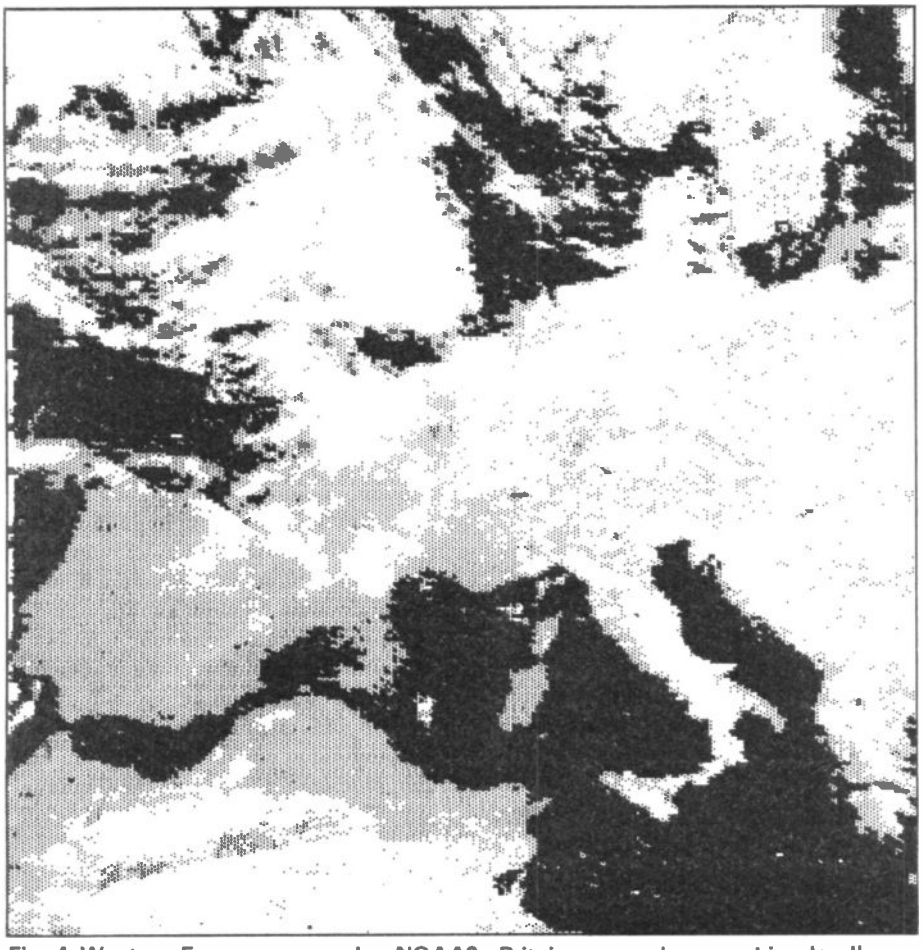


Fig. 4 Western Europe as seen by NOAA9. Britain as usual covered in cloud!

that it has the correct bandwidth capable of scanning all VHF weather satellites channels as well as UOSAT 1 and 2.

Provided in all the paperwork was a list of the orbital times and headings of NOAA 9. There are six passes each 24 hours; because I was using a non-directional antenna, only two or perhaps three were copyable, the other three being too far out to give a reasonable signal. The usable headings lie roughly between 100 and 200 degrees latitude, and for June, the times are between 1130 and 1530 hours local time. So the next thing to do was to wait for the specified time.

I switched on the receiver and the interface, keyed '* S RETURN' and 'Escape' to display the menu. Referring to the 'memory prompter' which was above the function keys, pressed 'F1' which gave me 'NOAA infra red/visible' and pressed 'Escape' to return to the picture. By this time, I could faintly hear the 'ping ping' of the clock on the satellite. The various switches on the interface now had to be set, full instructions for which are given in the leaflet supplied. In the meantime the 'ping ping' was getting louder and the screen was showing a jumble of shapes in colour building up from the bottom. The screen was cleared by pressing the space bar, and the picture started to build up again, this time looking something like an image.

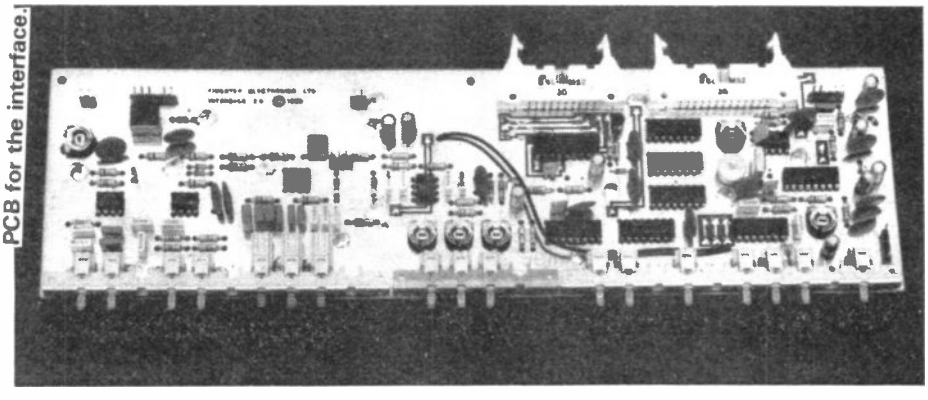
First Pictures

In fact, I was getting my first ever picture from a satellite! This was displayed on the screen in four colours and appeared a bit of a muddle to start with. It was quite obvious that there was a bar going down the middle, and the pictures were different either side. This was because 'F1' gives pictures of both the infra red and visible light. By pressing 'Escape' followed by 'F2', I was in the picture mode but this time the picture could be scrolled to the right using the 'slip' button on the interface — giving a whole screen display of either infra red or visible light. I carefully did this, watching the screen, until I thought it need go no further, then pressed the space bar to give me a clear screen.

Another facility on the ROM enables you to retain the picture: when the picture is completed, just press 'F0'. The whole contents of the screen is transferred to disc and a new file called 'PICA' (the software checks that the title has not been used before; the filename would otherwise be 'PICB').

The results of my efforts are shown nearby, together with one or two other selections. If the weather is cloudy, naturally one is not able to see the ground beneath, which makes it a bit difficult to know what one is looking at! I made a tracing of Europe, including North Africa which when placed over the picture gave me the outlines of the various countries.

One of the most interesting facilities of the whole set-up is the ability to print the picture as it were on hard copy with shades of grey and, of course, white where necessary. The extra hardware requirements for this is either an Epson FX80 or RX80 printer and the 'Printmaster' ROM from Computer Concepts. With the picture stored on disc, the interface disconnected and the printer reconnected to the printer port, the following program will load the picture on to the screen and the printer will commence printing it.



PCB for the interface.