

The Orient Explorer goes off to Borneo

In the week starting February 16th, the Orient Explorer, the first Mobile Oil Drilling Platform to be constructed in the United Kingdom, will be towed off to Borneo where it will be used by the Shell Petroleum Company for off-shore oil exploration. The £1 m. platform has been constructed by Steel Structures Ltd., an associate of the John Howard Group of Companies. It has been designed by the Delong Corporation of America.

The Platform is 190' long by 106' wide and 16' deep. Approximately 3,000 tons of steel have been used in its construction. It contains fully air-conditioned living accommodation for a crew of 62 people. It has its own generators, drilling rig with mud hoppers capable of drilling down to 1,500' below the sea bed, and a helicopter platform.

When the appropriate site is reached the four retractable legs, which are 235' in length, are lowered until they reach the bottom of the sea. At this point a powerful hydraulic mechanism is engaged which literally causes the entire platform to climb up on its own legs to a position where it is quite clear of any lifting action of the waves. When required to move to another position the platform is lowered into the sea, the legs are retracted and it can then be towed away.

Only two similar platforms have previously been built in Europe. Both in Germany. Steel Structures Ltd., of which Sir John Howard is the Chairman, was awarded this contract in the face of strong German competition.

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HOWARD HOUSE,
13 BUCKINGHAM GATE,
LONDON, S.W. 1.
28th January 1959

Dear Miss Fido

I am delighted that you are interested in filming the Mobile Oil Drilling Platform during its jacking trials on Wednesday, February 4th. The Platform is now virtually completed and it is due to be towed away to Borneo on February 16th. I think that it will look quite spectacular. I hope that you will be able to include, in any story that you may give to it, the previous shots of its construction which you took. As I mentioned to your secretary, Colonel Delong, who is responsible for the design of the Platform, is in this country at the present moment and we could probably arrange for an interview between him and Sir John Howard, the Chairman of Steel Structures our associate company which has been responsible for the construction of the platform.

As the Platform is the first of its kind to have been manufactured in this country it should be a good news story.

It will not be necessary for you to have any passes. Perhaps your camera team would make their way to the Steel Structures Offices, Western Avenue, New Dock, Southampton and ask for me. I suggest that they should catch the 8.20 a.m. train for Southampton on Wednesday, 4th which arrives at 9.40 a.m. This would give them about an hour to get ready before the jacking starts at 11.00 a.m.

I will let you have some background material

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about the Platform which can be incorporated into a commentary.

Yours truly
Humphry Berkeley.

Humphry Berkeley
Head of Publicity
The Howard Group of Companies.

Miss Grace Field,
Associated British Pathe News,
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London, W.1.

P.S. Since writing the above I have prepared the notes referred to and enclose a copy herewith.