

# FAX comes to the City

A facsimile transmission link has been installed on a trial basis between Greenly House and Cayzer House in the city. The equipment—known as Fax<sup>®</sup>—produces an electrostatic copy (facsimile) in one building, of a message or document placed on the machine in the other building.

The new system, recommended by the organisation and methods department, enables the telecommunications staff to be re-grouped in the main centre in Cayzer House, providing better coverage and reducing requirements for temporary operators.

Facsimile transmission is by no means new: it was invented by Alexander Bain (a Scot) in 1842 and a commercial system linked some French cities in 1865. For many years photographs for newspapers have been transmitted by this method.

Fax has also been used for certain specialised applications, such as the transmission of weather charts. More recently manufacturers have aimed at the office equipment market.

Most machines can transmit to another machine over the GPO telephone lines, and provided both are compatible they do not have to be of the same make. Incompatibility has been a problem in the past, restricting the growth of inter-company Fax communication.

Unlike Telex, the equipment does not need a skilled operator. Small portable machines are now on the market which can be taken into a public telephone box and

## When the postman went to sea with Union-Castle

In the September 1974 issue of the *Philatelic Journal of Great Britain* there is an article written by Bryan Hunt about the UK/South African Sea Post Office, 1913/14. The author was assisted by Brig. J. A. Hunter of Union-Castle in unearthing facts little known even inside the company. We are grateful to the author and editor for permission to extract the following story, prepared for CLANSMAN by Sydney Smith.

which operate acoustically through the headset. By dialing the number of his office Fax a salesman, for example, could transmit a copy of his report within minutes, together with any explanatory drawings.

There must be a great future in business use, both within organisations and inter-company, records Eric Kings. Telex has the advantage on line costs, but Fax could well replace Telex eventually. Some day it might even be part of household equipment. Your morning newspaper might quietly print out overnight on your own machine—possibly even your mail.

\*Jargon for FACSIMILE (fak-sim'i-li-ni-), an exact copy, as of handwriting; adj., exactly corresponding; v.t., to make a facsimile of, to reproduce.

The idea of establishing sea sorting post offices on board the Southampton/South Africa mail ships was mooted as early as May 1907 when plans were being made for a new mail agreement. The Union-Castle mail contract was due to expire in September 1910, but it was in fact extended to 1912, and the Sea Post Office was inaugurated in September 1913.

Experience with the transatlantic ships had proved that mail sorting on board was both financially worth while and time saving. For the South African ships agreement in principle was finally reached in 1913. This had involved a compromise by both Governments. Now the mailships were to sail from Cape Town on Saturday, while the normal Saturday departure from Southampton remained unchanged. In July 1913 a final co-ordinating conference was held between Mr. James (Postmaster at Southampton) the Union-Castle Line and the head post office in London. The *Pall Mall Gazette* of August 11 gave the first official notification.

In 1913 there were nine ships regularly engaged in the mail service, while a tenth was held in reserve to fill the gap in the event of any ship being temporarily withdrawn. All ten were to be fitted with special mail sorting accommodation, and cabins were to be provided on board for two sorters from the Southampton head post office. In the early stages, a South African postal official was to accompany them to familiarise them with South African geography and the South African postal system.

It was first agreed that the sorters would sell postage stamps, but it was later found this could more conveniently be handled



■ F. E. Knott (communications, GH) shows how you get the message from the new facsimile transmission link in the City. Picture: S. Walker.