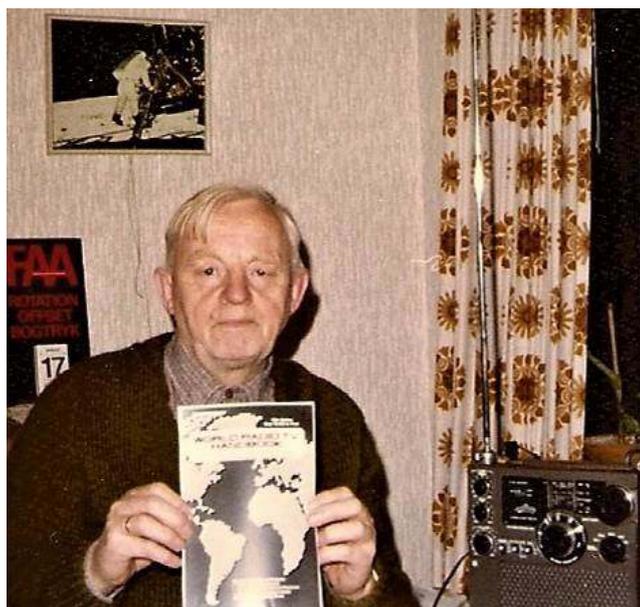
The oldest edition on the shelf here is the 136-page 1954 edition (published in November 1953). The price on the softback cover is 8/6d (43p) and the title page says it is published in German as well as English. As well as SW and MW stations, FM frequencies are also listed for some countries (e.g. USA, Germany, Italy), though under Great Britain there is just the “Experimental” service (“daily except Fridays”) from Wrotham on 91.4 and 93.8 m/cs. The 1954 edition also includes a 4-page Television section (although the cover title was not changed to *World Radio TV Handbook* until the 1961 edition). Advertising has increased by this edition with ads from receiver and broadcast equipment makers as well as radio stations.

A number of photos of radio station staff feature throughout, including alongside the pictorial maps which front each continent section (e.g. the map of Africa left). Leafing through old editions of the WRTH always make you dream of (now) impossible DX catches – the 1954 entry for Pitcairn Islands lists Radio Station Z.B.P on three shortwave frequencies

(7859, 9200 & 12110 k/cs) plus MW 500 k/cs – but the new 2022 edition states “All Broadcasting ceased” under the section for these Pacific islands.

In 1964, Jens Frost, a journalist who had been assistant editor since 1949, took over as the WRTH Editor-in-Chief when Oluf Lund-Johansen retired at the age of 73. Born in 1919, Jens Frost had secretly listened to Allied broadcasts in Nazi occupied Denmark and after the

Liberation in May 1945 bought a shortwave receiver and began listening to the world. As assistant editor he compiled a lot of the information for each year's WRTH and when he became Editor-in-Chief, moved the WRTH office in Copenhagen from Hellerup to his home in Hvidovre. Under his editorship sales rose from 18,000 copies per annum reaching 66,000 in 1981.

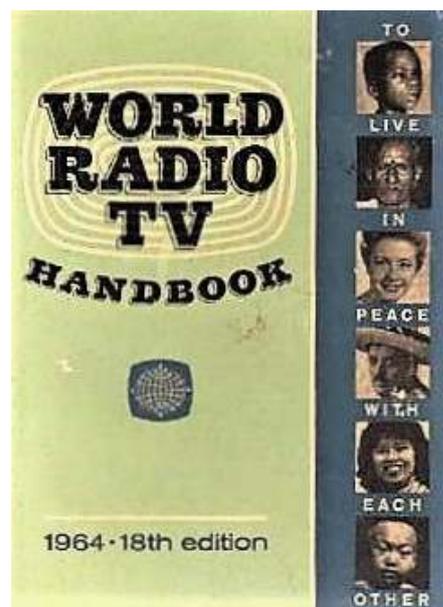


Jens Frost (left) in Hvidovre with the 1981 WRTH.

Jens became a Member of Honour of the Danish Club - DSWCI.

(photo DSWCI)

Right: The 1964 WRTH with cover message: "To Live in Peace with each other"



In an interview with the *New York Times* in 1959, WRTH founder Oluf Lund-Johansen had described how he sent out "at least 15,000 letters each year to radio stations, governments and broadcasting agencies each year" asking for all possible details to update the next year's handbook. The bulk of the detailed information in the early handbooks relied on the response from stations around the world and radio stations at the time were enthusiastic about supplying it. With the response from stations waning over the years, Jens Frost instead built up an extensive global network of contacts, both at radio stations and of experienced DXers, the latter being able to verify and add to the information received from stations. He sought contacts with DXers and DX clubs around the world and often attended DX meetings and conferences.

In 1967, the *World Radio TV Handbook* was bought by Billboard Publications. However, Jens Frost continued his autonomous operation in Hvidovre in charge of editorial and production and distribution throughout the world, apart from the USA. [Billboard magazine, 29 July 1967]

From 1978, Jens Frost was assisted by Andy Sennitt who had previously worked for the BBC Monitoring Service in Caversham. In the "Message from the Editors" in the 1984 edition, the two commented on a "great irony" that listeners were now armed with high quality, low-cost receivers, but broadcasters were not sending in the information to the WRTH to help them tune in "So we are dependent to an increasing extent on the collaborators and monitors who send us the "missing" information. Even some of the official details in this edition came to us indirectly via a collaborator."



Andy became Editor-in-Chief when Jens Frost retired in 1987 and the editorial offices moved from Denmark for the first time, to the Billboard building in Amsterdam. (Andy Sennitt – photo Critical Distance Blogspot)

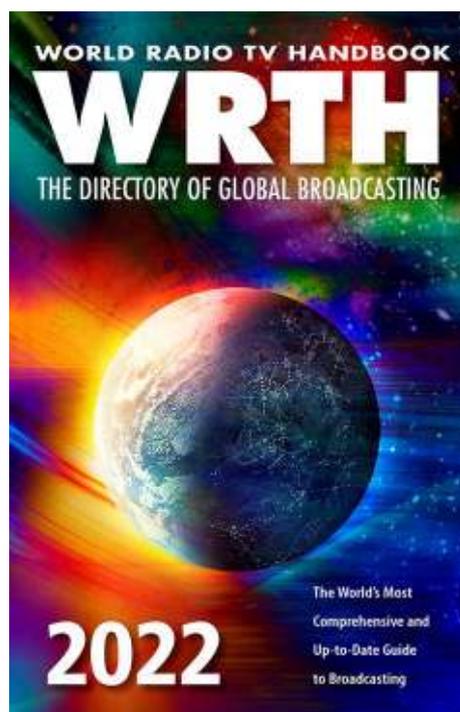
The original ambition of its founder Oluf Lund-Johansen to publish his handbook twice a year was realised again, when in 1959 the *WRTH Summer Supplements* first appeared. These were

published until 1971 (titled *WRTH Summer Edition* from 1967). A full list of these can be found on Jerry Berg's 'On the Shortwaves' website at: <http://www.ontheshortwaves.com/wrth.html>
As well as the books, from the mid-1950s the WRTH also published fortnightly *World Radio Bulletins* which were more akin in style to DX club newsletters (in the 1970s edited by David McGarva in Edinburgh). These were superseded in 1976 by less frequent *WRTH Newsletters* then *WRTH Downlink* magazines, the last issue of which appeared in 1991.

Another of Lund-Johansen's publications was "*How to Listen to the World*" with subtitle "*explained by experienced World Listeners*". The earliest edition here is a 32-page booklet from 1951, but by its last edition in 1974, it had expanded to a 168- page book of articles on DXing. The first edition of the WRTH I bought was the 1975 edition: an impulse buy when I saw a copy in WH Smith in Liverpool. I had only been DXing a couple of years, but needed little persuasion to splash out £3.50 on this goldmine of information on my hobby! The following year's 30th Anniversary edition (1976) incorporated a new "Listen to the World" 88-page section of articles at the back, including "The 20 most popular shortwave receivers", "BBC Short Wave Station Daventry" and "Clandestine Broadcasting 1975". The latter article was penned by Larry Magne who would review "Eight New Shortwave Receivers" in the 1978 WRTH. Reviews of new receivers have appeared every year in the WRTH since then.

The core information in the WRTH has changed little in its lifetime – why change a successful formula? Though from 1997, the International Broadcasters were moved to a separate section. And in the Millennium 2000 edition, countries were arranged purely alphabetically, not grouped by continent. A section on Satellite broadcasts first appeared in 1990: a *Satellite Broadcasting Guide* produced by WRTH Assistant Editor Bart Kuperus was published by WRTH 1994-1997.

In 1998 the WRTH was sold to Nicholas Hardyman's company, WRTH Publications Ltd with David Bobbett as editor. From 2003 Nicholas oversaw the National Radio section of the book, with Sean Gilbert, who had been Assistant Editor since 2001, as International Editor. In 2002 and 2003 a separate book, "*The Shortwave Guide*" was published, displaying shortwave broadcasts in a frequency order colour bar graph chart (similar to the Blue Pages in Larry Magne's '*Passport to World Band Radio*'). A WRTH Bar Chart Frequency Guide has been available in recent years on a CD or Download. Also in recent years, the WRTH website <https://www.wrth.com/> has made pdf updates available to download free of charge, although a donation is appreciated to help support their production.



If this is indeed the last edition of the WRTH, I for one will sorely miss it. Whilst some information is available online, it's invaluable to have all the information in one place without having to switch on a mobile 'phone or computer. Some of the information in the WRTH isn't readily available online, especially in the National Radio section, at least not without a lot of searching and translating into English. In the WRTH, the country editors have done all the research and updating for you! Many thanks to Nicholas Hardyman for publishing it over the past 24 years and to the dozens of contributors who have made the *World Radio TV Handbook* so indispensable! (AP)

Additional sources: On the Shortwaves website <http://www.ontheshortwaves.com/wrth.html>
OZ6GH's website (in Danish/English) http://oz6gh.byethost33.com/lund_johansen.htm?i=1
'Listening on the Shortwaves 1945 to Today' – Jerome S. Berg (published 2008)
DSWCI website http://www.dswci.org/specials/membersofhonour/jens_frost.html