

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.

Our thirty second Annual Convention will soon be on us, and 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 on the premises ready for the start on Saturday morning. Jean Osborne has told me she hopes to attend, and I believe she said she would bring a display. Jean has probably one of the finest collections of exhibition advertising labels in existence, and it will be a treat to see it if that is what she is showing.

Lisa Wall our Tudor house expert is also hoping to come this year. She couldn't make it last year as she was in Australia visiting her mother. If Jean and Lisa are bringing displays don't forget to let Don Knight know so he can arrange the program.

I have been working on a display using material I have not displayed before, at the moment I have done 78 sheet with still a few more to do.

I will repeat what I said in the last issue of the Journal in case you don't keep back copies, if you would like to stay over-night 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. Friends of members and non-member visitors are welcome, as long as they let Don know.

The saying "The more the merrier" is certainly true when it comes to our convention, and I would like to see some of our 'not too far away' members making the effort to come. I guarantee you will enjoy meeting other members, enjoying the displays and just having a chat with other like minded collectors.

Unfortunately we now have to accept that the 'social media' is now slowly destroying nearly all personal contact between people. I go out to a restaurant with my daughter nearly every Wednesday, and twice I have noticed couples sitting having a meal both stabbing away on their phones and not talking to each other. When one reads that the increase in young girls self-mutilating themselves and needing hospital treatment has doubled because it is being encouraged on social media, one can only wonder what the world is coming to.

In our last Journal I mentioned three free Festival of Britain booklets donated by Graham Hall to any member who wanted them. Much to my surprise I didn't get a single reply. Has collecting exhibition ephemera really reached such rock bottom interest now you can't even give it away? One item a 40 page booklet on a Thomas Chippendale (1718-1779) exhibition in Leeds, is surely so scarce that I should be very surprised if many ephemera collectors have it in their collection.

On Wednesday the 15 of August Kenneth took me down to see Fred and we spent three or four hours with him. I took the three F of B booklets with me and two of them Fred had not got, so the Chippendale copy has found a good home. I have been able to visit Fred three times since he died for sixteen minutes, once my daughter transported me there and twice Kenneth has come down from Shrewsbury to take me. While I was down there Fred gave me a short article for the Journal.

The Editors

Meeting at Autumn Stampex 2018

**By
Derek Connell**

As has become the custom over the last few years, The Exhibition Study Group will be sharing a room with the Philatelic Congress Study Group to hold a joint meeting at this year's Autumn Stampex. We hosted the spring meet, and now the Congress Group is returning the compliment.

It's a very loose arrangement, as will be seen from Don's report in the Summer Journal. Badges, handbooks and ephemera rub shoulders with handstamps, souvenir sheets and covers. National Philatelic War Fund labels can share a frame with adverts for Colman's Mustard and events as diverse as the Queen's Silver Jubilee and Billy Butlin's reunion at the Albert Hall are celebrated.

So if you have something you have to share, but are not sure where to display it, this is the meeting for you! It's only a couple of hours from 2pm to 4pm in Room "B" at Stampex, Business Design Centre in Islington on Saturday 15th September. Do come along and show anything you like from a couple of pages to three frames of twelve. Or just come and behold! Everyone's welcome.

Paxton Crystal Palisade

**By
Derek Connell**

Back in June I spent a Friday night at our October Convention venue, The Lodge at Crystal Palace (booked through the good services of Joan Miles) so that I could be on hand on Saturday morning for the Crystal Palace Festival. I met up with E.S.G. member, John Greatrex at the Crystal Palace Comer, an on-site reconstruction of a comer of the old building. He had invited me along as E.S.G. Chairman to open a display and say a few words to the assembled throng.

What I didn't expect was to be presented with a frock-coat, pair of breeches, waistcoat and top hat, not to mention a lovely ready-made wife, and before we knew it we were enacting a brief extract from the hit production of "Joseph and his Amazing Crystal Palace", as Joseph and Mrs. Paxton! (Go, go, go, Joseph!)

It was a sensational day for the local community, with arts and crafts, street food, ethnic entertainment, fairground rides, and of course Paxton's Bar. It was a 21st Century version of the Festival of Empire! Another E.S.G. member, Melvyn Harrison was also there, running the vibrant Crystal Palace Foundation stand with all the books and postcards of local history you could ever wish for. We should all go next year!

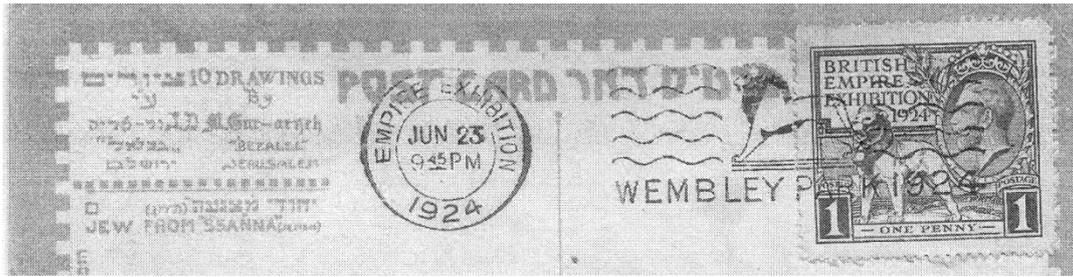
So what was John's aim in all this? Well, he has a plan to extend the Crystal Palace comer with a series of panels along the front of the old building. Known as the "Paxton Crystal Palisade", one idea to fund the project is to sell inscribed commemorative plaques for sponsorship.

The Study Group has said, without prejudice, that we might be interested in purchasing one of these, depending on further details such as size and cost. We eagerly await a progress report from John!

Letters to the Editor.

Mike Gorringe has sent in a scan of the leather object illustrated on the front cover, with the question 'What is it, anybody got any ideas'?

A new Wembley find reported by David Ogden who unfortunately did not get it on E-bay where it sold for £16-25 last December. David did manage to get scans of the whole set of ten post cards and the packet by the same artist. They look to be a very impressive set. The packet states they are 'Art' cards so I assume that means they are coloured. The Hadar Group had stand No. 6 in the Palestine Pavilion in 1924.



“Hadar”



A Jew from “Ssanna”



The Shepherd.



Harvest

“Hadar”.

Coloured card printed by “Graphica” of Jerusalem of drawings by Meir Gur-ameh. All the cards are vertical, it is not known if they are vert. right or left.

“Hadar” Edition.

- N.n. At the Wailing Wall.
- N.n. Harvest.
- N.n. In the “Chedder”.
- N.n. In the Market.
- N.n. Jew from Ssanna.
- N.n. Jewess from Mossul.
- N.n. Pioneers.
- N.n. The Shepherd.
- N.n. To the Well.
- N.n. Yemenite Child.

A letter from Derek Connell contained a surprise, I didn’t know he was into Palestine Exhibitions, so even at 92 I’m still living and learning. Derek has added to the recent correspondence on Palestine exhibitions by sending me some scans of Advertising Labels from ‘The Orient in London’, ‘Africa and the East’ and a new one to me the ‘Anglo-Palestine Exhibition’ which took place at the Agricultural Hall from June 7th to June 17th, 1933. Derek also sent me a scan of a cachet used at the Orient in London Exhibition Which I had not seen before. While cachets may not be as collectable as Advertising Labels, they are never-the-less of interest, and I like them.

I have added a few more items to Derek’s contribution as I feel that when a manuscript inscription is added to a post card at the stand holders instigation then it becomes almost official. This became commonplace way back in 1908 at the Franco-British Exhibition when natives appearing at the exhibition were always prepared to sign an autograph on a card bought from the stand.



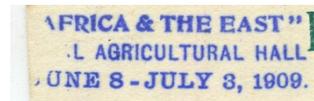
Orient in London



Africa & the East



Anglo-Palestine Ex



"Africa & the East" cachets



Type A



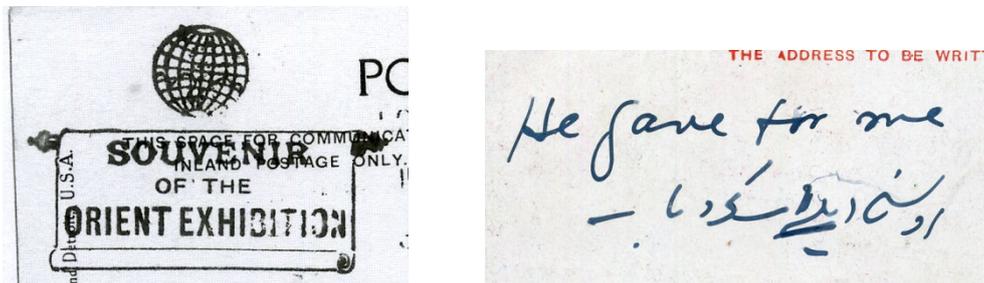
Type B



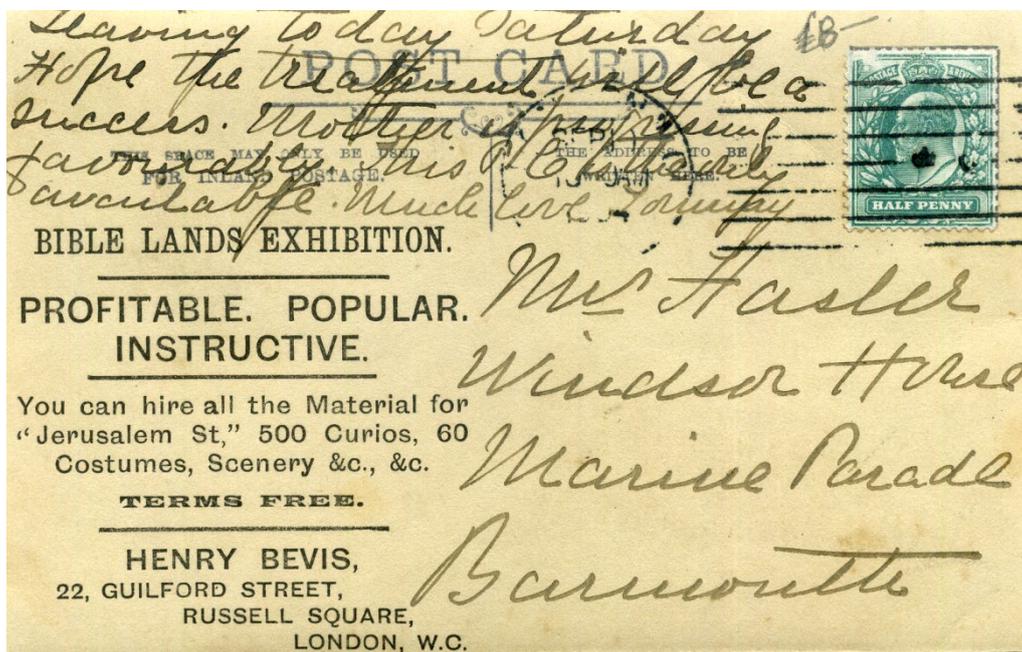
Type C

At the Orient Exhibition they had a scribe on one of the stands who would write an inscription on a card (Type A) possibly for a small fee. Each one is individually hand done as each is slightly

different and takes up almost the whole length of the card. The full inscription is fairly common, but I have only seen one example of the shortened one (Type B) where only the last two characters are written in. If the customer wanted to actually post the card they could request a reduced size inscription (Type C)



The Orient Exhibition, a rubber stamp cachet and a hand written inscription.



As missionary exhibitions became so popular it was not long before someone realised there was an opening for a supplier of all the artefacts needed to furnish an exhibition to people wanting to organise one. As you can see above Henry Bevis could hire out 500 curios, 60 costumes and scenery as required

The Nottingham Exhibition of 1903-1904: An Amusement Park.
by
Keith Fisher.
Part 2.

The Exhibits.

Visitors entered the main building of the International Exhibition by the canopied footbridge directly off the 'southern' approach to Trent Bridge. The footbridge was necessary to cross the small road which provided access to the riverside for the boatyard and rowing clubs. After passing through the turn-styles - admission 6d, season tickets 10s 6d - they would have entered the first floor of the 'Ivory Palace'. This curved gallery was approximately 300 feet long and 50 feet wide and was divided into seventy stalls for 'home' exhibitors, although it did include American office file cabinets and bureaus. At this point it should be recognised that these were not exhibits, in the sense that they were only there to be looked at. All the stalls had articles for sale. It was a market, a salesroom, a

department store or, as one commentator dubbed it, given its 'international' title, a bazaar. This does not mean there were no interesting stalls. On stall No. 9, Robinson and Barnsdale gave demonstrations of the manufacture of their cigarettes and cigars. Traditionally cigars, were hand rolled by women, although probably not, as they were rumoured to be in Cuba, on their naked thighs.

The women's Nottingham and Leicester Cigar Makers Union would not have approved. Pyn-Ka the Polisher - which polished all polished metals, without scratching, removed stains from polished wood and cleaned windows - was available on Stand No. 60. Barnett & Co, which is still in business in Nottingham, also had a stall selling their boiled sweets. Kent and Cooper Ltd [pianos], B. North & Co [wholesale druggists, hop merchants and dry salters], Mrs Garvey Thompson [Old English Cut Glass] all advertised their involvement in the exhibition in the local press. A newspaper article described the exhibition thus:

The optician is present and the maker of equipment for travellers, the manufacturers of sustaining and digestible food stuffs, the home brewers, the canned goods merchants, the manufacturer of oil cooking stoves, also a new "upside down incandescent gas mantle and fittings". The dealer in English cut glass, the manufacturer of perfumes, the dealer in ancient and modern laces, the local makers of art pottery, besides a dozen or more manufacturers of and dealers in other merchandise are in evidence.²⁶

As visitors proceeded down one of the two staircases, they would have found the 'international' part of the building. The exhibition advertised these as; "Most interesting exhibits of the various countries of the world, India, China, Persia, Japan, Turkey, Egypt, Morocco and Algeria."²⁷ It is notable that all of these lands were, to the Edwardians, distant and mysterious. The articles for sale included an Egyptian idol in the shape of a matchbox, Japanese style fans and porcelain, Indian ivory and wood carvings plus various embroideries, jewellery and 'delicate stuffs in colour.'²⁸ Also on the ground floor were the Concert Hall and the doorways out to the rest of the site, but to appreciate the layout of the grounds it would be better for the visitors to return to the first floor and go out onto the balcony.

The Rides.

From the balcony, which stretched the whole length of the main building, there was a panoramic view of the amusement park.

To the right was the Switchback, the original type of rollercoaster. This ride consisted of cars running along an undulating track using only the force of gravity, which, when they reached the other end, were 'switched back' - switch is the American railroads term for the British railways point - onto another track to return to the start, albeit at a lower level. An exhibition programme claimed it was 'said to be a great aid to digestion.'²⁹ The best known early switchback (there are disagreements on which was the first) was opened at Coney Island, New York in 1884, but it did not take long for the concept to reach Britain. In 1885, there was one at Skegness and by 1887 even Nottingham had one. At the beginning of October that year, a switchback was constructed on Gregory Boulevard, timed to coincide with the autumn race meeting on the Forest, and Goose Fair.³⁰ It was there for three months before being auctioned and re-erected the next March on Mr Woodward's land off Arkwright Street, coincidentally, near Trent Bridge, where it stayed until at least July.³¹

Behind the exhibition's switchback was the boundary fence, or, to be more precise, the background scenery, for painted on the fence was a representation of the town of Windsor with its castle on the skyline. These, much admired, 'perspective' scenes were painted on canvas that, according to Imre Kiralfy, 'was specially prepared to withstand the rigours of the variable English climate.'³² Under the ride was a line of several small buildings, painted in a black-&-white 'Tudor' style, which contained various amusements.

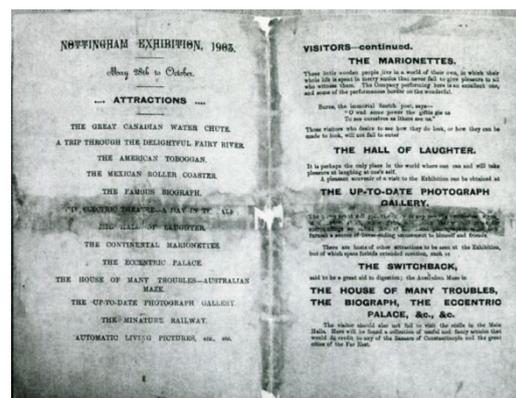
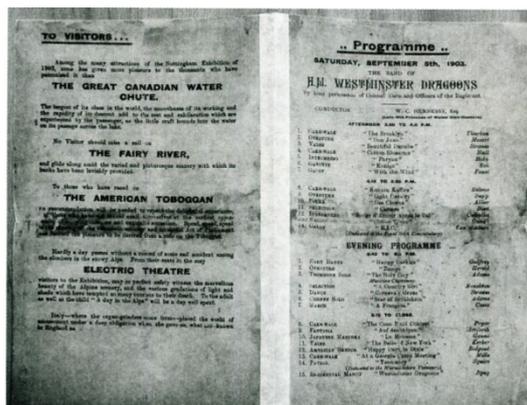
In front of these buildings was the lake for the exhibition's featured ride, the Canadian Water Chute (4). This was a toboggan-like slide, in a flat bottomed [but with a pronounced rocker] boat, down a steep incline into the lake. It was claimed, ambitiously, to be 100 feet high and 600 feet long. This was another type of ride from the USA and appeared at Earl's Court in the 1890s where it became very popular and was copied around the country. The bottom of the chute was modified with a slight upward 'ski-jump' curve. This caused the boats to skip across the water, bouncing the passengers up and down, much to their amusement. There were up to eight passengers, with a boatman at the rear who controlled the vessel in the lake with a sculling oar. He guided the boat to the landing stage. It is recorded that a 'coloured gentleman' supervised the disembarkation of the

passengers with a cheerful ‘This Side Only’ which ‘tickles them immensely.’³³ The boat was then moved to the chute where it was winched back up the slope ready for the next passengers, who had arrived at the top of the ride by a lift.

It is not unreasonable to speculate that Barnes Wallis [1887 - 1979], who spent his formative years [1892 to 1909] in London, visited one of the Earl’s Court Exhibitions. Even if he did not ride the water chute, the sight of a boat carrying 9 people being sent hopping and skipping across the water may well have planted the seed, which eventually led to his ‘Bouncing Bombs.’³⁴ This ride, which was fitted with no safety features except a hand rail, had its dangers. Apart from Mr Graney’s toe (already mentioned) Alice Wallace, 24, was awarded £600 damages for permanent injuries received upon the water chute at the Cork Exhibition in 1902-03. The accident happened when her boat was despatched off the end of the chute, into the tidal River Lee, when the water was too low.³⁵ Tragically, also in 1903, a Mr Walter A Baird was fatally injured when he was struck by a loaded boat while working on the chute at Steyne Court Amusement Grounds, New South Wales, in Australia.³⁶

Under the rear of the chute was a much more sedate ride. This was the Fairy River. The ride was taken in ‘canoes’ along a serpentine waterway inside an enclosed building, which was lavishly covered in more painted scenery. As the canoes travelled along, they passed at intervals various illuminated tableaux, of mountains and forests. The whole length of the ride was hung with stalactites interspersed with thousands of coloured fairy lights. After the terrors of the chute, the river would have given a welcome respite before the next thrill ride.

The farthest ride from the balcony, as you looked along the avenue of trees, past the bandstand, was the Mexican [sometimes American] Toboggan. This ride backed onto the Nottingham Forest grandstand which was hidden by yet more scenery. It was supposed to simulate a trip on a winter toboggan. The cars were winched by a cable to the top of the railway where they paused and were then released along a rollercoaster track until they returned to the start. It was noted that the sensation, especially in the region of the stomach, was similar to those felt on a fresh day at sea.³⁷ This ride we would recognise today but for one crucial difference. There was a ‘chauffeur’ in the car with you. His job was to release the car at the top of the ride and control the speed with the aid of a brake, to avoid catching the car in front and to stop at the right place. There was reportedly one car every twenty seconds.³⁸ The exhibition programme (5 and 6) marketed the object of this ride as ‘Speed, speed, speed ... and no sordid Act of Parliament has limited the pleasure to be derived from a ride on the Toboggan.’ Presumably this “sordid Act” was the Motor Car Act of 1903 which raised the speed limit on public roads from 14 to 20 mph. These large rides all had turnstiles and cost extra, the Canadian Water Chute was 4d and all the others 3d.³⁹



(5 and 6) Images reproduced by kind permission of Nottingham Local Studies Library.

Amusments.

The rides were not the only attractions with 3d entrance fees. There were plenty of other tempting amusements available. The largest, which could not be seen from the balcony, being in the far left hand corner of the site, was the maze. This was called ‘The House of Many Troubles’, which was probably a trade name as it was used by the Kiralfy’s for similar mazes at Wolverhampton, Scarborough and Roker. It is worth noting that the Wolverhampton maze, along with various other rides and attractions, became available after November 1902 and the Kiralfy’s were astute enough

businessmen to recycle anything they could. One, at least, of the three mazes they constructed in 1903 was probably second-hand. The design, known by aficionados as a panel maze, consisted of concentric circles of high pine fencing with gaps and cross walls designed to confuse. In the centre was a raised viewing platform reached by a spiral staircase. Upon reaching the upper floor, you could look out over the maze, and no doubt mock your less clever, or lucky, friends. From there, a balcony and stairs provided the way out.⁴⁰

Scattered around the site in various buildings were smaller entertainments. Some, if not all, of these were familiar to Nottingham folk from the annual Goose Fair. There was a Hall of Laughter, which consisted of distorting mirrors, supposedly designed in France. The reporter from the Newark Advertiser was most impressed:

When one finds oneself first elongated like a giraffe, then reduced to a midget with a corpulency that a Dutchman would envy, then represented like the leaning tower of Pisa, and finally viewing not doubles, but trebles, of oneself in a single mirror - well it is impossible to preserve one's gravity. In fact, the ludicrousness of the reflections is so great, that one laughs until one's neck aches. The "Hall of Laughter" well deserves its title.⁴¹

You could also see a 'Continental Marionette' puppet show, sometimes prefixed Merry [for alliteration?], or more specifically Italian, although it they did not make much impression on the newspaper reporters, as the most effusive description was 'pleasing and attractive.'⁴² The exhibition programme said that the Marionettes came from Italy, 'where the organ grinders come from'.⁴³ These casual racial insults to Dutchmen and Italians would have passed without comment in Edwardian England, confident as they were in their superiority. Most would have agreed with Cecil Rhodes's who said 'Ask any man what nationality he would prefer to be, and ninety-nine out of a hundred will tell you that they preferred to be Englishmen.'⁴⁴

According to the programme the Electric Theatre allowed visitors to travel, in their seats, to the snowy Alps 'in perfect safety'. The perceived danger in Switzerland was because of the almost daily accounts of accidents in the Alps. Indeed, there were more than 160, mostly climbing, deaths in 1903 up from 119 the previous year.⁴⁵ The show was an indoor *son-et-lumiere*, using lights and special effects to tell the story of one day in the life of a Swiss Mountain village. For a more modern take on recording daily life, there was the Biograph, 'it presents To-day's events'. This projector, patented by the American Herman Casler, used one of the sprocketless film types of the time. The early films included shorts of Dan Leno - the popular music-hall comedian - and a biograph trip to London. The visitor's children were not forgotten, as a Tom Thumb railway was provided to give them rides along the side of the lake. Any spare pennies could be used in the Mutoscopes, also designed by Herman Casler. You looked through a small window at photographs, mounted radially on a spindle, which flipped over as you turned a handle, giving the impression of movement. Whether any were 'What the Butler Saw' is not recorded.⁴⁶

Music and Food.

At the beginning of the exhibition, the one thing that was free, after you had paid your entrance fee, was the music. This was provided in the bandstand by, mostly, military bands. There were at least fourteen different bands during the 1903 season. Several are familiar, such as the Grenadier Guards, who played on the opening day, the Royal Marines and the Black Dyke Mills band. Others are less so, the Westminster Dragoons, the Old Robin Hood Military and the Blue Austrian bands. The exhibition also had its own, in-house Italian - sometimes Military - band. Music was almost continuous, being played, usually by two bands, for most of the time that the exhibition was open. Their repertoire was what passed for 'middle of the road' music at the turn of the twentieth century; Mozart, Souza, Wagner and Sullivan amongst others.

Food was then, as now, very important and there was no shortage of outlets. There was something for all tastes and wallets, a restaurant on the Pavilion terrace, a tea room in the grounds, and a Palace Dining room. For more exotic fare, you could patronise the Cafe Oriental in which coffee and cigarettes were served "a la Turk" by Eastern attendants. Perhaps the most striking was the much admired Japanese Tea Room, beside the maze, which was 'designed and catered by natives'.

Exhibition People.

It is unfortunate, lacking any of the Kiralfy's documents, that the only way we can find out about the people who actually worked at the exhibition is when they appear in the newspapers. This is

usually not good news. In June 1903, a gasfitter at the exhibition, Robert Gill, was summonsed for assaulting Dorothy Bhootwalls, who had a stall there. He tried to cut off the gas supply to the stall and some pushing and shoving took place. The magistrate said this was a waste of the court's time and dismissed the case.⁴⁷ On Sunday 12th July a much more serious event occurred. A Charles Le Chemienant, a 21 year old South African, and Annie Davies [28], who both worked at the exhibition, were drowned in the Trent. Le Chemienant and a friend had hired a light two- seater rowing skiff from Witty's Boatyard. They had seen Annie on the bank and had invited her to join them in the boat. The boat capsized. The inquest, held the next day, returned a verdict of 'Accidentally drowned through overweighing the boat.'⁴⁸ Their funeral took place on the Wednesday in West Bridgford parish church. The couple were interred in the same grave, the costs being met by voluntary contributions.⁴⁹

In August, Najeb E. Chazal, manager of the Indian stall at the exhibition, was summonsed for assaulting Adeline Crane, another stallholder. Mr Chazal had made comments about another girl in the exhibition to Miss Crane, which she had repeated to the girl. The defendant found this out and started abusing Miss Crane, who said she would, 'fetch an Englishman to talk to him.' Mr Chazal said, 'I don't care for twenty dirty Englishmen.' and punched her. He was fined 20s or fourteen days.⁵⁰ It may be unrelated to this case but it is curious that, at the end of September, the Indian Section was advertising for 'Several, smart, respectable young ladies,' less than a fortnight before the exhibition closed for the season.⁵¹ In November, a professional high diver, Monte Cristo, sued Charles Kiralfy in Nottingham Crown Court for £20, two weeks salary. He claimed that Mr Kiralfy had engaged him but that, when he arrived in Nottingham, he was told by the manager, Mr W. E. Chapman, that they already had a high diver. The judge said that there had been a genuine misunderstanding and suggested that they arranged an engagement for the diver the next year, at which the case was adjourned.⁵²



(7) Negretti & Zambra photograph of Dahomey Warriors at Crystal Palace 1893

Special Attractions.

The case involving the high diver highlights the point that, to generate repeat visits, amusement parks need to provide new novelties at regular intervals. The Kiralfy's understood this very well and provided additional attractions to keep the public interested. On the 3rd of July, they introduced the Dahomey Women Warriors. Dahomey was a West African kingdom [in, what is now, Benin] that was famous for its female fighters, naturally dubbed 'the Amazons'. Their country was invaded by the French, "annexed" in 1892, and became a Protectorate in 1894. The men and women

soldiers defended their king bravely, but had no chance against a modern army. Even before their final defeat, Dahomey Amazons started appearing at exhibitions in France and then throughout Europe and the USA. There was even a Dahomey Village at the Crystal Palace, London in 1893 (7). They became very popular.

The sight of the women performing war dances, and demonstrating their boxing, sword and spear exercises, drew large crowds. It helped that, as a French columnist commented, 'he found the women neither fierce, nor sinister, nor even ugly.'⁵³ The Sheffield Evening Telegraph, reporting on the Nottingham Dahomeys, managed to be even more patronizing, 'they are fine specimens of the West African native, being hardy, well developed, and, for Negroes, educationally far advanced. Small of stature, their skin is of a dark coffee colour, and they have black hair, which in the females, is artistically adorned with Kauri [cowrie] shells and pearls.'⁵⁴

At the exhibition, the West Africans built an 'exact facsimile of a Native African Kraal' under the Mexican Toboggan, and gave 'Grand Displays Half Hourly'.⁵⁵ The problem is that they were probably not Dahomeans at all. There is documentary proof that the first Africans displayed at exhibitions were indeed genuine Dahomeans, although whether they were actual warriors is less certain. For a few years, they were exhibited around the world. At the Chicago Worlds Columbian Exposition of 1893, a Frenchman named Xavier Pene was given a contract to supply a Dahomey village, one of several 'ethnic villages' there. He recruited at least fifty nine individuals from Benin, who were paid 100 francs a month for an eight month commitment. Anecdotal proof of their authenticity is provided by a supposed translation of their chants during the daily parades, "We have come from a far country to a land where all men are white. If you will come to our country we will take pleasure in cutting your white throats."⁵⁶

The Dahomey story was so popular that demand outstripped supply, there was even a "Musical Comedy in Two Acts" called "In Dahomey" on at the Shaftsbury Theatre, London in 1903. As the cast were African/American, most of the action took place in Florida and the play ended with a 'Cake Walk' dance, the use of the name Dahomey was simply exploitative.⁵⁷ So, on the principle that, to a European audience, one West African looks much like another, phoney troupes were formed. The Nottingham group almost certainly came from Sierra Leone, a British colony since 1808, and not Benin, which are both on the West African coast but several hundred miles apart. 'A coloured man Mr Brown', the manager of a group of Dahomey Amazon women warriors, had appeared before magistrates in Wakefield on the 29th of June. The problem was that seven women members of his troupe, after working for Mr Brown for six or seven years, wished to return home - to Sierra Leone - but he refused to pay their fares.⁵⁸ On the 2nd of July the women, stranded in Wakefield, were put on the 11.30 train to Hull, at the Chief Constable's expense.⁵⁹ On the very next day, a 'Great Corps of Dahomey Women Warriors'⁶⁰ whose 'Governor'⁶¹ was one Tom Brown, encamped at the Nottingham Exhibition.

Another reason we know of Mr Brown was because of a happy event. On the 13th of August, a baby girl was born in the exhibition. Her mother was Martha Brown, formerly Boye, and her father was Tom Brown, a Public Entertainer, residing at the International Exhibition at Trent Bridge, according to the birth certificate.⁶² The infant was baptised in St. Giles, the West Bridgford parish church, on the 26th of August, the exhibition's Publicity Manager paying the fees. The baby was christened, in honour of the town she was born. Maid Marion⁶³ The little girl got off lightly. In 1908, a Senegalese child born at the Scottish National Exhibition in Edinburgh was christened Scotia Reekie.⁶⁴ The Dahomeys stayed at Trent Bridge for two months until the 7th of September when they were moved to the Victoria Hall, Talbot Street, Nottingham, the building which is now Rock City. Admission was 3d from 12 noon to 10.30 pm⁶⁵

The West Africans were not the only special attraction. On the 8th of August, Prince Alexander, Blondin II, 'The World's Greatest Mid-Air Artiste with a repertoire of over 50 Startling, Unparalleled Acts on the High Wire Rope', started his stint at Trent Bridge.⁶⁶ He performed twice a day, until the 28th of the month. He left on that date because, four days earlier, Nottingham Estates Committee had requested Mr Kiralfy to 'remove at once the pole and wire rope recently erected in connection with the performance of Blondin at the Exhibition.'⁶⁷ There had also been trouble with another rope. A tethered, hydrogen-filled, advertising balloon, in the shape of a life-sized elephant, had broken free on the 14th of August and sailed away to the north-east.⁶⁸ The elephant, which was advertising Brooke Bond's Tea, must have been re-captured or replaced, because there continued to

be adverts in the Nottingham Evening Post into September, stating that it would ascend daily at 4.30, 'if the weather permits'.⁶⁹ By using a balloon, they neatly circumvented the exhibition's lease restrictions on advertising, as it was neither a building an erection or a fence.

The next special engagement, from the 7th of September, was of Frank Burley, 'America's Premier High Diver'. This dare-devil not only dived, each afternoon, sixty feet into a water-tank three and a half feet deep, but at 9 o'clock, did it again, 'enveloped in flames'. He also rode a bicycle down the water chute, into the lake, twice a day.⁷⁰ Mr Burley stayed at the exhibition until its close on the 3rd of October 1903, but he did not have to carry the burden of death-defying stunts alone. Two weeks after he started, he was joined by Ted Austin 'The Real Champion High Sack Diver of the World'.⁷¹ Sack diving was exactly what it implies; the exponents dived while tied in a sack. The idea came from Edmond Dante's escape from prison in Alexandre Dumas's *The Count of Monte Cristo* (1844), so much so that some sack-divers, as we have seen, called themselves Monte Cristo. To finish with a flourish, for the final few days the divers were re-joined by Prince Alexander, 'King of the High-Wire'.⁷² So, by the end of the season, the 3rd of October, the paying public were getting good value for their entrance money.

The 1903 Season.

It is not possible to review the Exhibition's 1903 season without referring to the weather. The summer of 1903 was dismal, it was cold and it was wet, and this must have had a dampening effect on visitor numbers. During the four months June to September, the mean maximum temperature was 66 degrees Fahrenheit (18.9 degrees Celsius). There were a few pleasant days at the start and end of June and the beginning of July when the thermometer reached 85.4 degrees Fahrenheit (29.7 degrees Celsius). To balance that, on the night of the 13th of June, the temperature was recorded at only 3 degrees Fahrenheit above freezing. But it was not so much the heat, or lack of it, as the damp that was so memorable. In the same four months it rained, on average, nearly every other day.⁷³ The 24th of August was the wettest day on record, at the time, when 2.357 inches of rain fell. It was only the comparative dryness of the winter months that stopped 1903 being the wettest year 'since records began'.⁷⁴ The weather highlights the hubris shown by Charles Kiralfy on the opening day, when he claimed that they were promoting the open air and outdoor amusements. The Exhibition tried to combat the elements by advertising, two weeks after they opened, 'In inclement weather, the Immense Exhibition Palace affords shelter for a Multitude of People and the band performs in the big concert hall',⁷⁵ The claim about the band is open to question as they did not acquire a music licence until the 24th of June.⁷⁶

The commercial success of the venture is more difficult to assess. It is said that the Kiralfy's spent £40,000 pounds on the construction,⁷⁷ and added to that would be the day-to-day running costs, as the labour intensive exhibition had about 150 staff.⁷⁸ Quantifying the income is nigh on impossible. We do not know how much the exhibit, sideshow and restaurant concessioners were charged or if the management was on a percentage of their takings. There is also no complete record of the number of visitors. We have a couple of snapshots, whose accuracy we can only take at face value. A report in the Nottingham Evening Post on the 16th of June, eighteen days after the opening, gave the following figures; total number 320,000, of whom 112,000 passed through the turnstiles (but it doesn't explain the discrepancy), Fairy River 250,000, Water Chute 70,000, Toboggan 40,000, Maze 20,000, Hall of Mirrors 20,000 and 26,000 for the rest of the amusements. If we take the entry [turnstile] fee as 6d, the Chute as 4d and the rest at 3d, we arrive at an income, in less than three weeks, from entry and the amusements, of approximately £8,400. On August Bank Holiday over 34,600 people paid for admission,⁷⁹ which equates to £865. The bottom line is that the Kiralfys reopened the exhibition the next year, so it could not have been a total financial disaster. That October, Charles was sanguine enough to travel to the USA to get married.⁸⁰

The Midlands Exhibition of 1904.

From the moment the doors closed, the Kiralfys were preparing the next year's events; by the end of October they had even applied for planning permission to increase the number of Concert Hall lavatories.⁸¹ They had learned the lessons of the first season and had decided to reinvent the exhibition. Their first step was to ditch the International title and rename it the 'Midlands Exhibition of Arts and Industry', concentrating on the East Midlands district for its support. In addition, they introduced the concept of short themed exhibitions, lasting three or four weeks, throughout the season.

These were: Sports & Pastimes, Brewers & Allied Trades, Hearth & Home, Health and Food & Cookery. They also removed the 'international' exhibits, increased the size of the concert hall and planned a greater variety of indoor entertainments.⁸² In February 1904, they applied to the Estates Committee for permission to seek a Full Licence for the site, but were again rebuffed.⁸³ The large rides remained, although the Fairy River took a darker turn by becoming the River Styx, coincidentally the name of a similar ride at Earl's Court the previous year. The smaller amusements changed rather more. While the maze and distorting mirrors remained, they were joined by Jewell's Automatic Electric Theatre (a puppet show), the Electric & Military Rifle Ranges and the Oriental Lady Snake Charmer (8).



(8) Midlands Exhibition, Nottingham 1904
Postcard by E. Hamel & Co. Image
Reproduced by kind permission of
Reflections of a Bygone Age. Keyworth.



(9) Entrance to the Midlands Exhibition,
1904. Courtesy of Nottingham Historical
Film Unit and www.picturethepast.org.uk

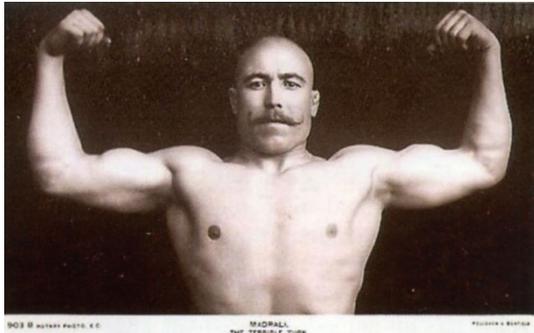
One of the more curious aspects of the March 1904 adverts was the claim that the Midlands Exhibition was now under 'Distinguished Patronage'. These patrons included three Dukes - Devonshire, Rutland and Portland - and, for the 'Woman's Work and Handicraft Section', two Duchesses - Devonshire and Portland - and no less than six Countesses.⁸⁴ The veracity of these claims may be judged by the fact that none of the patrons are recorded as attending the opening ceremony. Of much more interest to the sporting, and curious, public was that there would be Grand Wrestling Contests.

The 1904 Opening.

The opening on Saturday 14th May 1904 was a low key affair, when compared to the previous year. The ceremony was performed by the Mayor of Nottingham, Councillor A. Page, supported by the Sheriff and several councillors. There was no eight course lunch. Visitors would have noticed a few exterior changes to the venue, the sign over the entrance had changed to 'Midlands' from 'International' (9). the trees were more mature and the flower beds were in full bloom. There were 'new and exquisite' al-fresco illuminations. The more exotic restaurants had gone. At least some of the exhibits on the first floor had changed.⁸⁵ The National Phonograph Company had a stand thirty feet long by fifteen feet wide which displayed Edison Phonographs and Records and was 'conceded to be the finest show of talking machines ever seen in England'.⁸⁶ H Samuel, the jewellers, had a 'Special Show of Up-to-date Novelties at Wholesale Prices' on their stand, and also offered to pay the railway fare, up to thirty miles, of anyone who made purchases over 25s.⁸⁷ This reference to the railways as a sales ploy draws attention to the exhibition's new marketing strategy.

They had arranged railway excursions from local towns to Nottingham on specific 'Gala Days'.^{88 89} In the first week alone, there were excursions from nine local towns and cities, those on the same route doubling up. So there was a Chesterfield and Mansfield day via the Great Central Railway and another for Lincoln, Gainsborough and Louth via the Great Northern.^{90 91 92} The railway network also played a surprising role in the wrestling contests which were the main feature of the opening week. These were modern professional wrestling matches, although the sport was not new to Nottinghamshire. The most renowned were the annual open contests at Bunny, South Notts. These contests were started c.1712 by Sir Thomas Parkyns, the Wrestling Baronet [1662- 1741], and ended in 1811. Although they were for 'a gold-laced hat' and cash prizes, the contestants were not full-time professionals⁹³

Antonio Pierri's Troupe of Wrestlers was engaged for the first week. They were eight in number but the star of the show was undoubtedly Ahmed Madrali the Terrible Turk (10). Madrali's arm was still bandaged, as a result of his famous bout against the Russian Lion George Hackenschmidt that January in the Olympia Hall, London ⁹⁴ 20,000 grappling fans went to see the match, causing a monumental traffic jam, as Madrali was trying to avenge Hackenschmidt's defeat of his manager Pierri in 1902. The contest lasted less than a minute as, the Turk dislocated his elbow after being thrown and could not continue.⁹⁵



(10) Madrali, the Terrible Turk, postcard.



(11) This picture, looking towards the Bandstand, is taken from Mr A. R. Atkey's 1904 Photograph album. He was a member Of the Nottingham Automobile Club. Courtesy of Nottinghamshire Archives.

By the 14th of May, he was back to fighting fitness, so much so that the following week he, along with his comrades, was able to fight in Nottingham in the afternoons and in London, at the Alhambra, Leicester Square, the same evening, testament to the efficiency of the Edwardian railway system.⁹⁶ While in the evenings at Nottingham several international champions including Tom Cannon (England's Champion), Tom McInerney (Champion of Ireland) and Ganza (Belgium Champion) had a 'contest' of their own, for 'prizes up to a value of £250'⁹⁷ On the Wednesday, a new feature was introduced to the show when an amateur wrestler took on one of the professionals. This was Alfred Amedro, a Frenchman who worked as a lace twist-hand in Long Eaton, and who gave such a good account of himself against Petroff the Russian Champion that, by the 31st of May, he was being advertised as part of the show ^{98 99} Three weeks after the wrestling finished at the exhibition, he took on Hackenschmidt himself at the Nottingham Empire.¹⁰⁰ This was a great coup for someone who claimed not to have fought a professional before. The evening contests continued until the 4th of June, by which time the prices had fallen somewhat. Reserved seat prices on opening day cost up to 5 shillings, on top of the 6d to enter the exhibition, while, by the end the most expensive seat was 1s 6d.¹⁰¹

May and June 1904.

To replace the afternoon wrestling, the exhibition resorted to some old and some new attractions. The popular military bands, from the 13th Hussars¹⁰² to the 2nd Manchester,¹⁰³ continued to be engaged for a week or two at a time. By the second (Whitsun) week, an un-named high diver was back in business, and the Arabian Lady Snake Charmer had been joined by Tonini the Illusionist.¹⁰⁴ At the end of May, catering was taken over by the people who had worked at the Glasgow East End Industrial Exhibition, who could provide special dinners for parties for 3s a head, upwards.¹⁰⁵ June started with weekly competitions in the Electric Shooting Gallery,¹⁰⁶ and, from the 13th, Hardy the wire walker, whose feats included, riding a cycle in mid - air,¹⁰⁷ replaced the high diver as the resident outdoor attraction, but the major change was in the concert hall. From the 6th of June, Monkhouse's Select Concert Party appeared for one week.¹⁰⁸

A Concert Party was an end-of-the-pier type of show consisting mainly of variety acts, usually humorous and/or musical. This was the start of a drive to transform the concert hall into a full music hall. On the 20th of June, the Kiralfy's started presenting a full variety show, twice daily. The acts included magicians, a demon cyclist, Pierrots, burlesque artists and comedians as well as singers. Entry to the shows was free for visitors to the exhibition, probably because the Kiralfy's did not have

an entertainment licence, and could not, legally, charge.¹⁰⁹

Ever eager for publicity the exhibition played host, on Thursday the 23rd of June, to the Nottingham Automobile Club's 100 Miles Non- Stop Run. The route was to Kettering and back via Melton and Oakham with a time trial up Rockingham Hill.¹¹⁰ Twelve members assembled in the exhibition grounds, where Charles Kiralfy offered a medal for the smartest car (11). This was presented by his wife, Mary, to Mr Ellis H. Joule's 12 H.P. Darracq.¹¹¹ Mr Joule had a successful day as he also won the challenge cup for the endurance trial, completing the course in just less than four hours.¹¹² This easily beat the new legal speed limit of 20 mph, and one of the competitors in the hill climb even managed 40 mph. This is a good example of the dictum that you should never introduce laws without the means to police them. After a changeable May, with pleasant sunshine punctuated with the occasional thunderstorm, June was cool but almost totally dry.¹¹³ The exhibition was becoming a popular summer venue in the Midlands.¹¹⁴

The Fire.

At 8.54 pm on Saturday the 2nd of July 1904, the Nottingham City Fire Brigade received a telephone call from the exhibition reporting a fire. The call was taken at the Central Fire Station, behind the Guildhall. A hose carriage, fire escape, and three steam pumping engines, from the five available [Trent, Sherwood, Clumber, Little John and Robin Hood¹¹⁵], were despatched, with a full complement of men (some of whom travelled by cab), with Superintendent Breaks in charge.¹¹⁶ The time of arrival at Trent Bridge was recorded as 9.01 pm, although this was probably the Superintendent on the fast hose carriage arriving to assess the situation. The steamers would have taken longer, not just because of their weight but, as it was not practical to keep their fires permanently lit, it took at least eight minutes to raise steam for the pumps. This time is, nevertheless, quite remarkable and the stokers were proud of the way they could set a fire to produce steam in so short a time¹¹⁷.

The sight, on a pleasant midsummer Saturday evening, of the three steamers galloping through the Old Market Square towards the river, would help explain the size of the crowd that followed them, the trams becoming full to bursting. By the time the brigade arrived, the fire was well alight. The River Styx, Water Chute, Toboggan, and part of the Switchback were ablaze. The fire, driven by a south westerly breeze, had also ignited Nottingham Forest's main stand (Figure 2). After the alarm was raised, exhibition staff had tried to fight the blaze, but with the largely wooden constructions and painted canvas screens they had little choice but to call the fire brigade and clear the site. They were helped by police from the Trent Bridge police station across the road.

The third and final part will be published in the next Journal.