

Reminiscing

By Graham Parslow

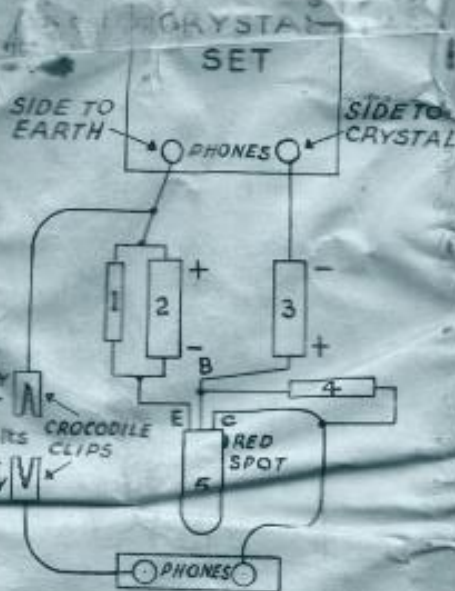
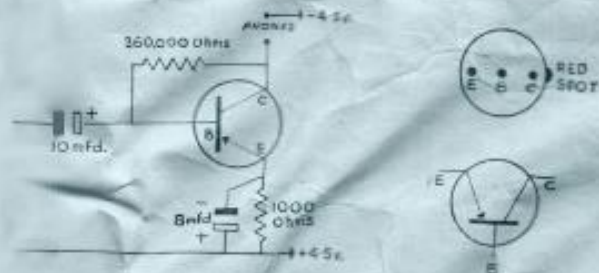
In 1959 I was ten years old in grade six at the Edithburgh Primary school. The hundred students at the school were assigned into combined classes taken by three teachers. We

Increase the volume from your CRYSTAL SET

Do you use a crystal set and you like the volume from it? All you need is this tiny transistor which will give you enormous volume and uses only a 4½-volt flashlight battery. You can use Mullard OC 70 or OC 71 transistor, or any Red Spot transistor from one of the suppliers advertising in the radio journals.

Two points especially to watch: do not get your battery plus and minus the wrong way round, you will ruin your transistor if you do. You will also ruin it if you let the heat run up the wires when soldering. Either get someone to hold the wire in a large pair of pliers whilst you solder so that the pliers conduct the heat away, or lay the pliers firmly on the connecting lead to the transistor so that the heat cannot run into the transistor itself.

Make up your amplifier on a small piece of wood or a "tag-board" which you can buy for a few pence, connect up your phones to it and also your crystal clip on your battery and there you are!



COMPONENTS

(page iii)

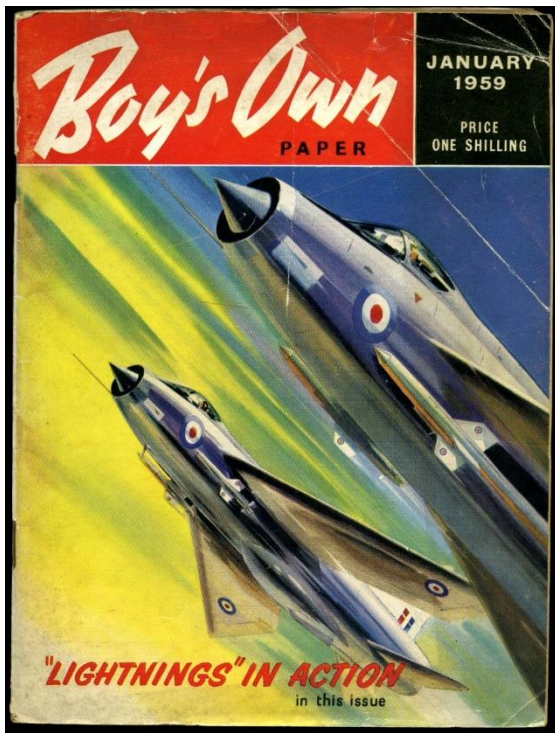
- 1. 10,000 ohms resistor, ½ watt.
- 2. 4 mfd 6 volt capacitor.
- 3. 50 mfd 4 volt capacitor.
- 4. 260,000 ohms resistor, ½ watt.
- 5. Transistor OC 70 or 71 or Red Spot type.

COMPONENTS

For Short Wave Set
(page v, within)

- C.1. 100 pf (or more) Short Wave variable cap.
- C.2. 500 pf solid dielectric variable cap.
- C.3. 50 pf fixed miniature capacitor.
- R.1. 1 megohm fixed resistor, ½ watt.
- R.2. 47,000 ohms fixed resistor, ½ watt.
- Coil. Osborn s/wave white spot T.R.F.
- Valveholder. McMurdo Octal.
- Valve. Mullard E.B.C. 33 (new or surplus).
- Terminal Blocks. A/E and phones (or L.S.)
- H/T Battery. Lantern 6 volt battery. Ever Ready.
- Wood; wire; slow-motion drive; knobs.

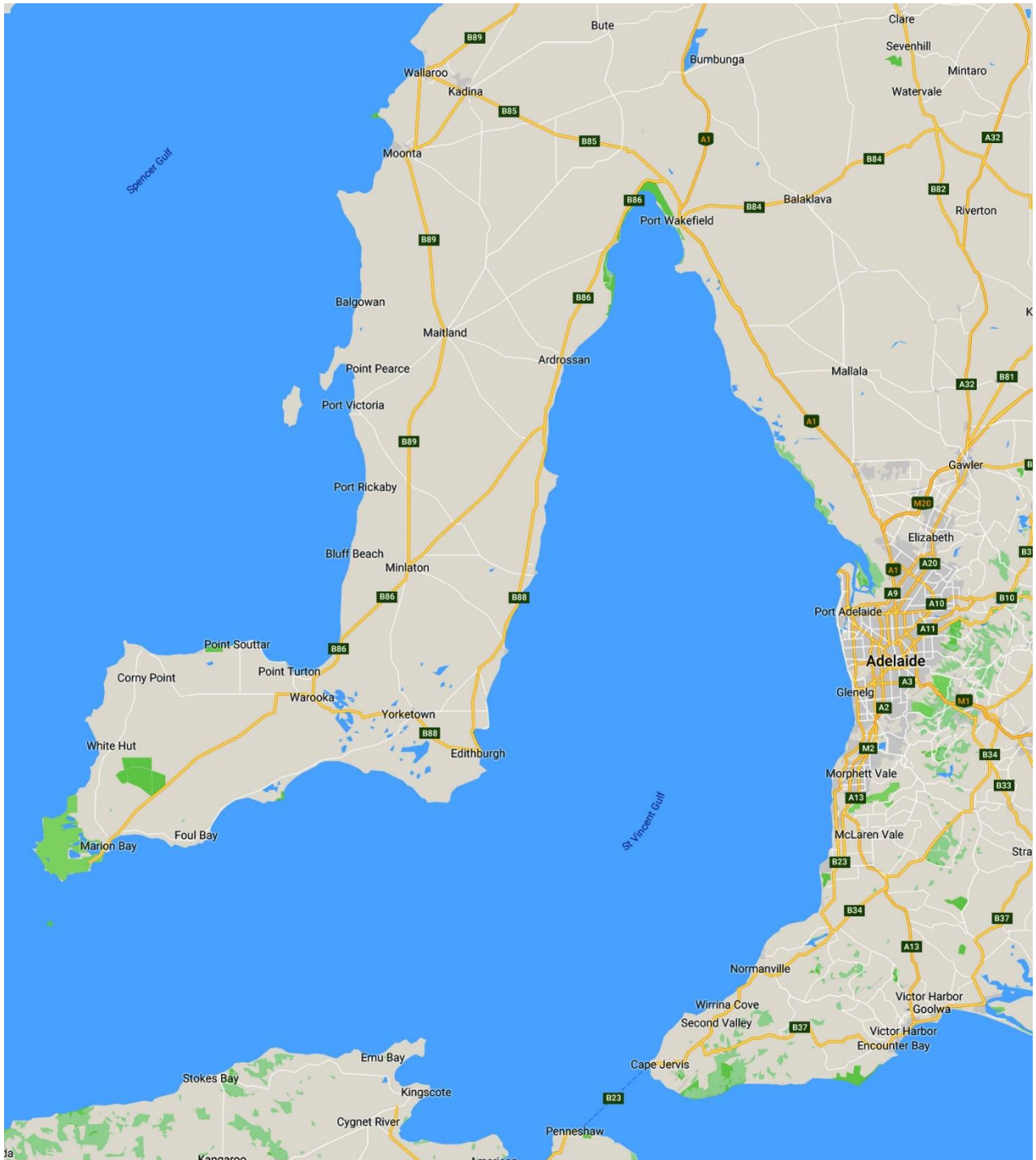
came from the town itself (400 residents) and the local farms. I was a town boy living immediately behind the Edithburgh Institute. The institute opened a public library once a week and one day I borrowed an issue of the *Boys Own Paper*. It nudged me in the direction that would culminate in the hobby of collecting vintage radios.



<http://www.littlestourbooks.com/covers/91751.jpg>

This *Boy's Own Paper* was Volume 81 No. 4 of January 1959. It was published by Lutterworth Periodicals Ltd., Bouverie Street, London. It had colour covers printed on paper, 8¼" x 6¼" and contained 64 pages of text with monochrome illustrations. Most significantly it had a supplement stapled in the centre and titled *Amateur Radio by Gilbert Davey*. It described a one valve radio using a Mullard EBC 33 for receiving short wave in the UK. There were also notes on Morse Code and using the "Q" code. My interest was however firmly fixed on the section titled *Increase the volume from your crystal set*.

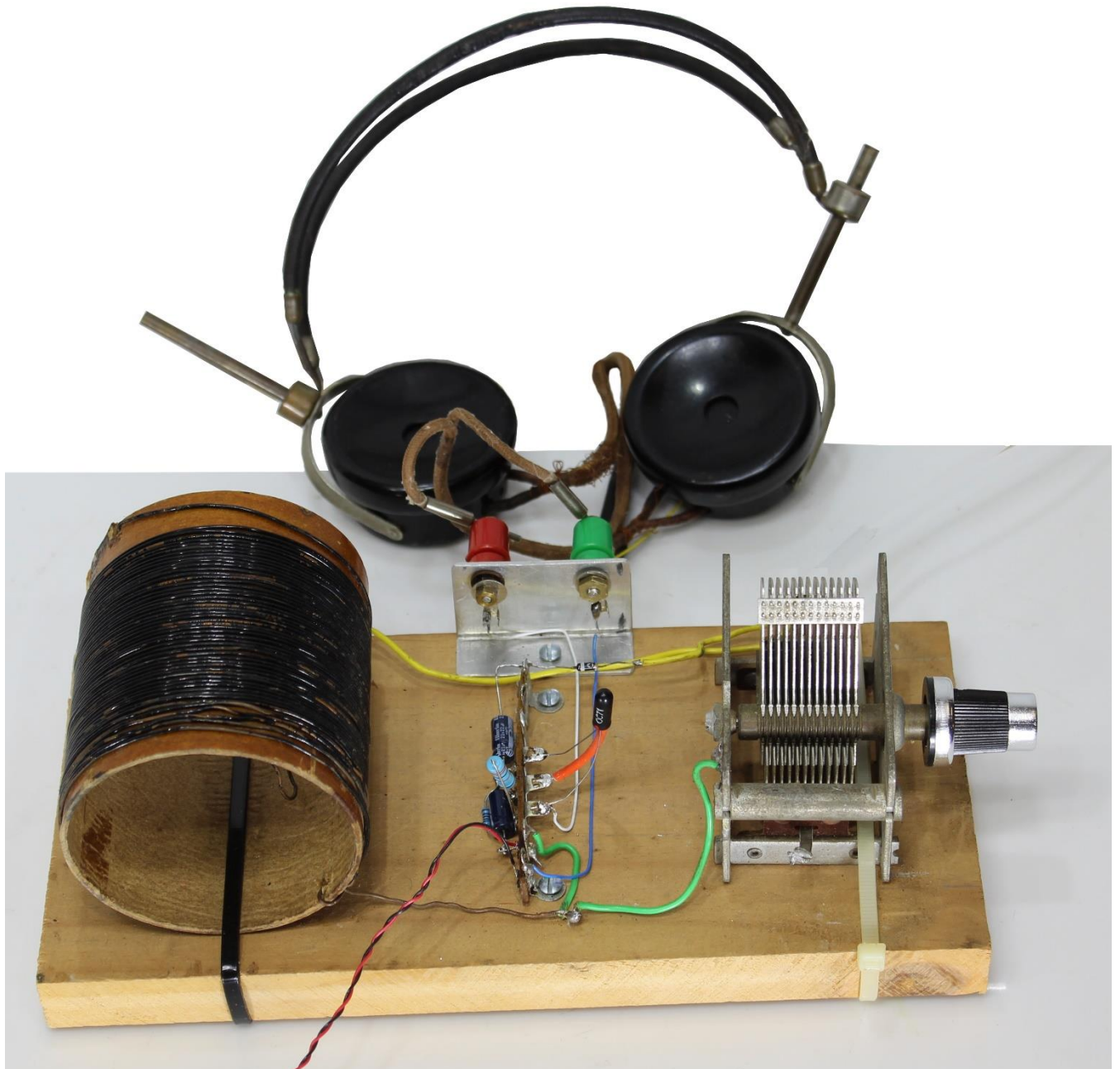
No one else in my town had any interest in these pursuits, so with permission I kept the insert. In conducting a recent purge of my shed filing-cabinet I was reunited with the supplement that had been so important to me 60 years previously. It is printed on light blue paper. To a ten-year-old this was an irresistible project and I very much wanted to increase the volume of my crystal set. I put sticky tape over the fold lines (evident on the copy reproduced here) presumably to stop any rips. If you persevere, all of the text can still be read.



South Australia has three peninsulas, Eyre, Yorke and Fleurieu. Four generations of my family lived at Edithburgh on the heel of Yorke Peninsula, opposite Adelaide across the St Vincent Gulf. Built around 1880, our house was typical of rural South Australia with solid stone walls and chimneys to all rooms. My aerial was strung over the roof between two chimneys and the down wire descended the

chimney into my bed room. I would listen to late night programs lying in bed with the lights out. On a clear day it was possible to see the peak of Mount Lofty in the Adelaide Hills 40 miles across the sea. This is where all commercial transmitting masts were located and this line-of-sight path was adequate to drive a crystal set.

My weekly pocket money at the time was 2/6, if I recall correctly. I was a good saver of my



pocket money and I put aside enough to buy the necessary bits from Gerard and Goodman in Rundle Street Adelaide on a visit to "the big smoke". The OC70 transistor I purchased cost 15/6. This was a minor fortune to me, but it brought great joy at the time.

I cannot precisely recall how effective the amplifier was back then so I got out the bits and made it again.

The crystal set pictured here is made from the same coil and tuning capacitor that I have kept since living in Edithburgh. As a boy I

packaged the crystal set in numerous boxes, but for the current purpose it was assembled as a "bread-board" project. The one transistor amplifier was assembled on a tag strip with battery leads trailing off the board to a bench power supply set at 4.5V. The transistor used was an OC71.

I live about 2km from several of Melbourne's major AM transmitters in Lower Plenty. Two metres of wire for an aerial brings in five stations quite clearly without amplification. The low "Q" of the coil means that selectivity is relatively poor, but even so most stations

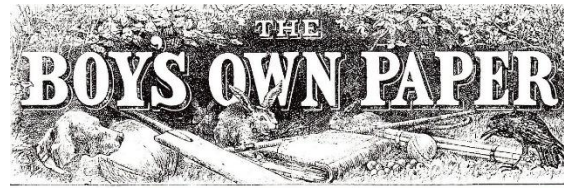
were separated adequately. As a boy I could only have dreamed of having the measuring equipment that is now on my bench. Feeding a 400Hz signal to the one transistor amplifier established a gain of 20dB. 20mV in could output 1mW to the headphones before clipping set in at higher levels. The strong stations were generating 10-15mV of audio from the detector so the amplifier was driven to near peak performance. The effect of around four times louder output was clearly apparent.

Who said “nostalgia isn’t what it used to be”? Anyhow, looking at the 1950s with the eyes of hindsight reveals subtleties that were in no way evident to me at the time.

The *Boys Own Paper* reflects a very UK-centric view of the world. Immediately post-war Australia remained imbued with the ethos of the British Empire and the *Boy's Own* did its patriotic bit to guide boys in the ways of Queen and country (that being England).

The Boy's Own Paper was published from 1879 to 1967. The Wikipedia entry on the magazine gives some insights to the time it was in print. A brief summary follows.

Initially the Religious Tract Society set out to encourage boys in Christian morals during their formative years. The first issue, as shown here, cost one penny and encouraged boys to play football. The contents were adventure stories; nature study; sports and games; puzzles and essay competitions. The first volume's serials included "From Powder Monkey to Admiral, or The Stirring Days of the British Navy". The paper was published weekly until 1913, when it became a monthly. Each year's issues were bound together and sold as the *Boy's Own Annual*.



No. 1.—Vol. 1. SATURDAY, JANUARY 18, 1879. Price One Penny. (ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.)

MY FIRST FOOTBALL MATCH.
By an Old Boy.

It was a proud moment in my existence when Wright, captain of our football club, came up to me in school one Friday and said, "Adams, your name is down to play in the match against Craven."

I could have knighted him on the spot. To be one of the picked "fifteen," whose glory it was to fight the lathes of their school in the Great Clove, had been the leading ambition of my life—I suppose ought to be advanced to confer it—ever since, as a little chap of ten, I entered Turford six years ago. Not a winter Saturday but had seen me either looking on at some big match, or often still scrambling about with a score or so of other juniors in a scratch game. But for a long time, do what I would, I always

seemed as far as ever from the coveted goal, and was half desponding of ever being to win my "first fifteen cap." Luckily, however, I had noticed Wright at a few others of our best players more than once lounging about in the Little Clove where we juniors used to play, evidently taking observations with an eye to business. Under the careful gaze of those heroes, one day I exerted myself as I had never done before? What cared I for backs or bruise so only that I could distinguish myself in their eyes? And never was music sweeter



In 1939 it was taken over by Lutterworth Press, and in 1963 by Purnell and Sons Ltd.

Many prominent authors contributed to the *Boy's Own*. W.G. Grace wrote for several issues, along with Arthur Conan Doyle, Jules Verne and R.M. Ballantyne. Robert Baden-Powell, founder of the Scout Movement, was a regular columnist and urged readers "to live clean, manly and Christian lives". Between 1941-61 there were 60 issues with stories about Biggles by W. E. Johns.

Gilbert Davey (the author of *Increase the volume from your crystal set*), also published a companion book *Fun with Radio* that introduced many youngsters to a future career in Radio and Electronics.

In the 1960s other occasional contributors included Isaac Asimov and the astronomer Patrick Moore, who contributed several articles about the solar system and would answer boys' questions on astronomical matters.

I was more a devotee of *The Eagle* magazine because I enjoyed the comic strips; or to use the current phrase “graphic novels”. 1962

was the pivotal year in which I discovered *Radio, Television and Hobbies*, but that may be a story for another time.

I was very happy to have the childhood I did in a small caring community that lived life in the slow lane. I was full of curiosity and bit by bit I learnt many things from people and books. Now the internet will provide my grandchildren with instant gratification about anything they care to search for or wish to acquire. Times have changed more radically than at any time in two previous millennia, but children are still filled with awe and excitement as they grow. I can imagine my grandchildren asking if my childhood was boring, but they can be assured that it was not. Little things meant a lot.