

Theatrical Postcard Photographers & Studios

Steve Bartlett

Investigating Edwardian photographers, who were so important in providing the essential material to picture postcard publishers, is an intriguing next step in delving deeper into our fascinating hobby. Lists of picture postcard photographers have been published in these pages before, particularly those that specialised in topographical work in local towns or resorts. Here however you are invited to join me in taking a tentative step into the world of theatrical picture postcard photography, where the most important studios were London based but the provinces also played their part. Through their doors passed leading popular actors and actresses of the day to be photographed to satisfy the insatiable demand for picture postcards in the early 1900s.

The photographing of actors and actresses was in fact well established prior to the picture postcard era. This was principally to provide material for specialist quality weekly magazines and newspapers such as *"The Tatler"*, *"The Sketch"* and *"The Illustrated Sporting & Dramatic News"* and also the earlier but smaller retail market in cabinet photographs. Indeed some of this older negative stock was re-issued in the picture postcard era adding confusion to the dating of some players' images.

Theatrical photographers ranged from selected individuals to large undertakings with several branches; the leading ones operating from prestigious studio addresses in Central London. These would have shop window displays of their finest images to attract customers through their doors. Many of the London studios that specialised in theatrical work also attracted the aristocracy and upper echelons of society, some of the latter photographs also being issued as postcards. One of their theatrical clients during this period was the up and coming teenage actress Billie Burke, who later crossed the Atlantic and became a well-known Hollywood character actress. She recalled, "I remember my excitement when I discovered that Ellis & Walery, the most fashionable photographer in the West End, had their windows full of my pictures and that they were selling right

alongside those of Lady Randolph Churchill, Queen Alexandra and the beautiful actress Gertie Millar. I was eighteen years old and the year was 1903." Indeed the high quality of many of the postcard images that have survived reflect the professional standing of these photographers, perhaps a little tarnished at the height of the boom with easily satisfied demand leading to some sub-standard images being released.

The way the supply chain generally worked was that postcard publishers such as Beagles, Rotary, Tucks and Philco, names with whom readers will be more familiar, bought in the photographic images from these specialist photographers. The majority of images after the very early years were published as black & white or colour tinted "real photographic" postcards. Whilst the most important of these photographers were London based, provincial photographers also contributed to the postcard output, particularly of artists appearing in the annual pantomime season at their local theatres.

I recently became intrigued by this subject when noticing that some but not all of these real photographic picture postcards contained what appeared to be the photographer's name in small hand written letters at the bottom of many pictures or occasionally printed alongside the caption in addition to the publisher's name. The inclusion or otherwise of these photographic credits varied according to publisher, with some like Davidson usually omitting them altogether whilst others were more consistent, notably Rotary who more often than not provided this detail - a pause as readers rush off to check for examples in their collections!

(right) MAIE ASH (1888-1923) postcard photographed by Johnston & Hoffmann of Devonshire St., London, published by Rotary (No. 1831M). She rose from chorus girl to West End and provincial lead, working for leading producer Seymour Hicks in many of his productions. Postally unused.

(left) MAUDI DARRELL (1882-1910) postcard photographed by Lafayette of New Bond St., London, published by Rotary (No. 1541S). A popular actress she tragically died at the age of 28, having just left the stage to marry wealthy industrialist Ian Bullough; his estates including a Scottish castle. Postally unused.



MARIE STUDHOLME (1873-1930) postcard photographed by R.W. Thomas of 41 Cheapside, London, published by Rotary (No. 241U). She was one of the most photographed picture postcard favourites and topped the bill for George Edwardes in many of his productions. Postally unused.

The list that follows represents the start of a journey of exploration into the subject, drawn up from a detailed check through the 2,000 theatrical postcards I have in my collection, supplemented by additional contributions from several other collectors. Inevitably the list needs massaging and enhancing and I would welcome input to correct unintentional errors and enlarge the content. This article can only be a first taster into the subject and does not attempt to tell the definitive story of the world of the theatrical postcard photographer - that must wait for more research and a future article.

The first criterion for inclusion in the list that follows was a "named credit", in addition to the publisher, on the postcard





GERTIE MILLAR (1879-1952) postcard photographed by prestigious lady photographer Rita Martin of 74 Baker St., London, published by Beagles (No. 644Y). Rita Martin and her sister Lallie Charles, working separately, became leading society and theatrical photographers. Examples of their work can be found on the National Portrait Gallery website. Postmarked Highgate, London July 1913.

itself. This was presumed to have been the photographer but in rare cases might be a sub-agent through whom the photograph passed. Spelling errors on captions were not uncommon and spelling variations have cropped up in compiling this list, which may have contributed to minor errors. The number of publishers shown against a particular photographer should not be taken as an indicator of scale of their output. Some may have distributed small amounts of material widely whilst others sold larger quantities to a smaller number of publishers.

The list also does not attempt to date the entries, although the vast majority fall within the period 1903 - 1912. Even during this short time span I detected a changing pattern in output with the large studios, such as Foulsham & Banfield and Dover Street Studios, becoming more prominent as the decade progressed. Biograph is an example of initially both photographing and publishing its own picture postcards, but later confined to photographs published by larger postcard publishers such as Davidson, Philco and Rotary. It is also known that at some point Biograph's negative stock was acquired by the expanding Dover Street Studios. Foulsham & Banfield became market leaders for the big West End shows, including increasing amounts of play scene photography taken at the theatre itself. Their expansion was a combination of Frank Foulsham's management skills, whilst Banfield had the photographic flare and also led the field in developing new lighting techniques that made the photography of large casts on location in the theatres a more practical proposition.

One feature that emerges from my



ALICE RUSSON photographed by Sydney H. Wood, published by Rotary (No. 1803O), playing Cinderella in an unidentified provincial pantomime. We know Sydney Wood was Darlington based. The card is un-posted, but another in the same costume and number series was posted in April 1906, which the performance must pre-date. We know she played "Cinderella" in Edinburgh in Xmas 1903/04 (when a Darlington photographer was unlikely) and "Aladdin" in Glasgow in 1905/06, but Xmas 1904/05 remains the missing link.

research is the presence of a small but select group of women photographers in an age where many trades and professions were male dominated. Miss Lizzie Caswell Smith, Rita Martin, Madame



MAUDE DARLING (1881-1927) postcard photographed by Bristol photographer Protheroe, published by J. Baker & Son (No. 65). She was appearing as Princess Aurora in the Christmas 1906/07 pantomime "Humpty Dumpty" at the Prince's Theatre, Park Row, Bristol. Postally unused.



CHARLES HARVEY postcard photographed by Protheroe of Bristol, published in the Grosvenor Series. Charles Harvey was appearing in the pantomime "Mother Hubbard" at the Prince's Theatre, Park Row, Bristol Xmas 1909/10. Postmarked Bristol, January 1910.

Lallie Charles (whose birth name was Charlotte Martin, sister of photographer Rita Martin), Lillian Beel in Bristol, Madame A. Pestel, joint proprietors Misses Kate Vaughn & Pearl Freeman and Miss Dorothy Wilding all feature in the assembled list. The first three named in particular were significant contributors to theatrical postcard photography, as well as recording leading figures of the day. Examples of their work are held in the National Portrait Gallery and can be viewed on the latter's website and have over the years been the subject of special exhibitions there.

To enable the work to move forward comments would be welcomed through the pages of PPM or further detailed contributions in the format shown would be gratefully received by the author Steve Bartlett by email: s-bartlett3@sky.com or by post to 3 Delamere Road, Nantwich, Cheshire CW5 7DR.

- A parallel article revealing the definitive detail of the contracts and payments made to actors and actresses during the period for their picture postcard photographic work appeared in April 2013 Picture Postcard Monthly.

References:

National Portrait Gallery website (www.npg.org.uk)
Photographers of Great Britain & Ireland 1840-1940 (www.victorianphotographers.co.uk)
"With a Feather on my Nose", by Billie Burke (publisher Peter Davies 1950)

THEATRICAL POSTCARD PHOTOGRAPHERS & STUDIOS
(Postcard Publishers of their work also shown)

LONDON PHOTOGRAPHERS

Theatrical Postcard Photographers & Studios

continued from page 27

Andre & Sleight Ltd - Unnamed publisher.

Arbuthnot, Malcolm - Beagles, Rotary.
Bassano (25 Old Bond St) - Aristophot, Beagles, Davidson, Ettlinger, Faulkner, Hartmann, Misch, Philco, Rapid, Rotary, Rotophot, Tucks, Wrench.

Beaufort - Philco.

Biograph Studios (107 Regent St.) - Beagles, Biograph, Davidson, Millar & Lang, National, Philco, Rotary, Rotophot, Tucks.

[Negatives and stock later acquired by Dover Street Studios].

Burford, F.W. - Aristophot, Beagles, Rotary.

Campbell, W.S. - Mercury.

Campbell Gray (17 Cheapside) - Aristophot, Davidson.

Caswell Smith, Lizzie (Miss) - Philco, Rapid, Rotary, Rotophot, Tucks.

Chandler, C.A. - Beagles.

Charles, Lallie (Madame) (39a Curzon St) - Beagles, Faulkner, Philco, Rotary, Tucks, Wrench. [Born Charlotte Martin and sister of Rita Martin photographer].

Corbett, Alexander (2 Orchard St.) - Beagles, Rotary.

Daily Mirror Studios - Beagles, Rotary.

Dover Street Studios (38 Dover St) - Aristophot, Baker, EAS, Misch, Philco, Rapid, Rotary, Rotophot, Samuels, Tucks, Wrench.

[At some stage acquired Biograph Studios negatives & stock].

Downey, W&D (57 & 61 Ebury St) -



DORA BARTON (1884-1966) photographed by Langfrier of Glasgow, published by Rotary (No. 1654B). A regular performer in comedy and comic farce in the West End and the provinces, she was probably on tour in Glasgow when this postcard picture was taken. A long career saw her with ENSA and BBC repertory in Manchester during the second world war. She made five films in 1916/17 and in 1935/36. Postally unused.

(right) **BILLIE BURKE (1885-1970)** postcard photographed by Dover St. Studios, London, published by Rotary (No. 1935E). Dover St. Studios grew into one of the largest commercial photographic companies, specialising in theatrical work. Post-marked Rugby Station March 1906 and addressed to Aberystwyth, presumably for despatch by L&NW Railway postal train.

Beagles, Philco, Rapid, Rotary.

Draycott Galleries (263 Oxford St.) - Davidson, Philco.

Elite Portrait Co. Ltd. - Philco.

Elliott & Fry - Unnamed publisher.

Ellis & Walery (51 Baker St.) - Beagles, Misch, Rotary.

Fellowes, Wilson (57 Bedford Gardens, Kensington) - Rotary, Tucks.

Foulsham & Banfield (95 Wigmore St / 49 Old Bond St.) - Beagles, Philco, Rotary, Rotophot.

Gordon, E - Philco.

Hana Ltd - Rotary.

Harris, Claude - Beagles, Miles.

Hills & Saunders (Sloane St) - Unnamed publisher.

Histed, Ernest (Baker St) - Beagles, Rotary.

Hoppe, Emil - Beagles

Horace & Nicholls - Rotary.

Hutchinson & Svendsen (115 & 116 The Strand) - Beagles, Philco, Rapid, Rotary.

Hyatt - Faulkner.

International Art Co. - Rotary.

Johnston & Hoffmann (31 or 312 Devonshire St) - Davidson, Ettlinger, Milton, Philco, Rapid, Rotary, Rotophot, Schofield, Tucks.

La Rose, Isidore - Rotary, Tucks.

Lafayette (New Bond St) - Beagles,



QUEENIE LEIGHTON (1872-1943) photographed by Richard Brown, published by Rotary (No. 220H). A Pantomime and Music Hall performer, it was the former that seemed to give her the most publicity, playing in "Dick Whittington", "Sinbad the Sailor", "Aladdin", "Robinson Crusoe", "Little Red Riding Hood" and "Cinderella" in the capital and the provinces. Postally unused.



Faulkner, Philco, Rotary, Scott Russell, Tucks.

[also branches in Belfast, Glasgow & Manchester]

Lainson, George - Beagles.

Lambert Weston & Son - Rotary.

Langfrier (23A & 222 Old Bond St.) - Beagles, Dunn, Rotary, Tucks.

[also in Edinburgh & Glasgow]

Lascalles - Unnamed publisher.

Lemeilleur & Co. - Philco, Rapid, Rotary, Rotophot, Thomas, Tucks.

London Stereoscopic Co. (106 Regent St & 54 Cheapside) - Rotary, Rotophot, Tucks.

Lyd Sawyer (AKA Sawyer, Lyddell) - Tucks.

Martin, Rita (Miss) (74 Baker St) - Aristophot, Beagles, Philco, Rapid, Rival, Rotary, Rotophot. [Sister of Lallie Charles photographer, birth name Charlotte Martin].

Mendelssohn, H.S. (14 Pembridge Crescent, Bayswater) - Beagles.

Neame, S. Elwin (Onslow Place, S. Kensington) - Beagles, Philco. [originally in Bristol]

Play Pictorial - Rotary, Tucks.

Pollard, W.G. - Unnamed publisher.

Record Press - Beagles.

Rembrandt Studio (Mortimer St) - Rotophot.

Reutlinger - Rotary.

Reville Studios - Beagles.

Stage Photo Co. (Brook St) - Beagles.

Stage Pictorial Co. - Philco, Rotary.

Swaine (146 New Bond St) - Beagles.

Tear, Herbert - Rotary.

Tear, Walter Adolphus - Rotary.

Thiele, Reinhold - Philco.

Thomas R.W. (41 Cheapside) -

Beagles, Davidson, Ducal, Philco, Rotary, Rotophot, Wrench.

Turner, Thomas Charles (Senior) & Co. - Rotary. [also in Hull]

Valerie - Philco.

Vandyke - Rotary.

Vaughn & Freeman (Misses Kate Vaughn & Pearl Freeman) - Beagles.

Ward, S - Ettlinger.

Whiteley R.M. Ltd - Rotary.

Wilding, Dorothy (Miss) (Regent St) - Picturegoer.

Window & Grove (63A Baker St) -

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Congratulations to Phyll Wood of Bishops Waltham, Hampshire, who celebrates her 90th birthday on June 25th. Once a regular at Bipex, where she helped Freda Gittos on her Edwardian Postcards stand, Phyll still helps out at Wickham postcard fairs!

Beagles, Rotary, Rotophot.
Wrather & Buys (27 New Bond St.) - Rotary.

PROVINCIAL PHOTOGRAPHERS
Arbus, Sala (Reading) - Rotary.
Asquith - Rotary.
Barraud (92 Bold St, Liverpool) - Rotary.
Beel, Lillian (Miss) (84 Park St, Bristol) - Davidson, Rotary.
Brown, Richard (Liverpool, Newcastle & Edinburgh) - Philco, Rotary.
Brown, Barnes & Bell (Liverpool) - Rotary.
Bustin, Fr  derick (151 Cheltenham Road, Bristol) - Grosvenor, Rotary.
Chancellor, John (Dublin) - Unnamed publisher.
Denham, J.C. (Torquay) - Rotophot.
Dobson Studios Ltd. (Liverpool) - Unnamed publisher.
Duff Bros. (Manchester) - Philco, Rotary.
Eves (Birmingham) - Rotophot,
Eves, George (Queens Road, Clifton, Bristol) - Rotophot,
Guggenheim & Co. (Birmingham & Wolverhampton) - Rotary.
Guttenberg, Percy (Manchester) -

Philco, Rotary.
Heath, William & Co. (24 George St, Plymouth) - Rotary.
Hubbard, Arthur (Nottingham) - Montgomery.
Jerome (Southport) - Unnamed publisher.
Kilpatrick, William (Belfast) - Beagles, Rotary.
Langfrier (Edinburgh & Glasgow) - Beagles, Rotary. [also in London].
Midwinter, William & Co. (48 Park St, Bristol) - Bee Series.
Neame, S. Elwin (Bristol) - Unnamed publisher.
Pestel, Madame A. (Eastbourne) - Philco.
Protheroe (Bristol) - Baker, Grosvenor, Philco, Rotary.
Relf & Co. (Preston) - Unnamed publisher.
Sachs (Bradford) - Garrett.
Sarony - Rotary.
Sydney (Manchester) - Rotary.
Wane, Marshall & Co. (82 George St / 130 Princess St, Edinburgh) - Wane.
Whitlock, Henry Joseph & Sons (Birmingham) - Philco, Rotary, Rotophot.
Wood, Sydney H. (Darlington) - Rotary.

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