

Calais en Fete

FROM MARCONI'S OWN CORRESPONDENT

THE MAJOR PART played by the Company in the historical first-across-the-seas television broadcast, made from Calais on 27 August, was responsible for your correspondent and photographer travelling to Calais to cover the story. We both felt superior to our fellow passengers when we arrived at Calais, for (thanks to the good offices of the B.B.C.) we were gratified to find excellent facilities already laid on; we were disentangled from a long queue of travellers and whisked through passport and travel departments ahead of the crowd. "*Quel service!*" we remarked, as we entered the Customs shed, followed by a porter bearing our luggage. But our luggage proved too much for the genial French authorities, and it was four and a half hours later that we finally came to an understanding, for the two English messieurs were carrying three expensive

cameras, boxes of flash bulbs, and (*sacré nom de Jean Sablon*) a complete high-speed stroboscopic lighting outfit.

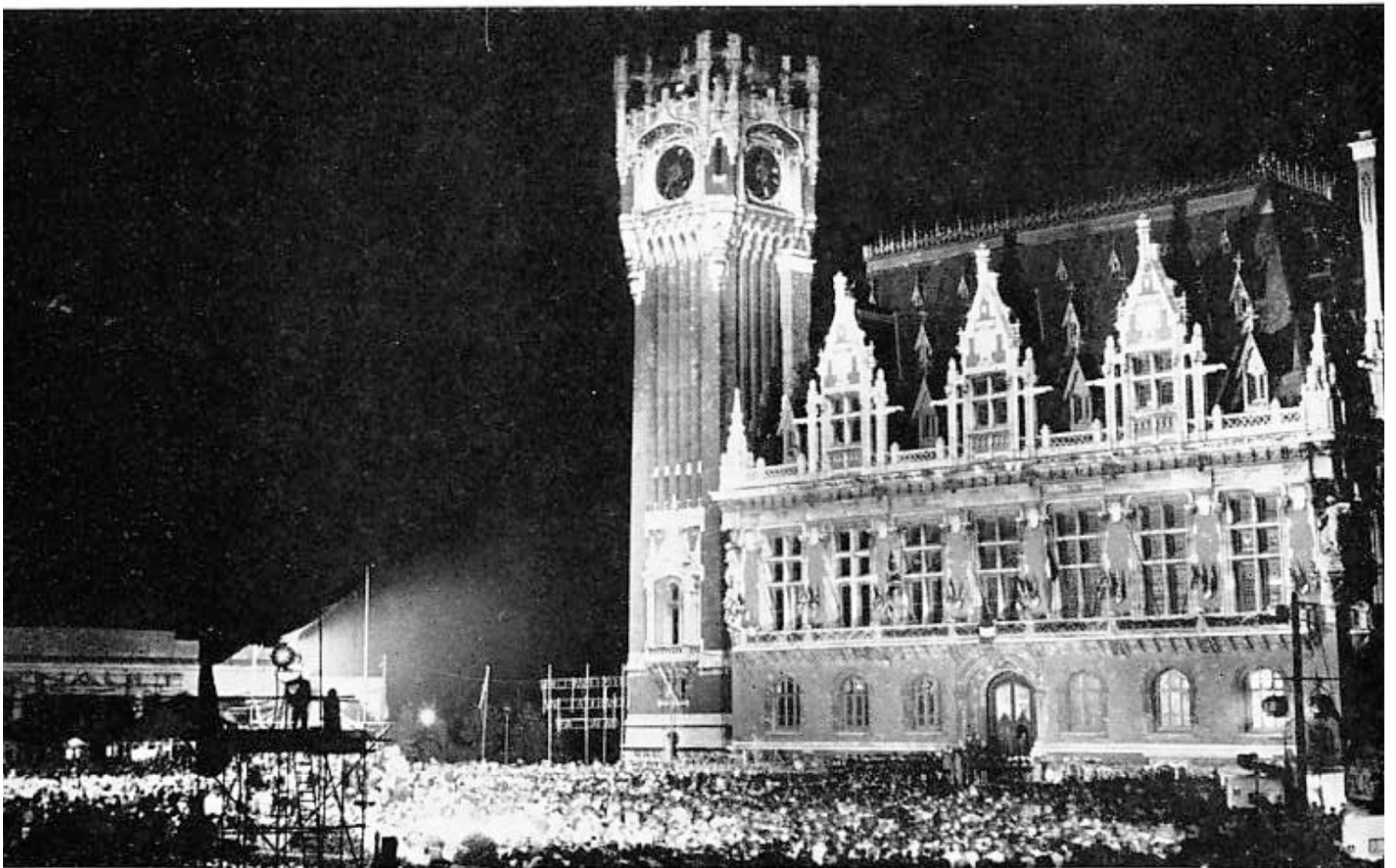
We are firmly convinced that one of the most difficult things to do is to explain to a Frenchman what a stroboscopic lighting outfit is . . . particularly if one cannot speak French.

We finally got clear and pressed on to the Calais Town Square where the people of Calais were preparing their fête to celebrate the centenary of the laying of the first submarine cable, and where the No. 1 Outside Television Broadcasting Unit of the B.B.C. were preparing to televise the event for British viewers.

Three Marconi television cameras were installed in the Square, one on a large stage, another on a smaller stage and the third on a high tower.

Dense crowds in the town square watching the television programme staged in front of the Town Hall.

[By courtesy of the B.B.C.]



In case of bad weather a fourth Marconi television camera, mounted on a dolly, was sited in the banqueting hall of the Town Hall, but good fortune was with us and this camera was not needed.

One of the most outstanding features of the whole installation was the position of the transmitter (the latest 30 watt Marconi "suitcase" transmitter). This was installed in the belfry of the Town Hall Clock Tower some 300 feet above street level. A line of coaxial cable stretched from this balcony to the scanner-van parked below.

I took a party of Press photographers up to this vantage point—by way of a formidable staircase—in order to obtain photographs of the installation up there, and show scenes of the Square down below. We all felt it rather strange to see the normal H type television receiving aerial mounted high above this French port, for not only did the B.B.C. transmit pictures from Calais, but they also received the programme direct from Alexandra Palace. One of the microwave links in use between Dover and London was of Marconi manufacture.

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A fun-fair had been erected around one side of the Square and a circus was installed on the opposite side. As most of the sideshows, the rides of the fun-fair and the circus had their own P.A. equipment, you can well imagine the incredible mixture of sound that assailed the ear when everything was going in full swing. Six or seven different musical items blared forth simultaneously from the swings and the roundabouts and the sound man stood in the middle of a large stage desperately repeating "*deux, trois, quatre, cinq*, testing for sound. . ."

By lunch time on Sunday, 27th, there was a considerable crowd in the Square watching the final preparations. By six o'clock the Square was crowded, and by

eight o'clock it was impossible to move anywhere. We were fortunate in that we had chosen the large platform for our vantage point during the broadcast. It was on this platform that the fisherwoman of Calais and her grand-daughter were interviewed by Mr. Richard Dimbleby, and it was between this platform and the main stage that we saw the torchlight procession and the circus rough-riders opening the broadcast.

Monsieur Gaston Berthe, Mayor of Calais, spoke to the crowd and to the British television audience. There was a gymnastic display, choral items, folk dancing, a circus balancing act, a French compère-comedienne, Lieta Frekal with her songs, and a firework display; but who could visualise a French fête that did not include a mannequin parade—and that is just what we had. Seven beautiful French *demoiselles* paraded a series of wonderful Paris fashions, and it was at this point that Mr. Richard Dimbleby (who was following the actual transmission from a Marconi camera and not watching the stage) really gave of his best and showed himself to be a connoisseur of fashion.

This first-across-the-seas television broadcast, which was also the first broadcast from one country to another, was a great success and a memorable occasion.

Not content with showing the rest of the world how they lead in television technique, the B.B.C. followed up by taking the Marconi cameras down to the quay the following Wednesday, and transmitting back to England a programme which featured the arrival of the Golden Arrow at Calais.

The B.B.C. has earned the highest order of congratulation for their enterprise and endeavour, and the Marconi Company and its workers are proud to have played a part in this great achievement.