



# A DATE WITH MARCONIDATA

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A TELEPHONE call between London and Copenhagen costs 3s. 6d. a minute, and for the same amount you can have a fraction of a second over a minute and a half telex time. There is no cheap rate, and no reduction for large organizations with mammoth accounts.

To speed up calls is therefore of urgent importance all the time to companies which have to maintain a constant stream of long-distance communication. This need can now be met by Marconidata, developed at Writtle, a means of converting data punched on to paper tape into a form suitable for transmission over international switched-telephone networks. It means that messages can be passed over the telephone circuits at up to twenty times the speed of the current telex service. The first major data transmission service to operate from this country to Europe over the public telephone network was installed for the Esso Petroleum Company in London and in five north European

RIGHT: The 94,247-ton (d.w.) tanker 'Esso London' bringing in crude oil for Fawley refinery. The picture was taken as she was passing down the Nab Channel on her way into Southampton Water [Esso photograph]

LEFT: The two Marconidata terminals at Esso's European headquarters at Stratton Street in London. Taped messages come in at fixed times every hour from Copenhagen, The Hague, Hamburg, Brussels and Paris at speeds of up to twenty times that of the normal telex service



capitals this year. Plans are made to extend the network to Rome, Madrid, and Libya.

Esso's Code and Cable Section in London acts as their distribution centre for the whole of the eastern hemisphere. Until recently messages from affiliated companies in Europe were transmitted to London almost entirely via the international telex system. Traffic was increasing to such a pitch that a faster method had to be found. After stringent evaluation of equipment made by several different manufacturers, Ken Green, who is in charge of their C. and C. Section, plumped for Marconidata H6010/H6011 terminals.

Esso offices in Copenhagen, Hamburg, The Hague, Brussels, and Paris are each booked to call London at a certain time each hour. Telex messages from their own regions are coming in all day, straight into equipment which converts them to tape. All these tapes are then fed in 'back to back' to the H6010/H6011 transmitter receiver which puts

them all on to one master tape—with, of course, start-of-message signals indicated. The master tape is then put into the transmitter ready for the appointed transmission time to London. The moment telephone contact is established, London announces the number of messages for transmission, and the European office does likewise. Without any further speech London starts its tape. As soon as the European capital has automatically counted off the noted number of messages it switches off its receiver and starts the return transmission. Similarly, on completion of the second transmission, both ends ring off at once. In this way a ten-minute call can easily exchange ten thousand words without wasting a second.

Although Esso's London office works round the clock, the European branches do not, and it is proposed that we modify their receivers for auto-answering at night.

These equipments are manufactured at Wembley to



*One of the most attractive capitals in the world, Copenhagen has many waterways. While on his tour of the Esso branch-offices in Europe where Marconidata terminals are installed, Pat took this photograph from the island of Amager looking towards the main part of the city on Zealand [Pat Freeman]*

very high standards and many of them and their fore-runners—the H6000 series, made at Basildon—are now in service. No matter how good an equipment it must be backed up by an adequate maintenance organization, and this posed rather a problem as Esso covers such a wide European area. However, Chris Leahy, Chief of Systems Group, made light of this by using the resources of our established agents. After the initial setting-up operation, I was to take over as the link between the agents and Line Communications Division at Writtle, so Ken

*The apparently communal old bikes in Copenhagen. People seem to take one when needed, says Pat, and casually leave it at journey's end [Pat Freeman]*



Green, Chris Leahy, and I visited the capitals in turn to finalize various points and to make personal contact with the agents' engineers.

Paris was the first capital on the visiting-list and our agent there is C.R.M. After talks at their headquarters we drove to the new Esso building on the outskirts of Paris, where we watched the Marconidata being operated by girls with the utmost skill and dexterity. This was before the strike but sightseeing was out as time was short, and we went straight on to Hamburg. Our agents there are Debeg, and the service manager, Herr Erler, has had a lot of experience servicing Marconi equipment on many of the ships that throng the huge port. We had a very enjoyable evening there with German friends at a restaurant where a four-piece band was 'oompah-ing' to a packed house.

A few days after returning from Hamburg we were off again, this time to Rotterdam to meet our agents A.N.R.U. Chris and I flew from Southend and landed at Ostend where the aircraft taxied close to the airport buildings to let off two passengers; within five minutes all four remaining passengers were airborne for Rotterdam. There we met Mr. Reitsma, who is a well-known visitor here at

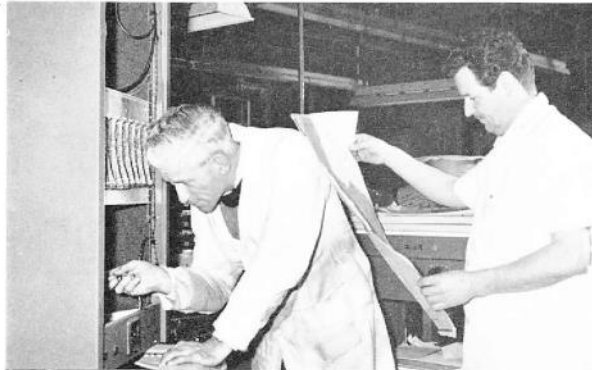
Chelmsford. His organization is responsible for the maintenance of the Marconidata equipment both at The Hague and at Brussels and at both these places we again witnessed the efficient handling by girls of the message traffic to London via our data links.

The car ride from The Hague to Brussels was pleasant as it took us through the flat, diked countryside of Holland and over the border, where we slowed down only to show the Customs officer the driver's passport, to the almost English landscape of Belgium. The only jarring note on the three-hour ride was caused by the awful cobbled streets which abound in Belgium.

Copenhagen I visited on my own to see our Danish agents Sophus Berendsen. Here I was more fortunate in that I had almost a morning for sight-seeing, and I saw quite a lot of this beautiful city, including the small island of Amager where the airport lies. What amused me was the incredibly ancient bicycles which lined the streets. There are thousands of these old contraptions, and it seemed to me that anyone in need simply helped himself and left it at his journey's end.

Travelling to all these capitals brought home to me how worldwide is the name Marconi and the high esteem in which it is held. In Ken Green's own words, he has 'not the slightest doubt that the choice of Marconidata for the Esso system was the right one'.

English Electric has just ordered three equipments for a customer in Bulgaria, and next month Marconidata will be receiving a lot of publicity in the communications world, as we have been invited by the G.P.O. to provide equipment for their stand at the exhibition of the International Federation for Information Processing in Edinburgh, where it will be demonstrated daily, operating between Edinburgh, Europe, and the U.S.A., to show the capabilities of international datel-working.



RIGHT, TOP: At Writtle, Pat Freeman (with tape, right) who was in charge of Marconidata H6010 development at Writtle; Ian Rogers, left, who worked with him on it, and Dave Starmer, one of the two engineers who installed the Esso order in London and in northern Europe. The other installation engineer, Alf Holmes, missed the picture due to an injured hand

CENTRE: Wembley assembly of Marconidata equipment. Leslie Woods assembles a unit while Bill Liddle, chargehand, checks a point on the drawing

BOTTOM: At Wembley, a Marconidata transmitter and receiver being given a final test by P. Pavlou and Y. Ip-Min-Wan, seated