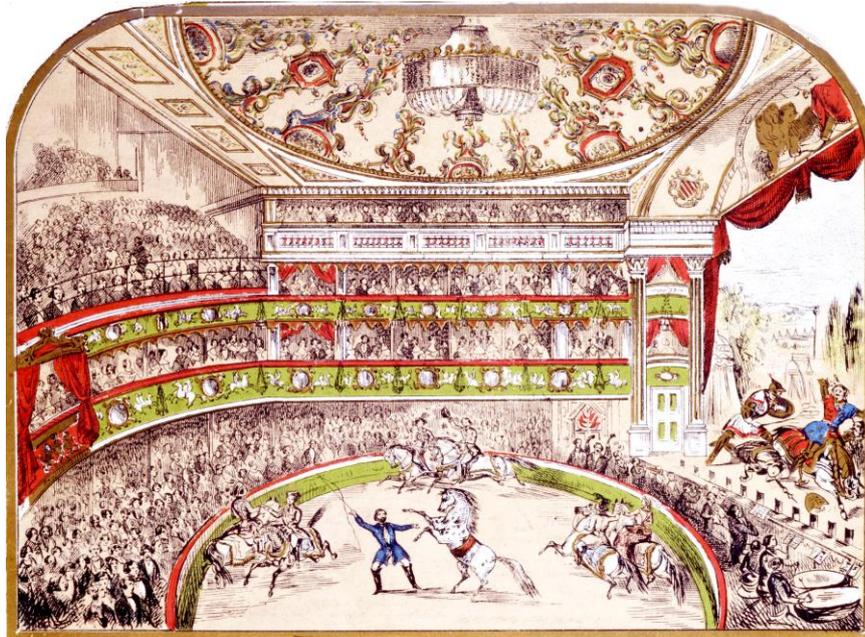


## Roll up! Roll up! - 19<sup>th</sup> century circus and other professional bands in the British Isles

Travelling zoological exhibitions (menageries), acrobats and trick animal acts were common forms of entertainment in the eighteenth century and earlier. Philip Astley was perhaps the first of the showmen to combine such acts in a show in a circular structure “*Astley's Amphitheatre*” in London in 1768 featuring trick horseback riding and live music. His later rival, Charles Dibdin, opened “*The Royal Circus*” in London in 1772, from which the term circus is said to have been popularised.



*Astley's Royal Amphitheatre*

By the 1850's travelling circuses and menageries had become widespread in the British Isles, ranging from small, tented affairs to large operations housed in semi-permanent buildings. Originally the circus was mainly performed in wooden buildings rather than in tents, and proprietors such as Frederick "Charles" Hengler constructed purpose-built buildings known as hippodromes, circuses, and amphitheatres in various locations throughout country. Eventually some permanent sites were established for a few circuses.

Tents to house circuses were imported as a concept from America in the 1840's. The touring shows largely swapped over to canvas which was cheaper to maintain and considerably quicker to erect and pull down in each location than the earlier wooden structures.

Each show, be it circus, menagerie or travelling theatre/vaudeville, had its collection of wagons, which were gaily or even gaudily painted, housing the performers, the animals, the equipment, and the tents. Many of the larger enterprises included musical bands, to provide enthusiastic music during or before the individual act performances, and to entertain the audiences before the shows and during the parades which often announced the arrival of a show to each town.

The make up of the bands varied considerably – some were only a few players, usually brass (to make the most noise), others reached numbers of up to twenty. The larger and more established bands were of sufficient quality and ability to deliver complex operatic and classical pieces as well as the “traditional” show music of marches, polkas and waltzes that were associated with such bands. Sadly, at the lower end of the quality spectrum, circus bands tended to get a bad name due to the poor quality of the music of some of them.



*Bostock & Wombwell's bandwagon, c. 1910*

The menagerie and circus bands were not limited to performing in their shows, they would often be engaged, or offer their services, for local events in the towns they visited, either augmenting a local band or providing the music on their own.

Circuses and menageries usually arrived in a town with a processional flourish. An example is Sanger's Circus in the 1880's with its main carriage drawn by four horses in 'royal state harness' as part of the grand procession. All the carved woodwork on the carriage was gilded. Sanger's wife, Mademoiselle Pauline de Vere, sometimes dressed as Britannia and rode on top of a carriage holding a Union Jack shield, a gold trident, and wearing a Greek helmet. The circus lion, Nero, and a lamb sat together at her feet. After this came a string of camels, a herd of elephants, numerous other costumed characters, exotic animals either in cages, or led by their trainers, and of course, the circus band.

As a means of popular entertainment, these travelling shows were a great success in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and they criss-crossed the country moving from town to town, residing in each for a time before heading off to the next location. There was usually great excitement accompanying their visits, especially when the parades took part. These processions were generally eagerly awaited by the local populace, only a few curmudgeons complaining about the noise, the effect on their business or the bawdiness of the performers.



*Sanger's Circus bandwagon*

Sadly, a number of accidents and similar occurrences resulted from the passing of a circus or menagerie band in a parade. People were injured, or even killed when, through inattention in watching or listening to the band, something happens to them. Similarly, horses bolted, and carts and wagons ran away when their draft animals were frightened by the band's sudden appearance or loud music, sometimes hitting or running over a nearby pedestrian, causing injury or death.

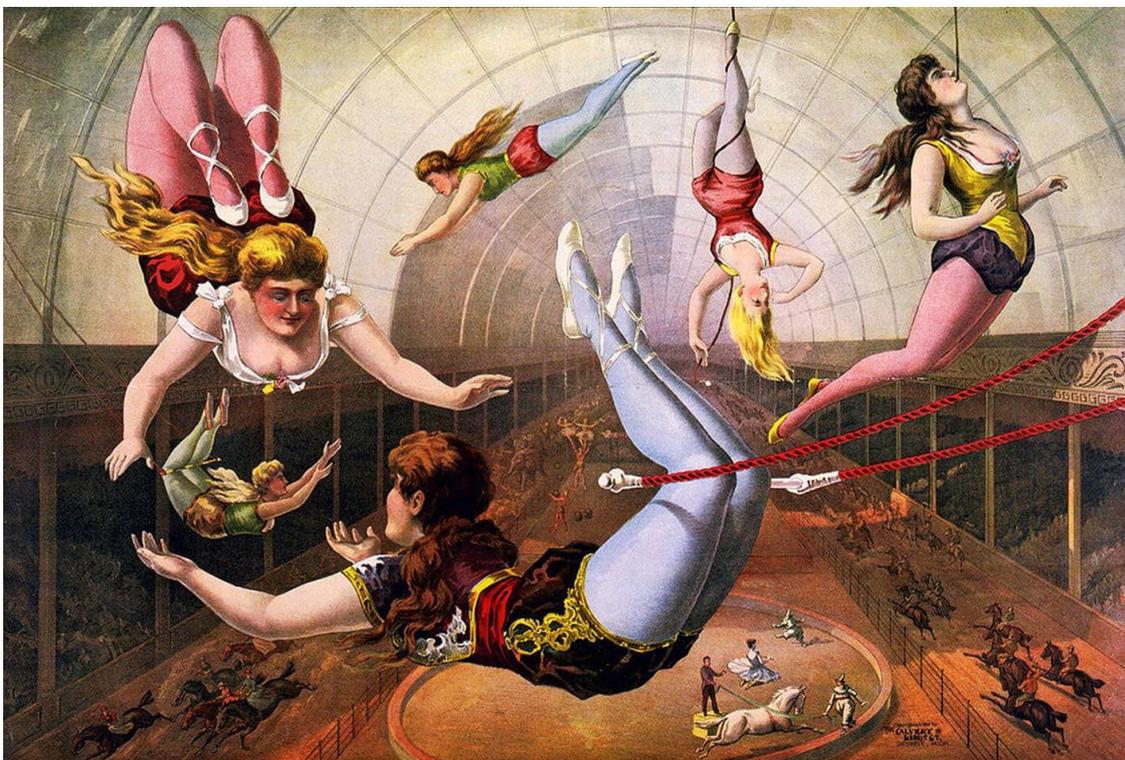
The worst of these happened in the USA, in May 1870, when the James Robinson & Co.'s Circus Band, led by Professor M.C. Sexton, were mounted on the roof of the lion carriage. In turning a corner during the street parade in Middletown, Missouri, the carriage hit a rock causing the roof to give way and throw the musicians in with the lions. Four were killed and many of the others had severe lacerations.



Contemporary with the circus and menageries, other travelling shows also entertained audiences across the country. These included minstrel shows, waxworks, theatres and sideshow “fairs”. Some of these also had accompanying bands.

Another aspect of popular entertainment in the Victorian era was the establishment of the public park, open spaces within which people could meet, congregate and enjoy various entertainments. To begin with, some of these were private enterprises – such as the very popular Vauxhall Gardens in London – but gradually the “corporation” public parks began to appear and the private, professional parks concentrated more on being an entertainment venue. Many of these earlier amusement parks and gardens had a resident professional brass band to entertain the crowds. Their players would be well employed during the summer season, but then would have had a lean time in the winter when much of the activity in such places was wound down. The public parks, of course, engaged or allowed local amateur brass bands to perform in their spaces.

During the 19<sup>th</sup> century there were many of these professional bands, attached to the travelling and static entertainment operations. Some were permanent, a fixed attraction which, over time, matured in its competence and quality. Many, however, were transient, often engaged through advertisement as a whole or as individual players for the season or part thereof that was involved. In all cases their employment was dependent on the success of the entertainers and the time of year - some enterprises laid themselves up for the winter. As the Victorian entertainment industries expanded, the various attractions increasingly made use of musicians, sometimes as string bands, but more often as brass bands (with occasional woodwind instruments). The list of bands below is probably only a small subset of the actual bands that fell into this category during the Victorian era.



*Fanciful trapeze artistes in a multi-ring circus, with horse racing track – no sign of a band!*

## The life and times of circus and menagerie bands in the British Isles in the 19<sup>th</sup> century – extracts from contemporary reports:

- At the time of the coronation of Queen Victoria, in June 1838, Wombwell's Menagerie had also been in Falmouth and the Menagerie Band played in the town's grand procession, and at the celebration dinner on a grandstand erected over the entrance to the meat market. At this time, the leader of the Menagerie Band was John Bright, playing his keyed bugle.
- Mr Deane's coachbuilding firm in Southampton created a new "superbly emblazoned" carriage for Mr Batty's Circus Band in early 1844. Later, in October 1844, when Batty's Circus visited Cork in Ireland, the wagon was described as "an elegant machine of novel structure, ornamented with several emblematical figures, and carrying the Circus Band, who looked like a group of huntsmen ready for the field."
- Mr Cock's Circus Band attended a soirée for the local Catholics at Hartlepool Town Hall, after the circus performance had ended, in March 1848
- Wombwell's Menagerie Band was engaged to play at the Kingsbridge and Dodbrooke Races in September 1851, together with the Ermington Brass Band.
- Macarté's Circus Band had a narrow escape at Oxford in August 1853 – in turning a corner, their vehicle was upset, and the musicians scattered in the road. They were all more or less bruised, and the drummer received a concussion of the spine.
- In the early 1850's Wombwell's Menagerie had a fine band, and one player was John Walker (1824-1890), from Huddersfield, originally an expert ophicleide player, and Richard Sutcliffe, of Honley, was the band leader. Walker later played with the Cook's Circus Band for a while before moving to Merthyr Tydfil and becoming instructor to the Cyfarthfa Band at the Crayshaw Ironworks.
- In January 1857 Henry Brown's Cirque Unique Company, in Norwich, described itself as having "*the best band ever heard in a Circus.*" Following this boast, Hengler's Cirque Variété, offered to back Charles Hengler's Reed, Brass, or String Bands (leader W. Allen) to "*play against the one he so vaunts, for the sum of £50.*" Another band, that of W. Cooke, in Hackney, attempted to take up the challenge, but was rapidly rejected by Hengler on the grounds that the original challenge was to Brown's Circus Band only. However he did state that "*in order to gratify your laudable ambition we will give you an opportunity of testing your abilities with ours on the following conditions only:- The respective Bands to be equal in number, and to form, alternately, three distinct bands - viz., Reed, Brass, and String, and that each leader compose and arrange seven different and original pieces, to be played at the said trial – viz., 1<sup>st</sup>, a March; 2<sup>nd</sup>, an Air, with introductions, variations, and finale; 3<sup>rd</sup>, set of Waltzes; 4<sup>th</sup>, a Schottische; 5<sup>th</sup>, a Polka; 6<sup>th</sup>, a Pas Redouble; 7<sup>th</sup>, a Gallop. Each leader to give satisfactory proof that the various compositions are his own. If those conditions suit we shall expect to hear from you by letter, naming the sum to be competed for; if not, no further notice will be taken of the matter. The above offer is also open to all travelling Circus Bands in the United Kingdom. In addition, I shall be happy to afford Mr. Wilson, leader of Mr. W. Cooke's band, or the leader of any Circus band travelling, an opportunity of testing his or their abilities against my own, as leader, composer, and arranger. William Allen, Leader, Hengler's Circus Band.*" Suffice it to say, no band took up the challenge!

- Ginnett's Circus Band played around Cardiff to celebrate the Princess Royal's marriage in January 1858
- Wombwell's Menagerie Band "discoursed sweet music, to the delight of those who had an ear for such" at the Walsall Whitsuntide Fair in May 1858.
- Brown's Circus Band, in a handsome carriage drawn by four cream coloured horses, provided entertainment at the Colchester Garrison Steeplechases in April 1859
- Joseph Taylor was leader of Macarté & Clarke's Circus Band in the mid-1850's, and he went on to form his own band in 1859, based in Ipswich, available for "flower shows, regattas, anniversaries, etc."
- In August 1859 the Oxford Regatta engaged a brass band, which included some of the best performers of the Wombwell's Menagerie Band (which was in the city) to perform on the University Boat Club Barge.
- The following month, in September 1859, Wombwell's Menagerie exhibited at Salisbury. The leader of the band, John Shaft Hartwell, had been drinking hard for a week, and in a state bordering on delirium tremens, committed suicide in his room at the Saracen's Head Inn. Mr Pickup, a bandsman who shared the room with Hartwell, witnessed the death.
- Walsall - 28 April 1860 - To Whom Does the Space Behind the Grand Stand Belong. Some time ago notices were posted in the town, intimating that the Alhambra circus would visit Walsall on Wednesday last; but on Tuesday large posters informed the natives that the above talented company were prevented carrying out their arrangements, through the avaricious demands of the lessee of the Lammas Lands, who charged £5 per day for the ground required by the company. Wednesday morning the circus band perambulated the streets, and intimated that the company would perform in Wednesbury. and would not visit Walsall again till a more conscionable person, who would let the land upon more reasonable terms, become lessee of the land. This affair might have been passed over unnoticed, but for the fact that it suggests the query by what authority does the lessee acquire the right to let the land - as he has been doing for some time past - during that period it belongs to the freeholders? This is a subject deserving the attention of the rate payers. and one it is to hoped that will not be lost sight of until fully cleared up.
- Jim Myers Mammoth Circus was advertising for a circus band in July 1860
- The Foresters Court Britannia in Croydon, as one of their charitable events for the Widows and Orphans Fund, arranged for a circus to attend the town for 20 guineas in November 1860, selling the tickets to raise money for the fund. The Foresters paraded through the town, headed by half a dozen of the brethren in full Robin Hood costumes, followed by the circus band in a carriage drawn by six horses.
- November 1860 also saw Battey's Menagerie visiting Llandovery, when the Menagerie Band took part in the procession celebrating the cutting of the first sod of the third section of the Central Wales Railway – sharing the musical efforts with the Llandilo Volunteer Band, and the Llandovery Band.
- Newsome's Circus Band was engaged to perform at the Hurdle Races at Brighton in May 1861
- In July 1861, Newsome's Circus was in Oxford, and the circus band played a small part in the suppression of the plans of the Oxford Mayor to veto the amusements of the people of Oxford – having lost support for his proposed bye-

laws, the circus band turned up at his house and played “*The Fine Old English Gentleman*” – to the delight of the local populace.

- Hogini’s Circus Band was engaged to take part in the procession celebrating the inauguration of the new mayor of Cork, in January 1862
- New Years Day, 1862, in Norwich found three bands entertaining the crowds after the chiming of the hour at midnight – Howlett’s Brass Band, Newsome’s Circus Band and Manders’ Menagerie Band. The latter made an imposing entry – “*the performers were seated in their ornamental locomotive orchestra, which on this occasion was drawn by two young elephants and several fine camels. The bands occupied stations apart from each other and played alternatively until the new year had advanced some hour or two. Some of the pieces were well played, and the musicians were frequently applauded by their monster audience.*”
- The Alhambra Circus Band was engaged to play at the Northamptonshire Agricultural Sheep Shearing Competition at Northampton in June 1862
- Sangers’ Circus Brass Band – appeared with the circus at Greenock in July 1862
- Hengler’s Cirque Variete Band was placed at the disposal of the Greenock Foresters when they took part in the grand procession through the town on the occasion of the laying of the foundation stone of the Albert Harbour in August 1862. Following this, in September, the Foresters returned the compliment by attending the Circus en masse, parading through the streets to the establishment, preceded by the circus band.
- Visitors to the Derbyshire Agricultural Society Show was entertained by Newsome’s Circus Band and the Alhambra Circus Band in September 1862
- In March 1863, Newsome’s Circus Band, in a carriage with four white horses, took part in the parade in Leicester to celebrate the marriage of Prince Edward to Princess Alexandra of Denmark. Madame Newsome was mounted on a pet white steed while members of the company rode abreast of her, holding a scroll with the inscription “*Happy May They Be*”.
- Howe’s Circus visited Dunfermline in September 1863, with the circus band parading the main streets on waggon tops, drawn by eight beautiful horses, sleek-skinned, long-tailed, and parti-coloured.
- June 1864 saw Edmond’s (late Wombwell’s) Menagerie visiting Cheltenham, when their grand entry in to the town was led by the Royal Menagerie Band, conducted by Mr Drake (who later that summer took up a position as leader and founder of the Sherborne Town Band – a seasonal band created for that summer. Harrison N. Booth was a player in the Menagerie Band in 1864, before leaving to marry Emily Ward in Retford.
- The International Circus, a troupe of acrobats and equestrians, appeared at the Zoological Gardens at Clifton, in September 1864, accompanied by their circus band, which shared the musical entertainment on the day with Mr U. Richardson’s band from Bristol.
- Boorn’s Russian Circus Band was advertising for engagements in October 1864. Having played with Boorn throughout the summer, they had just been released. The band consisted of first, second and third cornets, Eb bombardons, Bb euphonium, and Eb tenor sax.
- Newsome’s Circus visited Carlisle in November 1864, and the band, under the baton of Mr Saujeck, much impressed the audiences.
- In October 1865, on a visit to Scarborough, Newsome’s Circus gave a benefit performance in aid of the Scarborough Lifeboat Institution, on which occasion

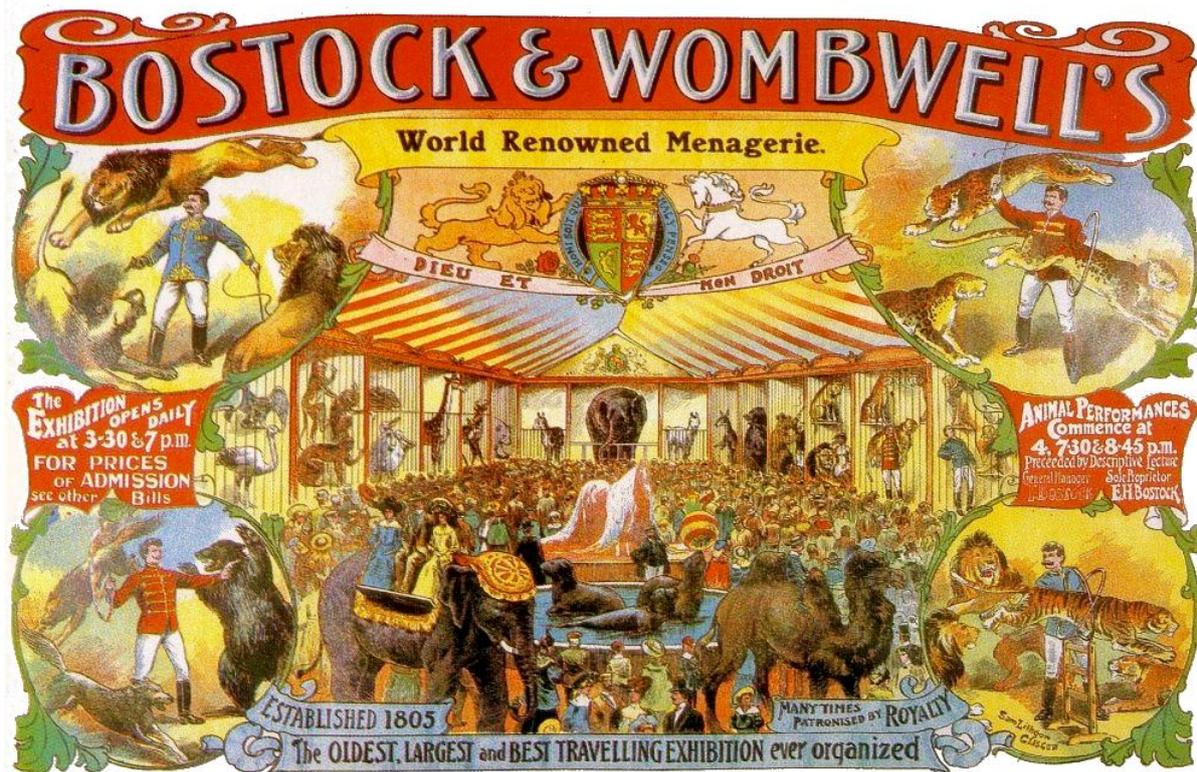
the lifeboat, fully manned by her gallant crew, was drawn in procession through the town by six fine horses, accompanied by the Circus Band.

- February 1866 saw Newsome's Circus Band engaged to play music for the Upperby Church Bazaar, near Carlisle, where the Circus was performing
- Manders' Gigantic Menagerie was installed at the old Royal Mews in Windsor, in October 1867. The Menagerie Band was conducted by Alexander D. Millar (who had previously led the Wombwell's and Edmonds' bands) and performed operatic and oratorio selections, delighting crowds of listeners.
- In July 1869 Newsome's Circus Band was engaged to play the National Anthem on the visit of the Prince and Princess of Wales to Hull
- Mr Powell's Circus visited Nailsworth in July 1869, and the Circus Band provided entertainment, together with the Stroud Rifle Band, at a fête and gala.
- Sangers' Circus and its "better than average" Circus Band greatly entertained the crowds at Southport in May 1870.
- June 1870 saw Mander's Royal Menagerie Band taking part in the Lady Godiva procession in Coventry, seated in a gilded chariot drawn by three elephants, two dromedaries, and two camels. Lady Godiva was "dressed" in flesh tights, which fitted close around the neck, and wore a white fall.
- In July 1870 E. Cook advertised his services as an Eb bombardon player, having previously performed with Manders' Star Menagerie and First Class Circus Band (on the circular bombardon).
- Robert Southworth, who died in Beverley in August 1870, had been a member of Wombwell's Menagerie Band, and had travelled with the Menagerie for 45 years. He had also constructed the coffin for George Wombwell with timbers recovered from the wreck of the *Royal George*, not using a single nail, all the parts being jointed together.
- MacCollum's Circus Band, on a visit to Bristol, was engaged to accompany St Philip's Conservative Association in the city-wide Conservative demonstration at Bristol in July 1871.
- Sangers' Circus Band was engaged for the Whitsuntide procession at Peel Park, Bradford, in 1872, in advance of the circus performances (for which the arranging committee had paid £400).
- Allen's Excelsior Circus played a short season at Parson's Field, Durham in May 1874. Their splendid Circus Brass Band was led by J.G. Cooper, and entertained the crowds each day. The opening selections were "*Maritana*" and "*Valentine Galop*".
- Christmas Day, 1874, saw members of the Manders' Menagerie Band augment the local volunteer band in the procession of the new Mayor of Carmarthen to the Tabernacle Baptist Chapel. Later, on 5 February 1875, a grand concert was held in the Carmarthen Assembly Rooms, organised by the Mayor, David Morgan, for the benefit of the Menagerie Band who were "*unable as yet to remove from there.*"
- Manders' Menagerie Band eventually escaped from Carmarthen, and were engaged during their visit to Llanstephan in June 1875, to perform at the Ivorite Fete being held there.
- Wombwell's Menagerie visited Sunderland at New Year, 1876, and the band was greatly admired for the quality of its music.
- Batty's Grand Circus advertising for brass band members in February 1876

- Hengler's Circus visited Dublin, in June 1876, and set up in the gardens of the Rotundo Lying-In Hospital, which were raising funds via the circus and also via a skating rink established at the other end of the gardens. The Circus Band kept up the music unceasingly from half-past seven to half-past ten o'clock each night.
- The Wolverhampton Fair, held in June 1876, engaged the Wombwell's Menagerie Band for its procession, and the use of the band carriage with elephants, camels etc. was eagerly accepted by the organising committee.
- Hengler's Circus auditorium, during their visit to Liverpool in January 1877, was used for a large Conservative demonstration, and the Circus Band alleviated the tedium of waiting with their music.
- The Bradford Peel Park Whitsuntide charities committee engaged Pinder's Circus for their gala in May 1877. The Pinder's Circus Band, together with six other local brass bands, to provide musical entertainment over the two days.
- Fossett's Circus visited Hartlepool in May 1877 and its troupe was paraded around the town by the Circus Band
- February 1878 saw the Wombwell's Menagerie in Bristol. A procession took place with the Band, in a carriage and four, with the great elephant leading the way, along Queen's Road. When opposite the fountain in the Triangle, "*one of the urchin tribe teased the animal, giving him orange peel. Upon his repeating the offer, the elephant took the boy up with his trunk, twirled him round over his head, and deposited him safely – screaming with terror – in a heap of mud close by, but quite out of harm's way from the vehicle following.*"
- Keith's Circus building in Derby burned down in March 1879, causing the death of the groom, Ralph White, who died with all the circus horses. At his funeral the Circus Band played the Dead March from Saul, using instruments borrowed from the local Volunteer Band, as theirs were all destroyed in the fire. Later, in April there was a benefit concert for Keith's Circus, at the Drill Hall, Derby, involving Keith's Circus Band, the Midland Railway Band (bandmaster Mr Belfield) and the Derby Volunteer Band (bandmaster Mr Scholes). During the evening the Circus Band, leader Mr Bell, was presented with new instruments provided by subscribers to the fund set up to aid the Circus. These consisted of three Bb cornets, two tenor horns, one euphonium, one bombardon, one tenor slide trombone, one bass drum and one side drum – each instrument inscribed with "*Destruction by fire of Keith's Circus at Derby on March 25<sup>th</sup> 1879. Presented to ---- by Mr Alderman Leech, on behalf of the subscribers of the relief fund*". The concert programme was: march "*The Advanced Guard*" (W.V. Scholes), the combined bands; "*Les Cloches de Corneville*" (Planquette), DVB; trombone solo "*The Village Blacksmith*" (Weiss); valse "*Mello*" (Waldteufel), DVB; overture "*Semiramide*" (Rossini), MRB; "*Pas des Patineurs*" (F. Godfrey), MRB; selection "*Lurline*" (Wallace), KCB; fantasia "*Songs of England*" (W.V. Scholes), DVB; euphonium solo "*Cavatina*" (Bellini); selection "*Scotch Airs*" (Boulderstone), MRB; valse "*Basse de Nuits*", MRB; selection "*Tannhauser*" (Wagner), DVB; and "*God Save the Queen*", combined bands.
- For August Bank Holiday, 1881, and through to October 1881, Percy Williams' Great Circus appeared at the Crystal Palace and the Circus Band entertained the audiences on the Palace Lawns at intervals through the day.
- The circus band of Fosset's Circus, at Wakefield in November 1881, lost several instruments including a cornet and a horn, which were stolen by Henry Buckley, an ex-employee of the circus. The instruments belonged to Thomas

Howes, the circus bandmaster, and two of his players, Thomas Smith and William Hodges.

- Stoodley's Circus visited Newbury in June 1883, and its Circus Band was engaged to play at the annual fete and gala in July, together with another band, which concluded with a balloon ascent and fireworks.
- Harmston's Circus Band had the sad duty, during the circus' visit to York in September 1884, of playing at the funeral of the clown "Little Bell" (real name James Bell) who died suddenly on his way home after a performance.
- Sanger's Circus performed at Sandringham in January 1885, and the Circus Band, led by Vincent C. White, entertained the crowds as they awaited the Royal party.
- Hengler's Circus appeared at Nottingham in February 1885, and it was noted that Hengler's Circus Band, led by Charles Elcock, was a pleasing exception to the rule that circus bands were generally of an inferior character and sometimes even agonising to listen to. It was regarded as being the best in the country, with a good and varied repertoire, with each performer a master of his instrument. In September 1885, the Circus Band's conductor was George Clements.
- Bostock & Wombwell's Menagerie visited Helensburgh in April 1885, and the Menagerie Band, set up outside the show, was a significant attraction.
- In June 1885, Bostock & Wombwell's Menagerie were at the far end of the country, at St Ives. They then processed from there to Penzance led by the Menagerie Band, with the "*musicians in a gay uniform in an imposing band carriage, drawn by a very fine elephant.*"
- The Bostock & Wombwell's Menagerie arrived in Torquay, based at Ellacombe, in July 1885. During their stay, the local Salvation Army, with its band, passed down the side of the exhibition, musicians blowing. The Menagerie Band took this as a challenge, commencing with the air "*The Campbells are Coming*". Each band blew its strongest, and "*a fearful din was the result, but the menagerie band prevailed, and the crowd cheered its victory.*"
- Bostock & Wombwell's Menagerie Band contributed to the celebrations in Edinburgh, seeing in the New Year of 1886, performing and entertaining the throngs of people in the High Street.
- Hengler's Circus appeared in Huddersfield, settling in St Paul's Street, in September 1886. The Circus Band, of twelve performers, played a wide selection of music, including "*The Standard Bearer*" (Meyer), and the overture to "*The Bohemian Girl*" (Balfe).
- Cook's Royal Circus was appearing in Glasgow in March 1886, when the Circus Band resigned after an argument with the manager, Charles Reed, over them being required to do window billing and pass out tickets in addition to their musical duties. The band members were Mr Beckett (leader), H.M. Holding, G. Taylor, T. Oakes, W. Yetman, W. Mason, J. Nolan, H. Gresty, and Tom Burt.
- The celebrations in Falmouth for Victoria's Jubilee in June 1887 were enhanced by the use of the visiting Wombwell's Menagerie Band, band carriage, camels, elephants, and horses for the grand procession. This echoed the similar event for the coronation of Queen Victoria in 1838 when, coincidentally, Wombwell's Menagerie had also been in Falmouth, and played for the celebrations.



- Later in June 1887, Wombwell's Menagerie were at Cricklade, where the Menagerie Band was loaned out to help with the celebrations of the achievements of the master of the local hunt, Mr C.A.R. Hoare.
- In July 1888, Wombwell's Menagerie visited Montgomery, Wales. When the show opened, it clashed with a local Oddfellows Club Festival, at which a local band was playing. The Menagerie Band marched up to the festival, causing the music and dancing on the green to cease. They continued to play, despite a volley of turf and grass which was thrown at them; the bandsmen were jostled and their hats knocked off and kicked down the road, eventually they beat a retreat back to the show, followed by an angry crowd. Despite the show's doorkeepers attempts to pacify the locals, they jeered and threatened to pull the show down – until the doorkeeper threatened to let one of the lions loose among them. The protestations died down, with only a few rotten eggs being subsequently thrown.
- Tayleure's Grand Circus appeared at Cardiff in December 1888, with the Circus Band being conducted by Mr Millward.
- Fred Ginnett's Circus visited East Dereham in September 1889, but the music for the circus performances was provided by Mr W.J. Cramer's band, as the circus band was on strike.
- Transfield's Circus advertising for brass band members in July 1891 (to open in Morecambe in August 1891)
- Hengler's Circus Band took part in the Shepherds' Church Parade in Bristol in September 1891 – when its members augmented the Bristol City Promenade Band in the procession.
- Hengler's Circus held their annual cycling and athletic sports in Bristol, in September 1892. During the event, the circus band, conducted by George Clements, played: march "*Links Rechts*" (Neibig), selection "*La Cigale*"

(Audran), polka "A La Bonne Heure" (Wittman), valse "L'Etoile Porlaire" (Waldteufel), kangaroo dance (Crook), overture "Light Cavalry" (Suppé), lancers "Talk o' the Night" (Williams), and valse "Souvenir des Indes" (Coghran).

- Fred Ginnett's Circus visited Derby in March 1893, when the circus band was conducted by A. Easom.
- Ginnet's Circus Brass Band – led the procession when Fred Ginnet's circus visited Dingwall in June 1893
- In Yarmouth, in June 1893, there was a clamour for a new town band, and during the debate, there was the comment: *"A few good players on brazen instruments – neither more nor less – are wanted. Who has not listened to the sweet music rendered by a Wombwell's menagerie band of ten players only? Do not hundreds turn out to listen on the rare occasions when these fine musicians turn up? A few good players will answer as well as fifty bad 'uns."*
- The Circus Tivoli appeared in Luton in November 1893, and the circus band was engaged to perform at the Luton Horticultural Chrysanthemum Show.
- When Ginnett's Circus appeared at Ballymacarrett in March 1894, the circus band, under the baton of Mr Sinclair, provided the musical entertainment during a football match between the circus clowns and the members of Glentoran Football Club, the latter being costumed as mashers (dandies) with tall hats, the rules being that players can't kick the ball unless the hat is on their head.
- A comment on menagerie bands appeared in the *South Wales Echo* on 6 September 1894: *"What about the menagerie bands? At a popular seaside resort a discussion has arisen as to the merits or demerits of this particular concomitant of wild beast shows. One would have judged (says a Bristol contemporary) that in this favoured spot the inhabitants and the visitors might have enjoyed frequent opportunities of hearing good music and plenty of it. One is, therefore, the more surprised at, the dictum of an honourable councillor that the best classical selections are furnished by the menagerie bands. It is eminently agreeable and instructive to be obliged with this information. Music, as we are aware, possesses the faculty of soothing the savage breast - not to say the savage beast - but differentiations in the quality and character of the article we had not bargained for. The thoughtless might divine that it made no odds to the elephant whether he performed his gambolings to the tune of "Tommy, make room for your uncle" or "Ta-ra-ra-boom-de-ay." In this fastidious era even the susceptibilities and prejudices of this giant beast are, however, honourably respected, and we are delighted to be apprised of the circumstance. Whenever we see the lion in his den we shall be reminded of Beethoven's Pastoral Symphony, and the monkey cracking a few nuts will carry along with it irresistible suggestions of Schumann's Concerto. The voluntary testimony to the class of music gratuitously rendered outside the show is the more pleasant, inasmuch as we have known several persons who took an entirely opposite view. But then the forces of prejudice are very strong, and exceedingly difficult to uproot."*
- Anderton, Haslam & Julian's Mammoth Menagerie and Circus Hippodrome visited Alcester in September 1895, and advertised two bands, their Menagerie Band, conducted by Mr Hurst, and the Model Circus Band – both of which paraded the streets at 1 o'clock daily during the visit.

- Rumbo Austin's Circus appeared in Lincoln in October 1895, and was greatly appreciated by its audiences, not least for the high quality of its circus band, conducted by Charles Elcock, which was a "*great contrast to the blatant apology for music which distinguishes some circus bands*".
- In January 1896 the funeral took place at St John's, Lewes, of W.H. Payne, a veteran musician, having been a ship's fiddler and later the bandmaster of Wombwell's Menagerie Band. He had also led the Lewes Sons of Temperance Brass Band and the Lewes Fife and Drum Band.
- In November 1896 the Wombwell's Menagerie Band, during its stay in Norwich, led a parade of the new motor car which was on display at the Menagerie, giving the people an opportunity to form an opinion of the merits and demerits of the new style of locomotion. Much interest was evoked by the car's appearance, as it seemed as if an ordinary carriage had run away down Guildhall Hill, leaving its horses behind. The car was a "Roger" which would easily run at 15 miles and hour, and a journey of 100 miles could comfortably be made in a day.
- In March 1898, Wombwell's Menagerie Band, during its stay in Taunton, was engaged to play at the Taunton B. v. Langford Budville rugby football match
- Batty's Circus appeared at Stockton in November 1899, and the circus band, conducted by Oswald Bentley, took part in a concert to raise funds for the relief of families of reservists who had been called up for the Boer War.

## **British professional, circus, and menagerie bands in the 19<sup>th</sup> century**

**Abbey Lakes Brass Band** (Up Holland, Lancashire) - Active in 1880. A professional band resident at the Abbey Lakes Hotel and Pleasure Grounds owned by Charles Liptrott.

**Adamless Eden Ladies Brass Band** - Active in 1883 to 1895. A professional band, part of the Adamless Eden comic opera and touring company

**Albert Victor Brass Band** (Ramsgate, Kent) - Active in 1868. Still active in 1870. A professional brass band that performed on the Albert Victor paddle steamer which provided trips and excursions to pleasure-seekers along the south coast. The ship was probably based at Ramsgate. It also performed on shore at regattas.

**Alhambra Brass Band** (Hull, Yorkshire East Riding) - Active in 1867. A professional brass band of 20 performers, conductor J.B. Acey, based at the Alhambra Music Hall, Hull

**Alhambra Circus Band** - Active in 1862

**Allen's Excelsior Circus Brass Band** - Active in the early 1870s. A professional circus band, conductor J.G. Cooper in 1874

**Amethyst Brass Band** (Stoke Newington, Middlesex) - Active in 1887, secretary Mr Tanswell - possibly a professional band, which included clarionets and piccolos

**Anderton, Haslam & Julian's Mammoth Menagerie Band** - Active in 1895

**Arcadia Brass Band** (Hammersmith, Middlesex) - Active in 1894. A professional brass band of eight or more instrumentalists

**Aston Lower Grounds Brass Band** (Staffordshire) - Active in 1885. A professional brass band associated with Aston Lower Grounds which were pleasure gardens with many attractions

**Atkins' Menagerie Brass Band** - A travelling "menagerie" band which was active in the early 1830s

**Batty's Circus Brass Band** – Active from 1844 through to 1899

**Belle Vue Brass Band** (Pulrose, Isle of Man) - Active in 1891. A professional brass band associated with the Belle Vue Pleasure Gardens that were inaugurated in 1889. The gardens offered all kinds of sports facilities, a circus, a fairground and animal exhibits and was hugely successful, eventually becoming a horse-racing centre in 1912.

**Blight's Cornopean Brass Band** (Surrey) - Founded by William Blight. A professional brass band, active in 1837, performing in the Surrey Zoological Gardens. Still active in 1846, with conductor Mr Bean and leader William Blight. Played at the Floral Fete in the Royal Surrey Zoological Gardens, on Tuesday, September 17th, 1844. Other attractions included a "grand dahlia and miscellaneous flower show for flowers, fruit, and vegetables, combined with picturesque grounds, superb menagerie, gigantic model of old London, a model of Venice, feeding of the carnivora, promenade concerts introducing Beethoven's Battle Sinfonia, Spohr's "Consecration of Sounds," etc. and Great Fire of London, allowed to be the grandest pyrotechnic display ever witnessed. No establishment in Europe presents so many, varied and unique attractions. Admittance one shilling. Open at one. Conflagration at eight o'clock" . Also advertised elsewhere as "available to accept engagements for

Public Dinners, Water Parties, Promenades, Archery Fetes, Flower Shows, Fancy Fairs and Etc."

**Boorn's Russian Circus Band** - Active in 1864

**Bostock and Wombwell's Menagerie Band** - *See: Wombwell's Brass Band*



**Bostock's Grand Star Menagerie Brass Band** - *See: Wombwell's Brass Band*

**Brighton Pier Brass Band** (Sussex) - Active in 1884 - a professional band

**Callender's Brass Band** - Active in the early 1880s. Still active in 1884. A professional brass band of 15 musicians associated with Callender's Consolidated Spectacular Coloured American Minstrels Show (which arose from Haverley's Genuine Coloured Minstrels), which toured England during that period.

**Circus Tivoli Brass Band** - Active in 1893

**Clifton Promenade Brass Band** (Bristol, Gloucestershire) - Founded in 1894 by bandmaster George Webb. Still active in 1895. It was a semi-professional band which was largely engaged to play at the Bristol Zoological Gardens

**Cock's Circus Band** - Active in 1848

**Courtois Brass Band Union** (London) - Active in 1867, 1868. A professional band based in London

**Cronin's Excelsior Brass Band** - Active in 1881. A professional brass band consisting of six performers (2 cornets, tenor horn, euphonium, trombone and bombardon), led by J. Cronin. In March 1881 the band were performing at Ginnett's Circus in Penzance, and were seeking a new situation at home or abroad.

**Duncan Brass Band** (Middlesex) - Active in 1880. A professional brass band, conducted by Mr Conduit, which appeared at the Queens Music Hall

**Eastham Gardens Brass Band** (Eastham Ferry, Cheshire) - Active in 1882. A professional band of ten musicians at the Eastham Zoological Gardens

**Edmond's Menagerie Brass Band** - *See: Wombwell's Brass Band*

**Finney Gardens Brass Band** (Hanley, Staffordshire) - Active in 1876, 1877, conductor E. Brunt. This was a professional band attached to the Gardens  
**Fossett's Circus Band** - Active in 1877  
**Ginnett's Circus Company Brass Band** - Active from 1858. In November 1888 it was performing in Odiham, Berkshire, and on New Years' Eve 1890/1891 in Cork, Ireland, conductor Mr Sinclair.



*Ginnett's Circus Band at Nantwich*

**Handley's Brass Band** (Surrey) - Formed in 1840 by Mr Handley, the celebrated Professor of the cornet à piston. A professional band performing in the London pleasure gardens. First public performance in the Royal Surrey Zoological Gardens on 15 June 1840.

**Hanoverian Brass Band** - Active in 1871. A professional brass band, conducted by Herr Becker. Engaged for the season in Eastbourne.

**Hansford's Juvenile Brass Band** - Active in the mid 1890s. Still active in 1898. A professional band which appeared with the Alexandra, Howe and Cushing's Great Allied Shows (circus and other amusements). The band, at one time, performed mounted on ponies.

**Harmston's Circus Band** - Active in 1884

**Hengler's Circus Band** - Active in 1857-1892

**Henry Brown's Cirque Brass Band** - Active in 1857-1859

**Herbert Lloyd's Band** - Active around 1910. A professional brass band associated with Herbert Lloyd's travelling show and troupe of minstrels. One show, in 1910, was called "A Royal Swank"

**Hogini's Circus Band** - Active in 1862

**Howe's Circus Band** - Active in 1863

**Humfress' Brass Band** (Ipswich, Suffolk) - Active through the 1840s. A professional brass band led by G.L. Humfress, a music tuner, teacher and supplier of instruments and sheet music.

**International Circus Band** - Active in 1864

**Jim Myers Mammoth Circus** - Active in 1860

**Keith's Circus Band** - Active in 1878-1880

**Kelsall's Wax Works Brass Band** - A professional brass band belonging to the travelling wax works. Active in 1869

**Levy and Distin's Grand Instrumental Union Brass Band** (London) - Founded in 1867. A professional brass band formed to highlight the instruments sold by Distin's and featuring some of the leading performers in the city, including M. Levy on principal cornet.

**Livermore Brothers' Prize Brass Band** (Reading, Berkshire) - A professional band active in 1876, conductor T. Channing. Still active in 1894. Livermore Brothers were philanthropic theatre owners and promoters. The band often accompanied the Court Minstrels on tour around the country. Conductor S. Crean in 1878.

**Lockwood's Model Brass Band** - Active in 1880. A professional band which accompanied the London Royal Aquarium Troupe on its tour of the country - with its circus and other attractions.

**Macarté's Circus Band** - Active in 1853

**Manders' Royal Brass Band** - A travelling "menagerie" band which was active in 1860, conductor J. Mackintosh, and through the 1860s. W. Manders' Royal Menagerie and Monstre Temple of Zoology toured the land, astounding the locals with its "stupendous and gigantic collection - with 23 lions!" In the 1870s it was known as Manders' Grand National Star Menagerie, with the Star Brass Band, conductor Professor Lockwood

**Messrs Leggett and Ferguson's Brass Band** (Middlesex) - Active in 1882. A professional band performing at the "Sun" theatre/music hall under the management of Mr R. Leggett

**Messrs Pinder's Brass Band** - A professional brass band belonging to W. & G. Pinder's Cirque Unique travelling circus. Active in 1861, conductor John Buckley. Still active in 1868, when it was called the "Excelsior Brass Band"

**Messrs Poole's Brass Band** (Derby, Derbyshire) - Active in 1884, conductor B. Simpson. A professional band, performing at the Drill Hall, Derby in a production entitled "The World and Egypt in 1882"

**Moss's Brass Band** (Belfast, County Antrim) - Active in 1890. Still active in 1892. A professional brass group of eight players who were originally linked to Lloyd's Circus

**Newsome's Circus Band** - Active in 1861-1869

**People's Garden Brass Band** (Willesden, Middlesex) - Active in 1874, conductor Mr Whitcomb. Possibly a professional band associated with the Gardens

**Pepper's Ghost Company Brass Band** - Active in 1888, 1889. A professional brass band touring with the Pepper's Ghost Show - they were accommodated in their band machine, drawn by several horses, the whole being lighted up with different coloured lights and torches.

**Percy Williams' Great Circus Band** - Active in 1881

**Phoenix Brass Band** (Small Heath, Warwickshire) - Active in 1869 and the early 1870s. A professional band associated with Capewell's Grand Compound Velocipede Railway at the Sydenham Hotel. In 1869 it was located at Barns's Royal St Helena Pleasure Gardens in Balsall Heath

**Phoenix Park Brass Band** (Tunstall, Staffordshire) - Active in 1879. A professional band, which was associated with the Phoenix Park Grounds in Tunstall

**Pinder's Circus Band** - Active in 1877

**Pollin's Private Brass Band** (Lincolnshire) - Active in 1898. A professional band touring the countryside with "Pollin's Tent", a travelling retailer of clothing and crockery

**Poultney's Brass Band** (Staffordshire) - Active in 1869, 1870. Possibly a professional brass band, playing in the Aston Lower Grounds

**Purchase's Waxworks Brass Band** - Active in 1860. A professional brass band belonging to the travelling Purchase's Waxworks Exhibition

**Ramsdale and Long's Ladies' Brass Band** - A professional brass band, conducted by Annie Birch, which was formed to accompany the "up to date burlesque" Joan of Arc, as it toured the country in 1900 and 1901. Founded by Edwin Ramsdale

**Rowland's Wax Works Exelsior Brass Band** - Active in 1875. A professional brass band of 7 players, led by T. Lonsdale, belonging to the travelling wax works, which also included mechanical works of art. The "mammoth wax-work" consisted of eight large caravans with 500 life-sized models

**Royal Alhambra Brass Band** (London) - A professional brass band which served the various entertainments at the Alhambra Palace, London in the 1850s to 1870s

**Royal Gardens Brass Band** (North Woolwich, Essex) - Active in 1868. A professional band based at the Royal Gardens, North Woolwich

**Royal Pavilions Brass Band** (North Woolwich, Essex) - Active in 1858. This was a professional band associated with the Royal Pavilion Gardens, conductor J. Stevens

**Royal Windsor Castle Brass Band** - A travelling "menagerie" band which was active in the 1850s. Edmonds' Royal Windsor Castle Menagerie toured the country.

**Rumbo Austin's Circus Band** - Active in 1895

**Sanger's Circus Brass Band** - Active in 1862-1885



*Sanger's Circus Brass Band leading a parade*

**Sanger's Wax Works Brass Band** - A professional brass band belonging to the travelling wax works (Sanger's Royal Moving Waxwork Exhibition). Active in 1865 to 1883. In 1876 the band advertised for solo and second cornets, G

trombone, and bombardon - salary 30s a week. In the early 1880s the wax works became "C. Mullet's Royal Waxworks"

**South Shields Skating Rink Brass Band** (Durham) - Active in 1889, conductor W. Batey - a professional band

**Stoodley's Circus Band** - Active in 1883

**Tenby Promenade Brass Band (2)** (Pembrokeshire) - Founded in 1887. A professional band provided by Mr Akid, originally of 8 performers, at a rate of £1 per man per week throughout the summer season

**Tourist Brass Band** (Isles of Scilly) - Active in 1858 to 1860. A professional band used to entertain the visitors to the island

**Transfield's Circus Band** - Active in 1891

**Vauxhall Brass Band** (Surrey) - Active in 1847. A professional brass band, attached to the Royal Gardens, Vauxhall - conductor Mr Bean, leader J.S. Hartwell.

**Wembley Park Brass Band** (Middlesex) - Active in 1897. A professional brass band associated with the Wembley Park, which was opened as a recreation in 1894

**West End Saxe-Tuba Brass Band** (Leicester, Leicestershire) - Active in 1877. A professional band linked to the Peacock Grounds in Belgrave Road

**Whitby West Cliff Saloon Brass Band** (Yorkshire North Riding) - Founded in spring 1883. Still active in 1885. A professional brass band established at the West Cliff Saloon Grounds

**Wombwell's Brass Band** - A travelling "menagerie" band which was active from the mid 1830's through to WW1. Conductor Joseph Nicholds in 1843 (he was born in Hurst Hill in 1784 and his favoured instrument was the ophicleide. He was originally a member of the Providence Baptist orchestra and following local employment at a lime works and steelworks joined Wombwell's. He also composed sacred music - his oratorio Babylon being his most well known), J.S. Hartwell in 1858, T. Taylor in 1870, Mr Sanders in 1874, J.H. Parker in 1878, W. Tidswell in 1885, Mr Parker in 1886, H.A. Grey in 1909. Appeared with the "Lion Queen" at Hitchin in 1847, Loughborough in 1848, Tiverton in 1849, Aldershot in 1863 (by which time the ownership had passed to 'Edmonds', through the band remained "Wombwell's". In 1883 it was "E.H. Bostock's Grand Star Menagerie", with a band of eight players. In 1917 the show was "Bostock & Wombwell's Gigantic Combined Show" and it and the band were appearing in Aberdeen.



*Bostock and Wombwell's Band at Hull, 1906*

**Yager Brass Band** (Surrey) - Active in 1844, leader Mr Lewis. Still active in 1850. A professional band performing in the London pleasure gardens. Also known as the Horn and Cornopean Brass Band. Performed in the Royal Gardens, Vauxhall in 1845

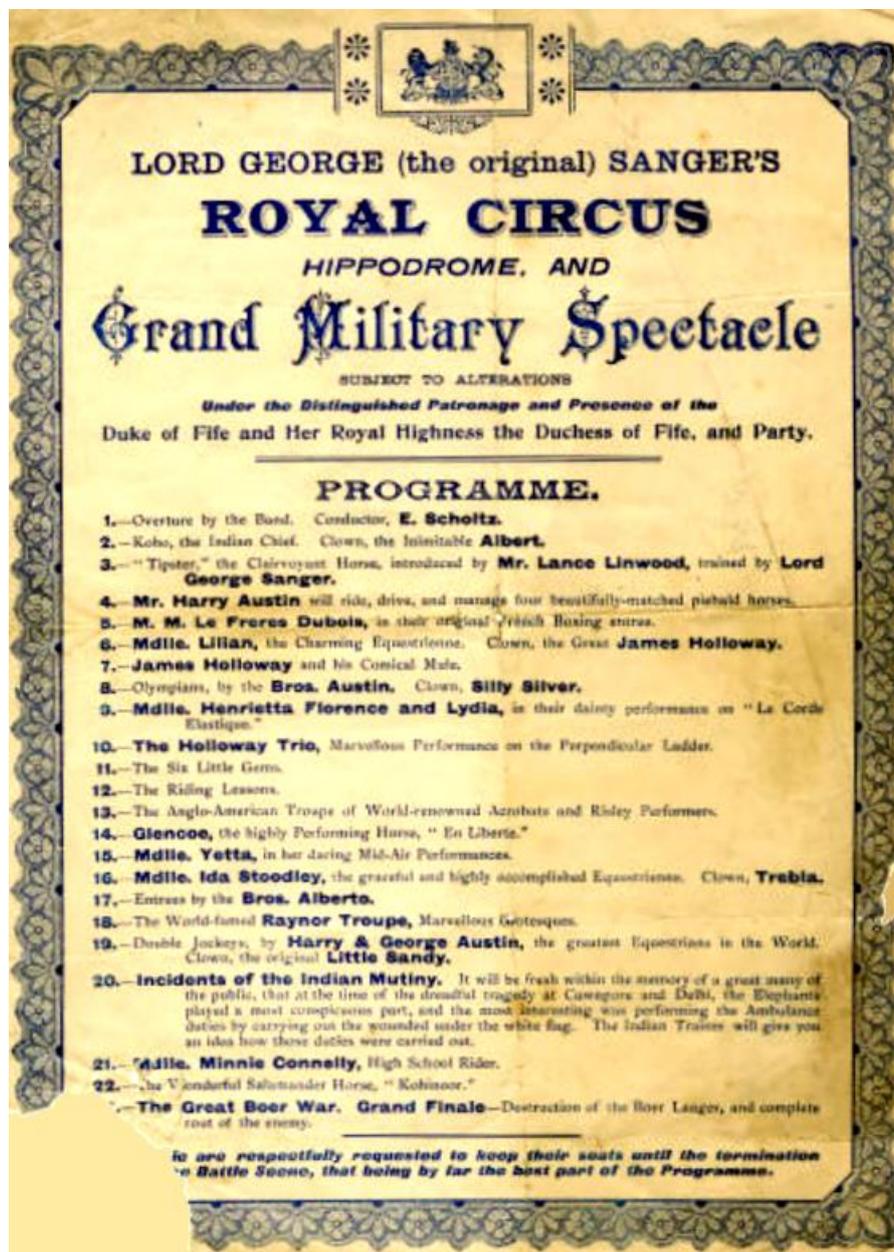
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### Further information

The National Fairground and Circus Archive  
<https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/nfca/index>

Windjammers Unlimited – The Circus Music Historical Society  
<https://mywju.org>

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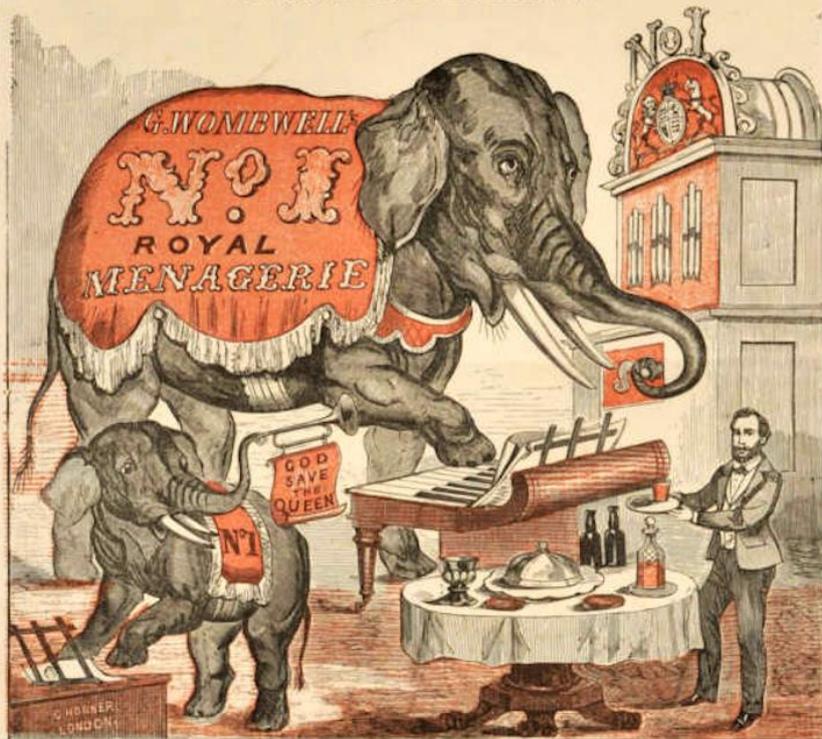


Sanger's Circus programme, c. 1900

THE QUEEN'S MENAGERIE,  
**WOMBWELL'S**  
 ROYAL No. 1.

GO AND SEE THOSE MARVELLOUS WONDERS OF CREATION. THE  
**MUSICAL ELEPHANTS!**

"A SIGHT IN A LIFETIME!"



The QUEEN'S MENAGERIE (WOMBWELL'S ROYAL No. 1), was the first Travelling Zoological Collection organised in the United Kingdom. Its appearance in this Country (considerably over half-a-century ago) awakened an interest which has never since subsided, and it has always been looked upon as an educational institution of the highest class. It was inaugurated by the late Mr. GEORGE WOMBWELL, and enjoyed, up to the period of that lamented Gentleman's decease, a career of unsurpassed prosperity. After Mr. Wombwell's death the Menagerie was carried on by his Widow, who strictly carried out the enterprise always brought to bear upon his business by her late worthy and esteemed Husband. Mrs. Wombwell, after a lapse of some years, finding herself in the "sere and yellow leaf," and having secured an honourable independence, retired in favor of her Nephew, Mr. ALEXANDER FAIRGRIEVE, the present Proprietor of the Menagerie. No pains have been spared on the part of that Gentleman to keep the Menagerie on the pinnacle of greatness it has ever occupied as the Largest, Best, and most Closely Travelling Zoological Collection in the World! THE QUEEN'S MENAGERIE (WOMBWELL'S ROYAL No. 1) is a magnificent monument to the man who conceived it, and who possessed the genius to carry his conception into effect. The present Proprietor is not inauspicious to the memory of keeping green the laurels of his distinguished predecessor, which, with the assistance of a generous Public, he trusts to be able to do for many years to come.

THIS MAGNIFICENT ESTABLISHMENT, under the Distinguished Patronage of Her Most Gracious Majesty QUEEN VICTORIA, the Prince of Wales, the Royal Family, and the Aristocracy and Nobility of the United Kingdom, is by far the Largest and Most Important Travelling Menagerie in the United Kingdom, and bears a first-class reputation, which a brilliant existence of considerably over Half-a-Century testifies.

The QUEEN'S MENAGERIE (WOMBWELL'S ROYAL No. 1) is unparalleled in the World for the extent & beauty of its general *fast ensemble*; the ample accommodation of its spacious enclosure; the admirable ventilation and cleanliness of its numerous dens; the excellent arrangements for securing the perfect immunity of its Patrons from danger; the civility and courtesy of its Keepers and Attendants, to whom no fees or gratuities are allowed; and for the number and rarity of the Specimens of Natural History to be found in its Fifteen Noble Caravans!—the whole forming a *coup d'œil* which no other contemporary Exhibition can ever aspire to or accomplish.

**THE SPLENDID BRASS BAND**

is, for its strength, confessedly the best travelling. It is composed of Gentlemen of selected ability, whose lengthened connection together has enabled them to attain that degree of efficiency only to be arrived at by such means, and its performances of Sacred and Secular Music will be listened to with pleasure.

Admission, 1s.; CHILDREN, 6d.; LABOURERS & CHILDREN, after 6 o'clock, SIXPENCE each.

For DETAILED PARTICULARS, SEE OTHER BILLS.

Sole Proprietor, Mr. ALEX. FAIRGRIEVE.