

*Alone With His Thoughts; A Waiter Muses on the Glories of Old England, in Butlin's Bahaman Village  
"It's lazy at Butlin's," says the brochure, "and you can relax, relax, relax . . ." Waiter Eddie Grant relaxes, by the cement rocks and the idle waterwheel, on the Old English bridge. Project, aimed to earn dollars from American visitors, is proving more expensive to run than was bargained for.*

## BUTLIN'S in the BAHAMAS

*Photographed by FENNO JACOBS*

**W**ILLIAM EDMUND BUTLIN, 50, South African born and Canadian raised, is a one-time fairground operator who built a four-million-pound business out of a £5 hoopla stall. By hard work and lively thinking, he became a big money man, specialising in the vacational needs of little-money people. His slogan was "a twelve-guinea holiday for six guineas." His precept: "Give 'em value for their money, and hand 'em what they want." Sensitive souls were horrified at the hi-de-ho heartiness of Butlin camps, the tireless loudspeaker jollity that took on the proportions of evangelism. But, still, it seemed to be what millions desired.

Butlin, himself, is enchanted by the poetry of figures. Once, in an emotional moment, he recalled to his shareholders that he served ten million meals a year, changed forty thousand sheets for new campers every Saturday, baked five million rolls, eight million cakes. He sounded as if he did it all single-handed, like some huge folk-hero of the holiday business. Indeed, he is a man conscious of his own legendary qualities, and his ways are not always the ways of ordinary mortals. In money matters, for instance, he has inclined to rattle his more cautious fellow-directors by his bull-at-a-gate methods of getting ahead. That the bull has a wily

brain is never in doubt. But, from time to time, some of Butlin's associates, perhaps less vigorous men than he, but with subtlety in financial affairs, have had the feeling that things might be done with a little more caution and finesse.

It may be they have that impression now, over the most ambitious of all Butlin's projects, the Vacation Village on the island of Grand Bahama, not far from the Florida coast. This is a lavish resort, described in the handouts as 'an island Paradise,' and 'the world's most exciting playground.' It has also been called a miniature Blackpool, with tropical overtones. The aim was to attract American holiday-

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'Ye Olde Pig and Whistle' is reproduced a whole Tudor-type village, with Shake-termite-proof stackable chairs is ye olde stocks.



Preserved for Ever  
The most devoted guest snaps the most ageless of old English fittings.

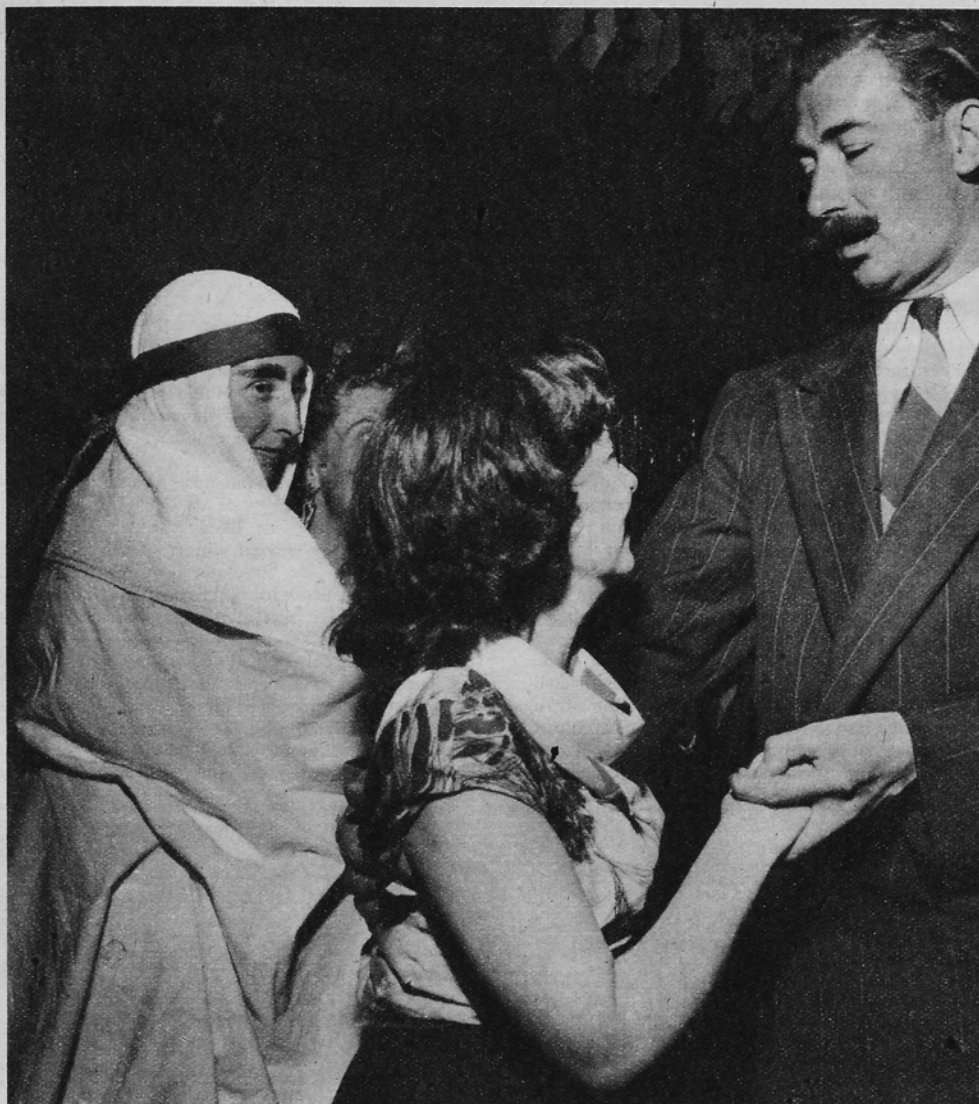
which stands ("give 'em value for their money") the façade of an entire English village street, in Disney Tudor-style, casement windows, old oak doors and all. All this, and the accents of the red-coated 'social directors' (Butlin hosts), are part of what the brochure calls: "the authentic atmosphere of a little piece of Britain with all the charm and traditions of an English village—here—now—economically—for you to experience and enjoy." The idea is to give the American guest the conviction that he is in a foreign land, and not merely half an hour from Palm Beach. However, lest the visitor should get out of his depth, the 'authentic atmosphere' is stretched to include a number of jackpot machines.

In Butlin's Bahamas, there is none of that hearty regimentation; no wakey-wakey, no hi-de-ho. It seems that such is not to the taste of those who can afford fifteen dollars a day. Indeed, the guests are little seen about the Village in daytime, preferring to loll on the beaches or to go deep-sea fishing after tuna, dolphin, tarpon or bonito.

The setting is perfect. Incredibly blue water laps impossibly golden sands. The palm trees sway as if they really belonged there (instead of being imported from hundreds of miles away, and propped-up on wooden struts). And the tired middling businessmen of Ohio and Illinois can relax with their womenfolk on what was, till now, the exclusive play resort of America's most fashionable set. The guests haven't a worry in the world. Mr. Butlin has shot them the works.



Demands Are Made of You  
conceivable amenity to make your Butlin vacation is your option whether you take part.'



The End of a Long Diplomatic Day  
British staff wait at table, arrange fishing trips, settle social problems, act as butlers, guides, ambassadors all in one. At staff dances, they find time for discreet enjoyment off their own bat.

preparations. The place was, in fact, about one-third finished, and there was accommodation for barely 500 guests—less than half the number that had been counted on. Within a month of the opening, the project was already running out of money. Some £300,000 more was pumped in by the original backers; but hard-headed businessmen like Brigadier Keith Thorburn—who represents the powerful Drayton group of trust and finance companies on the board of Butlin's Bahamas—could see that a great deal more money would need to be raised and spent, if the world's most exciting playground was to be kept going and to pay its way.

The Vacation Village is a more luxurious affair than any of the Butlin camps in England. The cost is 15 dollars (£5 7s.) a day in winter, 12 dollars (£4 5s.) in summer. The rate is stiff by British standards, but to U.S. citizens it seems reasonable. For their money, the guests are housed and fed, and given the run of miles of beaches (Paradise Beach and Honeymoon Beach are two of them). Basketball, rugby football, archery, spear-fishing and bingo are among the sports that are "All yours! At Butlin's! Nothing extra to pay!" Some of the announced amenities still exist only as blue-prints or in the reinforced concrete stage; but among the glimpses of paradise to be enjoyed are the Medieval Dining Room, with its orange and blue rafters and coloured camp chairs; the indoor rustic bridge, by the water-wheel, that leads to the Hall of Colon-nades; and Ye Olde Pig and Whistle Bar, behind



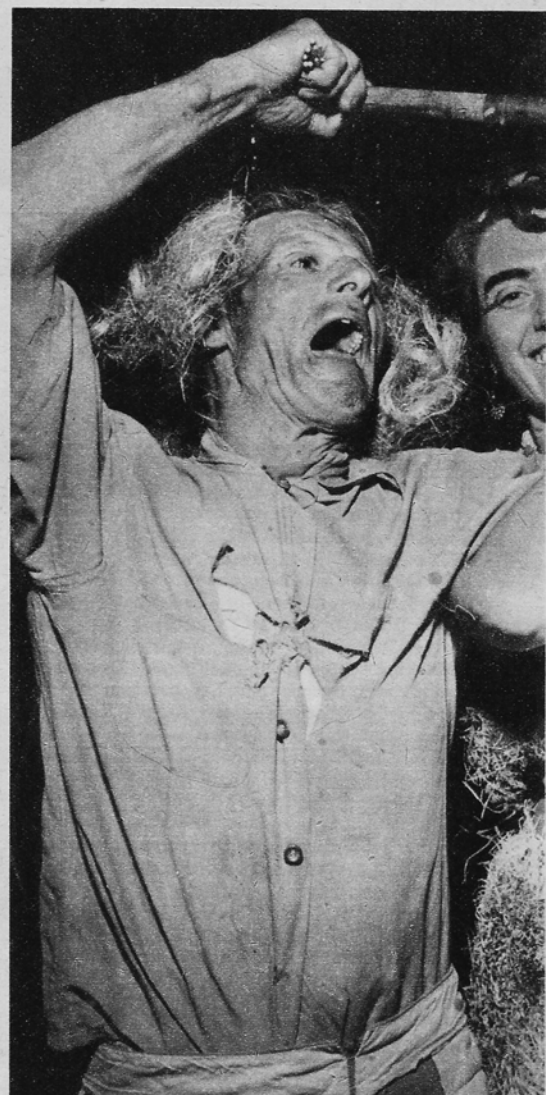
*Gone Tomorrow*  
Much of the weekly bag of dollars comes from day-visitors flown in from Miami.



*Evoked From Yesterday:*  
It's part of the English atmosphere. Behind the bar spearian casements and cement beams. Set among



*Carnival Night in the Caribbean*  
"The moon is riding high in the Bahamas. . . . The palm trees nurse the night-breezes in their arms. Native bands . . . moving calypso rhythms . . . the excitement of fancy dress and bal masqués."



*The Great Thing is—No*  
In the vacation village, the promise is: "Every long remembered is provided—but it



*Regimentation is Out*

*The mass-reveilles and mass-fun of English camps is not here. Npr the mass-eating.*

makers, and to earn dollars without spending dollars by setting up a resort on America's doorstep, but inside the sterling area. The camp—Butlin prefers the name 'village'—was to cost £1,100,000; opening date was January this year; a thousand guests were to be accommodated—two thousand by the coming November, by which time the takings, it was hoped, would be nearly £150,000 a week. It looks as if things may not quite work out that way.

The island of Grand Bahama is over 60 miles long, and its width varies from one to five miles. It lies some 60 miles due east of Palm Beach, Florida. Before Butlin, it was inhabited by a few natives engaged in desultory fishing. The only white men were a small U.S. Army guided-missile unit. Of this island, Butlin bought some 685 acres, on which to set up his holiday paradise. It was a bold, audacious project; and it held more snags than had been bargained for. Workmen, materials, building equipment, machinery, food, drink, all had to be flown in or shipped from England to Nassau, and thence 150 miles by landing barge. The difficulties multiplied. The mile-and-a-half of runway was hard to clear; dock strikes held up deliveries; and when deliveries did arrive, they came in such a rush that the wharves at Nassau became choked up with Butlin stuff, so that, as one worker put it, "if you wanted a toilet roll, it was buried under a hundred tons of steel." Everything cost so much more than had been expected; and everything went terribly slowly. In reply to the impatient prodding of the English staff, the native labourer replied: "Boss, you is gonna get like us, before we gets like you."

Brochures about Butlin's Tropical Paradise began to appear on the travel agency counters and in the vestibules of hotels as far away as Cleveland and Chicago. But by the time the Village opened, it seemed the publicity had rather outstripped the

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*Something to Astonish All Chicago*

*Fishing includes barracuda, marlin, dolphin as above. Boats are loaned free (whereas over in Florida they cost a fortune to hire). Some catches are eaten, others are immortalised in snap-albums.*



*The Lively Nymph of the Lifeless Cascade*

*The most-snapped girl in the Village. A hundred times she's climbed the waterless cascade to be photographed against the propped-up property palms.*



**The Sporting Pigeons Earn Their Keep**

*They're part of the amusements staff. Each day they fly home from an island two miles away, trailing ribbons of their racing colours. Sun-tanned Butlin bathers make Tote bets on result.*



*"All the Charm and Tradition of an English Village—Here—Now—Economically For You to Enjoy" (see Leaflet)  
Most guests are Americans. They pay (in summer) 12 dollars, or £4 5s., a day. They live in blocks of 64 chalets, each block named after an English county. The hosts have English accents. Intention is to give visitors the impression they're in a foreign land, and not merely 60 miles from Florida.*