



# The view from the top deck

Fifty years ago, funded  
in part by a £100 cheque  
from The Sunday Times,  
*Daniel Meadows* drove a  
double-decker bus across  
Britain, taking the portraits  
of more than 950 people  
along the way

Portraits taken in  
Southampton,  
Workington,  
Fakenham, Barrow-  
in-Furness and  
Brighton, 1974

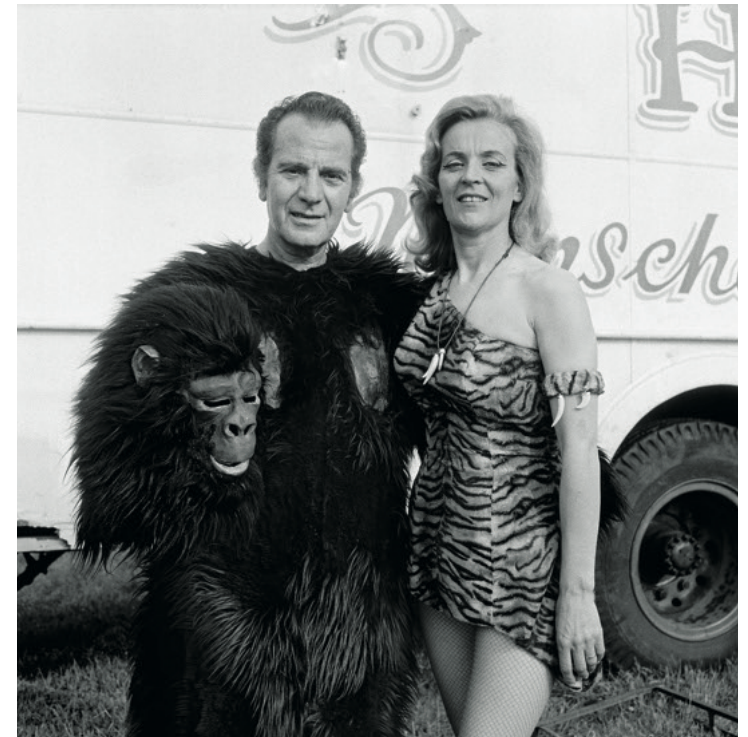




Left: a newsagent vies for attention beside a hoarding in Attercliffe, Sheffield, 1973



Right: a trainer puts faith in his elephant's appetite at Circus Hoffman, Weymouth, 1974



Right: two other performers from the circus troupe pose for Meadows's camera

**F**ifty years ago this month a 21-year-old photographer called Daniel Meadows set off in a repurposed 1948 double-decker bus on a 10,000-mile trip around England. For the next 14 months he lived and worked on the bus, photographing 958 people in 22 towns and cities, from Gateshead to Chippenham, Portsmouth to Stratford-upon-Avon. "It was idealistic," he says. "And massively ambitious."

To help fund his project, called the *Free Photographic Omnibus*, Meadows sent letters to "captains of industry — I suppose it would be called crowdfunding today". His

benefactors included The Sunday Times, which sent him a cheque for £100 and ran an article about the project on April 21, 1974. The bus — a Leyland Titan PDI — cost Meadows £360 and he would develop the images overnight in a darkroom he built on board, handing out free prints the next day.

It wasn't easy. "The first thing that would usually happen when I parked up is I'd get a parking ticket," he recalls, but his subjects inspired him. "I met all these people, then they would suggest other people, saying, 'There's a couple of rock'n'rollers in Darlington!' So I'd go and take their picture too. I loved taking my lead from random encounters with strangers." ■



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Left: Meadows with the bus he drove for the *Free Photographic Omnibus* project



Above: a family enjoy candyfloss at the opening of a hypermarket in Telford New Town, Shropshire, 1974

Below left: a teddy boy and girl pose in drape jackets in Darlington, Co Durham

Below: a gamekeeper and his family at their home in the Gloucestershire village of Great Washbourne

Order a signed copy of Daniel Meadows's *Book of the Road* from [bluecoatpress.co.uk](http://bluecoatpress.co.uk). A 50th anniversary exhibition is at the Centre for British Photography, London SW1, Oct 5 to Dec 17, free entry

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