



Fieldwork: photographs of Britain
1971-1988 by Daniel Meadows
curated by Val Williams

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Daniel Meadows and Val Williams have been working together for the last two years on an exploration of the Meadows archive of negatives, prints, digital stories and papers, which is housed in Monmouth.

A book resulting from the research will be published by Photoworks in 2011 and it is planned that a touring exhibition with several UK and, possibly, international venues, will launch to coincide with the publication.

A series of research seminars have been held around the project, with participants including Val Williams (Photography and the Archive Research Centre, London College of Communication); Daniel Meadows (Cardiff University); Peter James (Birmingham Central Library); Paul Reas (University of Wales, Newport); Russell Roberts (University of Wales, Newport); Fotonow (Plymouth); John Myers (photographer); Birmingham Central Library Archivists, plus project interns. A group of participating partners has now been formed around this project and consists of UAL Photography and the Archive Research Centre, London College of Communication; Birmingham Central Library; Ffotogallery, Cardiff and Photoworks. If you are interested in this project, please contact Val Williams at v.williams@lcc.arts.ac.uk.

Background

Daniel Meadows was one of a group of photographers trained at Manchester Polytechnic in the early 1970s, who spearheaded the independent photography movement in Britain, breaking with tradition and infusing the medium with new energies and ways of seeing. The Manchester Poly group included Meadows, Martin Parr, Brian Griffin, Charlie Meecham and Peter Fraser. Inspired by Bill Jay's touring lectures in the early 1970s, by material published in magazines such as *Creative Camera* and *Album*, by exhibitions such as *Bill Brandt* (Hayward Gallery 1970), *Henri Cartier-Bresson* (V&A 1969) and by photography from the USA made by practitioners such as Diane Arbus, Walker Evans, Robert Frank and Garry Winogrand, they were determined to establish a new 'independent' way of making and disseminating photographs, outside the traditional spheres of reportage. Meadows's 1973 project the *Free Photographic Omnibus* (during which he toured Britain in a double-decker bus, establishing free studios in towns and cities across the country) has received recognition; other work, such as *Butlin's by the Sea* (1972) and *June Street* (1973), both in partnership with Martin Parr, the extraordinary *Shop on Greame Street* (1972), the *Factory* music series in the late 1970s and the virtually unknown *Nattering in Paradise* series (which, through interviews and photographs studied the lives of one middle-class community), have been little researched. As well as these named series, many thousands of photographs taken in the North West during the 1970s have been neither printed nor published.

In his 1975 book *Living Like This*, Meadows demonstrated his growing interest in narrative by combining photographs, oral history and writing to construct an elegy to 'ordinary' lives:

'I hope that everyone who reads the stories will be able to enjoy a snatch of life as it is lived by someone else. For it is only by appreciating each other's circumstances that we can hope to improve our world.'

(Postscript, *Living Like This: Around Britain in the Seventies*. 1975)

Living Like This is a remarkable document, unique in photographic production.

Daniel Meadows and Martin Parr were the only photographers from the independent grouping to work collaboratively and, like Parr, Meadows was a radical. Working for the most part without editorial or journalistic constraints, he utilised street studio portraiture to produce an astonishing record of urban society in Britain in the 1970s. Unlike his contemporaries, he wrote about and interviewed his subjects,

This project continues Val Williams's interest in British photography of this period; and focuses on Meadows's major bodies of work from 1971-1987. Val Williams was awarded a University of the Arts sabbatical to pursue this research.

Over the last fifteen years, Daniel Meadows has reflected on his work from the 1970s, and, before and during his PhD studies, embarked on an archaeology of the *Free Photographic Omnibus*. Although he had largely ceased to make documentary photographs by the beginning of the 1990s, Meadows remained intensely interested in the genre and the publication of *National Portraits* (1997), a selection of portraits from the bus project, led Meadows on an intensive and highly personal research journey. Tracing the original portrait subjects, Meadows embarked upon a concentrated exercise of oral history interviews (with Alan Dein) and re-photographing. His 2001 book *The Bus* was the result of this research. As an early instigator of digital stories (short multimedia narratives) Meadows has become deeply involved in the exploration of the idea of performing and sharing autobiography.

The Daniel Meadows archive, held in his studio in Monmouth, is an almost complete record of his photographic practice, teaching and research career. It contains many thousands of negatives which have not been printed, and the complete collection of published work as well as his archive of digital stories and his many writings and lectures. As a lecturer on the Documentary Photography diploma at Newport College of Art in the 1980s, Meadows was a major protagonist of the teaching of documentary photography in the UK.

As a photographer, writer and digital storyteller, Meadows has produced practice which is complex, passionate and sometimes deeply autobiographical. He has interrogated the idea of documentary in a way that few of his photographic contemporaries have considered. This new research will make Meadows's work, and his photographic and research journey, visible and intelligible to new and existing audiences.



The Exhibition

Will encompass Daniel Meadows's major projects and recently discovered work, its eventual size being determined following discussions with the participating galleries. It will also afford an opportunity to screen a selection of the many short movies Meadows has made over the last decade. It will be accompanied by a major new book from Photoworks.

The exhibition will explore the following areas:

Documentary, Manchester (1971-73)

Made during the period when Meadows was part of a group of Manchester Polytechnic students which included Martin Parr, Brian Griffin and Peter Fraser.

Pictures (clockwise from left): Blackpool Winter Gardens, Ballroom Dancing Championships; Moss Side, Manchester, Alexandra Park Carnival; Manchester, crowd dispersing following a demonstration against the treatment of Jews in the Soviet Union.



Shop on Greame Street (1972)

For two months in early 1972 Meadows ran a free photographic studio in a former barber's shop in Manchester's Moss Side. The Shop on Greame Street was open on Saturdays. Local children delivered prints to the homes of those who had been photographed.



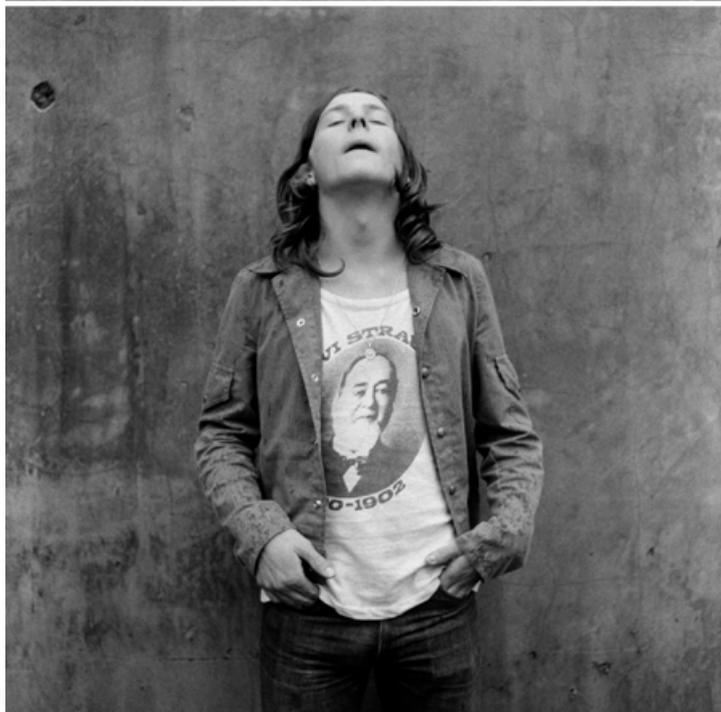
Butlin's by the Sea (1972)

Meadows and Parr became Butlin's Holiday Camp official photographers at Filey on the Yorkshire coast in the summer of 1972. They sold pictures to campers and also made many documentary photographs at this iconic location.



June Street, Salford (1973) with Martin Parr

Inspired by their interest in the British soap opera *Coronation Street* Meadows and Parr set out to find the 'real' *Coronation Street* and in doing so, made a series of photographs of the residents of June Street in Salford which represented the essence of working class Northern lives.



Free Photographic Omnibus (1973-1974)

Touring England in a converted double-decker bus, Meadows made a series of portraits which have been exhibited internationally, most recently in the Tate Britain exhibition *How We Are*. These moving and powerful photographs typify the 1970s as UK society moved from the post-war to the modern.

Pictures from Barrow-in-Furness (top): Brian Morgan, Martin Tebay, Paul McMillan, Phil Tickle, Mike Comish, "Boot Boys"; Michael and Peter McParland, twins. Pictures (bottom): unknown man; Karen Cubin and Barbara Taylor, daughter and mother.



Decline in the Cotton Industry 1975-78

Commissioned by the Borough of Pendle in Lancashire to work as Gulbenkian photographer-in-residence, Meadows undertook many collaborative documentary projects, most notably a study of decline in the textile industry.



Nattering in Paradise (1984-87)

This much overlooked series of photographs made in the South East of England portrays suburban life in the consumerist Britain of the 1980s.

Pictures (clockwise from left): Hayes Common, Bromley, Merrie England and London May Queen Festival; Orpington, Civil Service Retirement Fellowship, washing up; Farnborough Park, silver wedding anniversary party, dancing by the pool.

Daniel Meadows

Daniel Meadows's career as a documentary photographer, oral historian, storyteller and teacher spans forty years.

In the 1970s, as a member of the independent photography movement, his adventure in the *Free Photographic Omnibus* was an inspiration to many. In the digital age, as an early adopter of the new tools of media production, he established the award winning multimedia storytelling project *Capture Wales* for the BBC (2001-2008), something which has impacted widely.

Born in Gloucestershire, England, in 1952, Meadows studied photography at Manchester Polytechnic (1970-73) where he quickly developed a reputation for the quality of his engagement with people through his pictures, running free portrait studios and finding ways to celebrate the ordinary, the overlooked and the everyday. Notable projects from that time include the *Shop on Graeme Street* (1972) as well as his collaborations with Martin Parr: *Butlin's by the Sea* in Yorkshire (1972) and *June Street* in Salford (1973).

His solo London exhibitions, *Living Like This* at the Institute of Contemporary Arts (1975) and *Shuttles, Steam & Soot* at Camerawork (1978), as well as the touring show *National Portraits* (1997) confirmed his reputation as a leader in his field. Today his work is held in public collections in Salford, Birmingham and at the V&A.

In 1983 Meadows moved to Wales to teach alongside David Hurn on the Documentary Photography course at Newport's School of Art and Design. Since 1994 he has taught at Cardiff University's School of Journalism, Media and Cultural Studies. In the 1990s Meadows also taught photojournalism workshops for the Reuters Foundation, the British Council and others in the emerging democracies of Europe; also in India and Bangladesh. Since 2000 has travelled widely (mostly in Australia and the USA) lecturing about his pioneering work in participatory media. He was awarded his PhD in 2005.

In his books – *Living Like This* (1975), *Nattering in Paradise* (1988) and *The Bus* (2001) – he mixes his photographs with oral testimony and reflection. His work has been included in many group shows, most recently in Tate Britain's *How We Are*, *Photographing Britain* (2007), Hayward Gallery Touring's *No Such Thing as Society* (2008), and the international multimedia exhibition *Projections of Reality* at Red October, Moscow (2010).

For more on Daniel Meadows see: <http://www.photobus.co.uk>

Val Williams

Professor Val Williams is Director of the Photography and the Archive Research Centre at the London College of Communication at the University of the Arts in London. She is also an editor of the *Journal of Photography & Culture*, published by Berg from 2008.

Val is a writer and curator, whose past projects include *Who's Looking at the Family* (Barbican Art Gallery, 1994); *New Natural History* (National Museum of Photography, 1998); *Martin Parr: Photographic Works* (Barbican Art Gallery, 2001); *Warworks* (V&A, 1994); *The Dead* (National Museum of Photography, 1995); *Look at Me, Fashion and Photography in Britain* (British Council 1998 and touring). *How We Are: Photographing Britain from 1860 to the Present* (Tate Britain 2007).

Her books include *Magnum Ireland* (Thames and Hudson, 2005); *Anna Fox: Photographs 1983-2007* (Photoworks, 2007); *When We Were Young: Club and Street Photographs by Derek Ridgers* (Photoworks, 2004); *Martin Parr: Photographic Works* (Phaidon, 2001). She also co-ordinated and interviewed on the Oral History of British Photography for the National Sound Archive in the early 1990s.

www.photographyresearchcentre.co.uk