

The First Time at Sea

THERE IS a strange, almost indefinable "something" about a live television broadcast, which is absent from a televised film. The former has a sense of immediacy, of course, which the filmed version lacks, but there is something more to it than that.

Maybe it is that the subconscious daemon, which is in us all, gets a kick out of watching for the unrehearsed incident; the misadventure which we know would be edited off the air in the canned version. Whatever it is, it gives a certain sparkle to the performance.



Particularly is this the case with an "action" Outside Broadcast. Certain O.B.'s depend on it a very good deal; the race meeting or the football match, for instance, but here the reason is more apparent. The appeal of the unknown is very much to the fore, for only the most hardened enthusiast would want to see a series of horse races if he already knew from the papers the ignominious placings of his fancies.

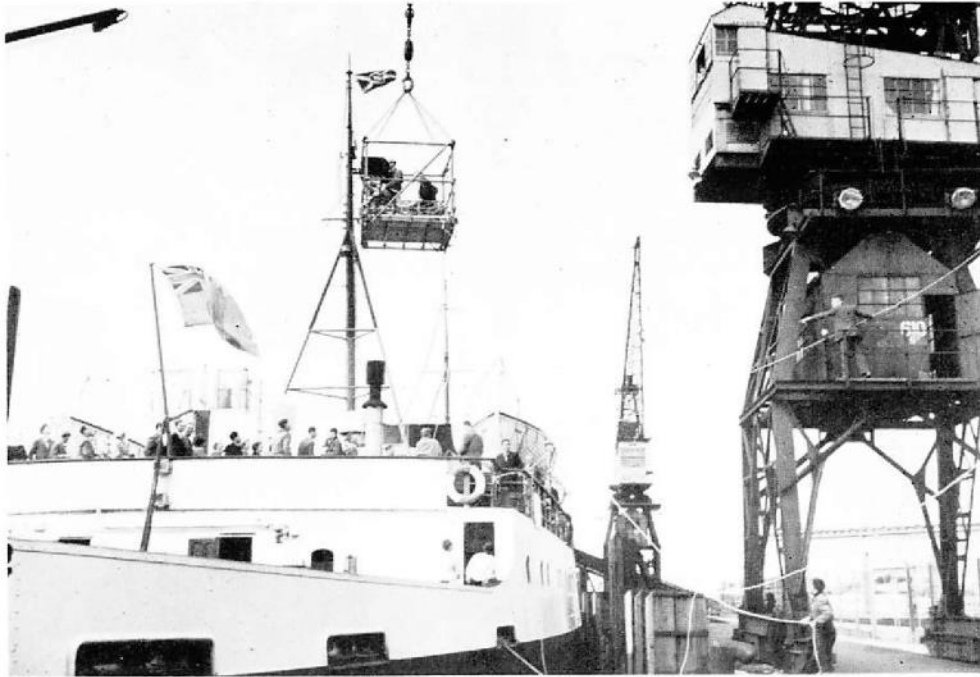
For certain events, of course, such as newsreels, filming is so far inevitable. The timing of a particular event may

make it inconvenient to screen it at the instant it is taking place. Economics too load the dice heavily against the live programme; it would obviously be impracticable to transport the whole paraphernalia of TV equipment to the Shetlands to get a couple of minutes interview with a centenarian, apropos her views on the younger generation.

There is, though, a third category of Outside Broadcast which comes in between the two. This, for want of a better term, might be called an experimental type of programme. It is essentially a breaking of new ground, or a stunt of some kind. Such a feature is not news in the everyday sense; it could be of equal interest a month later. In such a case, provided the event occurs at a reasonable hour, the programme people have an alternative to face. Shall it be filmed? Or shall it be "live"?

A Marconi camera (left) in operation on a wing of the bridge of the Channel car ferry Lord Warden, during the B.B.C. television broadcast from the vessel. Below is the equipment from the O.B. van, installed in a control room in the stern below the car deck





The second camera being hoisted by a crane to get an overall view of Boulogne Harbour

Remember, the viewing public generally is only interested in results, and what to an engineer may be a technical triumph may be only a very dull programme to the majority of viewers. Remember too that such experiments almost invariably involve a great deal of technical complexity. Under these circumstances it is a bold man who eschews the line of least resistance and elects to do it "live" rather than play safe and put it in a can.

As a case in point there is the recent cross-channel telecast from the s.s. *Lord Warden*, which made history as being the first occasion on which a transmission has taken place from a moving ship at sea. Any ship, however spacious, has certain finite limitations as a TV studio, and not the least of the problems must be that of getting the pictures without getting in the way of those responsible for the safe working of the vessel. Add to this the technicalities of the actual

transmission, and you have a strong argument for a filmed sequence.

But not for the O.B. boys of the B.B.C. They ran their combined power, transmitter and aerial vehicle on to the car deck of the *Lord Warden*, hoisted the fire-escape aerial mast and proceeded to push out vision signals from Boulogne to Swingate, on the cliffs of Dover, whence they were sent to London by radio links. The sound signals were sent from the ship to Swingate by frequency modulated VHF transmitter, additional sound and vision receivers being installed on the eastern arm of Dover Harbour to take over when the *Lord Warden* was close in-shore and thereby screened from Swingate by the cliffs. Standard O.B. inter-com radio telephone equipment carried engineering control traffic between ship and shore, while a frequency-modulated VHF transmitter at Swingate took care of the 50 c/s locking tone and production

Showing Europe Our Colour

A demonstration of compatible colour TV was given by this Company to delegates of the European Broadcasting Union. With B. N. McLarty, Engineer-in-Chief, is L. C. Jesty, Chief of Television Research (right)



In the demonstration the equipment was operated to British 405-line, 25-frame standards, but its design can equally be applied to foreign standards. Operating are C. E. Bonner and C. J. Matley, Television Research



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control messages to the *Lord Warden*.

A store room near the stern of the ship was turned into a control room, the equipment being removed from one of the B.B.C.'s Mobile Control Rooms for the purpose. Three cameras were used; two on the bridge, one of which was subsequently moved to the engine-room, while the third, a mobile, had a roving commission. At Boulogne it was run into a tubular steel cage and, accompanied by a cameraman and producer Berkeley Smith, was swung high into the air by a dockside crane to obtain an overall view of the harbour, while later it descended to terra firma, if a rolling deck may be so termed, to televise scenes on board.

The weather, although adding to the programme value, did nothing to ease the technical problems attendant upon the transmission. Although the weather was fine the English Channel decided to serve up one of its own special brands of cross-seas, the sort which is calculated to give a ship not only an up-and-down motion but a sideways roll at the same time. Even the *Lord Warden*, which is fitted with stabilisers, is not a hundred per cent proof against this treatment, and one found it difficult to envy the job of the cameraman perched on a wing of the bridge. Indeed, just after leaving Boulogne a large size in waves crashed upon commentator Richard Dimpleby, the cameraman and camera, strewing the two latter along the deck, fortunately without serious injury to either. It says much for the rugged construction of both that they were in action again very shortly after the incident.

All three cameras were of our manufacture, as were the camera control units and the vision transmitter. So once again Chelmsford has helped to make history: for this was a "first time" occasion, and one which translated splendidly to viewing screens in homes all over Britain.

W. J. BAKER