

# John Henry Iles

## Brass Band Promoter and Amusement Park Entrepreneur

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During the course of my research on the WW2 career of Gordon Iles, inventor the "Silloth Trainer," an early flight simulator, I became interested in the career of his father, John Henry Iles, who spent the early years of his life in Bristol.

What follows is a summary of the main events of his life, compiled mainly from published sources and public records. It was not really planned for readability, but as a repository of factual information concerning Iles.

The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography contains an article on Iles, summarising his most important achievements.

His life illustrates some more general aspects of changes in society in the late Victorian and Edwardian eras: many families were still very large at the beginning of the period; the church provided an important network of connections of both a personal and a business nature; employment was very often in a family businesses or obtained through a family connection; there was a progression in a single generation from manual and trade occupations into "professional" occupations - Iles's father started in the grocery trade, while his sons attended public schools and went on to Oxford and Cambridge.

### The Bristol Years

John Henry Iles was born on 17 September, 1871 at 8 Clarence Road, St Philips, Bristol<sup>1</sup>. He was christened at Newtown United Free Methodist Church, Trinity Road<sup>2</sup>. Henry was the second surviving son of grocer John Thomas Iles and Mary Ann Iles. He was one of at least eleven children.

The family home at 8 Clarence Road was also the grocery shop and warehouse of John Thomas Iles. His business was one of the many lining this busy shopping street along the eastern route into the city of Bristol. No. 8 was situated opposite the Holy Trinity Church near the junction with Trinity Road, and behind it were the streets making up the community of Newtown<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Birth Certificate of J.H.Iles. In his *Who's Who* entry he states that he was born in Clifton.

<sup>2</sup> <http://antill.org.uk/50/49007.htm> . Now demolished.

<sup>3</sup> D, Stephenson, A Jones, D. Cheesley, E. Haste, *Old Market, Newtown, Lawrence Hill and Moorfields*. Stroud, Tempus Publishing, 2002 (Images of England Series). The house was demolished, along with its neighbours, in 1971. Nothing now remains of the Victorian Clarence Road and Newtown.

John Thomas Iles first appears as a grocer trading at this address in the 1867 Bristol Directory. The 1861 census records the Iles family living at 5 Melbourne Terrace, Newtown, a few streets away from Clarence Road<sup>4</sup>. The occupation of the head of the family is shown as "commercial traveller in teas." From 1870 the Bristol Directory lists him at the Clarence Road address trading as a "grocer and tea dealer." Before the family moved to St Philips John Thomas was a baker and grocer at Longwell Green, a village a few miles away on the eastern edge of Bristol<sup>5</sup>. This is where the first of Henry's sisters, Ellen and Clara Jane, were born in 1856 and 1858.

John Thomas Iles (born in about 1836 in St George, Bristol), was married to Mary Ann Butler (1840 -1910). Mary Ann was the oldest of the 11 children of William Butler (1819-1900) who had settled in Bristol in 1843, the year which saw the launching in Bristol of Brunel's "S.S. Great Britain." It was in fact through Brunel that he came to live in Bristol. Butler had taken a job as manager of a new tar distillation works at Crew's Hole, situated on the banks of the River Avon in the industrial eastern part of Bristol.<sup>6</sup> Before this he was employed in the construction of Brunel's Bristol and Exeter Railway. The tar distillation works was set up to produce creosote, then coming into use as a preservative for wooden piles and railway sleepers, both required in large numbers for the continuing railway construction projects.

In 1863, William Butler became the owner of the Crew's Hole distillation works. In time he became an influential Bristol entrepreneur, serving as the first Chairman of the Bristol Tramways Company, as well as holding other public offices in Bristol<sup>7</sup>. He was also closely associated with the Methodist Church, in which he was a lay preacher.

The Iles grocery business evidently prospered, with John Thomas describing himself as "wholesale grocer" from 1877, the year in which the family moved away from the Clarence Road shop and warehouse to live at No. 3 Portland Square, St Pauls. Portland Square, lined with elegant stone-faced Georgian town houses was laid out in 1790. The residents of this square at this time included five surgeons, a vicar, manufacturers and other prosperous traders. The census return of 1881 lists the Iles parents, 4 Iles children and 3 servants as residents of the Portland Square house. 9 year old Henry (or "Harry" as he seems to have been called in his Bristol days) was away at school in Banwell, where he was boarding at the time of the census in 1881.

Banwell, a Somerset village<sup>8</sup> 15 miles south west of Bristol, was where the Methodist Henry Stockbridge ran a day and boarding school. This school,

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<sup>4</sup> Melbourne Terrace was demolished along with the other streets in Newtown.

<sup>5</sup> Birth Certificate of C.J.Iles.

<sup>6</sup> R.Holland, "A History of Tar Distillation at Crew's Hole, Bristol," *Society of Chemical Industry Lecture Papers Series*, No. 123/2002. ([www.soci.org](http://www.soci.org)); T.Howard Butler, *The History of Wm. Butler & Co. (Bristol) Ltd.* 1843 to 1943. Bristol, Wm. Butler & Co., 1954.

<sup>7</sup> The Butler Company later became Butler Oil Products Ltd. of Avonmouth, now known as Butler Fuels after acquisition from Total by Certas Energy. The company has other claims to fame: Butler's was the first firm in Bristol with a telephone, in 1879, and in 1904 William's son Thomas (b. 1861) owned the first car registered in Bristol - AE1.

<sup>8</sup> Now in North Somerset

which took both boys and girls, was one of a number in Banwell<sup>9</sup>. It was situated in West Street next to the Wesleyan Chapel (which still stands).

After Banwell Henry was sent to Ashville College in Harrogate where his older brother Samuel Morley was already a pupil. Ashville College had been set up a few years before in 1877 by the United Free Methodists. This was one of a number of such schools set up to cater for the growing middle class.

The Iles grocery business was growing. Plans held in the Bristol Record Office<sup>10</sup> show that permission was granted in 1884 for the alteration and extension of the Clarence Road premises, including a 3-floor warehouse at the rear. The cart entrance was in Trinity Road<sup>11</sup>.

The 1885 Bristol Directory shows that the Iles family were now living at "Burlingame", 33 Cotham New Road,<sup>12</sup> a substantial house (now divided into several flats).

Henry was a keen musician. He was a church choirboy in Bristol, and presumably had music classes at his school. He later became an organist and choirmaster at the Methodist Free Church (which one?), and was bass soloist of the Bristol Gleemen<sup>13</sup>. He studied singing under Dan Rootham, who was also the teacher of the celebrated Bristol contralto Dame Clara Butt (1872-1936)<sup>14</sup>.

He was also a keen cricketer. He played in 3 first-class matches for Gloucestershire in 1890 and 1891, scoring 13 runs and taking 3 wickets.<sup>15</sup> Also in the Gloucestershire team at that time were the Grace brothers, W.G. and E.M. (confirming Gordon Iles's statement that his father played for Gloucestershire with W.G.Grace<sup>16</sup>).

At the time of the 1891 census Henry was visiting the Shellards - Ellen, Edwin and their son Edwin - at Filton House<sup>17</sup>. Ellen Shellard was the sister of Mary Iles, Henry's mother and thus the younger Edwin was Henry's cousin. Two of Henry's younger brothers, aged 11 and 12, were boarders at Ashville College at the time of this census. The Shellards operated a lime works at St Philips Marsh. The occupation of the 19 year old Henry is recorded as "Timber Merchant." He had joined the timber merchants W.C.Gerrish and Co. as a

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<sup>9</sup> [www.banwellhistory.org.uk](http://www.banwellhistory.org.uk)

<sup>10</sup> Bristol Record Office Building Plans Vol. 20/45a and 98a

<sup>11</sup> In 1888 the Clarence Road street numbers changed. The Iles grocer became No. 4 in place of No. 8. Until I worked this out I couldn't understand why the building plans showed the premises on a corner while post-1888 pictures of No. 8 showed a building bounded by two others.

<sup>12</sup> Now called Cotham Road

<sup>13</sup> J.F.Russell & J.H.Elliott, *The Brass Band Movement*. London: J.M.Dent & Sons Ltd., 1936

<sup>14</sup> There is a blue plaque commemorating her at 3 Belle Vue Road, Totterdown

<sup>15</sup> [www.cricketarchive.com](http://www.cricketarchive.com)

<sup>16</sup> G B Iles interview 12/8/82

<sup>17</sup> Now known as "Old Filton House". It later became the first headquarters of the Bristol Aeroplane Company and is currently owned by Airbus.

saleman. In 1891 he turned this into a limited company, The Feeder Road Sawmills Co.<sup>18</sup>

The 1893 Bristol Directory lists the wholesale grocery business as "J.T. Iles & Son." Which son had joined John Thomas in the business is not specified. Possibly it was Henry's older brother Samuel, who is recorded in the 1891 census as being "wholesale grocer and provision merchant."

In 1893 Henry married Eleanor Marian Bird (1870-1953), known to the family as "Nellie". Marian was the daughter of Frederick and Sarah Bird of Norton House, Midsomer Norton. Frederick Bird, J.P. was a colliery proprietor and coal factor. The Birds, also members of the United Methodist Free Church, lived at Norton House, a property which had housed various mine owners over the years.<sup>19</sup> Marian's sister Agnes was married to Dr Charles William Pearce (1856-1928), an organist, composer and teacher of music. He would be influential in Henry's early musical career.

The 1894 Bristol Directory shows the address of Harry<sup>20</sup> Iles as "Rockleaze", 91 Sommerville Road, St Andrews Park. The Iles would have been the first occupants of this new terraced house<sup>21</sup>, overlooking St Andrew's Park. Their first child, Marian Davidge Bird,<sup>22</sup> was born in 1894 at Rockleaze. The birth certificate records Henry's occupation as timber merchant.

By 1896, however, he had established himself in a new business as an advertising contractor and publisher. The reason he had to find a new business was the result of his older brother's fraud and disappearance to America. In good faith, Henry had given guarantees having been told that he was to inherit £40,000 of a total £700,000 from America. When the funds were called in, in effect, it ruined him financially.<sup>23</sup>

In 1896 he published handbooks "The Housekeeper's Treasure" and "The Cyclist's Companion and Road Guide for Bristol and District," both giving ample space for advertisements<sup>24</sup>. There he announced: "Messrs. J.H.I & Co., are Agents for many leading firms of Bristol, London and the Provinces. The Public will find it to their advantage to send us enquiries of any work wanted; the same will always ensure a low quotation, prompt attention and despatch."

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<sup>18</sup> Information from John Iles. The records of the 1903 voluntary liquidation of The Feeder Road Saw Mills and Timber Co. (1902) Ltd are in the National Archives in record BT 34/794/34624. The shareholders of this company were Willam Butler & Co. and three members of the Butler family.

<sup>19</sup> The house was in Silver Street, Midsomer Norton. It was demolished in 1937-8.  
[http://lh.matthewbeckett.com/houses/lh\\_somerset\\_nortonhouse\\_info\\_gallery.html](http://lh.matthewbeckett.com/houses/lh_somerset_nortonhouse_info_gallery.html)

<sup>20</sup> In the 1895 directory his name had reverted the more formal "Henry" before becoming his preferred "John Henry"

<sup>21</sup> Financed by the Birds I am told by John Iles

<sup>22</sup> Davidge was Sarah Bird's maiden name

<sup>23</sup> Information from John Iles

<sup>24</sup> The British Library holds copies of these.

# JOHN HENRY ILES & CO.

*Advertising Contractors,*

Patentees and General Commission Agents,

BRISTOL and LONDON.

ADVERTISING in all its Branches  
- - undertaken. - -

We make a Speciality of . . . . .

## ADVERTISING NOVELTIES

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suitable novelty.

### THE BEST PRICE

Given for the Rights of all kinds of Advertising  
Mediums.

Address all Communications to:

**91, SOMERVILLE RD, BRISTOL,**

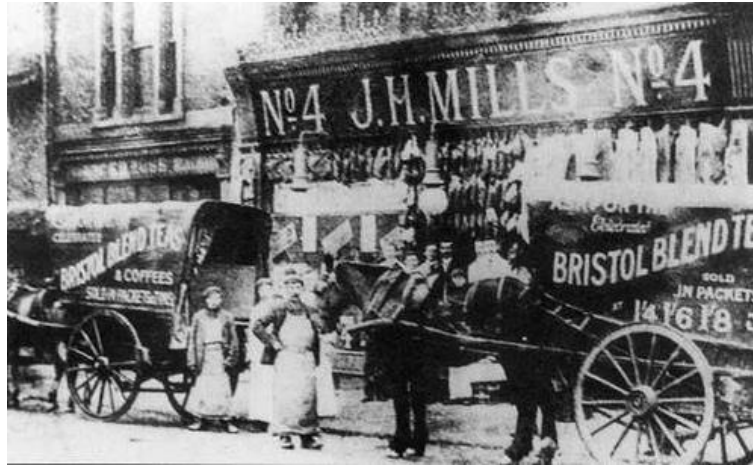
LONDON: 139, OXFORD STREET, W.

In late 1896 he started to work for the London-based "Organist and Choirmaster" magazine. Issue No. 44 of the magazine, dated Dec 15, 1896, contained the announcement: "All advertisements to be addressed to the Advertisement Manager, Mr J.Henry Iles, Office of the Organist and Choirmaster, 139 Oxford St, London W." The editors of the magazine were Dr E.J.Hopkins, Dr C.W.Pearce and Dr Charles Vincent. Presumably it was through Charles Pearce that Iles obtained his introduction. By 1897 Iles was running his business from an office at 16 St Stephen's Street in central Bristol.

In 1897 or 1898, the Iles grocery at No. 4 Clarence Road was acquired by the expanding grocery business of J.H. Mills, who already had a shop at No. 16 Clarence Road as well as three others in Bristol.<sup>25</sup> (The Mills chain of shops continued to grow and after various mergers became Gateway in 1950, Somerfield in 1994, and was most recently acquired by the Co-Operative Group in 2009)<sup>26</sup>.

<sup>25</sup> Mills were still operating at No. 4 in 1956: see D.Stephenson et al., *Old Market, Newtown, Lawrence Hill and Moorfields*, Tempus Publishing, 2002.

<sup>26</sup> <http://www.co-operative.coop/corporate/aboutus/Somerfield/Somerfield/Somerfield-History/>



The Clarence Road shop in about 1905 (Bristol Record Office)



Clarence Road c.1912. Holy Trinity Church with shop at right

After leaving the business, John Thomas went into retirement. In the 1901 census he is recorded as living with his wife at 145 Pleasant Road, Mangotsfield<sup>27</sup>. Still living with them were three of their children: Annie (28, teacher of music); William<sup>28</sup> (22, grocer's salesman) and Robert (21, grocer's clerk). Henry was 29 and now living in London. The 1911 census shows John Thomas, now a widower, living at 2 Auburn Road, Redland with his daughter Annie. He died in 1912.

### After Bristol

Issue 54 of "Organist and Choirmaster" dated 15<sup>th</sup> October, 1897 announced that "All advertisements, and enquiries regarding same, must in future be addressed to the Advertisement Manager, Mr J.Henry Iles, Advertisement Office of The Organist and Choirmaster, 79 Ferme Park Rd, Stroud Green,

<sup>27</sup> This street number no longer exists.

<sup>28</sup> William would marry Mabel Milne in 1902. One of their children was Gerald Iles, who became a well-known zoo director in Manchester and Canada.

London N." 79 Ferme Park Road was the new Iles family home in London, not far from the Pearces' house in Crouch End.<sup>29</sup>

It was in September 1898 that that Iles's passion for brass bands had its origin. The often-told story is that while on a business trip to Manchester he found himself with time on his hands. The porter of his hotel suggested that he might like to attend the brass band contest being held at the Belle Vue zoological gardens. At first hesitant, he came away an enthusiast . On his return to London he made further enquiries into the brass band "movement". He discovered and decided to purchase the struggling magazine for brass band players "British Bandsman", which had been founded by Sam Cope in 1887. He also bought the associated brass band music publishing company Richard Smith & Co<sup>30</sup>.

Iles was now running all of his business interests from the British Bandsman office in the Strand.

In 1899 Iles through the medium of the British Bandsman started a fund to raise money in support of the dependants of Boer War casualties. In co-operation with the Daily Mail he set up the British Bandsman War Fund<sup>31</sup>. Bands were encouraged to raise money for the fund by playing Sir Arthur Sullivan's setting of Kipling's "The Absent Minded Beggar" march at concerts and parades, and taking a collection.

The culmination of this campaign was the "Absent-minded Beggar" concert, a festival of massed brass bands in the Albert Hall in January 1900. Eleven bands were engaged, and Iles personally persuaded Sir Arthur Sullivan to conduct. Clara Butt was one of the soloists. The hall was packed and the concert was a great success.

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<sup>29</sup> Some secondary sources state that he came to London with his father's timber business, and even that he "inherited a timber fortune." I have found no evidence for this. (See earlier footnote).

<sup>30</sup> Russell & Elliott, op. cit.

<sup>31</sup> A.Hailstone, *The British Bandsman Centenary Book*. Baldock: Egon Publishers, 1987.



(The Iles's second child, Henry Frederick Bird, was born 2 days before this concert. Henry Iles's occupation on the Birth Certificate is recorded as Advertising Contractor).

After the success of the Albert Hall concert, and with the support of Sullivan, he planned a national brass band festival. This was held in July 1900 at Crystal Palace. Sullivan had arranged for the provision of the "1000 guinea" trophy. For several months before, Iles toured the country to drum up enthusiasm for the event. Charles Pearce was enlisted to help with the judging. The festival, which now takes place in the Albert Hall, became an annual event.

(The 1901 census shows the Iles family still living in Stroud Green, but at 27 Albany Road. Henry's occupation is given as "Publisher and Advertising Contractor").

Another of the Iles publishing ventures was the weekly business journal "The African Review." This he managed jointly with Leo Scheff. It dealt with African commercial, political and mining subjects. One of the publications produced

by this journal was the "Souvenir of Mr Chamberlain's South African Tour: 1902-1903."<sup>32</sup>



John Henry Iles in 1903

Promoted by Iles as 1903 National Champions, the brass band "Besses o' th' Barn" embarked on an extensive tour of the UK. They received an invitation by the Prime Minister, Henry Balfour, to play by Royal Appointment for King Edward VII at Windsor Castle. This performance led directly to a tour of France with concerts in Paris to commemorate the *Entente Cordiale* pact between France and Great Britain. Henry Iles and Alexander Owen, the band's conductor, were both presented with *Officier de L'instruction Publique* medals to mark the occasion. Invitations to play were now received from all around the globe."<sup>33</sup>

According to the band's history:

In response to ceaseless requests and displaying amazing courage, the Band decided to tour the world. Between the years 1906 and 1911 they did this not once but twice! Both trips lasted an incredible 18 months. They were regarded as pop stars of the day and welcomed by enthusiastic crowds of thousands wherever they went.<sup>34</sup>

The band played in the Aeolian Hall in New York. In later years Iles would handle publicity for the Aeolian Company in London which led to there being an Aeolian player piano at the Iles home. This started his son Gordon's

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<sup>32</sup> Copy in the British Library. Chamberlain was Colonial Secretary.

<sup>33</sup> [www.besses.co.uk](http://www.besses.co.uk)

<sup>34</sup> [www.besses.co.uk](http://www.besses.co.uk)

lifelong involvement with pneumatic technology and the development of the "Silloth Trainers" during WW2.<sup>35</sup>

While in the USA in 1906 on the world tour, Iles saw the Scenic Railway at Coney Island, quickly saw the potential, and bought the British rights. This started another thread in Henry's business interests: the amusement park entrepreneur. "He was so impressed with the obvious profitability of American amusement parks he sold his business to a partner and launched into a new career".<sup>36</sup>

(The Iles family had now moved to Sidcup in Kent, where son John Bird - known in the family as "Jack" - was born in 1907 and Gordon Butler in August 1908. The house in Granville Road was named "Durdham" - no doubt a souvenir of cricket matches played on Bristol's Durdham Down).

He installed one of Britain's earliest Scenic Railways at Blackpool's South Shore in 1907. He built another for the Franco-British Exhibition in London in 1908 and went on to develop complete amusement parks in cities around the world including Paris, Berlin, Barcelona and Pittsburgh, calling them after the two most famous amusement parks at New York's Coney Island, either Luna Park or Dreamland.<sup>37</sup>

In 1917 Henry became the owner of a coal mine, the Clandown Colliery in Radstock. This mine was owned by a company into which Frederick Bird, Henry's brother-in-law, and his sisters had invested. In 1917 Henry became the sole proprietor. He unsuccessfully attempted to develop this and other pits in the area, and had sold his interests by 1924.<sup>38</sup>

In 1919 he was elected Chairman of the London Press Club.<sup>39</sup>

The venture for which Henry Iles is best known is the Dreamland amusement park in Margate.

In November 1919, Iles purchased The Hall By The Sea dance hall and pleasure garden in Margate from its elderly owners, Arthur and Harriet Reeve, for the sum of £40,000. During holidays in Margate he had decided The Hall By The Sea could be transformed into an American Style amusement park and resolved to buy it. He chose the name "Dreamland" for his new venture, gradually phasing the old one out by using the title "Dreamland Hall" for a few months. Over the next 15 years Iles was to spend more than £500,000 developing Dreamland.<sup>40</sup>

Dreamland opened on 3 July, 1920. The Scenic Railway was the centrepiece. It had cost more than £20,000. He invested further in Margate:

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<sup>35</sup> G B Iles Interview 12/8/82

<sup>36</sup> Nick Evans, *Dreamland Remembered*. Whitstable: N.Evans, 2003

<sup>37</sup> *Dreamland Remembered*

<sup>38</sup> C.G.Down, A.J.Warrington, *The History of the Somerset Coalfield*. Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1972.

<sup>39</sup> <http://pressnews.londonpressclub.co.uk/who-we-are/biographies/past-officers/>

<sup>40</sup> *Dreamland Remembered*

Shortly after getting Dreamland up and running in 1920 he bought the Clifton Baths Estate, a genteel sort of place which could trace its origins back a further 100 years when it had been frequented by the 'nobility and gentry resorting to Margate.'...In the years that followed Iles spent £120,000 improving and rebuilding the estate....By 1925 Iles had leased a stretch of the foreshore from Margate Corporation and had embarked on a £60,000 programme to build a vast open air swimming pool....The 1930s settled into a happy pattern of music in the square bandstand on the top level terrace – enjoyed from the comparative comfort of a deck chair – swimming in the pool and a show at night. Occasionally Iles, dressed in plus fours, could be seen emerging from his Bentley (*actually a Rolls Royce - correction by John Iles*) to buy an ice cream and then enthusiastically pretend to conduct the band.<sup>41</sup>

Iles had bought the sole European rights for the Caterpillar ride in 1921. One was built at Dreamland in the following year.<sup>42</sup>

His next major amusement park investment was Belle Vue in Manchester. His amusement park empire now included parks and concessions at Aberdeen, Blackpool, Great Yarmouth, London, Manchester, Berlin, Brussels, Cairo, Paris and Petrograd (St Petersburg). In 1924 he took responsibility for the amusement park at the British Empire Exhibition at Wembley and it was there that he built the scenic railway he later relocated to Belle Vue."<sup>43</sup>

In late 1924 the owners of Belle Vue sold their interest to a consortium which included Henry Iles. Belle Vue (Manchester) Ltd was incorporated in 1925 Their priority was to establish Britain's first purpose-built greyhound course on land owned by Belle Vue opposite the zoo grounds; in 1928 the chairman resigned. Iles succeeded him, cutting corners where he could while investing in new, mostly non-zoological attractions.<sup>44</sup>

Iles also now controlled both major brass band competitions: the National Championships and the Belle Vue Contests.

One of his early appointments was to put his brother William in charge of the zoo, the catering business and the brass bands contests. Under Gerald Iles, William's 21-year-old son, who took control of the zoo in 1933, the zoo continued to be an attraction, but there was real evidence that now the welfare of the animals was more of a priority. Some of the old houses were improved or replaced. However, overall the zoo continued to struggle because competing interests and, at times, financial constraints hampered Iles' plans.<sup>45</sup>

(Although not a trained zoologist, Gerald Iles was the first at Belle Vue to have taken at least some university courses. A clever publicist, he established for

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<sup>41</sup> *Dreamland Remembered*

<sup>42</sup> *Dreamland Remembered*

<sup>43</sup> <http://manchesterhistory.net/bellevue/iles.html>

<sup>44</sup> Robert Nichols, *The Belle Vue Story*. Manchester: Neil Richardson, 1992. H.Reichenbach, "Lost menageries – why and how zoos disappear (Part 1)," *International Zoo News*, April/May 2002.

<sup>45</sup> <http://manchesterhistory.net/bellevue/iles.html>

himself and his animal collection a good reputation. In 1957, he left England to become director of a new zoo in Montreal. At Expo 67 he was given responsibility for looking after lions presented by Haile Selassie.<sup>46</sup> )

Henry was elected Master of The Worshipful Company of Musicians, 1932-1933.<sup>47</sup>

In 1933 work started on the new cinema complex at Dreamland. The architects were assisted by John Bird Iles, Henry's second son, who ran a furniture and interior design business, Bird Iles Ltd, in Mayfair. The cinema was opened in March 1935.<sup>48</sup> His youngest son Gordon took responsibility for the installation of the theatre organ.

Henry was Justice of the Peace for Borough of Margate from 1935 until 1938, when he resigned after his bankruptcy.

"John Henry Iles was a man with many irons in many fires and in the end it was his downfall. In the 1930s he ventured into the film industry and lost a personal fortune reported to in the region of a quarter of a million pounds. In 1937 he quietly resigned as Chairman and Managing Director of Belle Vue (Manchester) Ltd and his personal bankruptcy followed not long after."<sup>49</sup> His successor as chairman was his son H.F.B. (Eric) Iles, Gordon's brother and first cousin of Gerald."<sup>50</sup>

"The successful career of JHI came to an abrupt end in February 1938. He has invested heavily in a film production company making movie shorts, some starring comedian Leslie Fuller who had graduated to film stardom after appearing with his concert party at Cliftonville. Iles had put in £250,000 rebuilding the Rock Studios at Elstree. The venture failed and he was declared bankrupt owing £351,000."<sup>51</sup>

"Disqualified from his directorships he had to exchange his mansion, Gap House, at Dumpton for a bungalow in Herschell Road, Birchington. He began writing again for the British Bandsman and was awarded the OBE in 1944 for his services to brass music. He died in 1951."<sup>52</sup>

"His interests were taken over by his son Eric and son-in-law Howard Goldby. Within a year Eric was in sole charge. Eric was more cautious than his father and halted further development of Dreamland while making stringent economies."<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Information from John Iles

<sup>47</sup> [www.wcom.org.uk](http://www.wcom.org.uk)

<sup>48</sup> *Dreamland Remembered*

<sup>49</sup> <http://manchesterhistory.net/bellevue/iles.html>

<sup>50</sup> Reichenbach, op. cit.

<sup>51</sup> *Dreamland Remembered*

<sup>52</sup> *Dreamland Remembered*

<sup>53</sup> *Dreamland Remembered*

The Worshipful Company of Musicians established the John Henry Iles Medal in 1947. It is awarded annually in recognition of services to the brass band movement.<sup>54</sup>

### **The *Who Was Who* Entry**

ILES, John Henry, O.B.E 1944; J.P.(retd.); Officier d'Académie Française; Founder and Director, National Band Festival, Crystal Palace: b. Bristol; 2<sup>nd</sup> s. of late J.T.Iles, Clifton; m. Marion, 3<sup>rd</sup> d. of late Fredk. Bird, J.P., C.C., of Norton House, Midsomer Norton; three s, one d. *Educ:* Ashville College, Harrogate. Founded weekly newspaper, British Bandsman; conducted World's Tours of Besses o' the Barn and other bands; introduced the American Amusement Parks to Europe, including Scenic Railways; Hon. Entertainment Director of Lord Kitchener Memorial Fund; President for 27 years of London and Home Counties Band Association; First President of National Brass Band Club; Past Chairman, London Press Club; Past President, Margate Rotary Club; Master of the Court of the Worshipful Company of Musicians, 1933. *Publications:* Editor-in-Chief, British Bandsman. *Recreations:* golf, played for Gloucestershire C.C. 1890-91. *Address:* 210 Strand, WC2. *Club:* London Press (Life Member). [Died 29 May, 1951]

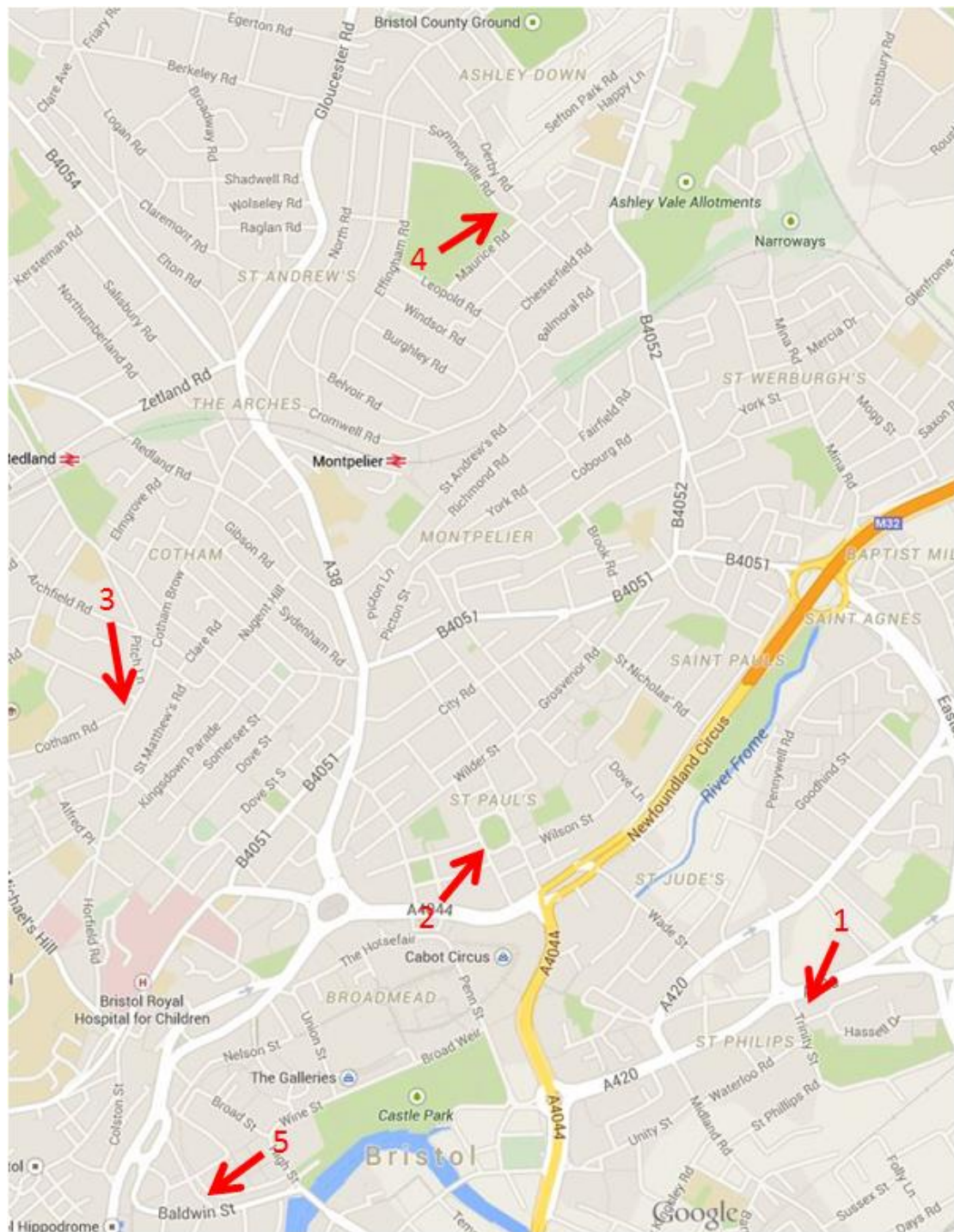
*This entry contains a few errors: He was not born in Clifton, but St Philips. The British Bandsman was founded by Sam Cope. It is doubtful that he was the first to introduce American Amusement parks to Britain - the Pleasure Beach in Blackpool has an earlier claim. The correct title is "Master of the Worshipful Company of Musicians.*

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<sup>54</sup> <http://www.wcom.org.uk/what-we-do/yeoman-awards/>

## Bristol Locations Associated with John Henry Iles

1. 8 Clarence Road, St Philips: birthplace (1871-1877) (shop and family home). The building no longer exists. No. 8 became No. 4 in 1888.
2. 3 Portland Square: 1877 - c.1885 (family home)
3. 33 Cotham Road: c.1885 - 1894 (family home)
4. 91 Sommerville Rd, St Andrews Park: 1894-1897 (marital home)
5. 16 St Stephen's St: 1896/7 (office)





Site of shop; 8 Clarence Road



3 Portland Square; view from house



33 Cotham Road



91 Sommerville Rd and St Andrews Park



16 St Stephens St