

Tasmania celebrates its GOLDEN JUBILEE

By the late Lon Jensen, B.Sc.,
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Mr. A. Harold Masters, Architect, Electrician and Lecturer in Electrical Engineering at the Launceston Technical College is credited with being the first in Tasmania to demonstrate communication by means of Wireless Telegraphy. These experiments took place prior to 1900, probably in late 1898 or 1899. Later, in 1906 he carried out two way experiments with H.M.S. Pioneer both in the Tamar River and along the northwest coast of Tasmania using Telefunken equipment obtained from Melbourne. There are few details available but apparently there was no two way contact along the coast. Mr. Master's signals were, however, heard when the ship was near Devonport. Some of the frame serials belonging to this equipment are being held for the Institute's Museum. They consist of copper birdcage wire netting attached to a metal cross about 3 feet across and were apparently mounted horizontally one above the other.



L. J. CROOKS, VK7BQ
Patron of the Tasmanian Division
First licensed in 1925.

Mr. F. W. Medhurst ("Pop"), who was later VK7AH was also experimenting with 12" and 14" spark coils in Hobart. On July 2nd 1901, Mr. Medhurst and Mr. Hallam, who were both members of the P.M.G.'s Department in Hobart were successful in communicating with H.M.S. St. George which was one of the ships accompanying the Duke of York on his visit to Australia to open the first Federal Parliament. A number of successful contacts were carried out with the ship both in the Derwent estuary and on the east coast of Tasmania. The greatest distance over which communication was carried out was about 60 miles. This vessel had previously been contacted by Mr. H. W. Jenvey, (father of Bill, VK2ZO) at the entrance to Port Philip heads on May 6th 1901. These achievements are all the more noteworthy when it is remembered that they took place some six months before Marconi successfully spanned the Atlantic.

The Marconi Company erected stations at East Devonport, Tasmania, and Queenscliff, Victoria, in 1905-6. The stations were opened for traffic on July 12th 1906 with the exchange of messages between the Prime Minister, Governors of the States and other dignitaries. It is probable, however, that the first contact across Bass Strait took place during experiments conducted by the engineers late in 1905.

By 1913 there were about a dozen experimenters in Launceston and Hobart who were conducting experiments with spark equipment. The outbreak of war in 1914 put an end to the experiments until about 1920. "Pop" Medhurst was still active and was assisted by Mr. W. T. Watkins ("Watty") who was given the call sign 7AA, and later still VK7DX. He was one of Tasmania's most successful experimenters in the early twenties and was the first to demonstrate telephony in Tasmania, in association with Mr. H. G. Lewis in 1923. It was about this time that groups of enthusiasts began gathering together to discuss their experiments and equipment. These gatherings led to the formation of clubs in both Hobart and Launceston.

The Tasmanian Division of the Wireless Institute of Australia was first established in Hobart slightly before June 1923 and a branch was formed in Launceston two months later in August. There is little documented evidence of the early years of the Division, but a receipt dated 19th June 1923, has been preserved and indicates that Mr. J. C. Milne of Gretna, VK7AG, was a member at that time and that Mr. W. L. Scanlon was secretary. Probably Mr. F. W. Medhurst, VK7AH, was President and Mr. W. T. Watkins, VK7AA, the leading experimenter. In those days the Institute was regarded as being more of a nationwide association rather than a local one. Some strong dissension arose amongst some of the members and the Institute fell into disrepute. Local clubs then sprang up in the two centres - the Hobart Radio Experimenters' Club (later the Hobart Radio Research Club) in Hobart, and the Launceston Radio Experimenters' Club in Launceston.

In Hobart other active members of the H.R.R.C. were Messrs. G. W. Larsson, T. Green, W. O. Duffy, H. Lovett 7HL, C. Oldham 7XA, L. R. Jensen 7LJ, K. Lester, F. Dodderidge, C. Johnson 7ARE, Kirby, R. D. O'May 7OM, G. Fraser, C. A. Walch 7CW, R. Buring 7RB, J. Heine 7JK, W. E. Masters 7MM, W. Bousfield, C. Harrison 7CH and many others whose names are not available.

In Launceston Mr. W. B. McCabe 7AQ was Patron of L. R. E. C., Mr. P. O. Fysh 7PF was President and Chairman, Mr. C. Scott 7CS was Secretary, and Mr. L. J. Crooks 7BQ was Treasurer. Other members were Messrs. W. Turner, E. Reynolds, E. Ferral, R. Ferral, N. Cave 7BC, H. Graham, E. Scheldrick 7BT, N. Symmons, A. Smith 7AB, W. Scanlon 7AL, G. King, A. Flounders, L. A. Hope 7LA, R. S. Hope 7RS, A. S. Gill 7AS, Thompson, M. Graver, Newton, Wolfe, E. E. Cooper 7MK, Phillips, and others.

A convention of the Wireless Institute of Australia was held in Perth in August 1925 at which all States were represented. The Tasmanian delegate was Mr. P. O. Fysh 7PF who stressed on his return the need for greater participation in the Institute's affairs by Tasmania. Accordingly a meeting was held in Launceston on the 3rd of September 1925 to discuss the

re-organisation of the Tasmanian Division along the lines suggested at the Convention. As a result the Tasmanian Division was re-constituted with headquarters in Launceston. The Launceston Radio Experimenters' Club continued to function for another year but it gradually faded out in favour of the Institute which was incorporated in 1925 as a company under

The Companies Act 1920. The Hobart Radio Research Club continued to flourish in Hobart although most of the transmitting members were also members of the Institute. For some reason (possibly lack of willing workers) the Headquarters were transferred suddenly to Hobart in June or July 1929. Pop Medhurst VK7AH became President, and Lon Jensen VK7LJ Secretary/Treasurer. The Headquarters of the Division has remained in Hobart ever since.

The officers of the Division have changed over the years but many of the early members are still active. Presidents of the Division have been Messrs. A. H. Masters (1925), W. Judd (1926), T. K. Jobb (1927), P. O. Fysh 7PF (1928), F. W. Medhurst VK7AH (1929-30-34-37-38), W. E. Masters VK7MM (1931-3), W. T. Hooker VK7JH (1935-6), A. E. Allen VK7PA (1939 - end of war), L. R. Jensen VK7LJ (1945-49 and 1959), J. Brown VK7BJ (1950), R. D. O'May VK7OM (1951-2), L. W. Edwards VK7LE (1953-4), F. J. Evans VK7FJ (1955-6), G. Aschman VK7GA (1957), P. E. L. Dunne VK7PD (1958), T. A. Allen VK7AL (1960-67), T. Connor VK7CT (1968-9), G. D'Emden VK7ZAS (1970-1), E. J. Cruise VK7EJ (1972).

Secretaries were Messrs. P. O. Fysh 7PF (1925-7), C. Scott 7CS (1928), L. R. Jensen VK7LJ (1929), C. Harrison VK7CH (1929 - 1932), B. Buring VK7RB (1933), H. M. Moorhouse (1933 until the end of the war), J. Brown VK7BJ (1945-8), R. D. O'May VK7OM (1949-50), L. W. Edwards VK7LE (1951), F. J. Evans VK7FJ (1952-3), W. G. Tait (1954-5), M. Hurburgh VK7HM (1956), K. E. Millin VK7KA (1957-62), K. Spiegel VK7KS (1963-5), C. Russel-Green VK7CR (1966), E. Beard VK7EB (1967-8), I. Eadie VK7ZIE (1969-70), M. L. Conway VK7CL (1971-2).

Patrons of the Division have been Messrs. F. W. Medhurst VK7AH and L. J. Crooks, VK7BQ, who is still patron. The accompanying photo shows this 'grand old man' of radio in Launceston.

The group photograph (taken in Dec 1972) shows six old timers all of whom are active on the air - many of them on CW. The dates show the date when first licensed.

Other old timers who are still active include R. M. Barker VK7RM (ex VK5RM 1927), R. Conrad VK7FR (1930), F. E. Nicholls VK7RY (1932), L. F. Clark VK7CK (1932), N. Campbell VK7NC (1932), C. P. Wright VK7LZ (1933), D. H. Fisher VK7AB (1934), T. Connor VK7CT (1972), M. L. D. Conway VK7CL (1972), etc.

(Continued on Page 20)

A group of VK7 Old Timers (with dates originally licensed) — left to right — back row, C. Harrison VK7CH (1927), J. Batchler VK7JB (1932), R. D. O'May VK7OM (1923); front row, C. A. Walch VK7CW (1926), J. C. Milne VK7AG (1921), the late L. R. Jensen VK7LJ (1925).

