

First TV picture seen in Minehead?

April 1949

I had kept in touch with a number of friends in Minehead, the seaside town in Somerset to which I, together with my brother Alan, had been evacuated at the outbreak of WW2 and it was probably through Charles Bryant, son of the owner of one of Minehead's hotels and Secretary of the West Somerset Radio Society, that I was invited to demonstrate TV reception in Minehead. So, shortly after giving two talks about TV to my BOC colleagues I took the TV set I had built to illustrate the talks to the County School, Minehead, at which my London school had been based during the war. The occasion was an Arts Festival in which the Radio Society was exhibiting.

Minehead is 170 miles from the only TV transmitter at Alexandra Palace so line-of-sight reception was out of the question. The TV signal had to be obtained by reflection from the ionosphere so reception was very variable and indeed might not be obtained.

I had built a pre-amplifier to boost a weak signal and had been allocated one of the school laboratories to set out the equipment, the local enthusiasts having already put up an aerial.



On the day, a TV signal was received and demonstrated as described in the subsequent West Somerset Newsletter.

THE WEST SOMERSET RADIO SOCIETY.

CIRCULAR NEWS LETTER. May, 1949.

FIELD TEST.

The Society carried out a short test of portable working from a point near Bratton Ball on North Hill, Minehead on 16th. April which proved most successful. The help received from Mr. J. P. Hawker (G3VA) Assistant Secretary of the Radio Society of Great Britain was much appreciated.

ARTS FESTIVAL.

This event was also a great success and the Festival was visited by over 2,600 persons. The Radio Section was well stewarded by our own members and several came great distances to attend, particularly Mr. H.V.Beck.

Besides gear displayed, demonstrations were given of Amateur Radio from G3SB/A (among the stations contacted was G5AK in Taunton) and a demonstration of Television by Mr. Beck. Despite the distance (170 miles from Alexandra Palace) both vision and sound were clearly received several times and only on one or two occasions were no signals picked up.

The Hon. Secretary has received the following letter from Mr. Beck:

H.V.BECK, B.Sc., Grad.I.E.E.,
CONSULTANT
ELECTRONIC and ELECTRICAL
ENGINEER.

49, St. Quintin Ave.
London, W.10.

May 3rd. 1949

Dear Charles,

I am writing to ask you, as Secretary of the West Somerset Radio Society, to convey my sincere thanks to the many people who assisted me in my demonstration of television in Minehead.

When I arrived in Minehead I found many of the services I required "laid on" and in this connection, I should like to thank Mr. Steel, Mr. Tuffin and Mr. Bendell for their willing co-operation.

I very much enjoyed the experiment and I may say that I found the discussions with the Society members most stimulating.

Yours sincerely,
H.V.BECK.

October 1949

I visited the Radiolympia Exhibition and sent a report on it to Charles Bryant:-

From the West Somerset Radio Society Newsletter

RADIOLYMPIA 1949. Harold Beck has contributed the following report which gives a more personal angle on the Exhibition than most accounts.

"Radiolympia 1949 was very definitely a TV exhibition, very little attention being paid to the TX "ham". However, since Minehead has become the centre of long distance TV research, I have no hesitation in making this an almost exclusively TV report.

The B.B.C., no doubt, look forward to Radiolympia because, for ten days, they have the use of a studio twice as large as in Alexandra Palace. Provision is made for the visitor to examine TV production technique - the studio may be seen during actual televising operations from a gallery above and the production control room may be inspected through glass windows. Transmissions may be viewed in television alleys, demonstration rooms and manufacturers' stands.

The "view in daylight" campaign did not receive much support from TV alley. The only lighting was a faint blue background - making bluish screens appear white and the white screens appear sepia. Sets produced by the E.M.I. group could easily be picked out by their apparent colour.

C.R.T. sizes varied from 9" to 15" and one or two TV receivers with 15" x 12" projection screens were shown. The general trend was towards the 12" tube, some manufacturers producing table models with this size screen. Although the use of RF EHT supplies and moulded plastic optical parts has overcome many of the economic disadvantages of the projection system, the screen brightness is still lower than the directly viewed type. This is offset by the low tube replacement cost and increased viewing comfort and there is little doubt that projection TV will become the standard method of reception.

The demonstration rooms were noteworthy innovations at this year's exhibition, although during TV transmissions, they turned into viewing rooms rather than listening rooms. Acoustical demonstrated a corner reproducer with ribbon speaker for "top". The reproduction was very realistic and although a bass resonance was noticed, this was probably due to the flimsy construction of the walls.

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