



ESU-Information

Allow me: the new members of the team

ESU Vice-Presidents Are Arnado and Alex James Colquhoun in conversation



The newly elected ESU Presidium at the 2023 Congress in Monte Carlo: (from left) Vice-President Charles Senn, President Albert Ritter, Secretary General Steve Severeys, Flagbearer Mike Roie, Deputy Secretary General Nina Crommelin, Vice-President Atze Lubach-Koers, Vice-President Are Arnado, Vice-President Alex James Colquhoun.

Both live for their profession, both come from old European circus and showman families, both have been committed to the future of the trade in their countries for years and both are the new members of the ESU Presidium. At the beginning of 2023, Are Arnado and Alex James Colquhoun were elected Vice-Presidents of the European Showmen's Union by a large majority at the 42nd ESU Congress in Monte Carlo. In the ESU interview they talk about the current professional challenges, among other things.



Are Arnado: "It is important that we are heard"

Mr Arnado, how does one actually become a circus director?

Are Arnado: In my case it has been a family tradition, my grandfather started our circus in 1949. I as my father have been learning the about circus from working with it from childhood and taken over step by step. With the only small different that my grandfather as well as my father was great artist, I have been student in BI Norwegian Business School for 3 years. My father took over the director chair in 1985, and I took over more or less in 2014.

What is special about the circus and what are your biggest challenges in everyday circus life?

Are Arnado: Circus is special in many ways. The traveling around, place to place. The live show in a ring inside a tent. The two ways communications between artists and public. But the things that lays in the base is that the circus is nearly the only place where what happen in the ring (stage) is the same as it was for over 250 years ago. Artist making extreme performance live for a live public. Our biggest challenges in everyday circus life, is that compare to when my grandfather started it that now the public has a limited amount of time and the entreatment is in the palm of their hand. And there for it is harder to make the public aware that are present.

You are the chairman of the Norwegian Circus and Showmen's Association. What issues are currently of concern to Norwegian showmen and circus workers?

Are Arnado: Our greatest currently concern in Norway for us at the moment is the traveling around on the roads, the way we travel, and also the grounds to play on is disappearing. (Note: The Norwegian Circus and Showmen's Association has been calling

for years for exemptions for showmen's transports, as they are already in place in many other European countries).

What are your demands to politicians?

Are Arnado: We are working more the one path to make an attempt to get the politicians to understand that we are different in many ways and does not fit into a A4 format. This is a time process that has taken time and will take a lot of time. But our demands are that we want that they see us and give us the space and possibility to still do our lifestyle in the harmony with the changes in with developments in the society around us.

What is the importance of the European Showmen's Union for you?

Are Arnado: I think a Union can have a stronger impact on the one whom are making new rules and lows, there for it is important being heard in a positive way to be able to make changes in a better way for our special lifestyle. As also Norway is a part of Europa and we are taking the EU rules. It is there for I think it is a great change the Union have to influence the right people who change or set up new rules. And a strong as I see the ESU is, will have the possibility.

Briefly introduced: Are Arnado

Are Arnado, 52 years old, lives in Brekkestø, Norway. He is married to Paola Folco and has two children. Are Arnado is Chairman of the Norwegian Circus and Showmen's Association Norges Cirkus- og Tivolieier Forening (NCTF) and Vice-President of the European Showmen's Union since January 2023.



Congratulations on the election. The new ESU Vice-Presidents Alex James Colquhoun (right) and Are Arnado at the ESU Congress 2023.



Alex James Colquhoun: "As showmen, we all face very similar problems, no matter what country we come from".

Mr. Colquhoun, since when have you been a Showman?

Alex James Colquhoun: I've been a Showman all my life. My family history in fairgrounds goes back many generations. Currently I'm a manager in a Safari Park looking after the entertainment and amusements side of things which is easier than travelling the fairs but I still very much miss the travelling side of things.

What is special/fascinating for you about being a showman and what are your biggest challenges in everyday life?

Alex James Colquhoun: Currently my biggest challenge is finding the time to carry out the work as Chairman of the Scottish section of the Showmen's Guild. After Covid we are so far behind and face many more challenges. It is very difficult to meet all the challenges and issues that we face at the Showmen's Guild while carrying out our normal day to day work.

You are the chairman of the Scottish section of the Showmen's Guild of Great Britain. What are the current issues facing Scottish showmen?

Alex James Colquhoun: In Scotland our biggest challenge is and has for many years been the need for fun fairs to apply for a Public Entertainment Licence. This can mean only one single complaint from a member of the public can close down a long established fun fair or prevent it from ever taking place on its traditional dates or site.

This legislation is so unfit for propose that the 32 local authorities within Scotland all have different interpretations of the Government law and impose different conditions upon travelling showmen.

This is making some areas within Scotland no go areas for traditional travelling fun fairs. Scotland is the only country to have this legislation none of the other countries within the UK have this law. You must negotiate for the fun fair site then go back to the same local authority to apply for a licence to operate at the site you have just negotiated to use. They can impose further strict conditions at this stage and invite the public to object to the application. In some cases this has had the result of traditional fairs being cancelled at very short notice. The fee's charged for this licence vary from £50 to £7000 pounds across Scotland.

What are your demands on politicians?

Alex James Colquhoun: We ask politicians for recognition and equality similar to all communitys. It is my belief that we do not get equal recognition in both our business and our traditional way of life. This is something that is very important for our future generations of showmen and politicians must listen to our problems or things will only get more difficult for our children to carry on our traditional way of life.

What is the importance of the European Showmen's Union for you?

Alex James Colquhoun: The ESU is important to all showmen as we can draw from other countries experience in dealing with issues and use examples of how things are done elsewhere to support our requests. As travelling showmen we all face very similar issues no matter what country we come from. Getting information and guidance from someone that may have already had your issues is much better than starting from nothing but also we must try for recognition for our industry across the world. We are a huge industry that is very often overlooked.

We entertain millions of people with very little recognition or assistance from governments. Our shared history and heritage spans hundreds of years, we support local historic community events bringing people together boosting tourism etc. Many traditional and historical events would no longer be held or celebrated if it wasn't for the fun fairs that attend to support them they would simply be lost to history.

Brief introduced: Alex James Colquhoun

Alex James Colquhoun, 54, lives in Glasgow, Scotland. He is married to the daughter of a travelling showman and has two daughters whose husbands and partners are both

travelling showmen. Although his eldest daughter is a lawyer, she is still involved in the showman business as is his younger daughter he is hopeful that they will continue on the tradition of travelling fairs across the UK.

Alex James Colquhoun is Chairman of the Scottish Section of the Showmen's Guild of Great Britain and has been Vice-President of the European Showmen's Union since January 2023.

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