

It's getting quite close to the end of June
Our next convention 'll be here soon.

It's nice to be able to record some good news for a change, as looking through the last Journal it was all doom and gloom. The good news is two new members have joined since I last wrote, John C. Downer who collects stamp boxes also Mauchline and Tunbridge ware, and Matthew David Dinsdale who's main collecting interest is old books. Both these subjects are near and dear to the hearts of your two editors.

Another bit of good news is that Fred is slowly getting back to normal. I have just phoned him and apart from a pause while he put his speaking box in, he sounds just the same as he used to. By chance I phoned him on his birthday. He has to use a zimmer but he is exercising by walking up and down the room. Elsewhere I have published the drawing of a coloured jug, which Fred claims is probably the rarest item he has. It is unfortunate that I cannot publish it in colour, but I only have a black & white printer.

My own situation is much like Fred's I have to use a zimmer indoors, and have an electric buggy if I go out, I now go out only three times a week, twice to visit charity shops. Friday I do five shops and then go to a local church for a coffee and Saturday I do three more charity shops up the other end of the High Street, and call in to another Church for a coffee. I think West Wickham is going for the most charity shops per yard of High Street in the country. Then on the Wednesday lunchtime I meet my daughter in a restaurant again in the High Street for a bite to eat.

So what do I do in these charity shops? I buy books, thrillers by about a dozen popular authors. As a confirmed collectorholic I just can't give up collecting, and since I can't get to post card fairs any more I started collecting modern thrillers. If I can't get them in a hard back I will take a paper back and my aim is to eventually swap all my paper backs for hard backs. As my mother would have said "It keeps 'im off the streets".

Recently I have had the Palestine post card collector David Pearlman get in touch with me asking me if I know anything about the Orient in London Exhibition. I have printed my reply elsewhere in this Journal, in case anyone else is interested in Missionary exhibitions. I'm pretty sure going back many years David used to be a member of the Study Group but dropped out. David shares with me in being a long time advertiser for post cards in the Picture Postcard Monthly. I started in 1999 and have run an advert every month since then. I think David also started advertising about the same time.

The yearly totals of post cards acquired through the advert which I have kept, show a steady decline over the 28 years in the number of cards sent to me on approval since 1990 and the 2017 numbers show the lowest years totals ever. I shall never see the 1992 figure of 3,383 post cards sent in on approval again, out of which I bought 796. The cost of cards in 1992 worked out at 30p per card. In 2017 I was only sent 284 post cards out of which I purchased 80

When I look through my records for 1990 I see that Julian Dunn, Derek Popplestone and Neil Garland three dealers have all sent me approvals for at least 25 years. Another early dealer still sending me approvals is Mike Pearl who started in 1993. To those dealers and the many other dealers and collectors later who have materially helped me build up my collection I owe a sincere thank you.

Obviously an ever increasing number of collectors and dealers are disposing of their cards through E-bay and other internet avenues where they can sometimes get incredible returns for their cards. Last year my advert costs alone in P.P.M. worked out at 94p for every card I bought. I can see the time will come when the internet will kill off advertising to buy post cards and even post card fairs will find it increasingly difficult to survive. And yet I cannot blame sellers of post cards whether they are collectors or dealers for going to the market place that gives the best returns for their cards.

Another past member and founder member Graham Hall also recently wrote to me, and in his letter he mentioned he put an advert in the P.P.M. for a year unfortunately with no results, he's also advertised in the Ephemera Society quarterly magazine again with no results. It is very sad but it must be said it is getting increasingly difficult to obtain good items for collections.

The Editors

Stampex Displays

17 February 2018

By

Don Knight

The Chairman of the Exhibition Study Group **Derek Connell** welcomed those present to the joint meeting with the Congress Study Group. He then invited **Colin Searle** to start with his display, Colin said he was showing Bits & Pieces of Fun. Starting with the 1909 Manchester Society Badge, special card, envelope and certificate given to all of the exhibitors and committee including the handbook of the exhibition. He then followed on with items from the Congresses of 1910, 1911, 1920, 1922 and 1927.

Ray Goodey showed British Empire Exhibition meter marks of the Tattoo, research shows that there are 6 types. Going from the plain meter mark, the change of dates and the inclusion of dots. **Alan Spencer** showed the Glasgow Exhibition 1911 with Cards and a rare perfin also a glass souvenir, the 1940 Congress covers from London and Bournemouth and the souvenir sheets of the Penny Black. **Don Knight** displayed Special Handstamps from the 1970's and 1980's, here was a wide range of covers going from small events to special exhibitions. The London 1980 International Stamp Exhibition with its wide range of special handstamps on covers and the miniature sheets also souvenir sheets from stamp exhibitions held in the 1970's and 1980's.

Trevor Milton went on to display items from the 1912 Cottage Memorial Hospital Fund, National Philatelic War Fund 1914 and auction catalogue on Congress. **Derek West** put up 2 Grants silk card from the 1913 Congress. **Jim McKerron** showed Cinderella items from 1925, 1940, 1948 the up dated Folkstone 1938 labels to 1958. In 1977 the Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth cards were produced and he showed 32 different varieties.

Derek Connell finished the afternoon with his collection on Billy Butlin items, with covers and postcards from the many holiday camps including badges and letters. Then told how Billy Butlin got into taking on hotels, these included Margate and Scarborough, where congresses had previously been held. In 1951 Butlin showed interest in the Festival of Britain with a special reunion at the Albert Hall. Derek Finished by thanking those present and **Colin Searle** invited members of the Exhibition Study Group to the September Stampex Meeting to be sponsored by the Congress Study Group.

Letters to the Editor

On 10/04/2018 11:26, Derek Weston wrote:

Bill

I have an example of a flyer produced by Colman's of mustard fame, that I showed at Stampex last year.

My question is to members: does anyone have a catalogue of that event, and could they confirm or otherwise that Colman's were listed in it.

I'm afraid I cannot help you on this one. I don't even know if they ever published a catalogue, I have never seen one or know anyone with a copy.

I have the Colman folded coloured flyer measuring 4 1/4 x 5 1/2 and I assume this is the one you have. (Illustrated on the front page of this journal) I have checked on the Official Guide 4th Edition and can see no mention of Colman. I also have the 5th edition and in this one they have included an index of advertisers in the guide, but there is no mention of Colman.

Since Colman produced a flyer which mentions the Franco-British Exhibition I would say it is 99% certain that they had a stand or shared a stand with somebody else, more than that I cannot help you, but I will mention it in the next Journal.

I have also had a letter from David Pearlman, and here it is with my reply,

Dear Bill,

Following the 1907 "Palestine in London" there was a missionary exhibition held I believe in 1908 with the title "The Orient - A Great Missionary Exhibition". Is that correct? Where was the 1908

exhibition held? Did that exhibition also have a title such as “East and West Exhibition”?

Dear David,

I seem to remember many years ago we corresponded and you loaned me some of your post cards to help me out, so rather belatedly I am only too happy to return the favour.

Yes you’ve got the year right, amongst my bits and pieces I have a copy of “The Exhibition Herald” which was “The Organ of the Orient in London to be held for the London Missionary Society at the Royal Agricultural Hall from 4 June to July 11 1908.”

The Exhibition Herald was a 20 page magazine and I have issue No. 5 for March 1908. Price one penny If you please. This rather implies that the magazine was free if you couldn’t afford a penny, or perhaps they were just being polite? I can scan this if you would like a copy.

I also have a copy of the gold printing of the Special Exhibition Number August-October 1908 of the Daily Mail, but it is entirely taken up with the Franco-British Exhibition and there is no mention of the Orient Exhibition.

Part of the Orient in London was a Pageant and I believe this took place each day, I have the one penny programme for this. It is a single sheet measuring 15 x 9¼ folded into four. The full name was “A Pageant of Darkness and Light” in four episodes and a final tableau, and this solves your query about East and West. The tableaux covered all points of the compass. Episode I – North, Episode II – South, Episode III – East, Episode IV – West, and a Final Episode and Tableau. At the end of the last tableau the whole hall joined in singing the Old Hundreth Psalm. On the programme is printed “Ladies are respectfully requested to REMOVE THEIR HATS during the representation of the Pageant.”

The organisers of the Orient in London on Saturday June 27 1908 gave a luncheon to the pageant staff at the Trocadero Restaurant and I have the card menu for this event.

Another item I have is a stapled booklet “Souvenir of the Pageant The Orient Exhibition” with blue covers published by John F. Shaw and printed by Photochrom measuring 8½ x 4 inches containing 8 panoramic views of various tableaux on a stage. I have listed the order they are in the booklet.

- 1 North. Episode 1. Restoring the chiefs lost child.
- 2 South. Episode II. Meeting of Stanley and Livingstone
- 3 East. Episode III. Scene I. The fugitive child wife at the missionaries home.
- 4 West. Episode IV. Scene I. Entrance of Queen Kapiolani
- 5 South. Episode II. Livingstone and the wounded Sheik
- 6 East. Episode III. Scene 2. The child widow at the funeral pyre
- 7 West. Episode IV. Scene 3. The lake of everlasting fire
- 8 Episode V. Rock of Ages.

Also a small collection of cuttings from the “Pall Mall Gazette”, “Stage” (2), “Daily Telegraph” (2), “Islington Gazette”, “Daily Chronicle”, “What’s On”, and “The Morning Post”. Unfortunately some of the cuttings are so brittle bits are breaking off.

Among my missionary post cards I have about 100 of the Orient in London and if you were thinking of producing a list of the cards I should be happy to make out a list. I have done this for a lot of the missionary groups but for some reason I never got round to doing the Orient. Thanks for mentioning your web site I must have a look at it some time.

David Pearlman’s web site is www.postcardsofpalestine.com and I understand is a complete listing of publishers and post cards of Palestine.

I have also been having some correspondence with a Pat Atkins via E-mails who got in touch with me as she wished to purchase some of the British Empire Exhibition books published by the Exhibition Study group. This led to some correspondence on Bermuda post cards reproducing paintings by two artists Ethel and C. F. Tucker which we both collect.

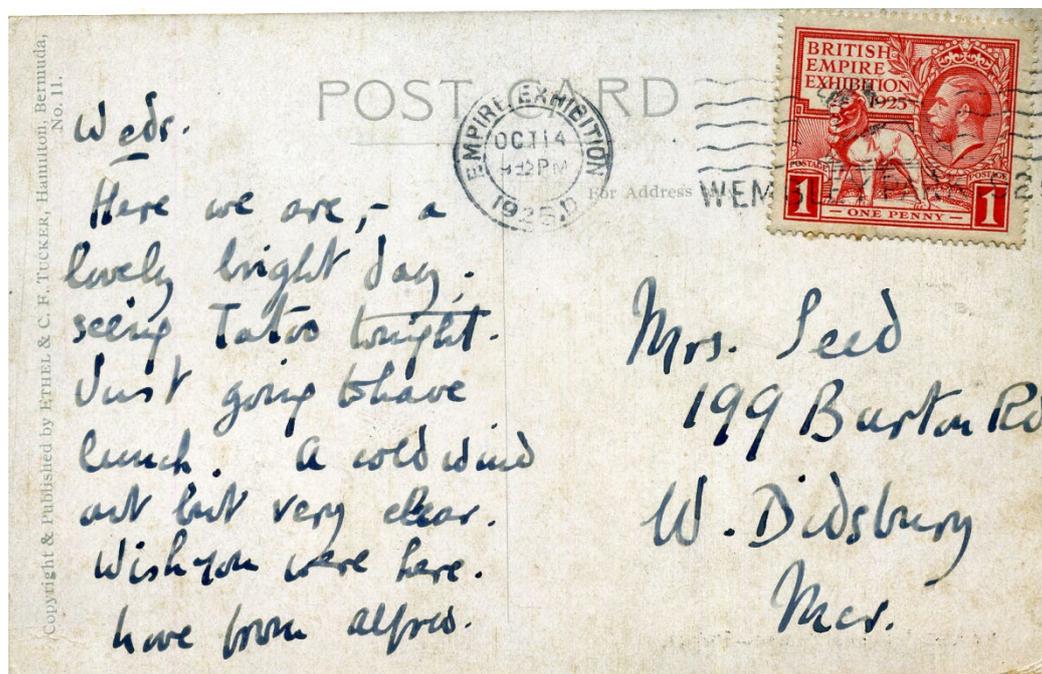
Dear Pat,

The Tucker cards come from several publishers but as far as I know cards with only one type of back was available in the Bermuda Pavilion at Wembley.

At the time Mike and myself did our book way back in 1994 we had the help from 47

collectors who supplied us with some details. Most of them either Mike or myself visited to go through their collections.

Out of all the Tucker cards we examined only one series could we say with any certainty that these were the cards that were on sale or given away at the Wembley exhibition.



Picture No. 1 post card No. 11

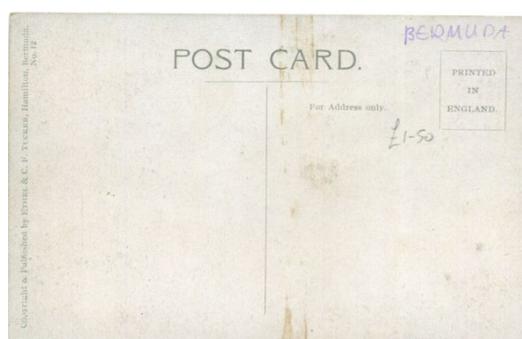
This is the prize of my collection. It came up on E-bay some years ago and a dealer friend of mine was out-bid, it going for £38 to a very wealthy collector Karl Illingworth. She did let me have a scan of the front and back of the card though. I do not know what happened to Karl but some years later in 2010 his wife was selling off his collection.

That year another dealer got in touch with me and I spent all of Boxing Day with him going through a collection he had just bought, which I recognised as part of Karl's collection. And there was the Tucker card which I got for £3.00.

A collector (Lyn Lane now deceased) Mike and I visited when we were gathering material for our book had two more Tucker cards, one I borrowed to scan (see picture No. 2) both of them had written on the back "Bermuda Pavilion Wembley Exhibition 1924/5" These were Post Card No. 3 and No. 11 (another No. 11)



Picture No. 2.



Picture No. 3.

Picture No. 3 is the back of Post Card No. 11 from my collection and written on the back in ink is the word "Bermuda". Now this is not proof that the card came from the Bermuda Pavilion but it was common practice of visitors to the exhibition to write on the back of the card where they got it. I also have Post Card No. 12 also with "Bermuda" written in ink on the back, in a different

handwriting.

So to sum it up I am sure that a supply of cards with this particular back were available in the Bermuda Pavilion.

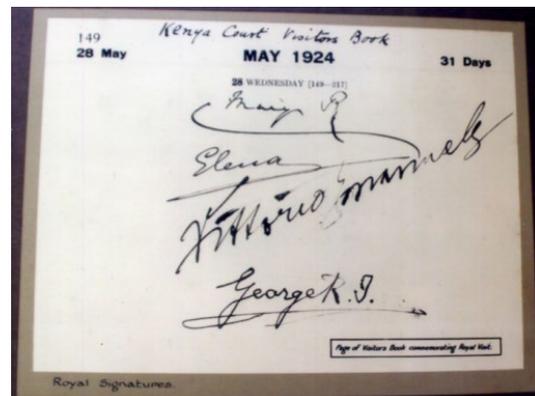
If you have any Tucker cards with this back I should be glad to receive a list of titles, please. The only numbers I know of are No. 2, 3, 7, 11, 12 & 17.

All the best

Bill

A letter received from a member Roger F. Weeks asks for any information on a book he has just acquired. It is a Presentation Copy of the Souvenir of the display in the Kenya Court at Wembley, and is signed by King George, Queen Mary and the King & Queen of Spain. The book measures 16 x 12 inches and Roger would like any information he can get on this.

I can remember many years ago one of our members Karl Illingworth displayed what I believe is this book at one of our conventions. I have looked through all of my convention photographs but I can't find one picture showing the book. Karl certainly had a book containing the royal signatures, and I don't imagine George V went round the exhibition signing autographs like a pop star, so this must be the one. I have looked through the Auction lists of the two firms that sold Karl's collection but there is no mention of the book, so I cannot help you Roger. Perhaps somebody else can.



The Presentation Souvenir book and the Royal Signatures



Two pages from the Souvenir book.

I see I have mentioned in this Journal a gold printing Daily Mail, and I had better explain what this is. Way back in 1908 the Daily Mail decided to publish an edition of their paper to commemorate the Franco-British Exhibition, and it was printed in a gold ink. The souvenir edition covered the months August to October.

Many years later (possibly in the 1970's) they were to repeat the experiment, this time republishing their Monday December 31 1900 edition celebrating the dawn of the 20th century and the 63rd year of her Majesty Queen Victoria's reign.

Lisa Wall sent me a scan of another Tudor house moved by Gill & Reigate to Clacton-on Sea who you will remember is the firm who were involved in moving the Tudor house exhibited at the Franco-British Exhibition in 1908. In the Autumn Journal No. 118 we published a long article on Tudor houses.

Lisa writes “I know the Clacton-on-Sea house was moved in about 1912 and the Tudoresque garage was added in 1926. The post card C&E 25 was published by Cook & Eves, Pier Avenue, Clacton on Sea. The message and post mark dates the card to 1931. Lisa has two talks lined up to give in February, and writes she is looking forward to our 2018 convention. Lisa missed our 2017 Convention as she was out in Australia, but she did send me a present from down under when she got back. After writing in her letter “No cork hats / Koalas or Boomerangs” I was surprised to get a small Koala waving an Australian flag and a bar of Australian chocolate. Thank you very much. Lisa has also offered to give a talk and display at our 2018 Convention, Don Knight please note.

Lisa has also sent me a scan of the Gill & Reigate Tudor House surrounded by workmen during the re-construction of the house at the Franco-British Exhibition. She writes, “the house is up and the garden is being landscaped and fenced, it must be May 1908, just before the Franco- British Exhibition opened. It looks like the house behind is still a building site. I don’t know if this is an official postcard or a real photograph as I was sent the scan in March 2017.

I have mentioned above a Daily Mail 1908 gold printing of the newspaper that I have and while looking through it I came across another picture of the Tudor house under re-construction at the Franco-British Exhibition.



Another Tudor house moved by Gill & Reigate.



Elisa Wall's picture of the re-construction of the Gill & Reigate Tudor House at Shepherd's Bush.



A slightly later picture taken of the Tudor House that appeared in the Daily Mail 1908 golden printing souvenir newspaper.

Free Festival of Britain Guides and catalogues.

I mentioned in the Editorial that I had received a letter from an old member Graham Hall, this is not entirely correct it was actually a parcel. Graham has been editing part of his collection and suggested I pass these three items on to someone within the group. He does not want anything for them, first come first served. I can be reached on 020 8777 8861. (Please note it now usually takes me a long time to get to the phone)

2/- Festival of Britain Guide & Catalogue Birmingham, Leeds, Manchester, & Nottingham 96 p/p

2/- Festival of Britain Guide & Catalogue of Science, South Kensington 84 p/p

2/- Festival of Britain Catalogue of Thomas Chippendale exhibition at Temple Newsham House
Leeds 41 p/p

Book review by Fred Peskett.

Fair World by Paul Greenhalgh.

A History of World's Fairs and Expositions, from London Shanghai, 1851 – 2010.

This book covers the World's Fairs in great detail, it is richly illustrated with full colour photographs. It covers over 40 fairs and exhibitions from 1851 to 2010. It measures 314mm x 273 mm and has 282 printed pages, all pages are glossy art paper. It was published by Papadakis in 2011 at £40, but is now available from the book remainder company "Postscript" at £19.99.

Order Line +44 (0)1626 897100. email orders@psbooks.co.uk. or www.psbooks.co.uk.

Society of Arts Prize Jug – 1846
by
Fred Peskett



The jug is 8 ins wide X 8½ high



The embossed marks on the base of the jug are full size

The jug shown is a souvenir of the first exhibition that Henry Cole and Prince Albert held as a trial for the Great Exhibition of 1851, the sketch was made for sending to the Victoria and Albert Museum for identification. The embossed marks on the bottom are full size. The jug is made in parian, and is known as a wine baccus. It would have had a pewter lid which has been removed, many jugs which had pewter lids have had them removed because of the difficulty of keeping them clean. By the lozenge mark on the bottom the V & A were able to identify it as being made by Herbert Minton & Company, Stoke on Trent and potted on the 26th May 1846. Note it was made for the Society of Arts, by the time the 1851 Exhibition was held it had become the Royal Society of Arts. I found this jug in an Antique Shop in Alton, Hants, I managed to get it for £5.00 because of the missing lid.

Notice of our 32nd Annual Convention.

Our thirty second Annual Convention will soon be on us, how time does fly, and those who attended our last convention will know it is again being held in 'The Lodge' at Crystal Palace on Saturday 13 and Sunday the 14 of October. As usual a few of us will turn up on the Friday afternoon for a Fish & Chip supper, so we are actually on the premises ready for the start on Saturday morning.

I have said this many times before, and I will say it again, that I look forward all year to our convention. Now that I am virtually house bound it is one of my few opportunities to meet old and new friends and live and enjoy displays of exhibition material again.

The Exhibition Study Group has been having a weekend convention for the past 31 years, so let's make it a bumper turnout for our 32nd. These have been held at many different venues around the country, from Portsmouth to Glasgow, with a few members who came to first one at York in 1987 still attending, although I think only Don and myself have attended every one.

This year on the weekend of the 13 & 14 October we will be meeting at the site of the Crystal Palace in Penge, South London, This is a very good venue, easy to get to by car or train, the Lodge was recently refurbished and the cost is very reasonable. There is a large free car park adjacent to the Lodge where we hold our meetings and stay.

Over the years many members have given a display of items from their collections, we have six display boards which take twelve sheets each. You do not have to fill all of them, but it gives you a chance to show what you collect. Other members may have items to sell and you could expand your collection.

We start on the Saturday morning with a short A.G.M. at 10. o'clock with displays starting at around 11 o'clock, we have a short break at 1-00 o'clock, restart at 2 and go on until 4.30. The times are elastic and not cast in stone. In the evening we sit down for dinner and wine. On Sunday morning we start at 10 o'clock and finish at around 1-00 o'clock. If you can-not make the full weekend we would like to see you on either day. Tea or coffee and sandwiches will be available free to everyone as a few years ago it was decided the Study Group would meet the cost of this.

The costs for the weekend will be roughly about the same as last year which were Bed & breakfast £30.00 per night single room including a cooked breakfast, our annual Dinner on the Saturday night will be about £10-00 with wine on the Life President. I don't have a price for those arriving Friday and wanting a fish & chip supper on the Friday evening, but I think you will agree these are all very reasonable prices.

Over the years we seem to be getting more and more members turning up on the Friday afternoon and evening, and in 2009 for the first time Joan Miles laid on a fish & chip supper, now Derek Connell slips out to get the fish and chips, as he's the only one who knows where the fish & chip shop is.

It has become our custom to commemorate the 100th anniversary of any exhibition that took place a hundred years ago, but we are now still into the Great War period when exhibitions were very thin on the ground owing to the men being called up. The only two I know of are the War Bond Campaign Exhibition and the Disabled Soldiers Exhibition both held in 1918. But there will be displays of other exhibitions. If you are intending to bring some sheets to display please let Don Knight know on 020 8440 3574.

If you would like to stay you can contact The Lodge, Crystal Palace National Sports Centre.

Ledrington Road, London. SE19 2BB. phone 020 8778 0131, or 8768 8148 which will get you straight through to Joan Miles without getting tangled up in a lot of recorded messages. Please mention The Exhibition Study Group as we provisionally book a block of single and double rooms. Friends of members and non-member visitors are welcome, as long as they let Don know.

Peter Denly.



Peter at our 1999 Annual Dinner

It is with very much regret that I have to announce the death of Peter Denly who will be well known and remembered by those members who attend our Annual Convention. I think Peter attended nearly all of our conventions since 1997, and served as our President in 2007. He also gave many displays to the Exhibition Study Group. Peter was a keen philatelist and member of the British Thematic Association (BTA) and like many of us it was through stamp collecting that he got interested in exhibitions. I remember one of his displays was of the 1940 Centenary of the Penny Black.

Peter's early career was in the Merchant Navy, rising to the rank of Captain. It was this that inspired his main thematic collection *Man's Marine Adventure*. The exhibit looked at the ships themselves, the uses they have been put to and the various aids and equipment which have been developed to increase safety and navigation at sea, from early days through sail power, to steam and then nuclear propulsion. A small excerpt from this collection won the British Thematic Association Cup in 2006 and he presented the full display at the BTA AGM in 2007, a wonderful exhibit enlivened with personal stories, experiences and memories. The same year Peter was a member of the British Team taking part in Eurothema; his exhibit was part of the team that came third in the competition.

Peter joined the Committee of the BTA in June 2004, taking over the job of Membership Secretary. His first challenge was to replace the membership database with more current software, choosing Access. This was no easy task and required a lot of patient data inputting to set it up and migrate the records. The benefits soon paid off with detailed information and ease of data sharing where necessary with Committee members. He finally resigned from the Committee because of ill health in 2016.

Like many philatelists, Peter had more than one collection. He had a specialist postal history collection on the Scottish Additional Halfpenny. Excerpts from his collections were shown at the BTA Weekend in 2016: the idea for this regular event having first been proposed by him. He worked tirelessly for our hobby. As well as all his work for the BTA he was heavily involved in his local society and local Federation and will be sadly missed by many people.

The Editors would like to thank Wendy Buckle Editor of *Themescene* for permission to use part of the above Obituary.

The Nottingham Exhibition of 1903-1904: An Amusement Park.

by
Keith Fisher.
Part 1.

Introduction.

On Monday 11 March 1901, the Estates Committee of Nottingham City Council, “Read an application from a Mr Kiralfy of London to take a lease for 10 years on a piece of land at the Trent Side lying between Trent Bridge and the Forest Football Ground for the purposes of establishing thereon an “Aquarama” similar to the one at Earl’s Court and offering £50 a year rental for the land.” The committee resolved to ask Mr Kiralfy to attend one of their meetings to “explain the nature of the proposed entertainment.”¹ Thus there started the negotiations which eventually led to the Nottingham International Exhibition of 1903. The reason Nottingham City Council took Mr Kiralfy so seriously was because of who he was. Charles Imre Kiralfy was the eldest son of Imre Kiralfy the showman and entrepreneur who had transformed Earl’s Court in London into arguably the top entertainment site in the country.

Imre had had a remarkable life. He was born in Pest, in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, in 1845, the son of a prosperous clothing manufacturer of Jewish descent. In the uprisings of 1848, Imre’s father lost his business and the family became homeless. So, from the age of four, Imre and his brother Bolossy became the family’s main breadwinners, travelling around Europe performing athletic folk dances, dressed in tiny ethnic costumes. As they grew older, the brothers moved into management and started their own company. By the early 1870s, the brothers had crossed to New York. Imre married Marie Graham, a dancer in his company, in New York in 1872.



(1) Charles and Albert Kiralfy, c. 1899
Courtesy of Alegra Azulay of www.Kiralfy.net



(2) View of the exhibition site in 1900.
Courtesy of Nottingham City Council
and www.piscturethepast.org.uk

Charles Imre was born in London in 1873 and Albert Enrico, Charles’s partner in the Nottingham venture, was born in New York in 1878. (1) The Kiralfy family regularly crossed the Atlantic for the rest of their lives. During the 1870s and 80s, Imre and Bolossy built up a reputation as impresarios. They started with small, risqué, burlesque shows and then progressively produced larger and grander productions on historical themes. This seems to have been one reason for the subsequent falling out of the brothers, as Bolossy appeared more interested in ballet and the musical theatre while Imre craved spectacle.

In his own “Reminiscences”, published in the Stand Magazine in 1909, he said, “I saw instantly that the great popular want in America was spectacle,” and he certainly gave it to them. The “Fall of Babylon” which Imre produced, without Bolossy, on Staten Island, New York, in 1887, had a cast of approximately 1,500.² It was around this time that Imre started to base himself in England, although he still continued working in America. Intriguingly, he became a naturalized US citizen in 1896, and a naturalized British subject in 1901. Imre’s first big production in England, which combined theatrical spectacle [Venice, The Bride of the Sea] with an “educational” section, was in the ‘Venice in London’ Exhibition of 1892 at Olympia.

This exhibition, which included “Venetian” buildings, canals and gondolas, made Imre famous in England. Imre then moved on to the larger Earl’s Court, Kensington, which had been

hosting large events and exhibitions since 1886. He took over the site, remodelled it and produced the first of his annual exhibitions, 'Empire of India', in 1895. This exhibition was the prototype for all those which followed. It had a coherent theme but included a wide range of alternative activities to suit all tastes. There were theatres, exhibitions, rides, music, gardens and restaurants.³ The most significant detail, as far as Nottingham is concerned, is that Charles Kiralfy is named in the official directory as the General Superintendent; he would then have been 22 years old.

Charles, and later his younger brother Albert, continued to work for their father over the years. Charles was the more outgoing "salesman" of the pair, while Albert concentrated on the technical side of the productions. Amongst other duties, Charles conducted research for exhibitions and productions here and in the States. Indeed, he spent the early part of 1900 touring the United States searching for the "most beautiful American" to take part in a beauty contest held at that year's 'Woman's Exhibition' at Earl's Court, a dream job for a single twenty seven year old.⁴ At the turn of the century, the young Kiralfys decided, presumably with their father's blessing, to pursue other, smaller, ventures on their own. The approach to Nottingham Council was one manifestation of this desire, but it was at the Wolverhampton Art and Industrial Exhibition of 1902 that they first worked on their own.

They were responsible for, what were termed, the side - shows. These included several attractions that were repeated at Nottingham. They apparently made a good profit but the rest of the site didn't and the exhibition did not open the following year.⁵ Their profit was hardly dented by the £25 damages which Charles had to pay to a Mr Graney who, while working on the water chute ride, caught his foot in the mechanism and had to have a toe amputated.⁶ Even while planning and running the Wolverhampton side-shows, Charles continued to negotiate with Nottingham Council.

Exhibitions.

Nottingham, at the beginning of the Edwardian Era, was ripe for an Exhibition. It had only become a city, along with Bradford and Hull, in Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee year of 1897, and was rapidly becoming a recognisably modern place. Nottingham was expanding out of its medieval town boundary straightjacket. The basic utilities were taking shape. There was an extensive water supply and sewage system. Electricity was replacing gas, and telephones were appearing. The postal service was at its apogee, with several collections and deliveries daily. The transport system was extensive, the Great Central Railway's Victoria Station had opened in 1900 and the Midland Railway responded with the new Midland Station in 1904, both designed by the same architect, Albert Edward Lambert. You could now reach London, by either route, in less than 2 ½ hours.⁷

The tram system was being modernised, with the electrified line from the Market Square to Trent Bridge, with its new tram depot, opening in 1901. The new Trent Bridge had been open thirty years, and the Victoria Embankment was completed in 1901 with the intention of reducing the frequent flooding, although it wasn't until the Holme Sluices replaced Colwick Weir in 1955 that the river came near to being controlled. Combined with national legislation on enclosure, suffrage, education, working hours and holidays, Nottingham was slowly regaining its reputation as a pleasant place to live. 150 years after being eulogised by Charles Deering as 'fair Nottingham with brilliant beauty graced,'⁸ but less than 60 years since being labelled one of the worst slums in England. The Inquiry Commissioners actually described Nottingham, 'as hardly to be surpassed in misery by anything to be found within the entire range of our manufacturing cities.'⁹

After the Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations was held in Hyde Park in 1851, the craze for World Fairs took off. Although there had been exhibitions of manufactured goods, as opposed to art, before, notably in France, the Great Exhibition was the first truly international one.

For the rest of the nineteenth century, it seemed that every country's capital city had to have its own Exhibition, Exposition or World's Fair. As is the nature of things, smaller towns and cities began producing their own offerings. Nottingham itself had an exhibition over the winter of 1865-66. It was on Horse Fair Close, what is now the junction of Shakespeare Street and South Sherwood Street. Called, rather grandly, the Nottingham and Midland Counties Working Classes Art and Industrial Exhibition, it was a pure exhibition of artefacts. The 522 exhibits ranged from children's drawings and model steam engines to rowing boats. Despite more than 120,000 people visiting the exhibition, at sixpence a time [children half price], it made a loss. It did not help that, despite the building costing £2100 to build, it was sold to the Corporation for £900.¹⁰ The 1851 exhibition had also been just that, an exhibition, but, as the century progressed, more and more entertainment was

added to the mix, for those who had seen one steam engine too many. By the turn of the century, the acknowledged authority in the UK on successful, profitable, exhibitions was Imre Kiralfy of Earl's Court. So when Imre's son contacted the city with the offer of a private exhibition, which would have no call upon the rates, they were more than willing to listen.

Land and Lease.

The selection of the Trent Side location for the exhibition, despite having its limitations, was a shrewd choice (2) The Trent, along the embankment, had become Nottingham's promenade and playground. Delivered by the new electric trams, on weekends and summer evenings the river was the place to be. It was a place to swim in, at the public swimming baths along the river towards Wilford Toll Bridge, to hire a rowing boat or skiff from Witty's Boatyard on Trent-side, to play games on the New Meadows Recreation Grounds, or to take a steam pleasure-boat down river. These trips went to Colwick pleasure grounds, leaving from beside Turney Brothers Leather Works, and cruising past the Bone-yard and Sewage Pumping Station. The British Film Institute (BFI) have a short film entitled *Scenes on the Trent, Nottingham - 1902* which shows Trent Bridge, Forest Football Ground and the pleasure boats, as well as a sweeping view of the site of the exhibition. Added to the idlers there were also the football and cricket spectators - there were then three cricket pitches just over the bridge - who were potential visitors to the exhibition.

How the Kiralfys knew that the strip of land, on the wrong side of the river, belonged to Nottingham City is any one's guess. The reason for the anomaly is believed to be because the Trent, which had been infamous for changing its course, had at one time another channel, further into West Bridgford.¹¹ There were still remnants of this possible channel shown on early maps. The two preserved arches of the medieval Trent Bridge, which were the first arches on the far side, may well have been for this alternative flow.¹² As the bridge was maintained by Nottingham, it needed to be on their land. Whatever the reason may have been, the Trent-side was part of Nottingham in 1901. This may have been one cause of the fractious relationship between West Bridgford and the city. West [to distinguish it from East Bridgford downstream] Bridgford, despite its name, had neither a bridge nor a ford across the Trent within its boundary.

Charles's negotiations with the Estates Committee continued throughout 1901. He requested that the length and price of the lease be changed to five years at £100 a year and quietly dropped the Aquarama name. He also realised that the site was rather cramped, bordered as it was on two and a half sides by houses, the Forest ground and the boathouses beside the river. In August, he made an application to the committee to lease instead part of the Nottingham Castle Cricket Club ground across the road. The committee would not entertain the application. Then, in November, Charles asked that the arrangements for his tenancy be postponed for a year.¹³ This was probably because his involvement with the Wolverhampton Exhibition was taking up so much of his time. In July 1902, after Wolverhampton was up and running, Charles renewed his application to Nottingham. In October, he accepted the committee's terms for the lease and got their agreement to site the main entrance directly off Trent Bridge. In February 1903, he addressed the problem of the restricted size of the site. He entered into a contract with Nottingham Forest Football Club to sublet a strip of land behind their main stand for a period of five years.¹⁴ This was a decision the football club came to regret.

Most of the conditions in the lease between Charles Kiralfy and the City Council, which was signed in February 1903, were as you would expect. It specified the length of the lease - five years - the annual rental - £100 - and stated that all buildings had to be approved by the Estates Committee. It also decreed that 'at the termination of the tenancy Mr Kiralfy shall make good all damage to the ground and restore it to its original condition.' But there were three other specific conditions; no public dancing to be allowed, no intoxicating liquor to be provided and 'no buildings, erections or fencings shall be used for the purposes of advertising.' The first two are understandable, as the existing dance halls and public houses would not have taken kindly to additional competition. The restriction on advertising was perhaps a sign of the times. There had, for some time, been concern about unregulated advertising, with posters being plastered on any available surface. The national Society for Checking the Abuses of Public Advertising (SCAPA) was formed in 1893, William Morris and Rudyard Kipling being amongst its supporters. The society had some successes, including campaigning to remove large "Quaker Oats" signs placed on the White Cliffs of Dover in 1900, although it required an act of parliament to do so. It was not, however, until the Advertisements

Regulation Act of 1907 that all local councils were given the power to impose by-laws to control advertising, resulting in the famously ambiguous sign 'Bill Posters will be Prosecuted.'¹⁵ As this was a 'private' lease between the council and Charles Kiralfy, the council were free to set their own conditions.

Construction.

To modern eyes, the most remarkable feature of the exhibition's construction was its speed. The time from the signing of the lease in February to the opening on the 28th of May 1903 was less than four months. In that time, they constructed a large two storey building with a frontage over 300 feet long complete with eleven domes. They built several smaller buildings. They dug a 200 foot long lake. They erected four large complex rides and numerous smaller attractions. They built several refreshment and tea rooms. They provided male and female lavatories. They planted trees. They found and organised the exhibitors. They found and employed staff. But what is really impressive is that this was not the Kiralfy brothers' only building project that year.

While they had been negotiating with Nottingham, they had also been talking with Scarborough and Roker [Sunderland] councils about providing seaside entertainments. Consequently, at the end of July 1903, they opened two venues in Scarborough, the 'New Arcadia' and the 'New Olympia', both on Foreshore Road. The Arcadia, which was outdoors, included an American Toboggan and a Maze, while the Olympia, which had been a theatre, included distorting mirrors, puppet shows, music and refreshments.¹⁶ Meanwhile, at Roker, they opened, again in July, four 'pavilions' which held a Hall of Mirrors, Automatic Machines, a Biograph and a maze.¹⁷

It looks as though Charles and Albert were seriously trying to move out from the shadow of their father and develop a business of their own. Although they didn't have to comply with the multiple regulations of today - they did have to contend with a joiners strike at Roker (they employed them at Scarborough)¹⁸ - one can only admire their vision, organisation, management and, perhaps most of all, their energy.

Back in Nottingham's exhibition, right at the beginning of the project, a basic plan of the site, highlighting the line of sewers from the ladies and gentlemen's lavatories, was supplied to the West Bridgford Urban District Council in February 1903. The layout was titled 'Mr Charles Kiralfy's Exhibition Scheme', and was stamped Arthur Marshall, Architect, King Street, Nottingham, and dated the 11th of February 1903.¹⁹ Arthur Marshall was a successful architect who had, in 1896, won a competition - beating, amongst others, Watson Fothergill - to design a new workhouse and ancillary buildings off Hucknall Road at Bagthorpe. This is now the core of the present City Hospital.²⁰

Marshall was retained by the Kiralfy's to design the structural steelwork for the project, but his local knowledge and contacts would also have been invaluable. Marshall became embroiled in the negotiations with West Bridgford about sewage. The city had specified that the exhibition's effluent could not be drained into a cesspool or the Trent, but there was no practical way of connecting the pipes across the river into Nottingham's sewers. They had to pipe into Bridgford's system. Bridgford offered to allow the exhibition to connect into their drains for the sum of £40 per annum, an offer which Marshall said he could not recommend to his clients.²¹ Several strongly worded reports passed between the city and the borough during and after the months of construction. As opening day approached, the exhibition contractors connected their sewer into West Bridgford's, via a Mr Radford's manhole (Figure 1). Whether an agreement was ever reached is not clear.²²

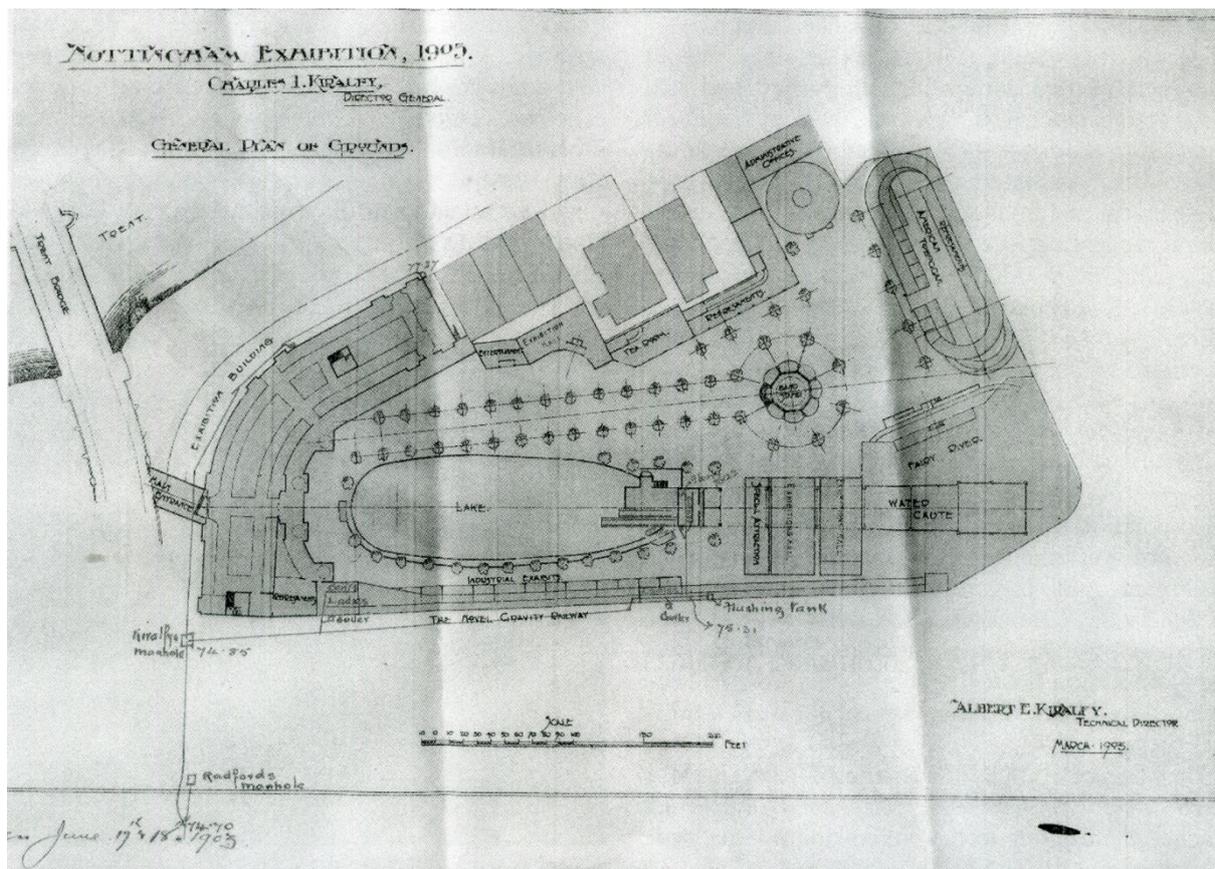


FIGURE 1: General Plan of the Grounds of the Nottingham Exhibition, 1903. Courtesy of Nottinghamshire Archives. City Building Plan Registers, CA/PL Trent Side, Volume 1/14, Page 125.

It is unlikely that Arthur Marshall had any say in the look of the exhibition. The design of the main building, with its ‘oriental’ domes, which became known as the ‘Ivory Palace’, had become almost the default style for exhibitions at this time. There had been domed, white painted pavilions at Earl’s Court (notably the 1895 ‘Empire of India’ Exhibition), Cork and Wolverhampton to name but three. Although there are, in the City Building Plan Registers, in Nottinghamshire Archives, several entries for the exhibition, drawings of the main elements have not survived. Luckily, several general layout plans, because of the sewage issue, and some blue-prints of minor buildings and additional lavatories have been retained.

The building drawings are by the Westminster Iron Roof and Housing Co. and relate to four buildings backing onto the boat yard and rowing clubs, plus two others under the waterchute. The accompanying official forms state that this company was erecting these structures, which were of steel & iron construction on concrete foundations with galvanised corrugated iron roofs.²³ The exhibition builders were not entirely free of oversight by the authorities, after they had had their designs approved. In April, the City Engineer reported to the Estates Committee that some of the foundations were in the wrong position but that they were being rectified. After the drains, the feature which generated the most correspondence was the boundary hoarding which stretched along the Radcliffe Road side of the site leaving a strip of land which gave access to the football club. This large wooden fence required supports which protruded onto this land. Nottingham Forest’s secretary was not happy and petitioned the committee for their removal. A compromise was suggested where the supports would be removed during matches, although it is doubtful if this ever happened.

At least one householder objected to the height of the exhibition. A W. E. Hammersley wrote three times to the Estates Committee for a reduction in the £6 per annum he was paying in respect of lights over the Corporation Estate, which he claimed had been reduced by the Exhibition. He was not successful.²⁴

Despite some dreadful weather - early in May there were considerable floods and the Trent reached the top step of the embankment - the work continued apace. The construction was, in itself, a

source of fascination for the locals, with inquisitive crowds on the bridge and the Trent-side towpath, who were entertained by the testing of the rides and illuminations. The first full advert for the opening of the 'International Exhibition' appeared, in the Nottinghamshire Weekly Express, on Friday 22nd May.

The Opening.

The International Exhibition formally opened at noon on Thursday 28th May 1903 (3). The exhibition itself was, predictably, not quite ready, although the entertainments were. There was a large gathering of prominent local citizens invited to a presentation, speeches, toasts and luncheon.



(3) View of the exhibition across Trent Bridge. Courtesy of Nottingham Historical Film Unit and www.picturethepast.org.uk



(4) Shooting the Chute, postcard, from authors collection. The image is of Earl's Court.

The guests included the Sheriff of Nottingham, but not the Mayor, numerous aldermen, councillors, JPs, the mayors of several local towns, the American Consul and other worthies. Charles and Albert's father Imre and their younger brother Edgar also attended. It is perhaps more illuminating to note who wasn't there. There was no one from the upper echelons of society. There was no Royalty - the Wolverhampton Exhibition had been opened by King Edward VII's brother the Duke of Connaught - and no aristocracy. By comparison, the 1865-66 Nottingham exhibition had been opened by the Lord Lieutenant of Nottinghamshire, Lord Belper, with the Duke of St Albans and Sir Robert Clifton in attendance. From this it can be deduced that this exhibition was perceived, at least by the upper classes, as a small, private endeavour not worthy of their patronage.

Charles Kiralfy gave a brief speech and declared the exhibition open. The Grenadier Guards played 'God Save the King' and all the machinery was set in motion. He welcomed his guests and invited them to Luncheon, which consisted of eight courses, in the Exhibition Hall. Councillor J. A. H. Green gave a speech, thanking the Kiralfy brothers for their efforts in building the exhibition and mentioning Nottingham's 1865/66 exhibition, the recent inclement weather and his hopes for brighter days. He finished by proposing a toast 'Success to the Exhibition.' Charles Kiralfy replied, thanking the assembled company for their kindness and gave an illuminating talk on what he believed were the public benefits of the exhibition:

The present exhibition in particular would supply a want in this district because it encouraged the idea of out-door amusement. They were living in an age of high pressure, and anything that encouraged the promotion of open-air and healthy exercise was beneficial. (Hear, hear) Mr Andrew Carnegie asked what he could do with his forty million pounds. He (Mr Kiralfy) would say, invest it in exhibitions. (Hear, hear and laughter) Libraries are all very well in their way, and he for one greatly appreciated them; but at the same time business men and others who were shut up indoors during the day did not want to pore over books in their spare moments. (Hear, hear) He should think the health authorities alone would appreciate an institution which so amply catered for outdoor and general recreation. (Applause). Then Alderman McCraith gave a speech. He said he was a member of the honorary committee which had been formed to advise the exhibition but which he conceded seemed to have no rights or privileges. His text was predictable, upbeat about the Kiralfys and Nottingham's virtues and downbeat about the centralisation of arts and entertainment in London. He concluded by saying that, as a member of the Tramways Committee, he hoped the exhibition would increase its receipts [it did]. After luncheon, the company toured the exhibition grounds where the entertainments were in full swing.²⁵