

Lifestyle

with SHEENA MCKENZIE



Oliver's so happy in his radio shack

OLIVER TILLETT can usually be found in the shed at the bottom of his garden tinkering with the radios he's built from scratch, or chatting with wireless enthusiasts across the world.

The 62-year-old founder and president of the Havering and District Amateur Radio Club admits he can easily disappear to his shed for about five hours a day, building new radios and testing them out – a hobby he has nurtured since he was a young boy.

"Amateur radio was all the rage among school boys in the 50s," Oliver, of Cranbrook Drive, Gidea Park, said.

"I started off making crystal sets – a device made from 80 turns of wire and a toilet roll. I remember rummaging around hedges looking for thrown out wirelesses and stripping them down to see how they worked."

As a youngster Oliver joined the Ilford Amateur Radio Club, but when it became full he launched his own radio club closer to home. That was in 1963.

Oliver was just 17 at the time and is now proud to have seen the club build from 12 members to around 40 members today.

The radio enthusiasts meet each week at the Fairkytes Arts Centre in Hornchurch, and usually have lectures on building wirelesses, installing amateur radio stations, and getting an amateur radio licence. The group also have 'natter nights' where they chat about, you guessed it, amateur radio.

Oliver still remembers the first time he used a radio he had built himself and the joy of tapping into other amateurs' frequencies.

"I heard people chatting and one said he'd be home in a few minutes. I could not believe it, so I rode around trying to work out who it was," Oliver said.

"I came across Roy Stevens, the President of the Amateur Radio Society of Great Britain, driving into his home and I started talking to him.

"He gave me the numbers of other club members like Major John Brown who had designed the B2 spy sets that were dropped down to groups in the occupied territories during World War Two."

For Oliver, the biggest thrill he gets from amateur radio is not speaking to people or listening in on conversations, it's building the radio.



• Oliver Tillett in his radio shack surrounded by the equipment he loves to build

BIGGEST THRILL IS NOT IN SPEAKING, TO PEOPLE, BUT BUILDING THE RADIO

"I wasn't interested in just talking – you can pick up a phone and do that. It's building the equipment, the satisfaction in knowing it works," Oliver said.

"Amateur radio is different today; people are just buying the equipment and talking. But we

were building it from scratch."

While Britain still has around 35,000 amateur radio licensees, Oliver admitted that it is a dying pastime. The former BT engineer lamented that in an age of the internet and social networking sites like Facebook, amateur radio has lost some of the

romantic appeal it had in the immediate post-World War Two era.

"There's no magic to radios anymore," Oliver said. "Now people can walk around watching TV on their mobile phones."

"But it's not the same as talking to someone on equipment you've actually built yourself."

Oliver's passion for transmitter tinkering also spilled into his work life and he worked as a BT engineer for 30 years, testing maritime equipment across the world.

However he still insists building a radio is so simple even a child could do it.

He said: "It really comes down to education and interest."

"A crystal set is so easy to make a three-year-old could do it."

"You start off small and then build it up over the years, adding amplifiers, and antennas."

This year the club will be taking part in world-wide amateur radio contests where groups race to build radios and send Morse code messages over certain frequencies.

For more information visit <http://www.haveringradioclub.co.uk>

Shelley West's Advice

□ MY HUSBAND has had an affair with a woman he works with. He first denied it saying they were just colleagues, but eventually he admitted he had a fling with her.

I kept finding little signs, and it was only when I confronted him, he owned up. It really hurts she is 20 years younger than me. He says he loves me and not her. But they are still working together and I don't know if I can trust him.

Our relationship has been secure for more than 20 years. We have two children who are all but grown-up and I feel my world has been turned upside down.

● I CAN understand why you are hurting. He has let you down badly. Do you still love your husband? If so and he is truly sorry then perhaps you should try and work it out.

You have had a secure relationship to this point and should think carefully before throwing it away. Explain you need to understand why he had the affair before making any important decisions.

Was it really just a fling? Is he trying to come to terms with getting older? These are some questions you need answers to. It may be you could get professional help to assist you both, such as relationship guidance. Check out www.relate.org.uk

□ MY WIFE and I have just discovered we can't have children because of a medical condition.

I found out my wife had an abortion in her teens. I feel it could have been very different had she been more responsible in her youth.

I hate myself for it, but can't help blaming her.

I can see the love seeping out of our relationship, and that hurts as well.

● IT WAS a long time ago your wife had the abortion and it's wrong to hold it against her now.

It was probably one of the most difficult decisions she had to make and she was probably under great pressure.

You need each other's support now. Your wife is trying to come to terms with not having children. Try and work together on this all.

Feelings of blame will pass, if you let them.

□ MY LITTLE boy has been at school a year and hates it.

Every day he pleads with me not to send him. I can't stand this for the next 12 years.

The school he goes to is a good school and staff seem kind and considerate, but he hasn't settled. What can I do?

● SOME children absolutely adore school and some would rather be anywhere else.

First have a good talk with him about how he feels. Ask him what he does and doesn't like about school.

There may be some things you can work with the school to change.

Then have a talk with your child's class teacher and if necessary the head teacher as well.

You need to know that you and the school are doing all you possibly can to help your son settle into school.

If you are still not happy, perhaps you should take a look at some alternative schools in your area.

Different schools can offer different things and suit different children.

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