Gaming in Britain 1900-1939: ‘I have got a good following. I have now a Duke and an Earl. In fact I have the cream of Society.’ Arrested Gaming House Organiser, 1924.

Gaming, the organisation of Banker’s games for profit, in Britain prior to the Second World War has largely been ignored by academics and historians. There has been an assumption that gaming was conducted at such a small scale that it was either not worthy of research, or, that there was not enough evidence to support specific analysis.

This paper will attempt to dispel the above academic myth utilising contemporary press coverage and archive material which will illustrate a vibrant, but illegal gaming industry. In fact, gaming during this period formulated in the minds of the authorities the need for substantial punishments to be utilised against identified operators, this undoubtably led to the introduction of gaming specific defence regulations into Britain during the Second World War. However, it will also establish a continuity of prejudice when dealing with offenders.

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My research has focused upon criminal entrepreneurship and the development of illegal and "grey" industries which subvert legislation and regulation. This has led to an interest in how lawmakers and governments approach illegal activity which calls into question the moral and practical legitimacy of existing law. My focus as a historian has been the British Gaming Industry throughout a life cycle of illegality to regulation.