

Rare chat for radio's kindred spirits

By MARGARETTA POS

WHEN you've been talking talking through the air to like-minded spirits for "hundreds" of years, it's a shock to meet in the flesh.

But it was a pleasant occasion yesterday when 13 members of the Radio Amateur Old Timers Club met in Hobart for lunch.

To be admitted to the club, members must have been qualified radio amateurs for 25 years — and just four of the Old Timers had chalked up more than 50 years each.

All are members of the Tasmanian branch of the Wireless Institute of Australia — the world's oldest amateur radio society.

"We chat to each other and to others all over the world," said Mr Edgar Nicholls of Midway Point — who has had 56 years on the air.

"And outside the world — we bounce off the moon," chipped in Mr Lew Jarvis of Lenah Valley.

When Mrs Joy Batchler of Sandy Bay got her licence in 1936, she was one of only six female radio amateurs in Australia — although she admits to being a pirate first as did Mr Joe Brown of New Town.

"So the first day I was licensed I went on the amateur frequency inviting people to talk to me and the sergeant major at Anglesea Barracks roared: "Get off the air you flaming pirate!"

Radio amateurs, who are adept at morse code, sometimes find themselves involved in search and rescue



Radio amateurs, from left, Joe Brown, of New Town, Joy Batchler, of Sandy Bay and Edgar Nicholls, of Midway Point, with the sort of home-made transmitter used more than 50 years ago when they started.

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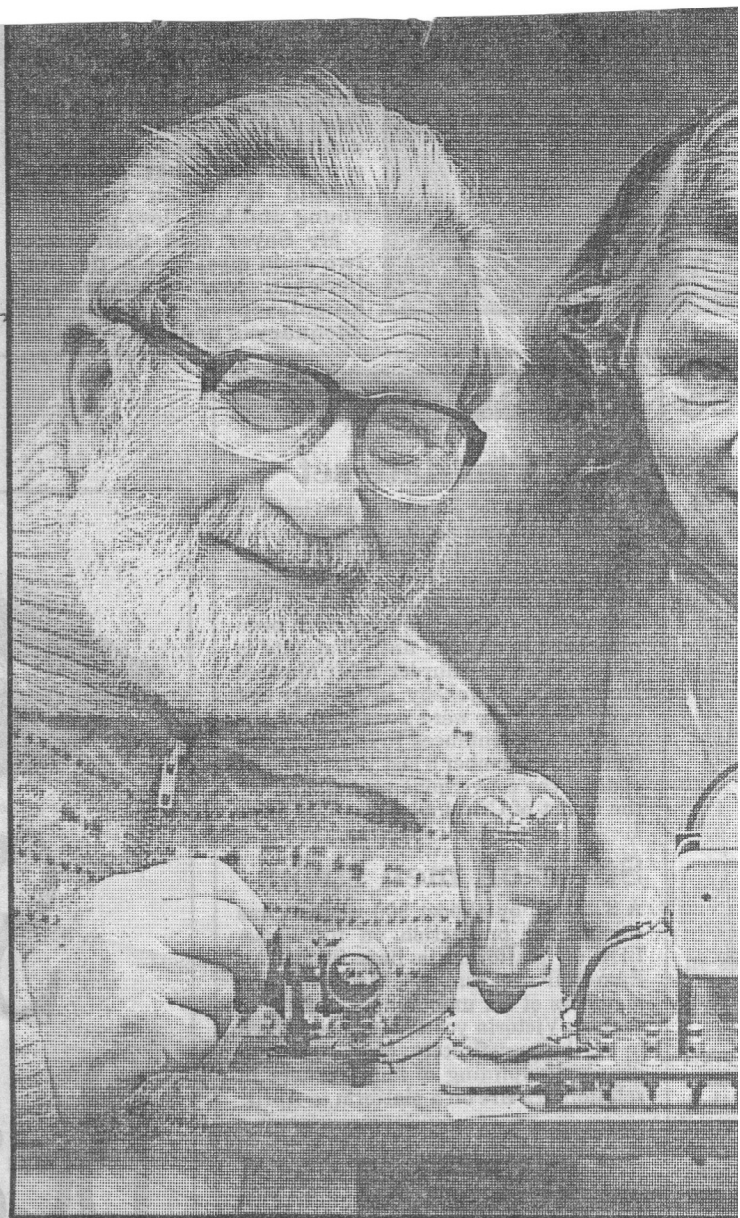
Radio amateurs, who are adept at morse code, sometimes find themselves involved in search and rescue operations.

Mr Jarvis saved a man at the end of his tether in Cape York in 1978, after he picked up a whistled morse code signal for help.

The man didn't have a key and whistled a desperate message to switch to another frequency.

For technical reasons he couldn't speak on the first frequency Mr Jarvis had picked up.

Mr Jarvis likes talking to people all over the world for the sheer fun of it but most of all he enjoys chatting to his son, Brian, also a radio amateur — Brian is an astronomer based in a mountainous region of Chile.



Radio amateurs, from left, Joe Brown, of New Town, Joy Batchler, of Sandy Bay, and the sort of home-made transmitter used.