

'G8JLE calling G8IHP ...'

It sounds like the start of a typical radio ham's technical chat. But this is far from typical. For G8JLE and G8IHP are seeing each other on small television screens miles apart.

G8JLE is television engineer Richard Langer, on the heights above Heeley, Sheffield, and G8IHP is Terry Hadley, an electronics expert at Coldflow Limited, who is at his Nether Edge home, three miles across the valley from Heeley.

Reception is perfect but Richard tells Terry to move down screen a bit (a tip of his head is cut off) and he promptly obliges.

Richard and Terry are the first two TV hams in Sheffield and they are anxious to contact others. Television flows by line of sight and Richard believes it is technically possible for him to link up with Leeds or way down in Lincolnshire. A good aerial is essential and he has a sophisticated one with 48

By Ken Morgan

elements which can be rotated to direct the signal.

Christmas Day super specials from BBC and YTV got low audience ratings with Richard and Terry — it was the first time they had made contact on their own service.

This is a hobby for dedicated enthusiasts with immense expertise ... "you buy a little outfit and then keep wanting more," says Richard.

It is also a costly one. A main receiver is around £500, a video transmitter £270 and a TV camera £100, to name but three items.

"Of course," he adds modestly, "you can save money and build your own apparatus," which he has done.

They both laugh: "We're bachelors, that's why we can do it." Richard is 29 and Terry is 27.

They operate their rigs from their bedrooms and they both gave us a guided tour of the rooms.

"Who's that sinister old rough in the corner that needs a haircut?" I was thinking. Then I realised it was me. Photographer Norman Sabine made a beautiful picture on his first appearance on amateur TV.

The TV hams operate on the same sort of licence and under the same strict control as the original radio hams. There is a two-part exam before the licence is granted and the hams are forbidden to discuss religion, politics or commerce on the air. And obscenities are also banned.

Richard was uncertain if there would ever be any commercial application for what is a hobby which is still very much in its pioneering days: "I had envisaged a sort of TV telephone link for checking on inaccessible old relatives or friends," he said.

On occasion, he finds his ham rig useful at his workshop when he is tracking down some elusive fault on a TV set.



TV ham Richard Langer ... or G8JLE.