The Coin-Opcommunity and the Traveling Showman.

By Freddy Bailey (A proud Traveling Showman)

When we talk about the roots of the coin operated machine in Great Britain, we must also talk about the traveling showman, for they have been at the forefront of the coin operated machine industry since the turn of the 18th century, many years ago a young journalist by the name of Nic Costa was commissioned to write some articles for the Coin Slot section of the World's Fair newspaper about the various British coin machine manufacturers and distributors that founded this great industry. (Nic Costa's articles and research of the industry, is second to none, I am proud to call him my friend)

At that time the World's Fair newspaper was the tabloid that had been reporting virtually everything that the traveling showmen did since 1906, this newspaper reported on every part of the traveling showman's life, be it a birth in the family, or even a death, it even reported the list of mourners at any given funeral or a list of travelers that attended a show land wedding, the traveling showmen's activities was a major part of this publication.

On the other side of the Atlantic, a similar publication called the Billboard was also the bible for the American Carnival people (Traveling Showmen) as they are known in the United States.
Both of these publications thrived on what was happening on the traveling fairs and entertainment for the public in general, they reported any kind of news relating to the happenings of the traveling people, Vaudeville, and early Cinematographs were popular subjects, booking agents would advertise the various circus acts that were appearing around the countries, then the various manufacturers started advertising their products, amongst them was the early producers of coin operated machines, by 1910 these newspapers had added several more sections for their readers, there was sections on the early coin operated phonographs first produced in America by Thomas Edison, similar products were produced in England by a small British company by the name of Haydon & Urry who had produced their first coin operated machine as early as 1896, Haydon and Urry started producing short films for a traveling showman called Randall Williams, by 1919 Haydon & Urry was producing and selling 100% of their equipment to traveling showmen, one such customer was Clarence Barron who later built the first purpose built British amusement arcade on the sea front at Great Yarmouth in 1923.





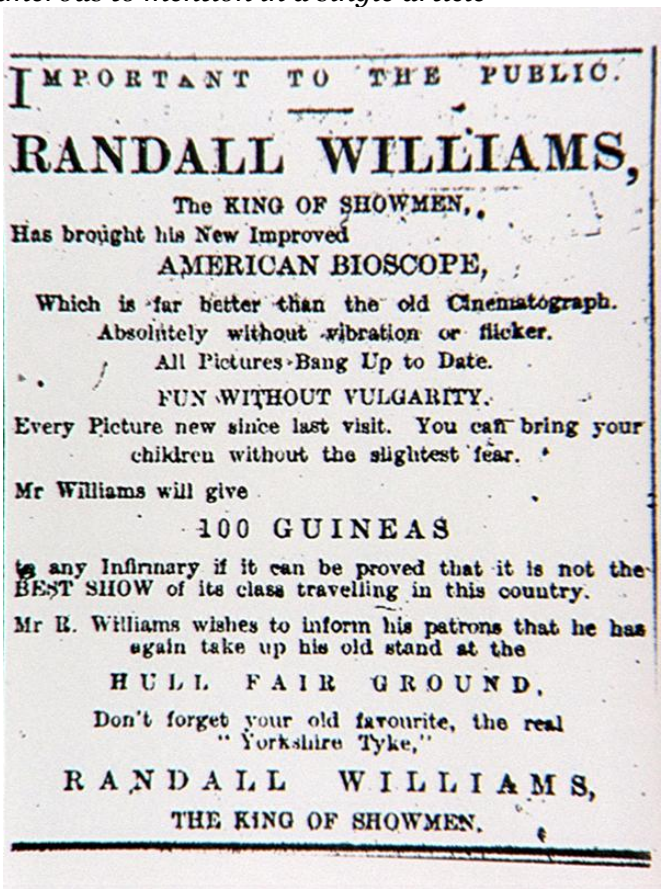




Arthur Bates *John Collins* *Bertram Mills* *Charles Thurston*

Some of the past presidents of the Showman's Guild of Great Britain.

Since those early days traveling showmen have been at the forefront of the British Coin Machine Industry, there is not a seaside resort in the country that does not have an amusement arcade owned by a traveling showman. When you look at the names of the arcade owners across the country it reads like an who's who in the world of traveling showmen, names such as Jimmy Corrigan, Jimmy Thomas, Jimmy Fletcher, Jimmy Botton, John Noble, Charlie Doubtfire, Frank Codona, Harry Grey, Billy Bell, Harry Symonds, Frank Bailey, Charles Thurston, Dudley Barron, Jimmy Jones, Frank Booth, Teddy Harrison, Billy Bagnell, George Peak, Arthur Crick, Rubin Holdsworth, Oliver Aveyard, Bertram Mills, Pat Collins, Arthur Webber, Sammy Deeks, John Green, Tommy Holland, Stanley Threadwell, Billy Hussey, Alf Johnson, Harry North, Arthur Bates, The Manning's, The Shufflebottoms, The Traylens, The Biddles, The Bolesworths, The Chadwicks, The Coggers and so many more too numerous to mention in a single article



IMPORTANT TO THE PUBLIC.

RANDALL WILLIAMS,

The KING OF SHOWMEN,

Has brought his New Improved

AMERICAN BIOSCOPE,

Which is far better than the old Cinematograph.

Absolutely without vibration or flicker.

All Pictures Bang Up to Date.

FUN WITHOUT VULGARITY.

Every Picture new since last visit. You can bring your children without the slightest fear.

Mr Williams will give

100 GUINEAS

to any Infirmary if it can be proved that it is not the BEST SHOW of its class travelling in this country.

Mr R. Williams wishes to inform his patrons that he has again take up his old stand at the

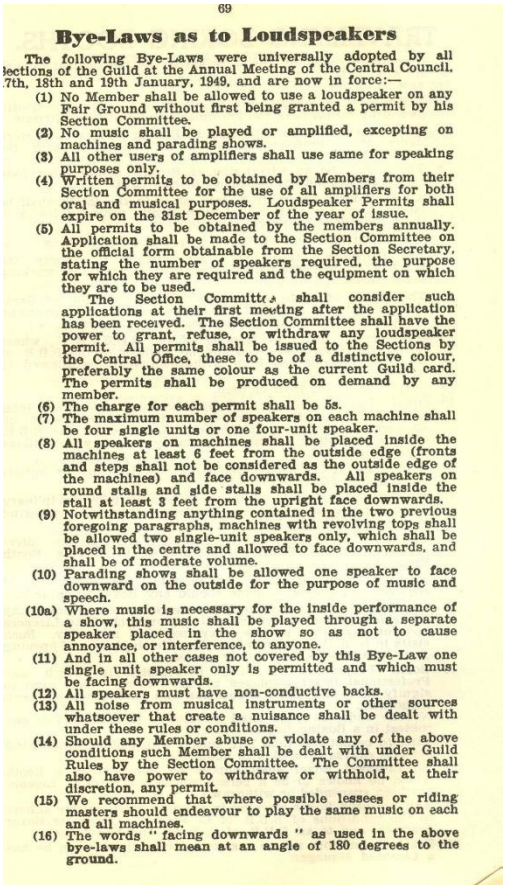
HULL FAIR GROUND.

Don't forget your old favourite, the real "Yorkshire Tyke,"

RANDALL WILLIAMS,

THE KING OF SHOWMEN.

Randall Williams "King of the Showmen"



69

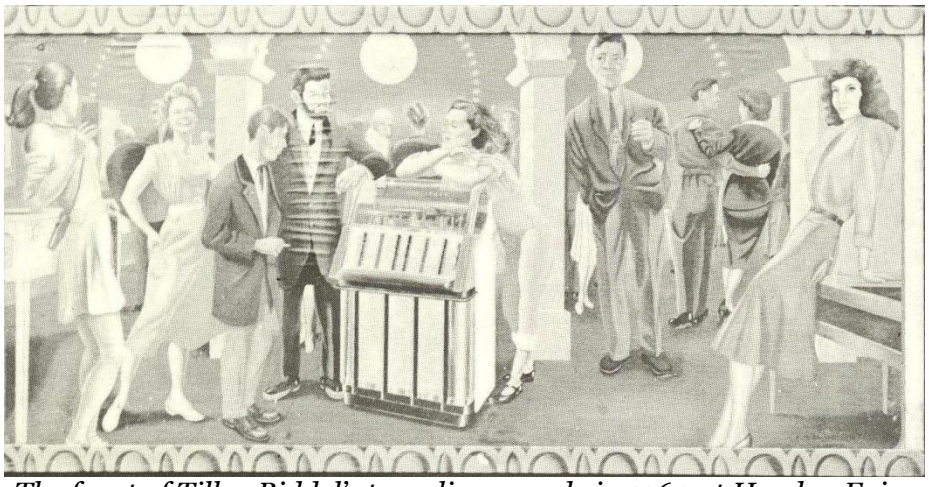
Bye-Laws as to Loudspeakers

The following Bye-Laws were universally adopted by all Sections of the Guild at the Annual Meeting of the Central Council, 17th, 18th and 19th January, 1949, and are now in force:—

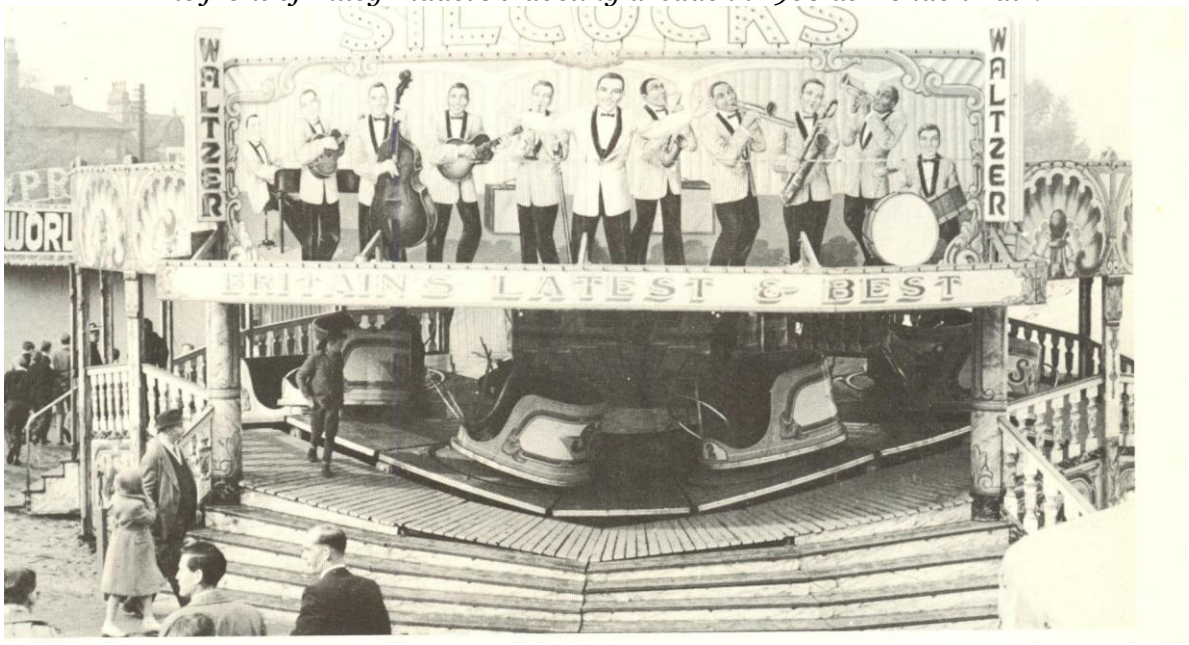
(1) No Member shall be allowed to use a loudspeaker on any Fair Ground without first being granted a permit by his Section Committee.
(2) No music shall be played or amplified, excepting on machines and parading shows.
(3) All other users of amplifiers shall use same for speaking purposes only.
(4) Written permits to be obtained by Members from their Section Committee for the use of all amplifiers for both oral and musical purposes. Loudspeaker Permits shall expire on the 31st December of the year of issue.
(5) All permits to be obtained by the members annually. Application shall be made to the Section Committee on the official form obtainable from the Section Secretary, stating the number of speakers required, the purpose for which they are required and the equipment on which they are to be used.
The Section Committee shall consider such applications at their first meeting after the application has been received. The Section Committee shall have the power to grant, refuse, or withdraw any loudspeaker permit. All permits shall be issued to the Sections by the Central Office, these to be of a distinctive colour, preferably the same colour as the current Guild card. The permits shall be produced on demand by any member.
(6) The charge for each permit shall be 5s.
(7) The maximum number of speakers on each machine shall be four single units or one four-unit speaker.
(8) All speakers on machines shall be placed inside the machines at least 6 feet from the outside edge (fronts and steps shall not be considered as the outside edge of the machines) and face downwards. All speakers on round stalls and side stalls shall be placed inside the stall at least 3 feet from the upright face downwards.
(9) Notwithstanding anything contained in the two previous foregoing paragraphs, machines with revolving tops shall be allowed two single-unit speakers only, which shall be placed in the centre and allowed to face downwards, and shall be of moderate volume.
(10) Parading shows shall be allowed one speaker to face downward on the outside for the purpose of music and speech.
(10a) Where music is necessary for the inside performance of a show, this music shall be played through a separate speaker placed in the show so as not to cause annoyance, or interference, to anyone.
(11) And in all other cases not covered by this Bye-Law one single unit speaker only is permitted and which must be facing downwards.
(12) All speakers must have non-conductive backs.
(13) All noise from musical instruments or other sources whatsoever that create a nuisance shall be dealt with under these rules or conditions.
(14) Should any Member abuse or violate any of the above conditions such Member shall be dealt with under Guild Rules by the Section Committee. The Committee shall also have power to withdraw or withhold, at their discretion, any permit.
(15) We recommend that where possible lessees or riding masters should endeavour to play the same music on each and all machines.
(16) The words "facing downwards" as used in the above bye-laws shall mean at an angle of 180 degrees to the ground.

Guild Rules on Fairground Noise.

Randall Williams was the first traveling showman to introduce moving pictures in a booth on the fairground, Clarence Barron was the first to operate coin operated Phonographs on the fairground in the early 1920's, it was the traveling showmen that made the jukebox so popular in the 1950's, they would operate jukeboxes in their portable arcades, they were the instigators of popular music, they played the hit's of the day on their loud pan tropes, several showmen even painted there rides and traveling arcade fronts depicting a modern day jukebox or a famous singing group or Rock and Roll band of the day.



The front of Tilley Biddel's traveling arcade in 1960 at Hendon Fair.



Silcock's Waltzer Ride depicting Bill Haley & The Comets in 1958.

Several of these actions would contribute to many of the traveling showmen "Settling down" and opening amusement arcades at the many British Seaside resorts around the coast of England, in the 1950's England was plagued by gangs of youths known as "Teddy Boys" these young thugs would wear loud clothes known as drape suits and creep sole shoes, most of them was attracted to the fairgrounds because of the loud music being played on the rides to attract customers, but the fairground was becoming like a war zone where rival factors would meet and do battle in the midst of the traveling showmen (The actor Albert Finney's first movie was called "Saturday Night and Sunday Morning" this movie depicted the atmosphere of the fairgrounds in the early 1950's and was filmed on location at Nottingham Goose Fair) doing their business, many a battle was fought between these Teddy Boy gangs and the traveling showmen themselves, so much so that the traveling showmen would organize themselves to combat such threats, the travelers would be told by the local police of a possible confrontation between two local gangs, several leading travelers would advise the police to stay on the perimeter of a particular fairground,(One such incident took place on a fair at Bermonsey in the east end of London in 1950) while the showmen themselves would battle such groups and

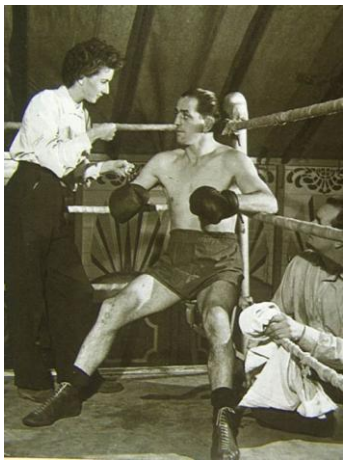
solve the problem, and then let the police remove and march off the sometimes beaten and battered Teddy Boys.

This all came to a head when a youth got stabbed at a fair on Clapham Common, a popular London venue, after that, many traveling showmen migrated to the coast and opened amusement arcades, and this was the start of the modern day coin operated machines as we know them today.

The Traveling showman can also be acknowledged as the first operators of Bingo, the popular card game that is a major industry even today, it was my late father that was one of the first to operate this game as an attraction on the traveling fairgrounds in the late 1940's. Many of the British Boxing champions started their careers in the boxing booths on the Fairgrounds, Champions such as Freddy Mills and Tommy Farr challenged all comers on the British Fairgrounds, all five of the Stewart family married other traveling Showmen.



harlotte, Amy, Maude, Phoebe, Elsie and Polly at Olympia in London in the 1950s

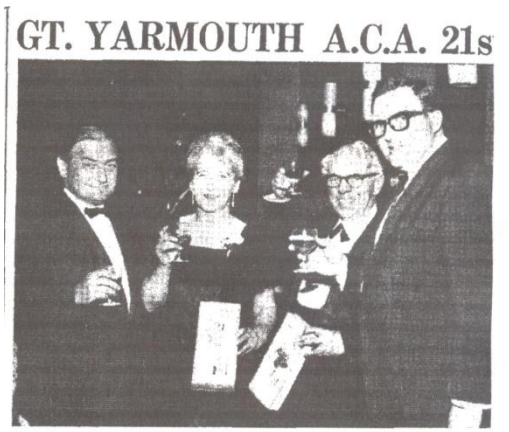


The Stewart girls at the Olympia during "Meeting Week". *Polly Stewart working the Booth.*

It was the Showman's Guild of Great Britain that was granted several exemptions in operating coin operated machines at traveling fairs in the early 1960's, from the early 1950's through the late 1960's, the Amusement Trade Show was aimed mainly at the traveling showmen, at least one third of the show was taken up by suppliers of prizes and equipment used by the traveling showmen, the week that the show was put on was known to the traveling showman as "Meeting Week" travelers from all over the country could congregate in London from all of the nine sections of the Showman's Guild they would enjoy themselves at the various venues of the day such as the Hippodrome Night Club (Now the leading casino in London and owned by a traveling Showman family The Thomas Group) and stay at the Regent's Palace or the Strand Palace Hotels, they would end their week with a dinner dance at the Grosvenor House Hotel, this was known as "The Supper and Ball" much of the business of buying "Boxes" (coin operated wall machines) was done in the lounge of the Regent's Palace Hotel, late into the night, it was also the start of the Amusement Trades Association having to put a ban of kid's attending the trade show, because they were getting out of control on the exhibitors stands, this was how strong the Traveling Showmen became in the coin operated machine industry.



Thomas Murphy MBE (former Sec. of Showman's Guild of GB) with John Singleton, Sec.-Genl. Mgr. of A.T.E.



GT. YARMOUTH A.C.A. 21s

Chairman Jimmy Jones (right) pictured with three of the original members of the Great Yarmouth and District Section of the A.C.A. as they drink a 21st birthday toast to the Section. Left to right: Mr. William Ghigi; Mrs. Eva Russell; Mr. George Barron.

Before B.A.C.T.A there was the A.C.A (Amusement Caterers Association) seen above is traveling showman Jimmy Jones who was Chairman of the Great Yarmouth & District section of the A.C.A along with George Barron and Mrs. Eva Russell of Russell's Circus on Gt. Yarmouth's Marine Parade. 1962.





The above pictures are of my late father's amusement arcade at Mundesley-On-Sea, on the east coast, Complete with a 20 seat Bingo game and the latest jukebox from The Ditchburn Organisation. 1954.



My late father's traveling Bingo Stall at Watford Fair in 1951, it was the first traveling square Hoop-La stall, (That is me sitting on the left while my cousin Jackie Briggs is sitting next to me, behind him is my late father David Bailey and my mother Florrie is in the back of the joint on the left).

Many of the early coin machine distributors started our supplying traveling showmen with *coin operated machines, names such as Chicago Automatic Supply Company, Ruffler & Walker, Krafts Automatics, Phillip Shefras and Samson Novelty Company, One of the best known and trusted by the traveling showmen was Ralph "Ginger" Horwitz the owner of Chicago Automatic Supply Company, "Ginger" as he was fondly known would go in his van to all of the major fairs of the day, selling his new and used machines, he was so well known that he would deliver messages from one family to another, he knew most of the families by their first name, he could tell you who was married to who in each family, the Horwitz/Horwood family are the true pioneers of the coin machine industry, from 1928 till the present day this family has been at the forefront in the supply of coin operated machines to traveling showmen, for more than 50 years, the generations of traveling showmen have stayed loyal to their suppliers of coin operated machines, both through the unofficial financing of their enterprises in the form of Bill Ruffler of Ruffler & Walker Finance and in more modern times through Roy Ruffler of Lordsvale Finance and The Ruffler Bank, and the supply by companies such as Chicago Automatic Supply Company and Ruffler & Walker, and through such manufacturers as Crompton's a company that was originally started by Arthur Bates a past president of the Showman's Guild of Great Britain and Walter Streets of Streets Automatics himself starting out as a traveling showman, to one of our most famous of all the traveling showmen, Jimmy Thomas who has risen from being a traveling showman to one the most successful businessmen in the industry, ever to come from the background of a traveling showmen. Many other traveling showmen have become pillows of their community with positions such as being a Mayor, a Judge or an Alderman, even a Knight of the British Empire in the form of Sir Billy Butlin, So in Great Britain, when you talk of Coin Operated Amusement Machines you talk about the people that created this great industry, the traveling Showman.*





The picture top left is of a group of Notts & Derby travelers in Travalger Square in London during "Meeting Week" 1959,(That's me first from the left at the back) the picture on the top right is of my mother and father with the Wilkinson's of Skegness, Maisy Proctor and Rosalie Wilkinson are on the left





My family on our wagon steps in 1949.
I am on the left, Jackie Briggs and My sister Sylvia with my dad.
Above. Dudley & Dolly Barron, Florie & David Bailey, Jackie & Lily Briggs at Caister Camp Christmas Party 1969.



Some of the more well known traveling woman from Left to right: Ivy Moore(Simmons), Ronnie Looms (Crick), Sylvia Burrows (Bailey) , Jane Jones (Botton), Pacie Wilson, Rosie Whittle (Crick) , Bernese Tate (Simmons) and Genie Mott(Crick) this picture was taken at Caister Camp Christmas Party 1964.



The Amusement Trades Exhibition at the Horticulture Hall London 1964.





COIN LTD.—John Enticknap receives an order from Mrs Parrish of Casino Amusements, Sheppey.

The late John Enticknap with Mrs. Parrish a London Traveler A.T.E 1964.

Above. Ron Murrey, Roy Ruffler, Len Cullum, Fred Walker & Gordon Walker A.T.E 1964.



Above Barron's Paradium Amusement Arcade, the first purpose built arcade in 1923.



Above. Barrons Paradium Amusement Arcade in its hetday in 1961.



A line up of modern wall machines and a crane at the British Seaside in the 1950's



A typical London SportsLand arcade in London 1950



Ralph Horwitz at the A.T.E show in London in the 1950's



The Showroom of Krafts Automatics Ltd in Stoke Newington, London 1958

Inside the showroom of Bollands Amusement Machine Supply Co. 1930's.



Illustrations show views of the extensive and varied stock held at our Showrooms, ready for immediate delivery



Particulars of any Machine will be gladly sent on request.



The founder of Samson Novelty Co. Ltd., Mr. Jack Holloway (father of B.A.M.O.S.), looks down on a selection of machines in our showrooms.







The Samson Novelty Company aimed at the Traveling Showmen, supplying both coin operated machines as well as Candy Floss and Punchball Machines. Above are the original proof adds for the World's Fair in the late 1940's.

Hope you enjoyed a brief history of the Traveling Showmen and their coin machine adventures. Freddy Bailey, from a traveler to a coin machine man, but still "A Showman"