



# Life and Times in Outside Broadcasts

By Brian G8GQS



# Where did it all start?

Here is possibly the first OB ever by Baird at the Epsom Racecourse. Apart from being a remarkable achievement for mechanically scanned TV, it is thought that this is the origin of the word "Scanner"





## 1937 "Electronic" Scanner MCR1 or 2

These had the same control equipment in them that was used at Alexander palace. This took up most of the interior.



There were just 3 picture monitors installed at the front.  
Note the easy access given by the fold up/down sides.





## 1948 Scanner MCR3 by Pye



**This first post war BBC scanner was made by Pye Ltd. and it set the pattern for the next 10 OB units.**





## 1948 Scanner MCR3 by Pye

Much progress had been made and the equipment in this first post war OB van shows the traverse layout with the production team looking over the shoulders of the vision crew.



The production team of 4, typically:- engineering manager, sound engineer, director & production assistant. Sat in a row and in front are the 4 vision control engineers

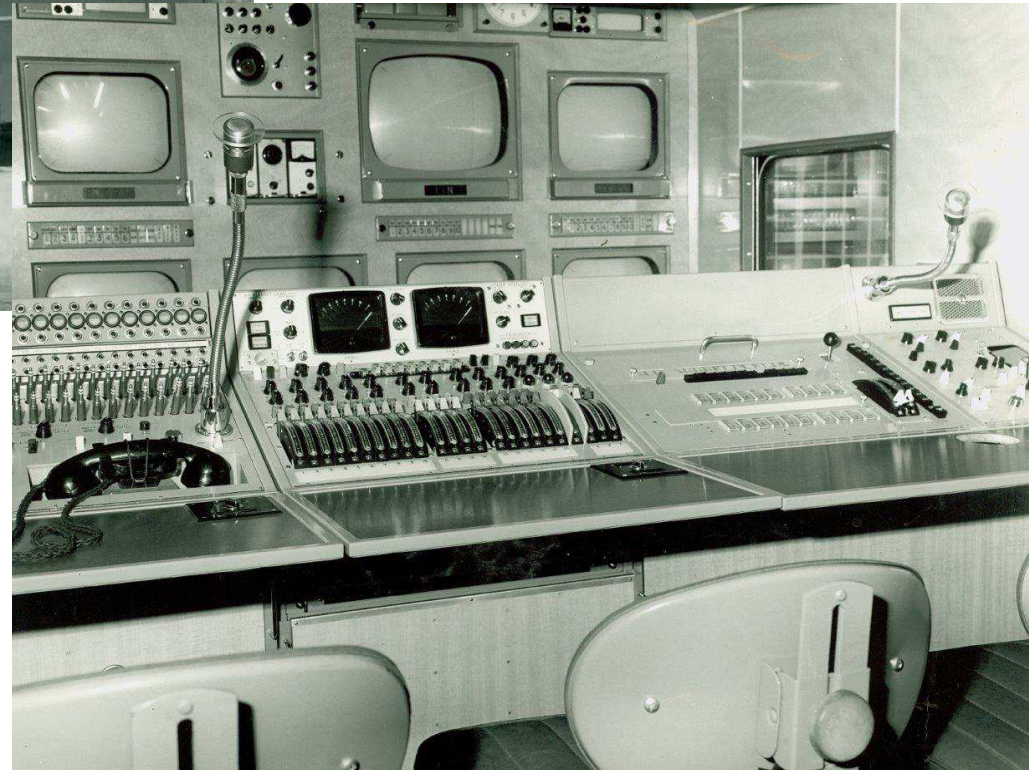


## The 1963 Scanner MCR21 by Pye



The BBC returned to a rigid vehicle for this series of 10 OB vans, they were the last of monochrome vans.

The transverse internal layout remained much the same as earlier Vans








## The advent of colour & the Type 2 scanner

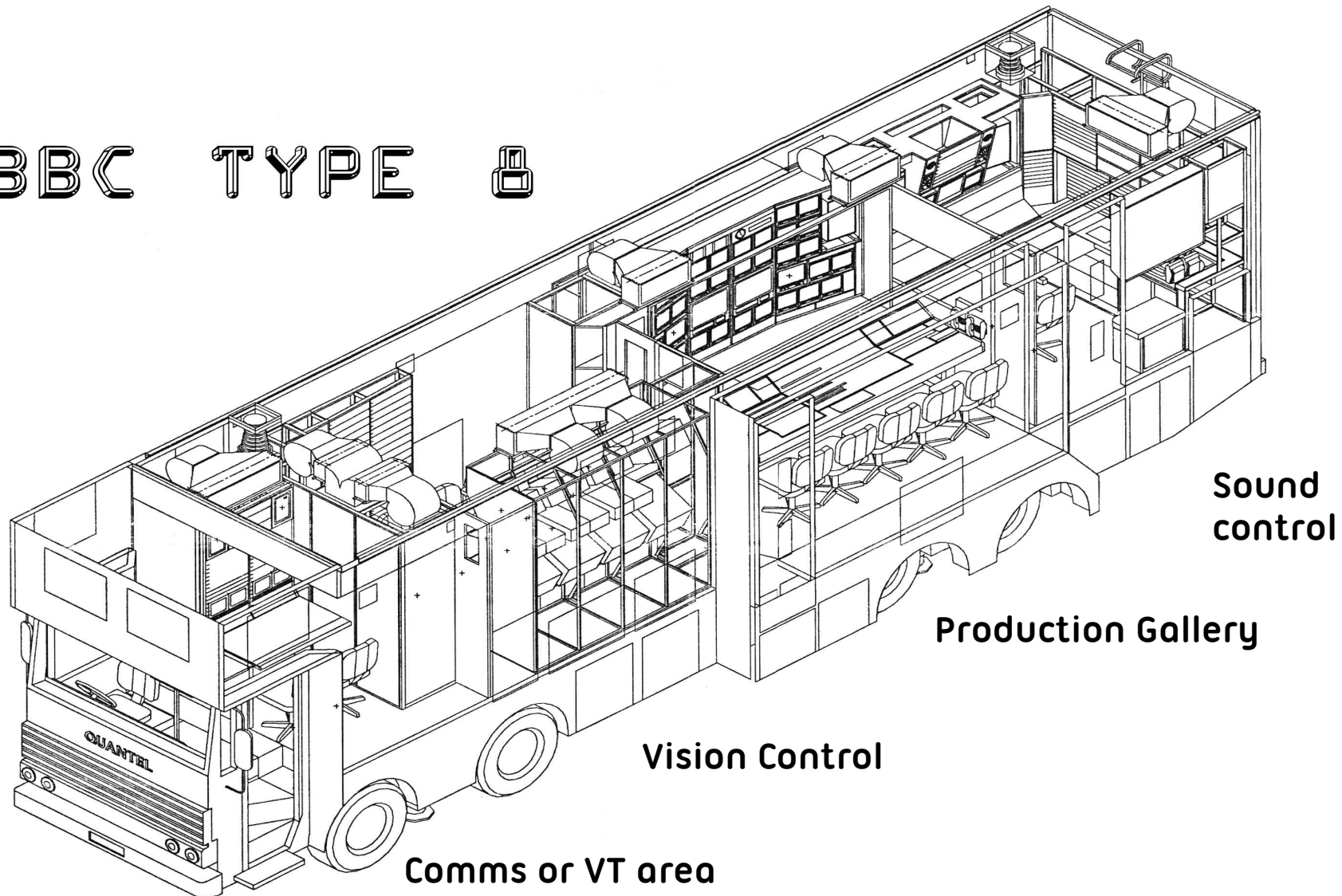
This was known as the longitudinal layout. More cameras were possible and the need for more monitors and seating in the production area.





This is a type 8 initially built for 12 cameras but expanded to about 20, with VT or Comms. area in the front.

BBC TYPE 







## A triple expanding Mega truck !!



**The BBC sold the London OB fleet to SIS and this truck, OB1 is the last of the line before SIS closed down.....**



- Working in Outside Broadcasts was a very different job
- You could be sent anywhere at any time
- We were on the Irregular hours 2 contact, this meant that there was no pattern to the work. Indeed you could do 3 or more weeks of long days with no time off and in the winter do nothing for a month.
- It was always hard to find accommodation, you would ring round trying to find a hotel and they were all booked up!
- But on the plus side there were many challenges to solve, programs to save and a great spirit of comradeship.
- Oh, and the pay was good !





A few pictures from the job.  
Wimbledon was possibly the biggest OB.







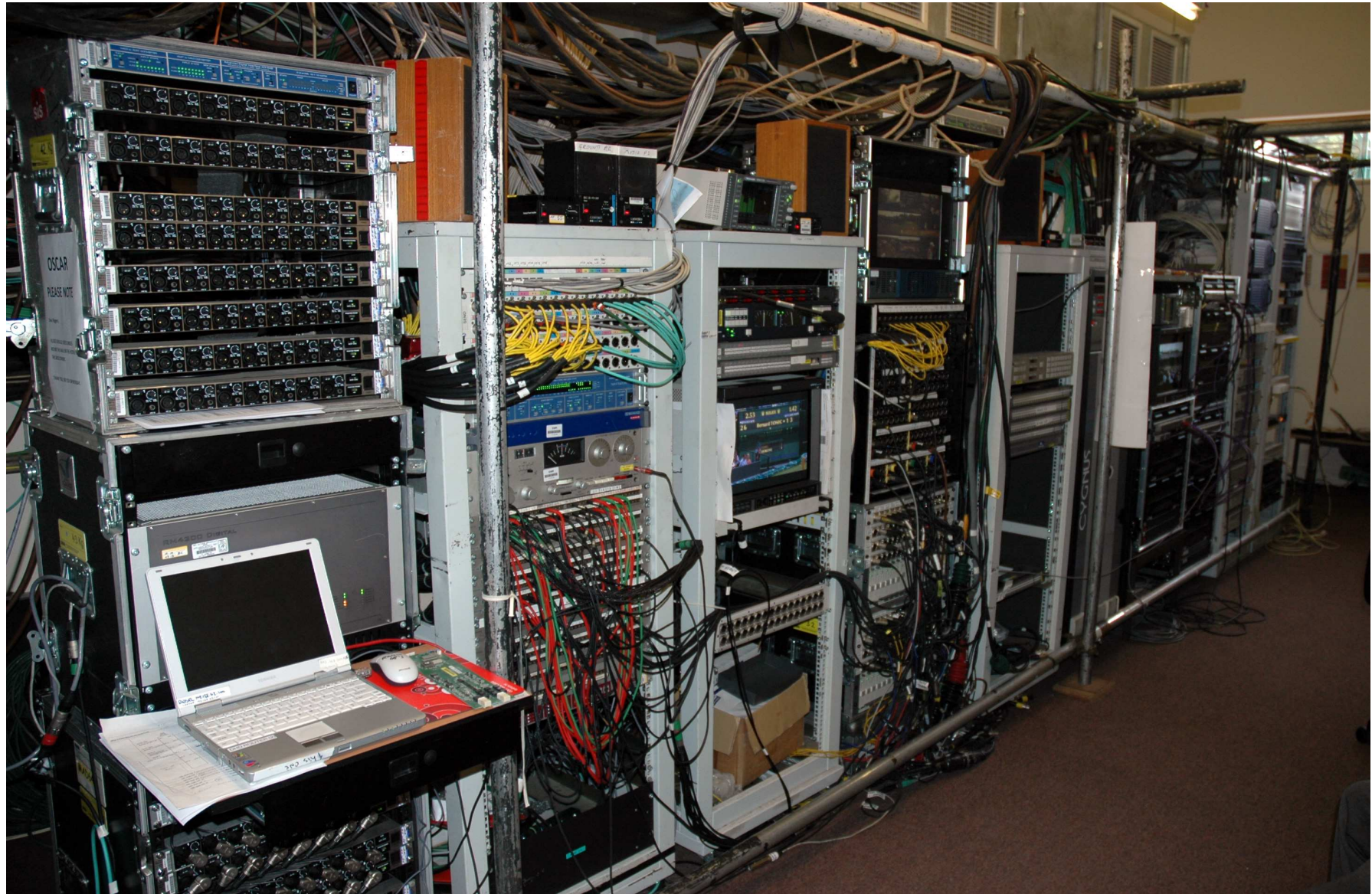
Beneath the vans there are two basement floors of control rooms & studios.  
This is the CAR for the 6 outside court control rooms.







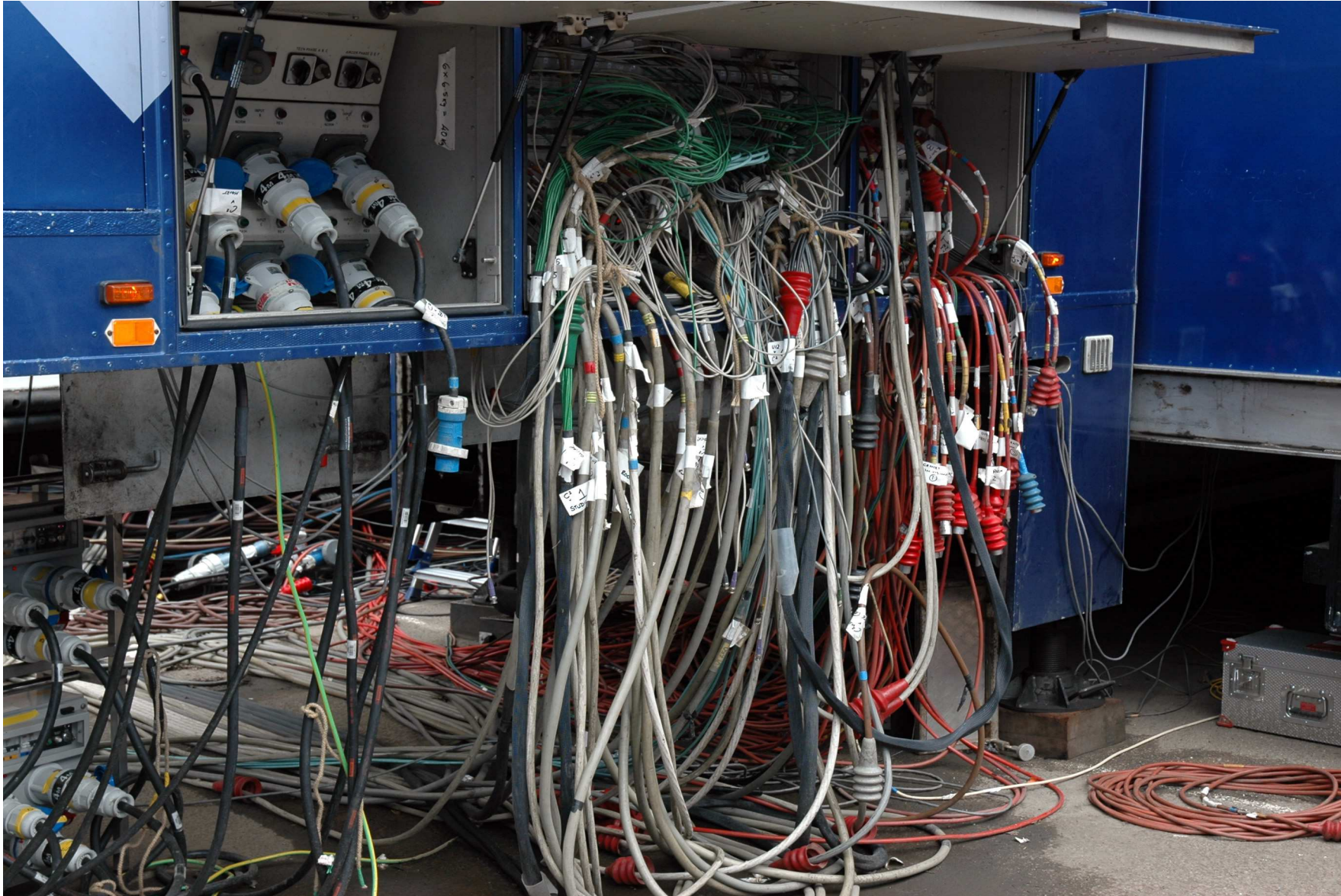
It's not just the BBC at Wimbledon, many other broadcasters are there from around the world. This is OSCAR the central distribution point.







**The tailboard of the CMCCR.**  
**Power to the left, video middle, cameras to the right**  
**The CMCCR did the transmission for BBC1 and BBC2**  
**often both at the same time.**







The studio, what the presenter sees!  
I took a lot like this so I could remember how it was  
done in the previous year.







**The Marathon was an other regular job**



**The Motor Bikes at Greenwich  
ready for the start.**

**A receiving point on  
the roof of the East  
Tower.**

**Yes it is held together  
with string (sash cord)**







## The view of the doughnut from the East Tower







**My Job was to correct and synchronise the pictures from the 4 bikes and two helicopters and pass them on to presentation for transmission.**







There was a lot of Golf, and I worked on most of it.  
Always difficult, a very big rig in too little time.







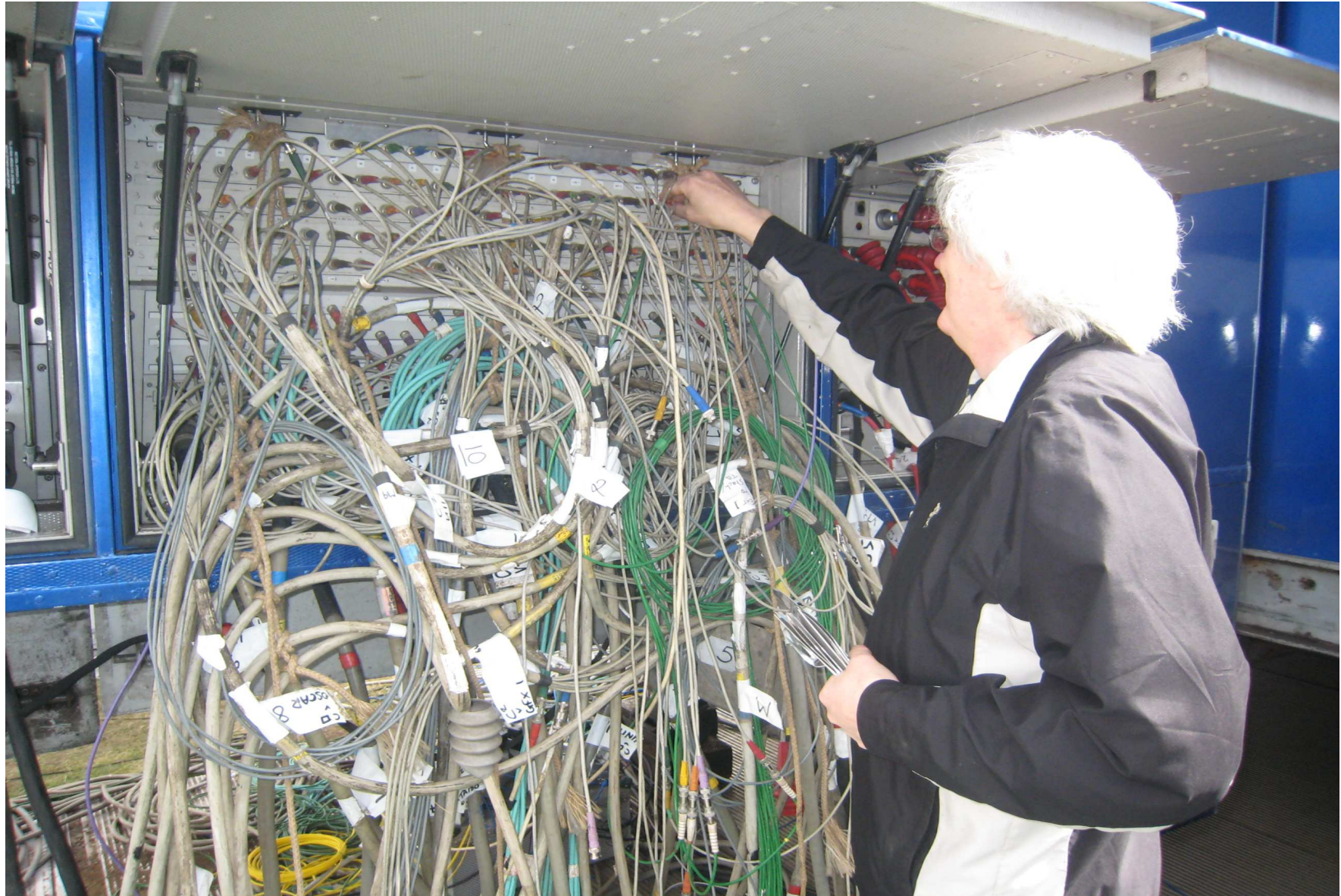
It's difficult to show the sheer scale of an Open Golf rig, but this central track way runs for a long way with vehicles two deep on both sides.







**There is an awful lot of wire interlinking all the vans.  
This is the outside of the CMCCR and the director  
wants to see all the cameras and graphics available.**







This is the production area and crew.  
Vision mixer to the centre Graphics to the left and  
Director to the right.







**There can be a number of hazards on Obs,**

**Here the roof has flooded and the crew are trying to catch the torrent in a waste bin.**

**No doubt production are wondering what the fuss is about.**





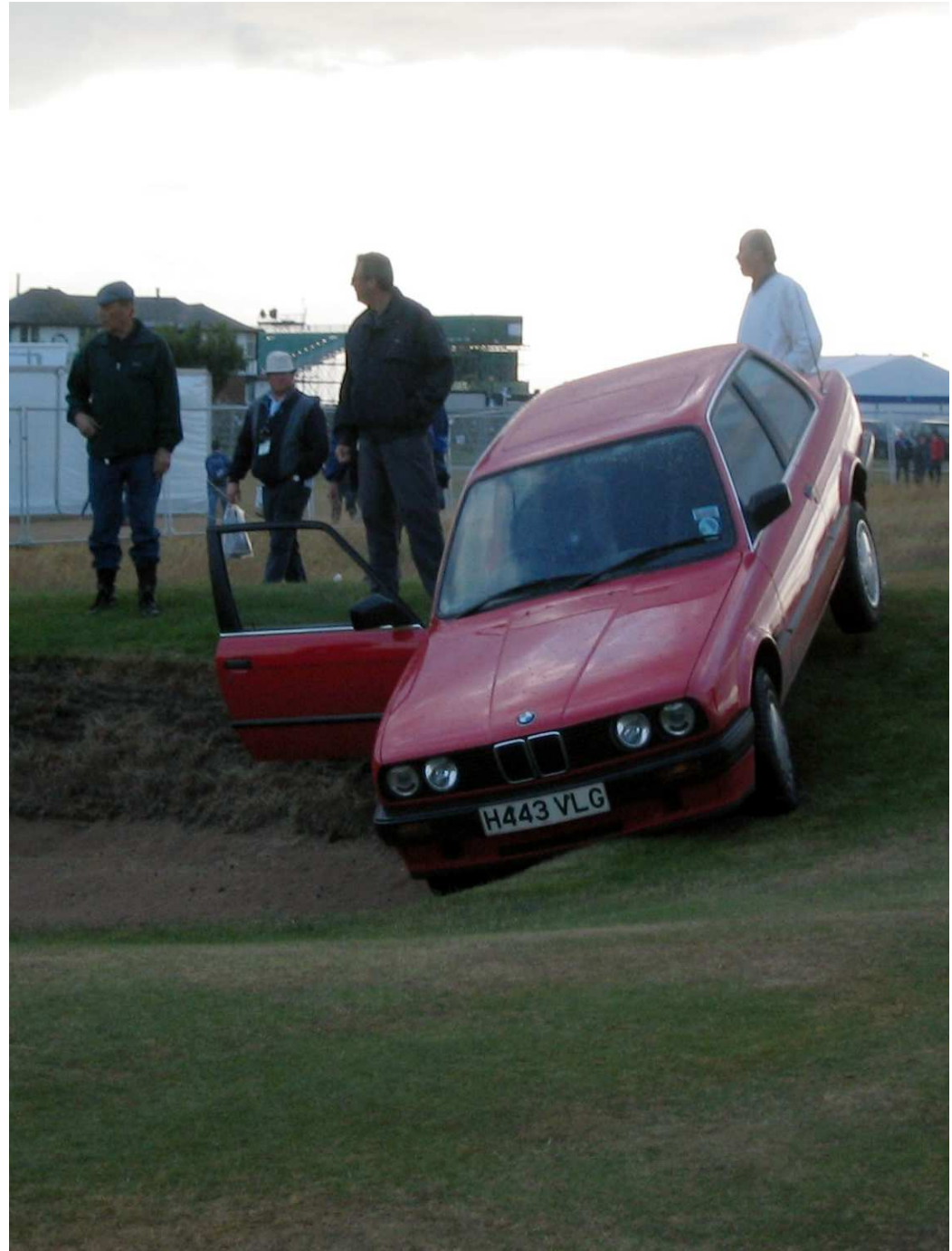


**Other hazards can  
be found outside**

**They say bunkers  
are a planned  
hazard**

**One of our number  
drove into one in the  
gloom on the way  
back to the digs.**

**Much amusement!**







**Part two**

**MCR21**

**The way forward**

**By Brian G8GQS**





As many of you will remember, my OB van ex BBC MCR21 has been part of my/our lives ever since it's first outing at the BATC convention of 1980 held at the Leicester Post House Hotel.







In CQ-TV 112 there is a picture of me with dark hair! Much time has passed and my hair is now white. Whilst my/our futures are certain, moves are afoot to save MCR21 for the future.



A charitable trust, the “Broadcast Television Technology Trust” or BTTT has been formed to own MCR21 and care for it in the future.





The Vision is to restore it to as near it's new 1963 condition as possible. Recreating an OB van that can be used to demonstrate, explain and educate today's generation the history of television outside broadcasting and the development of technology.

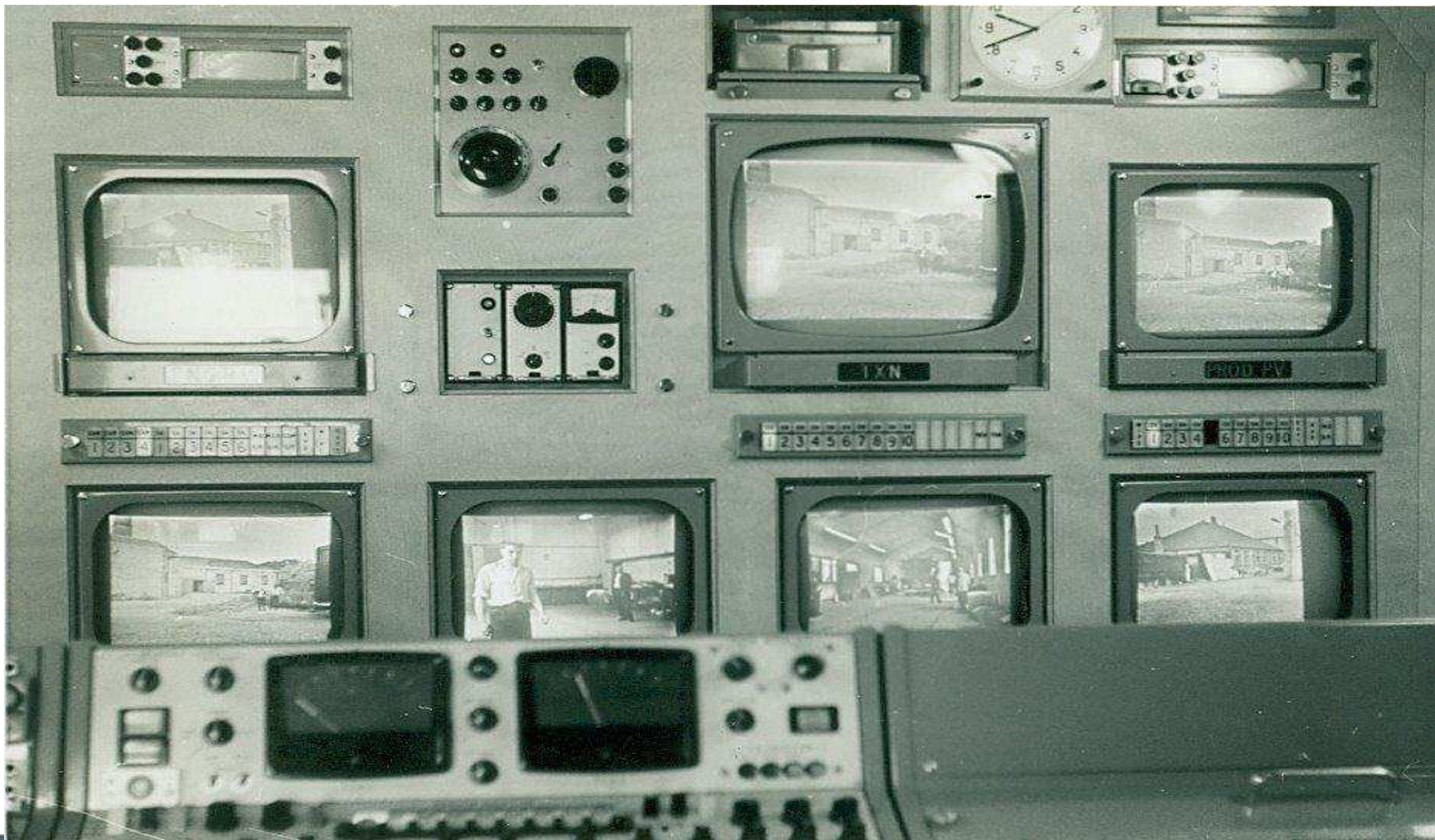






MCR21, as one of the final monochrome BBC “main fleet” OB vans, represents an important point in the development of outside broadcast scanners.

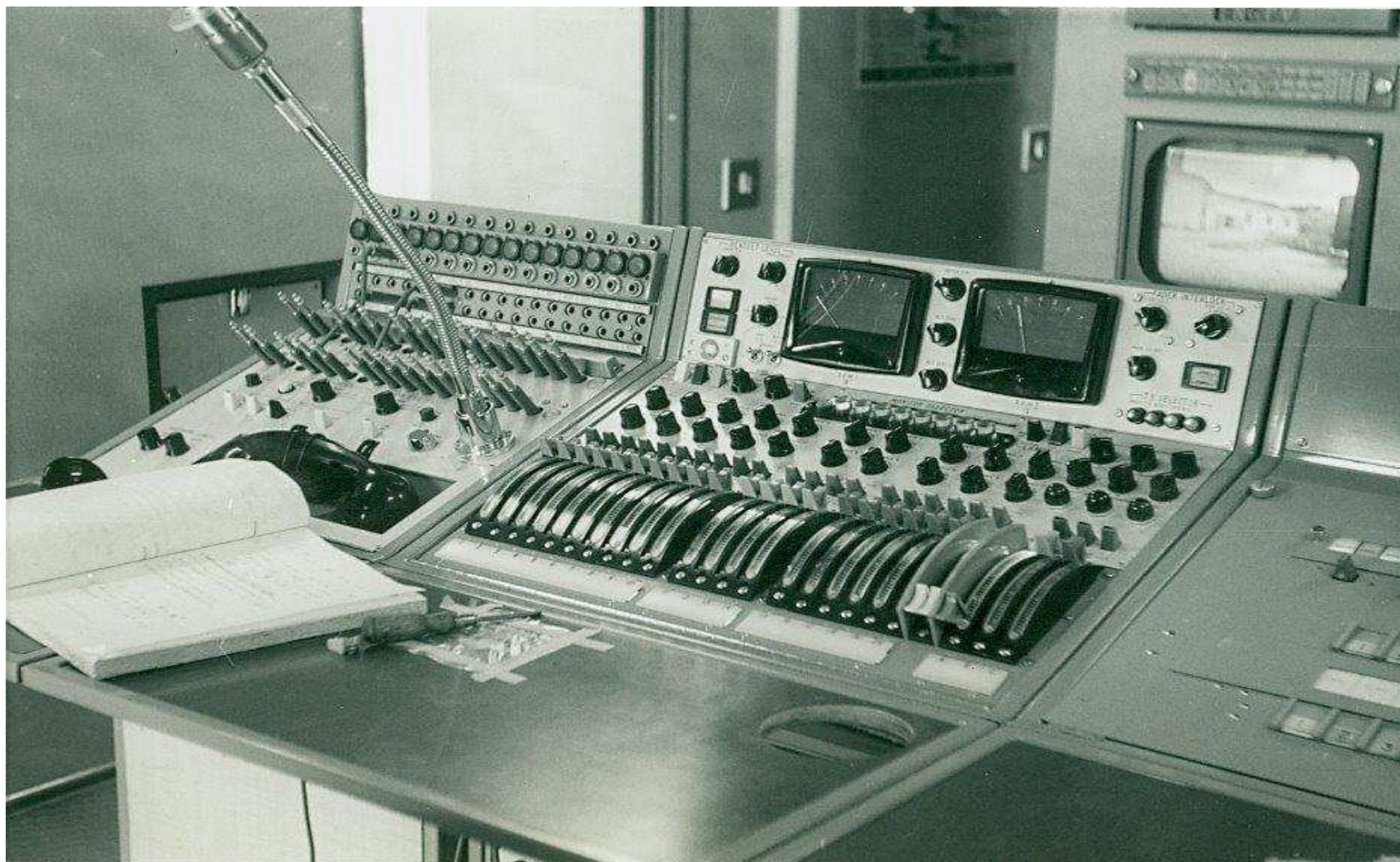
As a production tool and the technological advances it contains.







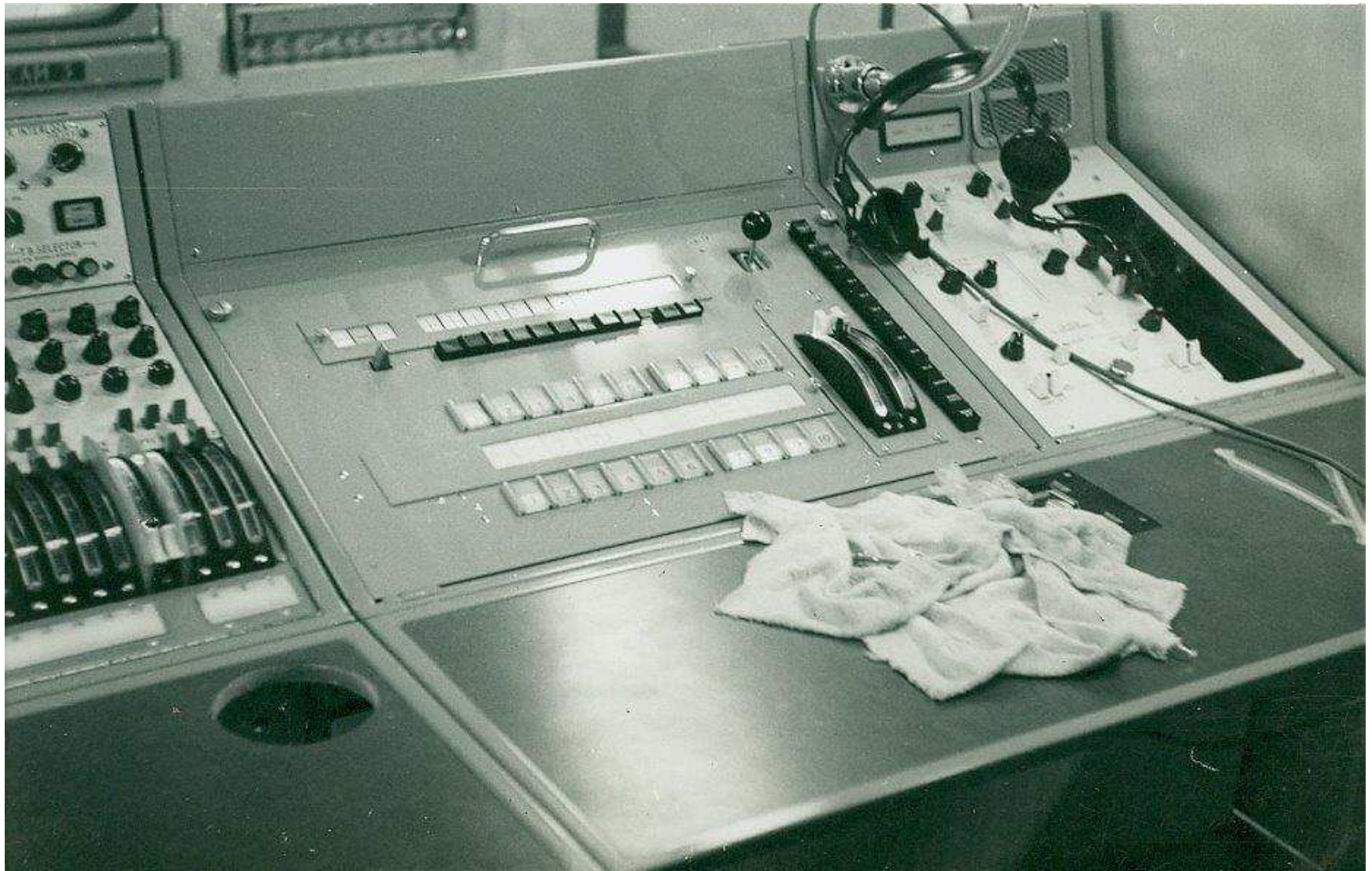
There will be many elements to the MCR21 project. The restoration of the most original and complete BBC television outside broadcast unit will be the centre-piece of the project.







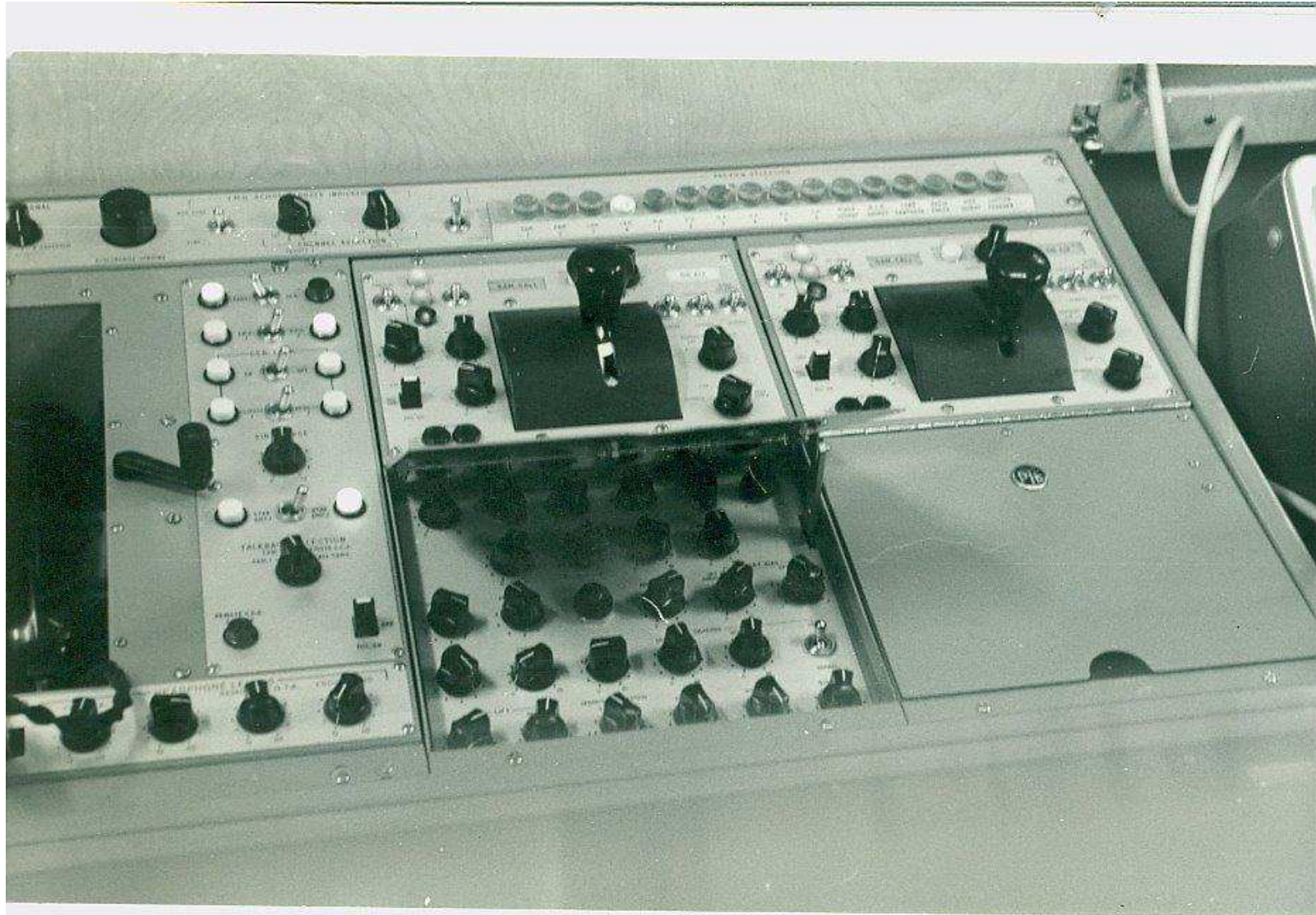
The unit will carry its original equipment with two Pye Mk VI cameras supplied by the Science Museum from their collection.







One of the two Vision engineers control desks with OCP's for Camera 1 & 2





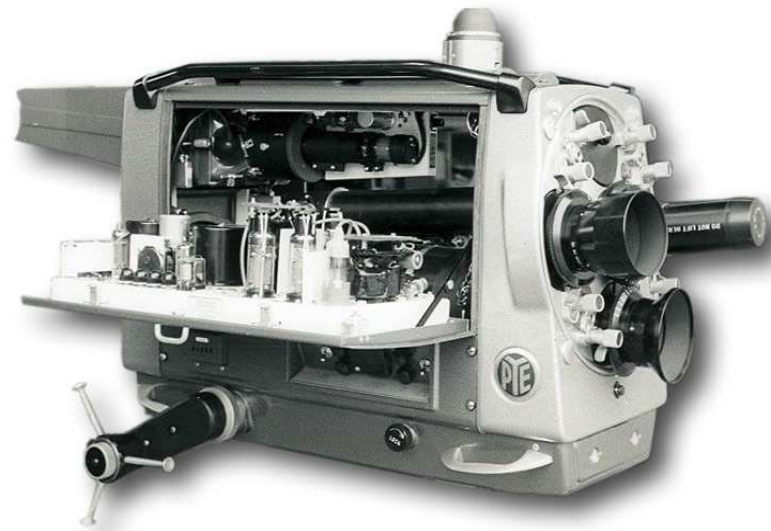


We have the support of the Heritage Lottery Fund, with an initial setting up grant and we will be applying for a further grant to start the work on the engine, chassis and body.

The interior equipment installation will be as close as is feasible to the original.

Some items of equipment are already available, some to be found and some will have to be re-made.

Much cabling to be installed, decisions made as to just how to do it and plans, drawing, schedules, and hardware to be created.







## Who are we?

The Trust is a registered Charity and we have four Trustees.

There is a great deal of work to do and we will need much help and support both from “friends” of the project and from industry.

There are many ways you could help, we need the support of a wide range of people with various skills, from fundraising to fabrication!

There is a large “educational” aspect to the MCR21 project, we need to pass on our skills to the next generation.

A website is under construction where we will be able to chart the progress as the work is done.

[www.mcr21.org.uk](http://www.mcr21.org.uk)





# Broadcast Television Technology Trust

Brian Summers  
Nick Gilby  
Richard Harris  
John Trenouth

Thank You.



**LOTTERY FUNDED**