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**Difficult Fun:
Fairground as Heritage, Heritage as Fairground**

By:

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Abstract

This thesis examines the British travelling fairground as a unique tradition and ongoing practice of the past, present and future, to create a wider dialogue with our understanding of heritage practices. The fairground is approached as a complex assemblage of objects and affects that has a sinuous historical trail, making its relationship to heritage practices a valuable insight in the wider environment of embracing our past. A key aspect of my work looks at, listens to, and explores the fairground and develops a detailed ontology of objects that set off a network of affects, making a major contribution to how the fairground is understood. This is then set out in a diachronic arrangement as the essence of change is investigated, understood as overlapping cycles connected to the content of the fairground, the space of the fairground, the music of the fairground, and the close synergy between accelerated popular culture and the visual presentation of the fairground. Central to this is the audience demographic, and the issue of when we most appreciate the fairground, and when we no longer feel a part of the fairground. This provides an understanding of our heritage seeking behaviour and expectations.

Heritage of the fairground is identified in five key contexts: the static museum collection, the steam rally movement, the specialist vintage travelling fair, the living museum (examples that incorporate a period fairground), and the specific re-creation of a seaside amusement park. These heritage efforts are investigated with site reports analysed using a wide toolbox: spatial practice, situational aesthetics, textual analysis, and audience granularity (including the protagonist who sets up and controls the collection).

Drawing on and synthesising the fieldwork from the fairground heritage sectors, I present case studies around notions of authenticity, vernacular flows, space and building, and future planning considerations. The thesis concludes by illuminating points of dialogue to the wider heritage field, addressing the growing uncertainty around the convergence of the museum and the theme park.

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My place in WROCAH was as part of a networked PhD, and I worked closely with a doctoral candidate at York and Leeds, supported by a framework of six academics across the institutions. My thanks go to those staff and students.

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Chapter 1 – Introduction

This thesis is part of the White Rose College of Arts and Humanities (WROCAH) Design Matters network, and forms a contribution to a body of work examining the intersection of past design processes, nostalgia and the heritage sector.

The thesis, based at the School of Architecture in the University of Sheffield, examines the British fairground and its relationship to heritage practices in the current environment of expanded and intensified heritage engagement. My research question can be simply stated as follows:

How do fairgrounds challenge and inform our understanding of heritage?

This chapter expands upon the research question by developing a set of sub-questions and a context for understanding the fairground and its heritage equivalent, sets out my own researcher background, and signals the shape and structure of the thesis. As the chiasmic phrasing of the thesis title indicates, this is a two-way dynamic; firstly, the attempt to move the fairground into the heritage environment, and secondly, the impact of the inclusion of fairgrounds within heritage. This can be somewhat clunkily stated as the heritage-isation of the fairground and the fairground-isation of heritage. Both vector flows are tightly related and open into current discourses such as intangible heritage, new museology, nostalgia theory and cultural object biographies. The serious studies of the fairground (as possible heritage) and heritage (as possible fairground) are overlooked in terms of physical sites and social practices, and a key driver for the thesis is the redressing of this imbalance and the seeking out of new knowledge. The thesis identifies the singular site of the fairground as the starting point of the outward vector, and multiple sites as the incoming vector of heritage (set collections open to the public, steam rallies, travelling vintage fairgrounds, living museums with fairground attractions, a rebuilt seaside amusement park). In addition, the contemporary fairground remains a container for its own heritage, and this makes the extraction of heritage into a new space both complex and fraught with tension. My focus is on the British fairground and heritage movement, whilst acknowledging that parallel structures exist in other countries.¹

Identifying the terrain of this thesis as potentially manifold and diverse, my own research background, interests and working history are stated at this early point. As a fairground enthusiast and avid photographer, I have been documenting the British fairground with significant intensity and methodological rigour since the early 1980s, combining my initial love of the fairground as a ‘punter’ who enjoys the thrill of the riding technologies and the frisson of the fairground with my later passion for historical research, systematic documentation and expressive photography. For the past 35 years I have been an active member of the various organisations established to support fairground enthusiasm, and have written numerous fact-based, historical articles specifically for this milieu. My engagement with the fairground has been ‘in the moment’, looking to document the here and now within the ever-present

¹ Whilst travelling fairgrounds occur in many countries, they differ in their content, organisation, arrangement and engagement. Processes of modernization are also relative, creating a variety of heritage imperatives and initiatives outside of the UK. My research here is a thorough study of the British scene which can then be developed as both a model and an empirical source for other countries.

impending forces of renewal, modernisation and rebranding. My engagement with the activist heritage strand of fairgrounds was minimal during this time. Between 1999 and 2014 I worked as the Collections Manager for the National Fairground Archive (NFA), established in 1995 within the University of Sheffield, Western Bank Library.² This role allowed me to develop my fairground interests in a wider capacity, working closely with colleagues in both the academic and cultural heritage environments.

Fairground as heritage

Taking the broad research question set out above, and working on the outward vector of capturing the fairground as heritage, there is a clear engagement between the fairground and time - the past, present and future. Two sub-questions arise, firstly an empirical enquiry:

Q1 - In what ways is the fairground of the past represented in the fairground heritage environments of the present?

And secondly, a speculative enquiry with an aim to develop considerations and recommendations:

Q2 - How might the fairground heritage environment of the future capture the fairground of the present?

This pair of questions encompasses an interplay between the synchronic and diachronic that can be expressed diagrammatically with two triangles as follows:

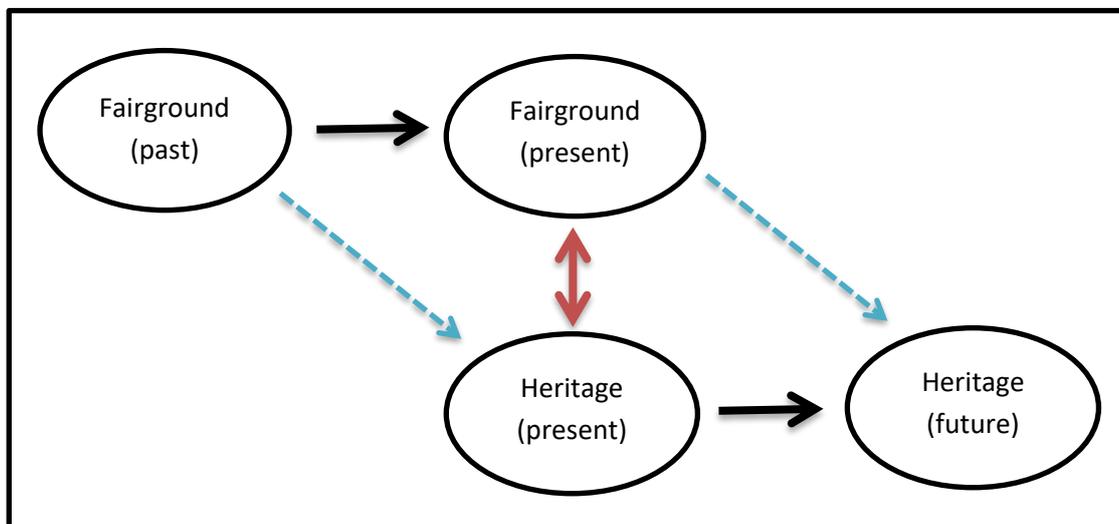


Diagram 1.1 - Research question posed in temporal form

In the temporal diagram above the black continuous arrows represent the diachronic movements of the fair (from the past to the present) and the heritage environment (from the present to the future), the blue dashed arrows represent a synchronic bridge over the diachronic where the past is attempted to be displayed and experienced in the present (in the heritage space), and the present may possibly be displayed and experienced in the future (in the coming heritage space). Finally, the red double-headed arrow (forming a side of both

² This was rebranded as National Fairground and Circus Archive in December 2016.

triangles) represents the instance of coexistence of the present and its past where the allochronic elements are seemingly made coeval.

This diagram depicts the temporal statement of the research sub-questions in a simplified manner, however the details of what are represented temporally (the fairground and the fairground heritage environment) are not simple contexts. They have a complexity that needs to be unpacked in full detail, a task which is addressed in chapter 2. The travelling fairground is a complex site of traditions, practices, material cultures, visual and aesthetic cultures, and experiences. It develops specific audiences that engage and experience the fair in different (but often intersecting) ways, and has a strong dynamic of both modernisation and reflective change to popular culture (in terms of aesthetic plundering, the music of the fairground, the connotative implications of the machines and attractions on offer). The relationship to change is also audience specific; hence defining the audiences, defining the affects and experiences, and understanding change are all intricately linked.



Figure 1.1 - Round stalls at Knutsford Fair, May 2015, photograph Ian Trowell

This expanding outside of itself into other realms of experience such as popular culture and spatial psychologies creates a poly-temporal (Serres 1995) or poly-chronic (Latour 1993) assemblage clinging to bits of its own fading (but not disappearing) past. This presents a double problem, necessitating mindfulness of the structuralist warning of not applying the complex in the synchronic domain over the diachronic domain, and muddying the problem such that any synchronic slice of understanding the fairground will contain vestiges, mutations and cross-pollinations of its own history and historical interactions with other contexts (popular culture etc). Figure 1.1 shows two juxtaposed round stalls utilising a mix of modern and traditional styles of decoration combined with a mix of cultural-temporal referenced

prizes such as soft toys based on franchised cartoon characters. Here, the fairground transports us into different worlds and times; real places that are out of reach and fantasy places from our dreams fuelled by popular culture, times of the past, future and an alternative present, dystopias and utopias alike. As Klein (2004: 7) states: 'special effects do not make for the usual teleological history. Instead they act as a history of surprising connections, like effects themselves'. Defining a clear ontology of the fairground is thus a challenge, and invites caution, embodying what Frosh (2003: 14) describes as 'reality in flux, an ontology of becoming rather than of being'. This can make the nature of what we recall, how we recall and why we recall problematic for the researcher looking for a grounding in empiricism.

Heritage as fairground

Returning to the broad research question set out above, and working on the incoming vector of transforming the heritage experience with a fairground flavour, there arises a third sub-question:

Q3 – How is the understanding and experience of heritage changing with the inclusion of the fairground?

This sub-question is central to the long-standing debate around education and entertainment within the heritage sector, though my work here expands some of the limitations and narrowness of this debate in terms of sites of reference. This works by both looking at examples of indicative sites (the museum) but unearthing examples that have previously been excluded and overlooked, and introducing new sites such as the steam rally which have all but evaded critical discussion. In addition, the living museum is reassessed through the inclusion of the fairground, an aspect that has been ignored in the dense literature on the living museum phenomenon.

As I show throughout the thesis, these heritage sites have tended to fall outside of the critical purview of the heritage and museum disciplines. Candlin (2016) presents a detailed study of what she calls micromuseums (and an associated micromuseology) in which housed collections of niche and esoteric objects are encountered and described. Candlin wrestles with pejorative terminology such as 'museum-like' (10) attributed by fortress-like disciplines such that this designation 'delegitimizes informally run museums, the expertise therein, and the experiences they offer' (11). The heritage focus of my work follows a similar path to Candlin, and I introduce the term grey-museum to include collections of objects on display to the public.³ My study of these sites of fairground heritage expands to include details of activists and protagonists in the instigation of the collection or site-specific practice, the space and arrangement of the collection telescoping inwards from region, to local environment, to exterior of enclosure, to interior of enclosure, as well as the experiences of the visitors and the stories of the objects.⁴ The amateur heritage effort is usually motivated by a love of, or specific relationship to, the fairground, thus an aspect of the audience developed in the outward vector forms the basis of the incoming vector, linking the thesis to the work on 'serious leisure' proposed by Robert Stebbins. There is also an added complexity here that emerges in the

³ Candlin (2016: 11) settles for the inclusion criteria of 'volunteers, staff or owners need only declare their collection to be a museum and open their doors to strangers'. Some of the housed collections I study here do not use the word museum.

⁴ The telescopic ontology of place is loosely borrowed from Relph (1976: 8).

thesis; a connection to other environments defined by agriculture and its associated technologies and regions.

The quote by Klein on special effects that is used at the end of the section on fairgrounds is equally applicable here, where the heritage of illusion merges with heritage as illusion. There is a growing understanding of heritage via nostalgia as equally complex and illusionistic, summarised by Rojek (1995: 119) as an ‘embellishment or re-creation of the past by use of artifice for commercial purposes’. This undefined dialogue of the fairground experience permeates the heritage world, such that a 1980s development was described thus: ‘the new Wigan Pier’s cousin is not the museum but the fairground’.⁵ This statement was intended, and taken, as derogatory, and no attempt was made to unpack wider implications. In many ways, the statement and the invitation to deconstruct its underlying assumptions, embodies my third sub-question.

Aims of the thesis

The principal aim of the thesis, through addressing the research sub-questions above, is to contribute to knowledge through an overall exploratory method. The research enters significantly uncharted domains in both the fairground and the heritage fairground environments, and will both document those domains and use findings to inform and challenge existing debates and theories around heritage, museums and nostalgia. The work makes a contribution to understanding complex popular cultural objects and practices (tangible and intangible) in lieu of heritage activity, in turn contributing to the newly energised discourse of critical heritage theory.

Observations relating to the general and the specific support the necessity of working in a systematic fashion can be flagged.⁶ These arose during the initial process of planning this research: early 2014 saw the production of an introductory large scale piece of digitally rendered fairground art producing a visual output that can be considered within the ‘classical style’ - artwork that had been traditionally produced using brushwork and multiple coatings of varnish to achieve patterns, shapes, and lettering (and an associated ‘patina-to-come’) onto a smooth surface.⁷ This artwork produced a flurry of discussion and discontent among

⁵ ‘Romancing the Grime’, W. Januszczak, *The Guardian*, 2 September 1987, page 9.

⁶ Gadamer (1976: 117) insists that ‘we must understand the whole in terms of the detail and the detail in terms of the whole’.

⁷ The work was produced by the company Colour Banners. The first method of producing digital fairground art involved the creation of a high-resolution digital image which is then printed as a sectional jigsaw onto adhesive vinyl. The vinyl is then applied to the surface of the fairground object. This method, known as vinyl transfer, emerged around 2005 as an alternative to the then dominant method of airbrush painting which generally involved dynamic, singular expressions of art lifted ostensibly from popular culture. It was generally accepted within those communities who felt a vested interest in the connoisseurial stewardship of art on the fairground that the digital sourcing and construction of this artwork for vinyl transfer was a natural progression for airbrush art, mainly because airbrush art was seen as significantly different from brush-painted fairground art. Acceptance of the new digital method amongst the few people documenting the evolution of airbrush art, and indeed the airbrush artists themselves, was obviously more muted. In addition, digitally produced images often involved direct copying from pre-existing digital images in a cut-and-paste type mentality (Bourriaud (2005) labels this as ‘post-productionism’) leading to potential issues of intellectual property infringement.



Figure 1.2 - John Silcock's Waltzer with brush-painted front, Daisy Nook, 1985, photograph Ian Trowell



Figure 1.3 - Digitally prepared and produced artwork on the same ride, 2014 / copyright Shaun Martin

fairground enthusiasts and historians and indicates how a single, specific practice (fairground art) can emerge from and represent the general of the fairground (figures 1.2 and 1.3).⁸

⁸ See <http://www.fun-fairs.co.uk/topic/67865-john-silcocks-waltzer-front/?hl=silcock> (accessed 28 May 2017) for the discussion. Note that this discussion was amongst a specific community that can be identified as the enthusiast community, the demographics and relationships of which will be developed in this thesis. It was not known at the time what other communities such as the general fair-going public thought of this 'heretical' artwork.

In conjunction with, and comparison to, the arrival of this rogue artwork, preliminary discussions leading up to the proposal of this PhD project with practitioners in the fairground museum sector evolved around the difficulties of recreating the full fairground experience in the light of a museum often only able to exhibit static artefacts and aspects from the fairground of the past. This example shows the converse of the above whereby the particular - for example, a piece of art - cannot be guaranteed to represent the general.

Structure of the thesis

The thesis consists of ten chapters. Chapter 2 details research methodologies, methods and definitions used in the thesis, incorporating literature reviews of material relating to the fairground and the heritage case studies, as well as a corpus of heritage theory that is engaged and challenged throughout the thesis. In this chapter I draw out a clear methodology of an assemblage approach that is developed and employed in both understanding the travelling fairground as potential heritage and approaching the fairground heritage environments. I also take a number of steps back in chapter 2, initially to unpack the variant terms that are used to describe the fairground, using this as a springboard to consider the fullest extent of the fairground. This initial stepping back then allows me to address aspects of the fairground that may be taken for granted or glossed over as unknowable or mystical – specific communities who provide or engage the fairground, rules and regulations, temporal and spatial boundaries of the fairground. Following chapter 2 there is an intermezzo: a sequence of images (single photographs and arrays) with extended captions and interpretive drifts. This section of the thesis will re-set to a ‘degree-zero’ of the fairground and then guide the reader/viewer through the assemblage of objects, audiences and (where possible) affects to develop a knowledge of the fairground. Drawing on this work, chapter 3 sets out a further understanding of the fairground in terms of flow and change, using a series of survey quotes and looking at how different audiences both identify and interpret change. It is the modernising fairground that leaves things behind, and the ageing audience that (maybe) has to leave the fairground behind, that links to the heritage fairground. Chapters 4 to 9 are detailed heritage case studies that examine key operations (set collections, arranged activities) where heritage fairgrounds are a key part. The audiences, objects and dynamics developed in the intermezzo and chapter 3 are visible throughout the case studies and allow the thesis to focus on the complex process of creating heritage from the fairground. The case studies proceed as follows: a preliminary ‘furrow’ linking agriculture and the fairground, a substantial chapter devoted to four museums, the steam rally, the vintage travelling fair, and a re-imagined seaside amusement park. The concluding chapter takes focussed and indicative examples from my heritage case studies to set against current heritage, museology and nostalgia theories, setting out a progression of difficult fun. The chapter concludes with suggestions as to how the work can be employed or developed in further directions.

Chapter 2 – Methodologies and Definitions

This chapter sets out a methodological and conceptual overview of the approaches taken in the thesis. Looking at both the fairground and the heritage spaces aspiring to represent or contain the fairground of the past, it develops a clear definition of the focus of the study and sets out (with reflection) the practical methods used for gathering data. The definition takes account of historical terminology, demographic and sociological constructions, structural, temporal and spatial considerations of the fairground, taxonomy and ontology of proposed content, inclusivity and scope. The fairground in particular has developed within its own dynamic that is often shaded from a critical or analytical understanding, the community of showpeople who organise the fairground can appear as secretive and mysterious, the economy of objects (from specialist caravans, to large machines, to small prizes) is not part of a marketplace that sits within the everyday, and the event or space of the fairground itself (premised on an intoxicating overexposure of illusion) can seem confusing and challenging to the researcher who is reluctant to be drawn into the surface. With this in mind, the setting out of a definition of the fairground pauses and steps back at several points to question what might be assumed, overlooked or taken as either ‘magically occurring’ or ‘none of our business’ in regard to terminology, demographics, and flows and rhythms of objects. The dangers of assuming a simplified definition and understanding of the fairground are apparent in respect of the thesis, such that the dynamic between the fairground and its heritage equivalent cannot be effectively investigated and challenged without first developing a fullest understanding of what the fairground is and what it means to different groupings. Thus, the stepping back is taken at an early point in this chapter, with an aim to map the fullest complexity of the potential phenomenological extent of the fairground. With this stepping back performed, I then move forward and propose three key critical and analytical frameworks for understanding the fairground: an object ontology, a spectrum of affect, and a consideration of cultural hybridisation.

Methodologies

My approach to the development and undertaking of this thesis is based upon both an understanding of the situated object of study and an understanding of how this object may be encountered and engaged by various groupings. As indicated in chapter 1, the fairground of today sits alongside a heritage incarnation of the fairground of the past, and to some extent carries its own heritage. Thus, the object of study is twofold; both the travelling fairground and the heritage fairground. The thesis then draws upon and unites these understandings to produce a body of observations and ideas that in turn initiates a critical dialogue with, and contribution to, heritage theory. A degree of heritage theory is itself drawn from similar empirical work investigating different objects, their audiences, and their heritage equivalents, bridging conceptions of the past and co-existences of past and present. The fairground is a complex assemblage of things and affects, situated within the familiar terrain but specializing in the short, sharp shock of defamiliarisation. The heritage equivalent is situated in other environments that necessitate a careful consideration. Collections and events/gatherings are predominantly focussed in the rural regions, weaving significant narratives with agricultural histories. The fairground heritage presentation is also an assemblage, partly a remix of the

fairground itself, partly something else drawing on crude didacticism, obsessive collecting, and expressions of industrial might and power. Thus, the heritage encounter is itself often a sequential process; the passing into an environment or region (the rural) followed by the encounter with the heritage fairground housed within the region.

My methodology and work is informed by writers who both study in detail a complex phenomenon within the everyday and document a journey into the rural regions. Observational methodology draws upon Marc Augé (2002) and his techniques used to develop an ethnography of the Paris metro through proximate and endotic methods - indicating both a social-spatial closeness and a desire to scratch away at what is easily dismissed as the everyday.¹ This notion of the endotic, borrowed from the oeuvre of Georges Perec, informs much of the current movement towards the study of the everyday (Gardiner 2000; Highmore 2002; 2011; Moran 2005) in which inherent observer assumptions about the worth of what might possibly be observed are pushed to one side.²

The part of my work that describes the predominantly rural geography of the spaces of fairground heritage is informed by both a writing style and observational eye of diverse writers such as the artist and writer Robert Smithson, the filmmaker and writer Patrick Keiller, and the cultural geographer David Matless. Smithson worked and wrote with a sense of adventure and a steady documentary eye and hand. He sought out overlooked places and spaces, often made irregular by their sheer ordinariness such that they fall into a blind spot. Channelling Smithson, I undertake my case studies, in terms of the enquiry, the visit and the writing up, in the spirit of cultural exploration and insightful bathos (foreshadowing the praxis of institutional critique) he applied to his work. The attention to detail and the lateral thinking towards site, space, signage, presentation and engagement is not to be seen as monomaniacal but instead as thorough and exploratory, performing a fitting documentation of these spaces.³ Both Keiller and Matless draw on their own literary sources such as the writer W.G. Sebald, weaving their own encounters with that of Sebald to produce a rich and evocative narrative that has a cutting edge criticality. I develop this approach in chapter 4, considered as a furrow, such that it has resonance throughout the following chapters.

Whilst not stressing the rural regional, Fiona Candlin's work on micromuseums, already flagged in chapter 1, provides another strong model for detailing the heritage encounter as both approach to the building and within, drawing on readings from artistic discourse to situate vernacular displays in a different light of interpretation.

¹ Sheringham (2006: 311) describes Augé's approach to his work on the Metro as 'to see the metro as a total social fact, not to establish an overall "culture" of the metro, and its local variations, but to hone in on the interactions of users and systems'.

² However, there is now a tension between the excitement of the liminal and the radical, and the allure of the everyday, with instances where the two are seemingly shoehorned together under the rubric of Perec's emergence of the extra-ordinary in the infra-ordinary. Looking at the everyday with super-focussed vision does not automatically bring about the liminal by shifting the everyday outside of itself (and its everyday-ness). The change is subtler such that the everyday finds a different exit from its limitations and strictures, in the way that Herman Melville's character Bartleby the Scrivener is celebrated by Deleuze (1998) as a kind of radical and hardcore advocate of passive resistance.

³ Reynolds (2003) and Graziani (2004) both provide substantial studies that support Smithson's methods and their repurposing here.

The fairground object, which I singularise at staggered levels within a nested hierarchy on the fairground and then seek out in the remixed and recontextualised space of the heritage environment, is understood through the work of material culture theorists such as Daniel Miller and Michael Thompson's 'rubbish theory', though I also add in the work of art theorist Boris Groys and his proposal of a value boundary. Miller's curating of the 'Object Lessons' series of books, where an author writes about the material encounter of a single object, has proved an influential source.

The main body of the thesis is taken up with empirical case studies of heritage spaces, examining how these spaces have formed, how they have been assembled, how they are encountered, and how they are engaged. Within these spaces I employ a multi-method ethnographic approach that asks the question 'what is going on right now?' and develops an answer based upon observations, expert knowledge to ground historical considerations, interviews and text analysis.⁴ I look at the current publicity materials for each associated heritage example – brochures, leaflets and the website – and I combine this with my own knowledge to create a historical context of the heritage practice and the specific fairground heritage objects in situ. This method has a strong parallel with the work of Luke Bennett and his study of bunkerologists (the exploration of built and disused underground spaces), particularly his 2013 paper which argues for discursive multivalence in both knowledge seeking and dissemination, extricated through a fine analysis of texts and visual presentation of bunkerologist activity.

Gathering testimonies

Whilst this chapter develops a proposed assemblage of the fairground and the heritage fairground, the empirical chapters that follow gather evidence to test, support and instrumentalize the models with an aim to understand heritage processes at work. As stated above, the object of study is twofold: the fairground and the heritage fairground. Furthermore, the fairground is understood as both a fairground of the past (that now resides in the heritage environment) and the fairground of the present (that carries its own past and seeds its future heritage). With this in mind, direct testimony is gathered on both the fairground and the heritage environments.

Evidence gathering was completed through a number of pinpointed surveys. In each instance the evidence gathering conformed to ethics approval that I had set out through the University of Sheffield Doctoral Academy. Responsibilities within the process consist of explaining the purpose of my research to any respondents (supported by an information sheet with research project details and contacts), attaining signed agreement that the respondent willingly undertakes the research, and offering assurance that responses will be anonymised and used only for the purpose of the project. These signed agreements were completed in duplicate, with a copy kept in my own research file. Ethics structure meant that I could not seek responses from unaccompanied under-16s, and a bit of common sense was applied later on in the evidence gathering where I avoided questioning families with younger children (such that a child may become detached from their parents during my interview).

⁴ Similar methods are used in analysis of subcultural scenes (see Hodkinson 2002: 4).

Gathering testimony of the fairground on the fairground needed careful consideration. Visiting the contemporary fairground meant that I had access to the people who chose to actively partake in the fairground, and the majority of this audience consisted of groups of under-16s, thus outside the scope of the ethics procedure. Whilst certain fairs retain an attraction for older members of the community, a more heterogeneous audience is found at specific times. My interest here is in gaining an understanding of how the fairground of the past was experienced and remembered, how change as a structural process (of fairground objects) is understood, and how the implications of the changing fairground are understood. This was achieved in two ways: firstly, I focused on official opening ceremonies that drew in a more diverse crowd of older people who still saw value in the fairground; and secondly, I arranged a series of workshops where I set up in a neutral space. The workshops were targeted at locations where a longstanding charter fair is in existence (Loughborough, King's Lynn and Ilkeston) and were timetabled to be held either during or close to the time of the fair. Each workshop was advertised in advance using local history connections, social media and poster displays, and the format involved me bringing a selection of heritage photographs of the specific fair as prompts for discussion. The Loughborough event was most popular, arranged at a bustling community centre for elderly people sited on the edge of the town centre, with the fair ongoing and pressed up against the windows of the building. This offered a constant stream of respondents who in turn provided some rich and positive memories of the fairground of their childhood. The event at Ilkeston was held two weeks after the fair, in the local museum, and this proved less successful. The King's Lynn event was part of their museum talks series, and so there was an onus on me to spend at least half of the session delivering a talk on the history of fairgrounds and showpeople, however this did, in turn, provoke a useful discussion. For both testimony gathering on the fairground and within the workshops a qualitative approach was adopted, with questions semi-structured to allow expansion and development, whilst giving me key facets to query and build up a more rigorous core of ideas and experiences. I found that some aspects of recalling the fairground seldom needed a structured prompt (smell, food, sound and the material culture of fairground prizes were always vividly discussed), whilst other aspects such as staking out the anticipative temporal frameworks worked with a prompt and opened up into fondly recalled and insightful dialogue. This body of evidence forms the basis of chapter 3, what I call a pulse of the fairground, though some key aspects that raise the issue of the potential phenomenological scope of the fairground are brought forward to chapter 2.

Testimony was also gathered at the sites of heritage, identifying respondents on the ground and seeking evidence and opinions. Again, a semi-structured interview approach was utilised to gather views of the heritage encounter, engagement and effectiveness, though the format was more rigid with important details such as distance travelled and reason for visiting firmly established. Interview work at the heritage sites was augmented, where possible, with analysis of feedback from TripAdvisor, and this is discussed further within the empirical chapters. There are methodological cautions here as to accuracy and the representational nature of this data, and I took this on board to weed out serial complainants etc. This corpus of data was queried using basic text mining for key terms, the same method being used each time.

Whilst testimony gathered about the fairground allows an insight into the fairground of the past, and testimony gathered at the heritage sites allows similar insights into how the heritage is experienced in the here-and-now, a personal connection (or otherwise) between the

fairground past and fairground heritage efforts was also sought. I asked respondents in the workshops about whether they pursued fairground heritage and received a mixed response. This evidence of a gap between recalling and appreciating the fairground of the past yet having no active involvement in validating or seeking out the heritage fairground might be an issue of marketing on behalf of the heritage providers, though it also signals a perceived difficulty of considering the fairground as feasible for heritage. The reverse process, asking respondents on the heritage sites about their fairgrounds of the past, understandably proved more fruitful. Good heritage sites that cater for lived memory stimulate lived experiences of the past within and amidst the focus of the heritage, and the fairground is no exception.

A key audience of self-identifying fairground enthusiasts (see below) was questioned as a more concentrated demographic with specific questions that linked their own (historically rooted) passions for the fairground with their heritage-seeking activities and assessments. Unpacking the motivations and implications of their opinions is a necessary and key part of the thesis, and this is developed in more detail with my case study of the Fairground Heritage Trust in chapter 5. Finally, I undertook interviews with heritage activists and protagonists at each heritage site, using a mix of general questions on fairground heritage and the assembling and curation of the collection, alongside some more tailored questions based upon my own studies of the history of each heritage collection.

Assemblage theory

As indicated in the opening of this chapter, with the setting out of tools and methods drawn from differing discourses, the thesis draws heavily on assemblage theory: firstly, as a way of structuring and understanding the fairground as a complex arrangement of interlocking and overarching objects creating a series of audience-specific affects and intersections with other cultural practices and constructions (such as popular music); secondly, as a way of understanding the accumulation, display and engagement of fairground heritage in the environments examined in the case studies. In the first instance I prioritise an assemblage in the literal sense, an interiority or core, as I look to develop a way of understanding how the fairground comes to be as a complex object approaching critical mass, by using methods and tools from discourses such as structuralism, material culture and affect theory. Principal methods are expanded in the section below (The travelling fairground – definition, literature and methods). In the second instance I prioritise an assemblage of possible readings of the heritage experience, an exteriority or orbit, trying to dissipate into engagement, meaning making and a heritage dialogue, by using methods from critical heritage discourse, art theory, nostalgia theory, spatial practice and situational aesthetics. This pairing of an interiority and exteriority assemblage parallels DeLanda (2006: 12), suggesting his own setting out of assemblage as a tool of critical analysis operates from a 'material role at one extreme of the axis, to a purely expressive role at the other extreme'.

Assemblage theory highlights complexity and heterogeneity, in turn avoiding reductionism and signalling any encroachment of restrictive genre theory. It proposes a multiplicity of autonomies that opens up a set of liaisons between components, such that any unity of understanding a complex whole emerges from a network of co-functioning sub-systems. Assemblage theory has recently found favour in subcultural music analysis (Born 2011; Krogh 2015), where the a priori affixing of a genre restricts the potential scope of understanding, however its introduction into archaeology and heritage by Rodney Harrison has a more direct

resonance with my work here. In his paper directed towards the archaeological subfield of the 'contemporary past' Harrison (2011) introduces assemblage theory into archaeology, stimulating a key debate amongst archaeologists of the recent past. Harrison's paper is bold in its proposal, but unfortunately gets side-tracked as he introduces a dichotomy between depth and surface. His intent is to emphasise the surface as an imprint of the near-contemporary which must be understood as an assemblage, but his delegitimisation of excavation touches a raw nerve as he undermines what might be thought of the *esprit de corps* of archaeology. In his response to the responses, Harrison draws on Georges Perec and his command to 'see more flatly', suggesting a stratigraphy can be (must be) opposed by an assemblage, effectively nesting this important methodological dichotomy in the wider depth/surface dichotomy.⁵

Harrison then brings assemblage theory into heritage with his important work *Heritage: Critical Approaches* (2013), taking on and successfully navigating the evolving discourse of heritage studies from its origins, to the ferocious debates of the 1980s and 1990s, through to its current labelling as 'critical'. Assemblage is part of a wider toolkit of approaches including actor network theory and symmetrical archaeology, stressing multiplicities of agency and collective interpretation over and above individualised insights distributed across collectives (32). As with my approach in this thesis, Harrison uses assemblage in two broad capacities; firstly, in what he considers a conventional definition by stating heritage as a 'series of objects, places, or practices' (33); secondly, in the spirit of DeLanda and the assemblage usurping the organism as a model for understanding society through a flattening of hierarchy, a focus on fluidity, and the dynamics of formation and reformation (34). These applications of assemblage are combined to give a definition of heritage as the 'entanglement of humans and objects, pasts and presents' (38).

With this introduction to assemblage theory and its heritage use by Harrison set out, I now use these methods to work towards a definition of the fairground and a framework for its understanding.

⁵ The nested depth/surface and stratigraphy/assemblage dichotomy is complex and opens up a potential debate that goes into the heart of archaeological practice and thinking. Though not explicated in the article, it could be suggested that Harrison's call for an assemblage model nullifies the correlation between sedimentation and knowledge, such that layers of evidence to understanding set down in an ordinal system (this, then this, then this) are no longer present, or at least observable or decipherable. Layers of evidence of an assemblage, as multiplicities engaging in liaisons towards a fluid co-functioning whole, hark back to the problems of understanding the diachronic of the synchronic – a complex set of relationships and expressions that constantly change through time. Such thinking within archaeology also reverberates with Foucault's own calling upon the discipline for his methodological analysis set out in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, whereby discontinuities between modes of knowledge are challenged as discrete breaks and considered instead within a complex overlapping structure of semantics, syntax and discourse. However, recent work has seen a return to excavation as a method within material and cultural studies that draw archaeology into their interdisciplinary orbit, with writers also evoking art projects as Harrison does in his original article (Harrison uses Sophie Fiennes' film of Anselm Kiefer and Simon Fujiwara's *Frozen City* installation). Thus, Jussi Parikka in his *Geology of Media* (2015) explores the accelerated stratigraphy of modern technological society and loops this back into art exhibitions building coal-fired computers, whilst Stephen Graham (2016: 291) proposes an 'archaeosphere' where geology and archaeology combine to open up a potential reading and record of rapidly shifting city structures within the consumer-driven environment. Note also the experimental/Perequian investigation of the fairground surface undertaken in the intermezzo section of this thesis.

The travelling fairground – definitions and models

In advance of writing my opening sentence for this section, starting in earnest with the definition of the principal object of study, I realised that an alternating terminology between fair and fairground had already ingrained itself into the work so far, and would continue with the quote I intended to use. Whilst it would be easy to ignore this and give a definition of the fair/fairground that applies to both terms, continuing to use both terms without probing what a difference might imply, my intention here is to situate this historical interchanging and test its implications. This is a first step back. Furthermore, this necessitates a second step back as I visit the nuances of difference as a way of opening up a dialogue for an expanded understanding of how both terms work together in different planes (time and space) to describe a contextual whole. This can be taken, at this early juncture of the thesis, as an opening utilisation of assemblage.

Fair or fairground – two ways of saying the same thing?

In the UK, the word fairground has taken precedence in the key organisations and institutions directing attention to the travelling tradition that is the focus of this thesis. Current associations for enthusiasts⁶ exist as the Fairground Association of Great Britain and the Fairground Society (both extending back to the British Fairground Society and the Friendship Circle of Showland Fans – which interestingly doesn't suffer a dilemma of fair or fairground). The principal archive collection was formed as the National Fairground Archive, and the body proposed to collect and preserve material in a museum capacity is the Fairground Heritage Trust. Key theoretical books exist such as *Fairground Art* and *Fairground Architecture*, alongside photographic books such as *Fairground Snaps* and *Historic Fairground Scenes*.

The word fair, which draws from and extends back to the general fair as a subject-specific insertion into the flow of time (trade fair, craft fair, careers fair), is less represented but still in evidence. Books such as *The English Fair* and *English Fairs* are both key titles, whilst place specific books (such as *Bridgwater Fair*, *Hull Fair* and *Tavistock Goose Fair*) use the word fair as opposed to fairground. The rules aren't hard and fast and variations occur.

As with my thesis, most (if not all) of the articles and books on the fair/fairground vacillate between the two terms without losing context or sense. Perhaps it is my situated position, but going through the whole work and settling on one or the other doesn't seem right. Sometimes fairground works, sometimes fair, and there isn't a logic that says (for example, 'at that point I am talking about one thing, and at that point something slightly different').

What this thesis, and many of the books previously listed, talks about is the bounded collection of attractions that gather and open for a set period of time. Hence, it is temporally bounded – the terms of the fair, and spatially bounded – the terms of the fairground. The objects that occupy the space within the time doesn't have a name, we call it either the fair or the fairground. This is where adjectival terms become loose, for example we say fairground ride or fair ride. The collective object that we are trying to grasp might be classed as the fair. For example, we talk about the fair coming to town as a physical something rather than a temporal

⁶ Enthusiasts as a fairground community are explained below. Enthusiasm as a wider field of study is also developed later in the chapter and in the conclusion.

disjunction, and the posters that accompany the fair declare it as a fair. Once it is here, in our town or village, we might say 'we are going to the fair' or 'we are going to the fairground' – either would make sense. Maybe this is a nuance on whether we are thinking spatially (we are going to physically go to another space) or whether we are thinking in terms of social practices (we are going to partake in riding, watching, having fun, etc).

Bryant (2014: 141), drawing on Heidegger's work, sees space and time as necessarily bound together when setting out his onto-cartography; the function in the space and the space for function are entangled. In order to set out a brief historical definition and statement of the parameters of the focus of study (the fairground), Bryant's bounding together is necessary.

The travelling fairground – historical context and definition

The deeper historical origins of the travelling fairground reach back to early festivals for trading, hiring, and seasonal agricultural celebrations, with the inclusion of games and spectacles of exhibition intermingling with the more serious aspects of trade and commerce. A host of charters were created granting continuity and regularity of these fairs, establishing a set calendar of events. With the changing infrastructure of trade, transport and industrialisation, the function of the fair shifted away from trade and commerce, opening up the potential of a vacuum of meaning. However, this was avoided, and the festivity attached to the fair, previously buttressed by the inclusion of games and exhibition provided by travelling showpeople and musicians, overwhelmed its rationale and became a primary purpose. The trading and hiring element dwindled, on occasion prolonged by a tokenistic gesture of historical rooting and remembrance, and the fair became solely about the entertainment provided by travelling showpeople.⁷ The industrial revolution that effectively wiped out the fair's necessity as a collectivising symbol and facilitator of trading also reverberated in the provision of fairground entertainment, with the development of large fairground machines flourishing in the agricultural engineering milieu. This key moment of change and the intrinsic link with agriculture is considered throughout the thesis at various heritage points where the industrialising moment is rekindled and the agricultural crossover is still current.⁸ However, I do not wish to restate or dwell upon this early history of the fairground prior to the fairground taking the shape as we now know it, with resources such as Toulmin (2003), Starsmore (1975) and Cameron (1998) providing good historical overviews of this period.

Established through the early charters granted for trading, hiring and seasonal celebrating, and eventually given over to provision of pure entertainment provided by a dedicated travelling community and set out on a temporarily repurposed space, the scope and understanding of the British fairground was established through the 20th century. The season traditionally runs from February (Valentine's Day marking the start of King's Lynn Mart Fair) through to November (the season ending with the charter fair at Loughborough). In recent years the start and end points of this period have been extended further, with newly founded Valentine's fairs usurping the status of King's Lynn as the official start, and extended bonfire fairs pushing

⁷ For example, the continued trading of geese at Tavistock Goose Fair is enabled by a small number of local poultry stalls offset from the fairground rides, whilst the historical attachment to trading geese at Nottingham Goose Fair is simply the siting of a large, plastic, illuminated goose on a road island.

⁸ Chapter 4 focusses on King's Lynn, a town that provided the key impetus in the industrialising fairground, whilst the first case study in chapter 5 (Thursford Collection) hinges around a memory of King's Lynn and the time of the arrival of powerful machines and engines.

towards the end of November, alongside Long Eaton Chestnut Fair which falls the week after Loughborough. With the current fashion for Christmas lights switch-on events and Christmas and New Year fairs, the season is now no longer a season as such, more so a continuous occurrence.

Reports claim (Toulmin 2003: 61) that there are approximately 150 travelling fairs taking place each week throughout this season, consisting of large fairs occupying streets and market places in towns and cities, fairs on urban grasslands, commons and large out of town expanses such as business parks and retail centres, and smaller fairs taking a weekend occupation of idyllic village greens (figures 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3). The contemporary fairground itself will consist of larger rides (adult rides), smaller rides (juvenile rides), side- and round-stalls offering a variety of games, supplemented by food stalls (sweet and savoury) and a smattering of hawkers selling balloons and associated 'swag' (figures 2.4. and 2.5). The temporal pattern of the fairground (outside of its pre-existence in terms of planning and anticipation, and its post-existence in terms of physical traces and vibrant memory) is such that it arrives and disappears as if by magic (normally overnight), and spends a few days providing thrills and entertainment.

Whilst this introductory explanation sets out a scope for the history, prevalence, frequency and most apparent specific content of the fair, we can see that the spatial and temporal aspects quickly start to attain their own characteristics, suggesting a more complex reading that hints at a more intricate potential phenomenological extent of the fairground. Thus, before continuing with developing a more detailed breakdown of the objective and affective content of the fairground, it is required to step back again to reaffirm and reinstate the disarticulation between fairground and fair – read as space and time – and allow a better understanding of a complex whole. Such a move is necessary for the reason that neither the space nor time of the fairground, taken individually, escapes complexity.

Space and time of the fairground and fair – becoming uncertain

In spatial terms, the fairground is the bordered region that encloses a set of objects that instigate and afford a set of affects. It is generally distinct and marked out with barriers declaring curtailed regular access to vehicles or notices that 'regular' uses of the bordered space are likely to be suspended (previously functional ways of moving around will not be possible, some services will be closed) or made difficult/different. The fairground space exists for the duration of the fair, a temporal consideration that initially hinges upon a simple declaration of two points in time - the start and the finish (as declared on the aforementioned poster). If the fairground occupies a space that normally functions as something else that needs to be spatially curtailed (thoroughfares and infrastructure for shopping, commuting, working) then the temporal existence of the fairground space slightly extends the end and start points of the declared fair. The measurement is usually in days, however it will become granular and be expressed in hours if it wishes to register disruption as well as its time of operation.⁹ It is also worth noting that fairground spaces such as a dedicated park that entail

⁹ A good example here is Kimbolton Statutes Fair (Stattis) in Cambridgeshire. This is a one-day fair that builds-up and pulls-down within an approximate 24-hour period. Loads are allowed onto the High Street at 18-00 the day before in a strategic fashion that keeps the road open. At 05-00 on the day of the fair the road is shut and a complete pull-on and build-up is completed before opening at 15-30. The current fair



Figure 2.1 - The fair outside the town, Cambridge, June 1984, photograph Paul Angel / copyright NFA



Figure 2.2 - The fair on concentrated space inside the town, King's Lynn, February 2013, photograph Ian Trowell

runs until 22-00 (it used to be up until 01-00 the next day) and the fair has to be pulled-down and removed for the road to re-open at 06-00 the next day.



Figure 2.3 - The distributed fair expanding on all spaces, Ilkeston, October 2006, photograph Ian Trowell



Figure 2.4 - A typical fairground thrill ride, Cambridge, June 2015, photograph Ian Trowell



Figure 2.5 - A typical fairground food stall, Newcastle, June 2015, photograph Ian Trowell

minimal spatial and temporal disruption of normal functionality are sometimes referred to as the fairground even when the fair period is not in operation. The physical ground on which the attractions operate during the period of the fair garner meaning and memory to monopolise the space in local folklore. Thus, the fairground is a spatial bounding, the fair is a temporal bounding. But both of these boundings are amorphous and unstable.

The temporal bounding, the question of 'when is the fair?', elicits broadly different answers from different communities.¹⁰ Each community will see the fair starting and ending at different times, and enact practices of engagement (preoccupying thoughts, affect and excitement, pilgrimage, visual documentation) around their own understanding of this. For example, the process of the fair arriving provides a visual cue for the community of enthusiasts who may have an interest in documenting and visually recording transportation. For the fairgoer within the proximate public this aspect of the fair may not be of concern, and the transportation will usually be parked out of sight whilst the fairgoer engages with the fair.

The following quotes indicate how the fair is considered both before it arrives and after it has departed:

It was something you looked forward to over the years and when you saw the town workmen painting the white lines of the road to mark off the limits of equipment you knew that the market was imminent. (Arnot Muir talking of Kirkcaldy Links Market in Toulmin (2003: 31))

¹⁰ The different communities of the fair are expanded upon below. Also, see intermezzo for a tabular proposal and visual working through of the community-specific when of the fair..

Even after they'd gone you'd go back and see the marks in the grass where the roundabouts had once stood. There is something fascinating about it all, to think that once the fair had left you it's away doing the same thing in somebody else's town. It's not an easy thing to explain. (Alan Ingram in Toulmin (2003: 36))

Taking the quotes together and applying a phenomenological reading, we can argue that the same fair may in fact be in three places at any time; to have departed from place A (the home of Ingram) but still be at the forefront of his mind prompted by the visual traces, to be open in place B (the home town of neither Ingram nor Muir), and to be heading next to town C (the home of Muir) and be made acutely aware to Muir who has seen the council workmen applying paint onto the road surfaces.

Responses in my own survey work which form the bedrock of chapter 3 revealed similar aspects. The following three responses from visitors to a drop-in centre for elderly people at Loughborough (during the period of the fair in town) shows a remarkable parity of specifics and remembering (the responses were all separate):

At junior school we were given three penny tickets by the council, then the school brought us down for the opening. We would follow the mayor around as this might mean free rides (Female, 70s)

Three tickets from school, then we waited for the fair to come (Female, 60s)

Three tickets from school in the 1950s, then I worked for 30 years in Woolworths, so I always saw it arrive (Female, 70s)

For the three respondents above, Loughborough Fair started in earnest when they were given tokens for free rides whilst at school, at a time before the fair had arrived. The impression of anticipation made upon the final respondent was such that she continued this through to her after-school career working in Woolworths, marking the start of the fair with the arrival of the loads.

Anticipation prompted by knowledge (a priori or externally stimulated by a poster, painted road marking or distribution of tokens) and prolonged appreciation prompted by physical trace or communal discussion expands the duration of the fair, though such expanded aspects are incredibly challenging to capture as heritage.

The spatial boundary of the fairground is equally complex and fluid. I proposed a line that forms the boundary of the fairground and this gives us what initially appears to be a clear inside and outside. There are a number of ways in which this boundary is problematised: firstly, the boundary itself as a physical thing; secondly, the outside becoming inside; and finally, the inside becoming outside. These are now detailed.

In terms of the boundary itself, Walker (2013) questions the delineating basis of the assumption that we can apply an inside and outside to the fairground through a clear and fixed boundary, an ontological 'not fairground' and fairground. Furthermore, in studying the visible boundary at various fairgrounds (road closures, signs informing and preventing access, a buffer zone of loading and unloading peripheral things like prizes, foodstuff, spare lighting) he

discovers that the boundary itself (as a physical thing) moves slightly such as a breathing organism or diaphragm to accommodate requirements at certain times.¹¹

The outside of the fairground becomes an inside on various sensorial/phenomenological levels. For example, the soundscape of the fairground extends well beyond the physical border, as Bull (2000: 116) suggests, 'sound is no respecter of private space as it is multiple and amorphous. The audible is intangible, unlike vision which more often than not focusses upon objects'. Similarly, the smellscape and gustatory effect of the fairground overlaps this border slightly, whilst the visual aspect of the fairground extends the border in various ways such as structures within the fairground extending above the regular skyline or the intense lighting of the fairground forming a beacon in the after-dark period. The sensorial extending over the material demarcating border of the fairground effectively creates a further series of fluid borders located at a wider circumference. In this regard, the smell and sound of the fairground are integral to the fairground experience, and so this fairground experience is instigated in advance of the material fairground being reached. A fairground enthusiast summed this up when recalling his fairground memories:

Shaw's Ramba Zamba surrounded by buildings on all 4 sides, echoed around, you could hear it before you got on the fair. At my Grandma's in Knutsford you could hear the general noise and announcements over a mile away (Male, 40s)

This region of both being outside of the material fairground and inside the sensorial fairground resides as a kind of fluid halo around a possible border of the material fairground. At a subjective level, the approach to the fairground (on foot, preferably after-dark) becomes a part of the fairground itself, as excitement is raised and a lessening disparity of fair-goers becomes a focused crowd such that social aspects (performance, proximal codes, social codes) engender the 'fairground mode' well in advance of arriving there.¹² This is connected to the experience of thrill that permeates the fairground, a complex mix of being thrilled whilst partaking in the aspects of the fair and of being thrilled in anticipation with regard to watching aspects of the fair, deciding whether you wish to engage with aspects of the fair, and then queuing for these aspects of the fair. Thus, the procedure of going to the fair involves an anticipation of thrill - or equally an anticipation of an anticipation of thrill - and this anticipation is experienced as thrill. The emergent visibility of the fair (within the fairground) is effectively the start of the fairground.

Spatially bounded aspects of the fairground thus expand (the outside becoming part of the inside) as shown below:

Physical >> smell and taste >> sound >> sight >> sense/awareness/anticipation

Finally, the spatial boundary of the fairground is challenged through the inside of the fairground becoming an outside with its own smaller inside spaces. This can be considered as a monadological concept, such that smaller units within the fairground form enclosed zones

¹¹ 'Mike Newman, fairs officer at Oxford, told me when they apply for official road closures, they always apply for a bigger area than they think they'll need, just in case... So there's a "legal" boundary that's almost certainly bigger than the actualised road closure barriers would suggest, even as these move in and out'. Email correspondence with Stephen Walker, 11 July 2017.

¹² A similar effect occurs at football matches, with many fans suggesting that the 'matchday experience' starts with the walk to the football ground.

acting as a fairground-within-the-fairground. This might be a constellation of high-octane thrill rides or the individual fairground rides that offer an enclosed and semi-private space. As Walker (2013: 57) surmises from his observation of the Waltzer at Loughborough Fair:

As the evening wears on the ride closes in on itself, closes itself off from its surroundings while attracting a predominantly under-18 audience with the promise (and delivery) of pseudo-transgressive hardcore techno music and a rave environment that they would not otherwise (well, legally, or with parental consent) be able to access.

If the uncertainty and breaching of the boundary gives the fairground a topological curiosity, an additional topographical confusion occurs in fairgrounds that occupy a dedicated enclosed space and form a stronghold.¹³ The enclosed fairground space comes into its own through other measures enacted principally through fairground designs and 'interior' layout. The fairground layout appears as a labyrinth imprinted on a Möbius strip, provoking a dizzying disorientation achieved through a mixture of visual arts and curved surfaces, light, sound and smells. The topographical experiencing of a confusing interior translates as a topological affect, with the boundary of the fairground being distorted such that it becomes elusive and unruly: it is seemingly possible to travel around an enclosed space in an endless manner. Moran (2005: 157) gives an excellent account of being lost in the bounded space of the (then new) Chafford Hundred housing estate, built using twisting, spiralling avenues and roundabouts giving access to rows of houses that are all the same, whilst Eco (2009: 241) extends this to the layout of the city in certain examples where he considers a topology based on rhizomatic structures with no centre and repeating parts such that the city is 'practically the outskirts of itself'. Harvey (1990: 83) stresses that a mainstay of postmodernist space can be understood through 'labyrinthine qualities of urban environments ... the creation of an interior sense of inescapable complexity and interior maze'. Such spaces have also been explored and interpreted by Deleuze (1989: 203) as hodological and by Klein (2004: 104) as a 'narrative conflict in a space condensed like a dream'. Disorientation in this sense is a more literal understanding of the term, in that the subject no longer has a grip on orientation - which way is which.

Demographic consideration 1 - showpeople

The stepping back to reconsider spatial and temporal complexity is tied in with a further necessity to draw out a clearer demographic understanding of the fairground. In the testimony I called upon to show how boundaries are fluid, it is evident that such fluidity is experienced differently by specific demographic groupings. Key groupings introduced in the previous section include showpeople and fairground enthusiasts, and both of these impact significantly on how the fairground heritage process unfolds.

There is a complex demographic structure within the fairground that makes the fairground happen, so to speak. This demographic structure (unsurprisingly) further disrupts the temporal and spatial fixity that is already unravelling in the previous section. There are key groups responsible for providing the fair in terms of its continuing legislation, its facilitation with regard to making time and space within the flow of the normal urban functioning, and the

¹³ My use of topology and topography refers to the shape of bounding space and the terrain or characteristics of enclosed space. Hardt and Negri (2005: 159) also discern between these two terms (which are often used interchangeably to signify shape of space) in the service of their development of the theory of empire and multitude.

actual provision of the content. This responsibility for the coming-to-be of the fair extends from a predominantly invisible population of legislative bodies and council dignitaries, through to showpeople and their working staff. These groups often converge well outside the time and space of a fair, with annual luncheons sited on motorway-accessible hotels during which showpeople assert their 'ordinariness' and importance (and the importance of fairs) to local police force chiefs and council luminaries. On the fairground itself, as Walker (2015b) meticulously observes and unravels, a selection of these communities reconvene to have a brief but heightened visibility to the general public during an official opening ceremony, and are glimpsed by those members of the public who chose to attend such a ceremony.¹⁴ Whilst such ceremonies are not always performed at a fair, and the organisational hierarchies of the fairground remain invisible and unconsidered, showpeople and their staff are crucial to the fair in terms of its coming-to-be and engagement by the public.

Showpeople are central to this thesis and my wider research - they are considered as a photographic subject and object in the intermezzo and feature throughout the heritage case studies with particular regard to tensions in ownership of objects and identity. In introducing the scope of this chapter I suggested that showpeople can appear secretive and mysterious, understood through assumed and handed-down knowledge that often verges on prejudice. Similarly, for many people visiting the fair the community of showpeople and their staff of gaff-lads will merge into one, united by a feint aura of romantic mystique and vagabondage. This section of the thesis outlines their part in the creation and continuation of the fair and their common conception as a community by people outside of that community. First, I need to make a note around gendered terminology. The term showman is most commonly used in literature, and is part of the name of the organisation that represents showpeople. The importance of women showpeople has been actively researched by Vanessa Toulmin, and she justifiably tries to reclaim the term showwomen.¹⁵ I endeavour to use the neutral terms showperson and showpeople even if the former term feels a little clunky.

As outlined above in the definition and ensuing discussion, fairs occur at a certain time, in a certain space (or set of spaces) within a certain place, and are filled with certain objects owned by certain people – all of this is linked to showpeople and functions with an interlocking set of rules and regulations. The coming-to-be of the fair is set out in rules that relate to the historical rights of the fair such that it has a definite sense of identity and eventfulness, and at the same time has an assurance to project into the future free from concerns about disruptive changes to the fair itself and the possible challenge from other potential fairs within a certain time and distance. This legislation is often made public with the proclamation of charters during the opening ceremony. Walker (2013) details the process of the coming-to-be of Loughborough Charter Fair at sub-levels below the simple charter, identifying a nexus of officials and processes resonating through the local council departments, emergency services, trading organisations, health and safety, local schools and charities. Planning is in process well before the fair and remains invisible to those outside its sphere of direct involvement, exposing itself at the last with selected official opening ceremonies.

¹⁴ See intermezzo for a further visual presentation and analysis of the opening ceremony.

¹⁵ See <https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/nfca/researchandarticles/nowomenlikeshowwomen> (accessed 20 June 2017).

A further set of less visible rules determines the precise content of the fair and how the balance of the fair is created; reflecting the provision of a variety of rides allowing thrills for all tastes and a minimisation of duplication. These rules are more complex than simply stated, but it is good practice (for both public and showpeople) to build a fair that offers something for everyone in a layout that reflects and responds to the traditional topography of the fair.

These rules of the fair lie within another set of rules, such that the rights to present a fair (and have the rules to abide to) can only apply to showpeople, who are an identified community that has a membership policy whose inclusion is defined by rules. This community of showpeople is grouped together as the Showmen's Guild of Great Britain (shortened to Guild), an organisation that has a dedicated history recording membership, committee structure, development of rules and development of function. Thus, the pivotal coming-to-be of the fair stems from the Guild in all aspects, such that the showpeople who provide the fair are Guild members (in that they satisfy the inclusion policy for being in the Guild) and the look and feel (or objects and affects) of the fair are rooted in the rules laid out by the Guild. Whilst certificates are granted in certain situations for 'hawkers' and food vendors drawn from private businesses, it can normally be assumed that every transaction point of purchase on the fairground is a showperson – rides, stalls, food and general fairground 'tat', 'swag' or 'bunce' for sale.

Thus, a showperson will be a Guild member by birth and will be expected to marry another Guild member creating a somewhat closed community. The showperson will have attractions (rides, stalls, juveniles, food-joints) and hope to have enough spaces in terms of either running the fair itself or having a position such that most (if not all) of their equipment is open throughout the season. The early history of the Guild is covered in two volumes (Murphy 1940, Murphy 195-?) with Guild activity documented in the *World's Fair* newspaper which provides reports from annual Central Committee meetings, sectional lunches and meetings, and important committee meetings regarding issues of safety and other business. However, the Guild remains a semi-clandestine organisation with its archive, housed at the NFA, only accessible with specific written permission to non-members.

Stepping back to the previous layer of rules determining the precise content of the fair, showpeople (in terms of a named family) have ground rights and 'positions' as well as certain lessee rights to run the fair. These are carried through in perpetuity, and a transfer down a generation needs to be ratified at Guild committee level. A transfer of rights is also possible if a showperson wishes to forsake a fair or a position. Alternatively sub-letting a position might be allowed in cases where a showperson is unable to fulfil an obligation through not having equipment (in cases where the dates of their fairs clash or a machine is out of action), though sub-letting for more than two years counts as a forsaking of rights. The general aim is to create a well-balanced set of attractions that is hopefully rewarded by a spending public. Counterintuitive moments, however, do occur, particularly when two competing showpeople look to negate each other's likelihood by presenting the same, or similar, ride type. This can work to the public's advantage at larger fairs, with a ride such as the Waltzer looking to gain a competitive edge by giving a longer ride, stepping up the presentation of music on the ride, or cutting the price to have a go.

This community of showpeople is intrinsically linked to the fairground - they make it happen and are there at all times. The connotations of the fair as 'mysterious, dangerous, a venue in

which emotions are unguarded, experiences intense, and a break from the routine of everyday life' (Toulmin 2003: 61) is often transposed in a synonymous move onto the group associated with presenting the fairground, contributing to a very deterministic reading of showpeople. The reality is somewhat different, as showpeople see the fair as 'their business arena, a few hours' opportunity to earn enough money to keep the business operating for the rest of the week. It pays the bills, supports the family, and is both their home and working environment' (Toulmin 2003: 62). The life of a showperson, however, encapsulates a certain distancing from society, in terms of actively placing oneself at a distance in a certain defined space (the fairground and the caravan) and taking on a set of habits and practices seen as markedly different in terms of both content and arrangement. A key difference to note is the dedifferentiation of modes of dwelling. Whereas it is widespread practice for most residents of the UK to switch between environments of home (with family), work (with colleagues) and the 'third place' (time with friends in the pub or at the football for example), for a showperson these environments and practices are not distinct. Furthermore, that the environment of the fair is at a physical distance means that the totality of social existence of showpeople can appear to reside at a kind of social distance. Consequently, showpeople are shown as mysterious and different, juxtaposed with seemingly similar outsider and mobile communities such as gypsies and new-age travellers, this alignment not helped by the recent trend (in the UK) for an intense sequence of reality TV programmes featuring the gypsy community.

In many cases, to the uninformed outsider of the fairground, the showpeople community merges with what is known as the gaff-lad community, even though there is a strict delineation between these two. A gaff-lad is a worker on the fairground, hired and paid accordingly, drawn quite often from a pool of young people on the margins of society.¹⁶ Gaff-lad work is physically hard and involves going out on the road, so in many cases the gaff-lad is someone who is not able to put down roots, and may indeed be shunning any roots previously established. Between building-up and pulling-down, necessarily heavy and dirty work, the gaff-lad will assist in operating the fairground equipment. It is here where they will excel with the gift of the gab, enjoying the chance to fraternise with and impress the punters with their skills of jumping on and off fast-moving rides with an apparent consummate ease.¹⁷ The attire of the gaff-lad will be a combination of dirty clothes marked by the labours of building up and pulling down (and a readiness to have to go into the bowels of a ride during opening time in instances of malfunction), with a sort of vernacular Sunday best consisting of subcultural markers. Tattoos and brash jewellery are also part of the package, as the gaff-lad is romanticised as living in a kind of interspace between work and play, embodying the liberatory possibilities of a nomadic existence in the city (Pinder 2005: 208).

Demographic consideration 2 – fairground enthusiasts

The second demographic cluster I consider is the specialist world of fairground enthusiasm. The enthusiast as discourse is a new area of research, linking back to Robert Stebbins work

¹⁶ I acknowledge here that gaff-lad is gendered terminology. There are examples of gaff-lasses though this term has not prevailed.

¹⁷ Origins of the term punter are split between the chiefly British informal use describing a person who places a bet or makes a risky transaction, a customer or client (especially the member of an audience), and the name of a prostitute's client. On the fairground the term punter has been adopted by showpeople to signify any member of the fairgoing public who may be liable to enact an economic transaction to partake in something that the fairground offers (a ride, a game, a show, a piece of food).

identifying 'serious leisure' and his efforts to triangulate leisure, consumption and work (2007; 2009).¹⁸ At this point I simply wish to sketch out the origins and characteristics of the fairground enthusiast, as a significant shaper and consumer of fairground heritage. However, I will return to enthusiasm as a discrete discourse in the conclusion and offer a potential dialogue between the work of the thesis and the emerging work on enthusiast cultures within industrial and architectural heritage developed by Geoghegan, Neate and Craggs.

Fairground enthusiasts are a specific group who, whilst relatively small in number, exert a significant influence on the fairground heritage movement. They are often activists and protagonists in heritage initiatives, and form a key audience to a heritage event or attraction. In the intermezzo section, as with showpeople, I consider the fairground enthusiast demographic through photography, looking at how they operate, what they see, and how their image of the fair is shared and circulated. Additionally, a separate introduction to the enthusiast scene is given as a precursor to the case study documenting the Fairground Heritage Trust in chapter 5. My intention here is to give an introduction and background to the enthusiast movement and how it has expanded and become complex in the current era. The historical aspects are drawn from work I prepared for the NFA website in 2010.

The period immediately following the Second World War saw substantial changes on the fairground scene in the UK. New technologies of transport and machinery melded together with the post-war birth of popular culture to alter the fabric and experience of the fairground. Rides changed from ornate carved Scenics to faster Speedway Arks, decoration moved to a modern painted style using geometric shapes and colourful motifs plundered from advertising, transport changed from traction engines to petrol and diesel lorries, and music provision changed from decorated organs to early-type record players. This key package of changes brought about an urgent sense of impending loss and thus energised a nascent gathering of fairground fans who had occupied relatively disparate terrains, involved principally in visiting and documenting fairgrounds, meeting at the larger fairs, debating via the letters column of *World's Fair* newspaper, and purchasing commercially reproduced photographs of fairground scenes.¹⁹ At the same time as creating a community of activist preservationists (see case studies throughout this thesis) there was also instigated an official society with a magazine – the Friendship Circle of Showland Fans (FCSF) commenced in 1941. It is important to recognise that the society was very much of the 'memory lane' mentality, with an understandable imperative to document the soon-to-be-extinct details of engines and organs in showland service. These lanes were often patrolled by self-appointed experts who liked to hold sway on all matters to the point that something became 'fact' if it was spoken with the right amount of authority by the right person.

The FCSF published a regular monthly bulletin and was joined by a rival society and publication – the British Fairground Society (BFS) – in the 1950s. Again, the accent was on looking back, and fairground enthusiasm was established as a wider hobby consumed through reading a journal, buying photographs and meeting at larger fairs. Hands-on work of purchasing and restoring organs, engines and rides was generally left to those with time, money, skills and

¹⁸ Stebbins has an aggressive publishing schedule and tends to recycle or cross-pollinate his ideas, which reverberate through his oeuvre. I have referenced two key works here amongst many, but there is considerable overlap in the two works referenced.

¹⁹ Personal photography was not easily affordable or available in the first half of the 20th century.

storage resources. Due to the somewhat entropic character of the hobby, essentially looking (further) back to a disappearing past that had been written about (by a dwindling authority) to the point of repetitive oblivion and bemoaning the modern fairground, the magazines of both societies began repeating earlier issues. Without a more adventurous and contemporaneous outlook amongst the key members, both the FCSF and BFS were doomed to extinction, suggesting that a kind of autobiographical saliency of the past comes in to play.

A new type of enthusiast grew slowly within the time of the FCSF, with a trio of members who had a commitment to documenting the contemporaneous and modern, developing their own means of sharing information and furthering knowledge. Jack Leeson (Rugby), Philip Bradley (London) and to a lesser extent Rowland Scott (Manchester) would document the contemporary fair with a photographic focus on working parts, technical structure and aesthetic detail, and then indulge in lengthy correspondence via written letter to share photographs, details learnt, and to request opinion. The survival of these letters has meant that epistolary research is possible to learn of both fairground history and enthusiast history.²⁰

The Fairground Society (FS) formed in 1962 as a response to this change, though the FCSF persisted through to 1967 and the *World's Fair* letters page from around this time sees some fierce debate across the societies. Strangely, the FS initially had no magazine to circulate to its members, relying on a column in *World's Fair* and regular get-togethers. As a further response to this, a new society – the Fairground Association of Great Britain (FAGB) – was formed in 1977. The FAGB had both a quality magazine and a contemporaneous outlook, recognising the rapid flux of the fairground scene and documenting the here-and-now of the fairground at the end of the 1970s. Both the FS and FAGB survive into the present time and publish a quarterly magazine, setting out a mix of the contemporary and historical. Membership of both societies is stable at around 1000, and activity extends to frequent model-shows coinciding with major fairs.

Defining enthusiasm is a tricky and subjective endeavour. My historical overview above is premised on a motive (type of interest) and a vessel to share views and congregate under (a society with a publication). It is possible that in the past, contemporaneous with the FCSF and BFS, there were other people enthusiastic about fairs in different ways that may not have been able to connect with like-minded people; thus, enthusiasm has diachronic and synchronic aspects that are often difficult to explicate.

The rise of fandom as an academic object of study coincides with the explosion of new practices of enhanced and dedicated engagement with evolving forms of popular culture (film, television, sports, music, fiction), and this now ensures that many aspects of enthusiasm and engagement are recognised and recorded. Enthusiasm, such as around the fairground, can be triangulated on the axes of aspect of engagement, associated practices, and means to share practices. It is the paradigm shift in the latter category – the means to share practices via the onset of the internet and social media platforms – that has accelerated BOTH the volume of enthusiasm and its associated visibility (and recordability). Fairground enthusiasm found new channels with the advent of the internet, initially through bulletin boards and message forums,

²⁰ Leeson and Scott collections both at the NFA, whilst Bradley collection at Surrey History Centre. Each collection (in terms of correspondence) has the letters from the other two, making copyright a back-to-front issue.

to encompass amateur websites, and finally niche-specific Facebook groups to reflect streamlined subjects of interest (a particular ride type, a particular amusement park) and segmented practices or modes of engagement (riding something, studying something).

Whilst the movement from the original societies (FCSF and BFS) to current societies (FAGB and FS) saw a move from a past-centred exclusivity to a contemporary inclusivity, there remained an underlying respect for the fairground object outside and beyond its intended use as a pleasure device to pay to ride upon. The fairground object is set out in a historical framework that runs both synchronically (a particular ride is compared to other similar rides in terms of small details of difference in construction and decoration) and diachronically (each ride has a history or provenance of owners, structural and decorative changes, key incidents, transportation, etc). It is this obsession with detail, or 'epistemophilia' (Jenkins 2006: 139), that forms the lifeblood of much of the output and discussion amongst the milieu of enthusiasts interested in the fairground object as something that has a power beyond a simple commodity to engage. In much the same way as Bennett (2013: 75) declares a 'restricted code' for those people of a music scene who have 'absorbed' qualities and have longevity within the scene allowing them to assume a position of superiority, a similar pecking order often operates amongst the fairground enthusiast milieu.

Members of this enthusiast community who embrace the fairground object as something beyond its commodity use can be classified with a greater degree of granularity in various considerations. Specialisms exist with the nature of the objects recorded (transport, rides, rides building up, artwork, the fairground itself as a whole), the level of activism or commitment (how far the enthusiast is willing to travel, to research, to wait at an event for the right opportunity) and the operational practices undertaken as part of the hobby (documenting the history of fairs with written research, creating visual records, promoting the fair and working as close as possible with the showpeople community).

The use of the word enthusiast is a name that the members bestow upon themselves, and this community is often a grouping that sits distinct from general society with a hint of alterity alongside practical necessity and shared passion, such that the community is not something generally conceptualised outside of that community. An alternative moniker to enthusiast would be trainspotter, a word derived from those who devote their passion and activities to a very singular subject in a specific way (viewing and documenting their viewing of trains).²¹ A trainspotter is seen to have a mode of existing, or rationale, that is consumptive of time and resources, can be simplified to a finite system of marking off sightings or achievements, and places the participant on the spatial (and thus social) verges of society (for example, special holding pens were built on the extreme ends of railway station platforms to allow trainspotters to partake in their hobby).²² The alterity associated with trainspotting can quickly shift into stigmatisation, opening up onto a sociological mine-field as the social distancing that is seen to

²¹ The word trainspotter, and an associated word 'anorak', has migrated to cover types of behaviour whereby a passion for intense detail, completism, and the documentation of completism defines the life of the subject. Trainspotters exist in the world of buses (bus-spotters), football grounds (ground-hoppers) and many other aspects of society where a finite list of accomplishments linked to tangible objects (engines, structures, etc) can be engaged.

²² A person with a passionate (and possibly consuming) interest in railways, but not in being driven to see and document everything, would class themselves as a 'railfan' (see Whittaker (1995) for some guidance here).

be associated with the trainspotter carries with it further connotations of 'not fitting in' and being prone to deviant behaviour. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to unpack and address these issues though it should be noted that this problem is currently common and becoming more common within the fairground enthusiast community, particularly in regard to visual practices. A sizeable proportion of fairground enthusiasts, especially those who might consider themselves as trainspotters in that they look to document rides and transport on a 'tick-list' basis, partake in their hobby at moments when the fair is closed and no public are around (allowing unimpeded views of the fairground object). Fairground enthusiasts attending the fairs with their cameras whilst the fair is open, looking to document their view of the fair, are often identified by the general public present at the fair as trainspotters, and there are common occurrences when they are challenged as being paedophiles looking to source surreptitious imagery. This is, understandably, a topic of great concern amongst enthusiasts, and various solutions around developing some kind of 'genuine fairground enthusiast identity card' have been mooted.

Finally, it is important to recognise that new enthusiasms manifested on Facebook groups and message forums are equally concerned with tracking down a certain ride or type of ride to simply experience it as pure thrill, shifting the object back towards its intended purpose as a commodity. There is a link here across to the change in what Larsen and Sandbye (2014) call the ecology of photography, with images created to mark and notify a presence of being AT the event NOW, rather than a memento OF the event THEN. Certain modern enthusiasts use social media to alert people of their own personal achievements in attending the most number of large fairs. There is no clear divide between the communities of riding enthusiasts and researching/recording enthusiasts, and subsequent assumptions about an interest in heritage cannot be made.

Fairground literature review

Having introduced both showpeople and enthusiasts as demographic groupings associated with the fairground, it comes as no surprise that a substantial body of fairground literature emerges from these two clusters. The earliest fairground writing consists of autohagiographic works by prominent (and self-bestowed) showmen and circus proprietors, and this was slowly usurped by a small body of work produced by, and for, the nascent fairground enthusiast movement. The work developed from within this milieu is increasingly prolific, though its discursive limitations make it epistemologically unstable for taking as a complete grounding (necessary and sufficient) for the task set out in this thesis. A handful of more general books emerged (Dallas 1971; Starsmore 1975; Cameron 1998; Toulmin 2003), and the tradition of folk art has also included fairground signwriting within its remit (Fletcher 1962; Lambert and Marx 1989; Lewery 1989; Jones 2013). Modes of focus in the enthusiast milieu include the local fair (Belshaw 2004; 2006), the fairground family (Belshaw 2005; Scrivens and Smith 2006a), general photographic endeavours in search of standardised images of rides and transport (Bradley 1999; Kilvington 2006), a history of key manufacturers (Braithwaite 1978; Howell 2003), significant objects of the fair (Scrivens and Smith 1995; 2005; 2006b), and its aesthetic dimension (Weedon and Ward 1981). Work occasionally attempts to break out of this milieu with Braithwaite (1968) and his attempted dialogue with the discipline of architecture and Comino-James (2003) with his photographic project being good examples.

Recent works by Stephen Walker (2013; 2015a; 2015b) have started to redress the lacuna of critical or cross-disciplinary work emerging from the fairground, effectively re-engaging and re-asserting Braithwaite's barely acknowledged dialogue with the architectural domain. I have already drawn upon Walker's works in this chapter to set out the scope of the fairground, and continue to do so at various points in this thesis, and so a full explication of his research is not presented at this introduction point. Harcup (2000) is also a break with the milieu-centred fairground research, and his paper provides useful crossover points with my work here. Harcup approaches his fair with an observational rigour and identifies objects and affects at all levels, activities of engagement (watching, riding, posing, public kissing), and sensory overloading and layering (sounds, infused popular culture, light and perception of the fairground outside of its borders). His observations are set out in a frantic chain of introductory paragraphs included to support his wider discussions on cities as festival spaces, but I acknowledge Harcup's studied breadth of observation in my work here.²³ Harcup scratches the surface of a wider Bakhtinian tension in understanding the festival, seen as both subversive and the 'oppositional culture of the oppressed' (Stam 1989: 95) and also as a safety valve that reinforces authority through the permission of its temporary suspension (Dentith 1995: 73). This vein of thought carries through to contemporary figurations of the protest and riot understood in the spirit of carnival, introducing terms such as 'festivals of the people' (Harvey 1989: 273), or the further displacement from pleasure as a vehicle for politics to 'pleasure as politics' (Jordan 2002: 85).

Developing an object ontology of the fairground

Having considered above an analysis of definition and overview of literature to set out a fuller understanding of the fairground in time and space, as created, experienced and engaged by different groupings, I now propose and set out three structural and contextual frameworks of the fairground to give the thesis a working traction.

Firstly, I propose an ontological framework for an understanding of the possible objects of the fairground, and illustrate how this object ontology can be carried through into the heritage case studies. The heritage engagement of the fairground is primarily through tangible objects in the first instance, and these are used to invoke or work alongside less tangible concerns. A fairground museum tends to work primarily with a group of objects – real things – rather than say a room of flashing lights and a permeated odour of hot-dogs and diesel.²⁴

Lash and Lury (2007: 204) utilise a similar origin point to expand biographies of cultural objects and argue that 'all cultural-thing-biographies, all circulation of cultural goods, are a question of intersubjectivity'. With the fairground object this intersubjectivity is never neat, and the illusionistic nature of many objects alongside the differing audiences make something more of a fractal intersubjectivity. This condition is developed by Bowker and Star (1999: 297) with their proposal of boundary objects which 'inhabit several communities of practice and satisfy the informational requirements of each of them ... plastic enough to adopt to local needs and constraints of the several practices employing them, yet robust enough to maintain a common identity across sites'. Guins (2014: 4), meanwhile, warns us that 'objects are opportunistic' and

²³ Harcup's paper covers substantial ground around the pleasures of festival and the city's attempt to utilise this as a controlled safety valve. A citation search suggests that the paper has been absorbed into the discipline of events management.

²⁴ Of course, light comes from the object light, and hot-dog aroma from the object hot-dog.

pass through 'mutable taxonomic change', taking on a 'transfigured identity and taxonomy' (12).

The tangible objects of the fair derive from the intersection of objects brought in as part of the travelling fair itself and the objects of the environment which the fair builds upon and around, and re-purposes through its presence. Re-purposed objects situated in the existing environment may pre-exist as familiar, unfamiliar or invisible - however they are given different (temporary) meanings and modes of visibility (or sensibility) due to their integration with the objects of the fair. It could be argued that these re-purposed objects of the everyday environment are encountered and understood best through affects, but in the first instance I will class them as objects that are intrinsically linked to affects. For example, a de-familiarised space or fixture is met as an object (albeit forced into a new class of objecthood through the presence of nearby fairground objects) first before the affect of de-familiarisation can be experienced. These tangible objects form the fairground-in-itself as opposed to the subjectively experienced network of affects of the fairground-for-itself.²⁵

As part of this approach it is instructive at this early point of the thesis to consider the fair, or more specifically the fairground-in-itself, as a set of nested objects, and to draw out a set of definitions on a practical level. This is justified for three principal reasons. Firstly, the fairground as subjective affect, or fairground-for-itself, relates to all levels of the fairground-in-itself, in that experience of the fair is entangled with the fair as environment, as specific attraction, as aesthetic object, or as smaller (nested) object (such as a prize or a piece of food purchased). Secondly, the fairground is reproduced in various heritage environments as sometimes disparate collections of smaller objects derived from larger fairground objects. Thirdly, as shown in the previous chapter (figure 1.1), the polychronic nature of fairground objects is often caused by mismatching temporalities of the smaller components that go towards making the larger object.

Thus, a travelling fairground as object clearly provides a set of pleasurable diversions provided as a set of smaller tangible objects brought in to view by the presence of the fairground - this is the fairground-in-itself. I classify the 'whole' travelling fairground as a super-object such that in this structure are a distinctive set of first-order-objects.²⁶ These objects consist of riding devices or machines (figure 2.4) in various categories (thrill, family, social, juvenile, classical), games of skill and chance, exhibition cultures of the side-stalls and specific food offering structures (figure 2.5) - all of which have a historical structure and trajectory. These first-order-objects are encountered and manifested each as an object-singularity such that a fairground

²⁵ The in-itself and for-itself draws from a detailed philosophical heritage of Kant's exploration of noumena, Heidegger's separation of the ontic and the ontological, Marx and the *klasse an sich* and *für sich*, through to Sartre's ideas of the for-others and bad faith set out in *Being and Nothingness*. It is not my intention to restate or reorient my research question to develop a dialogic between the fairground and philosophy, as tempting as this is with the fairground's reassessment of noumena made real (suspension of disbelief with mermaids, griffins, etc) and the 'real' made noumenal (degradation of belief, doubt). I use the in-itself to denote the fairground as an object set in the external world, whereas the for-itself involves a degree of activation and engagement.

²⁶ As I discuss at the start of this chapter, the 'whole' of the fairground is easily stated but slippery to pin down. For the purpose of setting out a nested classification or object ontology of the fairground I need some concept of a whole that provides an outermost level of concrete conceptualisation.

ride is clearly a fairground ride and is not met in any other contextual understanding.²⁷ In addition, each first-order-object of the fairground consists of smaller second-order-objects that I class in the following broad schema: detachable and tangible objects such as prizes and food items, aesthetic aspects of the ride including decorative panels and lights, and finally discernible structural and mechanical parts of rides and stalls such as motors, seating, lifting arms, etc. These second-order-objects have a varied spectrum of ontological function such that any detachable and tangible object is, as with the first-order-object of the fairground ride, able to be classed as an object-singularity. However, I class aesthetic second-order-objects as objects-about-objects, indicating that the ontological status of the object is to add appearance to the larger object; discernible structural and mechanical parts I class as objects-within-objects, indicating that the ontological status of the object is to be an integral and functional part of the larger object.

Figure 2.6 shows a configuration of discernible second-order-objects associated with the first-order-object of the ride called the Sizzler Twist. In this initial schema I consider this an assemblage of second-order-objects of the type objects-within-objects, in that we can clearly see mechanical and structural components such as a passenger car and a sculpted handrail, and also an example of the aesthetic category objects-about-objects, with regard to the decorative metal post with cut-out lettering. Already here we can see a slippage of categorisation, such that what I have classed as decorative (the polished aluminium post) is also structural (it forms part of the barrier with the handrails that encloses the fairground ride and prevents dangerous intrusion when the ride is in action) and quite arguably what I have classed as structural with regard to the handrail could also be considered as decorative (it contains a fibre-glass decorative shield emblazoned with the initials of the showman - Arthur L. Silcock). I will show throughout the thesis the key idea that not only do specific categorised objects evolve within themselves, they also move between categories and are resolutely audience-specific; it is not a steady-state ontology. This has important ramifications for considering the movement of fairgrounds into heritage environments and the mapping across of audience-specificity.

Figure 2.7 shows a new assemblage of solely aesthetic second-order-objects from the fairground, located in a fairground heritage museum site. We could consider each artwork within this new assemblage as if it was on the fairground, as a clear example of objects-about-objects, in that the pieces included (a shutter, two pillars, and a dropper all made from wood and decorated and varnished to a high standard using subcultural iconography with an associated patina of age and use) are in the realm of the aesthetic rather than the structural or mechanical. However, this image shows how categories are transformed in the heritage environment. The four fairground art objects might not necessarily have co-existed on the same fairground ride, but in the museum they come together to form a new first-order-object, that is, the museum display. We could even consider the displaying of a single piece of artwork, such that the aesthetic second-order-object of the fairground becomes the first-

²⁷ Contrast, for example, a bus which may be manifested as a living space, as an educational space such as with a mobile library, an entertainment space such as with a café, etc.

order-object of the museum. In addition, the movement of the object from the fair to the museum potentially shifts the value and audience of fairground art itself.²⁸



Figure 2.6 - Detail of Sizzler to show assemblage of second-order-objects, May 2011, photograph Ian Trowell



Figure 2.7 - Second-order-objects as fairground art as museum display, Dingles, 2004, photograph Ian Trowell

²⁸ See Trowell (2016) for the movement of fairground art between profane and cultural realms.

Finally, with regard to the ontology of the fairground-in-itself, I propose a symmetrical category to the super-object with the sub-object. The sub-object is created by breaking down the second-order-object (detachable pieces, aesthetic pieces, mechanical and structural pieces) into smaller units that begin to lose their function and identity as fairground objects. For example, a mechanical or structural device can be broken down into smaller parts of sheets, rods, nuts and bolts, and a piece of fairground art can be broken down into paints, varnish and surface.²⁹ I show through case studies how these sub-objects are also audience-specific and can enter into the economy of useful and desirable parts in the movement towards heritage environments. Table 2.1 summarises the nested ontology of objects on the fairground.

Plotting the existence and historical trajectory of the objects within the ontology suggested here is a key activity in tackling the research question. These tangible objects form the first base of many of the heritage and museum representations of the fairground. I draw on my own knowledge and research past to fill in the categories as they change through time. Principal data resources will be photographic material (contemporaneous and archival) and documentary resources such as *World's Fair* newspaper and manufacturer's trade literature. Written testimonials through books and further archival material will help provide a picture of how the fair used to look at various points in the past.

Structuralist theories help to buttress the object ontology approach and pull together the historical trajectory of how new things come to be on the fairground, and how these new things are then incorporated within the 'rules of the fair' outlined at the start of this chapter. This method involves nesting a syntagm and paradigm structure, such as used by Barnard (2002) who expands on Barthes' work on the fashion system. Barnard sees a syntagm and paradigm at work in the design of an individual fashion garment (which I translate to parts and possibilities designing a new fairground first-order-object such as a ride) and then a further syntagm and paradigm at work as the garment is considered as part of a designer's collection or a wearer's outfit (thus the fairground first-order-object must be incorporated into the super-object of the fair itself). This work complements the existing research into diachronic categorisation carried out by Braithwaite (1968), Starsmore (1975) and Bradley (1997), augmented by the extensive Jack Leeson notebooks held in the NFA, in mapping out the technological development of fairground devices.

The tangible fairground as occurrence is the intersection of fairground objects and environment, forming the fairground-in-itself. The previous paragraphs dealt specifically with proposing a detailed ontology of the objects that the fair itself brings in to play, however, the specifics of the environment that the fair takes over has a bearing on the fairground-in-itself. These re-purposed objects of the environment are not drawn into a detailed ontological

²⁹ As with the proposed whole of the fairground representing the super-object expanding ever outwards, this base level or atomic level ascribed to the sub-object is open to fluid interpretation and a Gödel inspired incompleteness of endpoint. For example, a motor drive system classed as second-order-object can be broken down into smaller parts constituting the motor, and each of these smaller parts can feasibly be broken down through repeating the process.

Object type	Assigned class	Examples	Ontological status
Fair	Super-object	The whole fair	Object-in-itself
Self-contained object of the fair	First-order-object	Rides Stalls Food joints Juvenile rides	Object-singularity
Detachable, tangible and self-contained part of first-order-object	Second-order-object	Prize from stall Food item Arcade fixture	Object-singularity
Structural or mechanical part of first-order-object	Second-order-object	Motor or engine Pay-box Seat Tilt Hydraulic system	Object-within-object
Aesthetic decorative part of first-order-object	Second-order-object	Shutter Pillar Front section Gag card Dropper Rounding board	Object-about-object
Deconstruction towards base materials making up and second-order-object	Sub-object	Paints Varnishes Nuts and bolts Wood, metal, etc Small assemblages	Fluid dependent upon audience

Table 2.1 - Ontology structure of objects on the fairground

classification as proposed with the objects of the fairground-in-itself.³⁰ The differently experienced environment is encountered through these re-purposed objects (figures 2.8 and 2.9) but it is incredibly difficult to draw these re-purposed objects in to the fairground heritage environments. Furthermore, the experiences following the encounter with the re-purposed object may depend upon the knowledge of the original object, making any attempt to try and draw these re-purposed objects into the heritage environment a meaningless exercise. However, it is part of the fuller understanding of the fairground to track and explain these interactive aspects of objects meeting and changing, and the thesis will develop this through observational analysis alongside historical resources, mapping and ideas drawn from topology, topography and broader spatial practices.



Figure 2.8 - Open spaces redefined as new interstice, Grantham Fair, 2015, photograph Ian Trowell
Figure 2.9 – Existing Interstice given new meaning, Stamford Fair, 2015, photograph Ian Trowell

From objects to affect

The consideration of everyday objects being re-purposed shows the potentially entangled nature of the object-centred tangible fairground-in-itself and the affect-centred intangible fairground-for-itself. This entanglement can extend to the simple fairground object such that it is difficult to distinguish between the object considered in-itself and the same object as the source of different affects. Firstly, the existence of an object and the affects it engenders is not a simple mapping, such that fairground objects (and everyday objects transformed by the fair) create different affects for different people (aforementioned ‘boundary objects’). Secondly, the changing nature of the object-in-itself does not necessarily create a changing series of

³⁰ Borden et al. (2001: 3) propose the city as the ‘ultimate object’ in the introduction to their edited volume unearthing the ‘Unknown City’, whilst Walker (2013) correlates scales of understanding the city with scales of understanding the fair.

affects such that an unchanged object may create changed affects through time, and a changed object may maintain a stable affect through time.

Beyond the objects in and around the fair, the fair as occurrence also provokes slippage between tangible and intangible manifestations. For example, and outlined above in this chapter, the anticipation of the fair arriving (signalled by tangible objects such as posters, quasi-tangible objects such as local knowledge, or intangible affects such as seasonal intuition)³¹ or the fairground as rhythmic interruption (based upon both the everyday rhythm being suspended whilst the fair is in situ and also the breaking of the inscribed rules of rhythmic adjustment - the rhythm of rhythm or meta-rhythm so to speak - such that the fairground arrives overnight and disappears just as quickly).

At some point the objects of the fair and the everyday objects transformed by the fair induce, by a combination of their individual presence as objects and their arrangement in a pattern with other objects, a series of affects. This is the subjective network of affects and experiences, based on multiple intangibles, that I call the fairground-for-itself. Affects can be derived directly from the tangible objects of the fair (first-order-objects such as rides providing thrills and vicarious experiences, aesthetic and decorative second-order-objects providing a seamless suspension of disbelief) and the environment of the fair (spatial disorientation).³²

These intangible aspects of the fairground-for-itself do not sit so easily with any proposed ontological hierarchy but instead consist of interlocking and evolving forces and feelings - thrill, vicariousness, spontaneity and increase in socialisation, performance and performativity, disorientation, liminality and transgression, overturning of the everyday. As a useful example, Walker (2013: 57-9) observes and comments on the fairground ride the Waltzer, in full effect as the night-time draws in at Loughborough Fair. Though his principal concern is the erosion of discernible boundaries between the town and the fair, in that (with the Waltzer) something from within the boundary of the fair starts to become both something outside of the boundary of the fair (a nightclub) and also a new bounded interiority or sub-space, we can take his reading of his observations as the richness and indicative breadth and interactivity of the affects of this example of a fairground first-order object:

As much as the Waltzer changes its identity as dusk settles, becoming partly peripheral to the fairground crowd, it also provides an example of the complex range of interactions between different individuals and groups of people that can take place within a single ride and throughout the fair. Here, at a basic level, a distinction can be made between the main ride operator (and DJ); temporary operators who ride the ride/dancefloor, circulating around and spinning the booths while remaining apparently unperturbed by the rough motion of the ride; small groups of punters in the spinning booths; and lines of spectators described by Paul Needham: 'Crowds sat around the back of the waltzer listening to the latest tunes with light shows better than any night club - free to all no entrance fees here! The screams of the girls -- "If

³¹ As detailed in the historical context earlier in the chapter, fairs are commonly based upon rigid timetables as part of either their charter status or part of having to fit around other fairs defined by charter status. Hence they arrive at a particular time of the year and the notion of 'fair weather' is discerned - this has been recorded by the author at King's Lynn (the opening fair of the season where the weather always seems to be fiercely cold with a February icy wind blowing in from the sea) and also at the author's home fair of Spondon (near Derby) which falls upon the hottest time of the year - mid August.

³² This suspension of disbelief is an important term within the thesis, particular in regard to the visual and illusionistic traditions linking back to early scenographic developments around the theatre and the panoramic show - see Boyer (1994: 76).

you wanna go faster you gotta scream, let's hear you scream come on"!' (Needham 1999-2000: Vol. II: 23-24). Even with this one ride, each of these constituencies remain in close physical proximity but barely acknowledge each other, each behaving according to distinct codes and rituals, acting and moving in very different ways.

The Waltzer observed by Walker (and Needham) reveals an instance of multiple affects; thrill, vicariousness, performance in general, performativity of roles (girls must scream), watching (of things, of people, of people performing roles), of immersion into thumping four-to-the-floor music.



Figure 2.10 - Waltzer as nightclub, Kirkcaldy, 2003, photograph Ian Trowell

Figures 2.10 and 2.11 illustrate this further, the first image providing a good example of night-life being simulated at Kirkcaldy Links Market - a fair (and country) that has developed a fierce style of techno music (and celebration of that style) on the fairground.³³ The second image shows the spectacle of queuing for one of the thrill rides on the fair, moving beyond the mundane social practice of the queue (Moran 2005: 2) and providing a sense of both the tingling anticipation for the those in the queue glimpsing the current crop of passengers being inverted at speed over the heads of those in the queue, and those more calm and collected

³³ Known as 'tartan techno', an example of the region-specific micro-genre processing of the hardcore techno music that has found its audience on the fairground.

(and performing such coolness) by feigning a lack of fear in regard to what they have just volunteered to put themselves through.³⁴ Bennett (1995: 238) observes similar acts of bravery at Blackpool Pleasure Beach, suggesting that ‘the psychic thrill of physical danger is therefore intensified by the pleasures of bravado, by the public display of conquering fear’.



Figure 2.11 - Queuing for Air, Newcastle Town Moor, 2015, photograph Ian Trowell

The exploration of the fairground-for-itself, with regard to how the fair is experienced by the different user communities as intangible affects, is not something that can be proposed as a bounded and fixed set and then recorded and tested in the way we can with fairground objects. The principal user community of the fairground consists of the punters who engage the presence of the fair in either a kind of accelerated ambience (simply being there) or engage the offerings in terms of the first and/or second level objects on offer (go on rides and partake in games and shows, purchase food items and win prizes). Affects and experiences are identified from all these perspectives, and surface with activities such as thrill-seeking and the visceral, performance and exhibitionism (and associated practices of sousveillance), new codes of sociability and unprovoked participation, scopophilia, and the saturation of cultural, visual and sonic bombardments.

It is possible to impose readings on the fairground, to observe key behaviours and associated subversions and perversions, and to read into these through key works around, for example, liminality and radical spatial practices. There is a wealth of material that theorises our experience in terms of both time and space, looking for the moments when the façade of orderliness starts to crack. The specific thrill created by the fairground is a product of a certain

³⁴ In this case, a ride on *Air*, an example of a Zierer Starshape ride and (as at 2015) a claimant to the crown of the most thrilling ride on the travelling fairground.

type of space and a certain type of time. The space of the fairground, in terms of the simple designation of the ground on which it occurs, falls under the spell of Foucault's proposals of heterotopias whereby the gridded points of time, space and function start to fall away and create glimpses of different orders (Foucault 1984), though the danger of generalising and romanticising Foucault's ideas outside of a more rigorous understanding backed up with some form of evidence is an easy trap to fall in. Similarly, a wider reading of the experiencing of time on the fairground can be made through the classical distinction between *chronos* as measured durational time and *kairos* as time not kept but unleashed, overcharged with significance. Such readings push towards Turner's notion of liminal spaces (Turner 1977), and provide another tempting mode of radicalising the fairground through an observation of supposed affects. These ideas are touched upon and developed throughout the thesis to aid the general aim of considering the capture and transfer into the heritage environment, though a full explication in dialogue with their theorist-focussed genealogy (Foucault, Turner, etc) would move beyond the scope of the thesis.

Cultural hybridisation

The fairground also presents cross-over points, utilisations, re-workings and hybridisations of other cultural, social and technological affects and associated objects. These cultural objects and affects are linked in complex and dynamic ways with the object and affects of the fairground. At the forefront is the fairground's engagement with popular culture, enacted as a kind of dialectic in that the fairground as a viable space (for the showpeople) is threatened by the emergence and differentiation of other cultural pursuits (the dance-hall, disco or rave, the cinema or downloaded film, the computer game, the mobile phone and activated social network) but the showperson needs to draw on these cultural affects (through acoustics, iconographic artwork, prizes) to draw in and engage the punters.³⁵

As with the objective structures of the fair and the subjective affects of the fairground experience, these cultural engagements have a complex historical context. The birth of popular culture, through the changing structure of music and its consumption, brought the main changes, with Middleton (1990: 14) defining pre-1950 music as:

A relatively narrow stylistic spread, bounded by theatre song on the one side and novelty items deriving from music hall and vaudeville on the other, with Tin Pan Alley song, Hollywood hits and crooners in between.

This hybrid mix of semi-itinerant sounds mirrors the semi-itinerant beginnings and vestiges of the fairground world, with roots in theatre, music hall and vaudeville. Fairground music cranked out through the organs amidst and within the fairground rides would have drawn upon these common styles of pre-pop music, and there is natural and historical synergy between the music and the fairground. The post-1950s birth of pop music changed the fairground's relationship to the music, severing any historical linkage. Subsequently, the fairground quickly drew on the birth of popular culture as part of its own allure, and embraced this procession of scenes through appropriation of artwork, iconography, language as well as integrating them into prizes and ephemeral material culture. Early music movements such as

³⁵ Whilst at first glance it could appear counterintuitive for the travelling fairground to embrace something that challenges its customer base, the fairground as dance-hall/disco/rave can also be seen as allowing permissive barriers around age normally associated with these practices to be broken down.

rock'n'roll followed by subcultural fracturing into oppositional genres (mod, disco, soul, techno, pop, etc) provided the soundtrack to the fairground. Further iconography and terminology is then provided by films and other cultural milieus.³⁶

The fairground's utilisation or hijacking of popular cultures and cultural hybridisation has implications for the further work around heritage practice and nostalgia that can be flagged up at this initial point. In these cases, nostalgia for the fairground may become intertwined with other nostalgias - ostensibly popular music. If the youthful partaking in a subcultural music genre, as a directly experienced nostalgic past, was enabled through the fairground in a revelatory manner, then nostalgia for that music genre may well be pursued through a nostalgia for the fairground.

Fairground heritage environments – definitions and models

The second strand of research maps out, through a sequence of case studies, categories of public-facing heritage environments that re-present and re-use fairground objects and artefacts, or attempt to recreate a fairground from the past as a super-object.

I categorise the sites of heritage as specific housed collections (or grey-museums) that have a significant collection of fairground rides and objects, the steam rally, the specialist travelling vintage fairground, the larger living museum (in cases where a fairground is a part of the total experience) and a re-imagined vintage amusement park. These categories can be qualified with a little more definition, and introductions to the concrete case studies to be covered:

- The housed collection of working fairground devices and associated artefacts provides the most common example of re-presented heritage (figure 2.12). This may be marketed as a museum and function as a museum, it may be marketed as a museum but not have aspects such as policy, labelling and education, or it may simply be a housed collection used as part of another function or oriented in a non-museum way. Collections covered here are Thursford (Norfolk), Scarborough (Yorkshire), Folly Farm (Tenby, Pembrokeshire), and Dingles (Lifton, Devon).
- The dedicated preservation movement associated with the restoration of fairground engines, rides and artefacts provides another large sector of re-presenting fairground heritage with the organising of steam rallies (figure 2.13). This is a wider environment of restoration and re-enactment. I study the large rallies at Welland and Lincoln.
- The nostalgically themed travelling fairground (figure 2.14) is a recent innovation with the highly-branded Carters Steam Fair providing the strongest example. Vintage fairs run along the lines of a traditional travelling fair with an emphasis on the 'village green' as the site of appropriation.
- The three largest living museums in the UK all incorporate a fairground (figure 2.15). I study the Black Country Living Museum and Beamish (County Durham).
- The long-running plans to recreate the Dreamland amusement park in Margate (Kent) have recently come to fruition (figure 2.16), though this has been a tumultuous period of operation with a shifting focus and vocal critical chorus. I study Dreamland and analyse its intentions, actualities and arguments for and against its revival.

³⁶ Subcultural music and the fairground is developed in chapter 3.



Figure 2.12 – Dingles Fairground Museum, 2017, photograph Ian Trowell



Figure 2.13 – Welland steam rally, 2016, photograph Ian Trowell



Figure 2.14 – Carters fair at Bath, 2016, photograph Ian Trowell



Figure 2.15 – Black Country Living Museum, 2016, photograph Ian Trowell



Figure 2.16 – Margate Dreamland, 2017, photograph Ian Trowell

A commitment to, and interest in, fairground heritage and the decision to ‘become activist’ in the milieu stems from various initiatives, motivations and practices alongside circumstances and opportunities (finance, open land for working or displaying, large buildings for renovation space, skills or access to skilled people). These (people and organisation) biographies must be unearthed and considered when assessing fairground heritage. In addition, the wider practice of the personal collecting of vintage fairground artefacts in the form of painted or carved objects sits within this complex history, and has led to key auction houses and businesses dealing with fairground artefacts whose owners will develop links with showpeople and scour winter quarters. This forms an intermediary point of the object biographies of typically second-order-objects (principally art) from the fairground.³⁷

I document these heritage spaces and practices for a number of reasons; they are entirely overlooked in critical and academic writing (falling outside of specific discussions on museums and heritage), they express vernacular traditions and cross over into agricultural heritage, and they are ephemeral in terms of their fixed constitution and existence (they have a fragility of longevity that is often a reflection of the passions, finances and facilities of certain individuals, such that they may change from year to year or quite simply cease to exist).

There is overlap of these heritage environments with the fairground amidst clear distinctions. The issues here to develop will be the nostalgic value of objects and artworks and the relation to fairs past; the fairground experience stripped down and presented as museum artefact; the

³⁷ Appendix 1 details a timeline of fairground heritage activity mapping known activists as collectors and exhibitors, key events such as steam fairs and rallies, and dealers and auction houses

elusive search to recreate the fairground itself as super-object; and whether the distinctive design of the vibrant fairground can provoke nostalgic and heritage feelings in its own right.³⁸

Case studies are written up in the form of a site report, taking into account the sequenced context indicated in the introduction to this chapter (encountering the region then encountering the heritage space). I impose a consistent approach across all visits; an emphasis on regional context, the utilisation of space and structure, and observations on public interaction. Objects are then considered drawing upon the ontology introduced above for the fairground, with specific detail to a recreated whole environment. The case studies conclude with interviews and feedback material including evidence drawn from the social media website TripAdvisor. The work is presented with a strong emphasis on visual culture, and images are utilised extensively in the presented thesis. Nuances of approach for specific types of heritage practice are flagged at the start of each chapter, and this includes situations where a greater environment beyond the heritage fairground needs to be considered (the whole of the steam rally site, the wider living museum, and the prolific zoo at Folly Farm).

Fairground heritage literature review

As for the fairground, literature on the heritage fairground is prolific within a specific, and limiting, milieu. There is a large corpus of enthusiast-generated material such as association newsletters and fan group material for the steam rally scene, whilst the discrete body of academic literature on the living museum movement understandably tends to treat the subject as a total environment and, in most cases, omits a discussion of the fairground. The author Brian Steptoe is prominent in writing key publications that reflect upon the vintage scene, however Steptoe's work - carried through with his dedicated, meticulous and aesthetically oriented photography - is clearly geared for the coffee table of the activist preservationist or well-seasoned rally-goer. Steptoe has produced work for all the heritage scenes that I cover in this thesis, and I reference and discuss these works as they arrive on a chapter-by-chapter basis.

Heritage studies, temporal sensibilities and the value of the past

Drawing from heritage studies, museology and theories of nostalgia, the thesis considers and sets out ideas and theorisations around how we relate to our past and satisfy such needs, particularly through desires to return to our past (or other pasts) and the re-emergence and persistence of practices, techniques and products from the past.³⁹ With an understanding of both the fairground and its attempted heritage equivalents mapped out, I open up a critical dialogue with heritage theory. In contrast to the two strands of research explored around fairgrounds and heritage fairgrounds, this subject is well charted (perhaps to the point of overdetermination) with explanations, suggestions and models of both temporal sensibility (how we relate to time in general) and nostalgia (how we intertwine the present with the past through a desire to return) running counter to each other in the aforementioned disciplines.

³⁸ Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1990: 386) proposes 'artefactual autonomy' for objects displayed in and of themselves, with a 'poetics of detachment' regarding the metonymic fragment. as object, the 'part that stands in contiguous relation to an absent whole that may or may not be recreated' (388).

³⁹ The disciplines of memory studies, consumer and marketing theory, materiality studies and design theory also have tangential impact.

A genealogy of this hybrid disciplinary approach can be situated with the fierce heritage debates of the 1980s instigated by historians and cultural theorists, and I return to give an overview of this debate in chapter 8 where the analysis of living museums draws from the contemporaneous discussions. The heritage debate formed a new discipline of heritage studies, which had a further effect on museum studies, creating what Candlin (2012: 28) considers as 'two separate fields that have overlapping trajectories and shared areas of interest'. Heritage studies is an evolving discipline that tackles intangible concerns as well as more traditional tangible aspects (buildings, places, objects). In addition, there is a movement to escape what Smith (2007: 5) calls the 'authorised heritage discourse' (AHD), suggesting that 'heritage ceases to be simply "objects" or "things" ... but rather processes that *do* things'.⁴⁰ However, it is widely acknowledged that an alternative to AHD⁴¹ is, whilst necessary, a problematic and unruly terrain, with publications such as the *International Journal of Heritage Studies* giving space to expressions of perplexity and ontological debate.⁴² Roberts and Cohen (2014: 242) express this potential groundlessness and ontological lacuna by suggesting 'much like the term "culture", the concept of "heritage" marshals a jumble of overlapping, disparate and at times contradictory meanings and a burgeoning array of perspectives that frustrate attempts to pin it down'. This echoes Samuel (1994: 205) and his initial proposition that heritage is a 'nomadic term ... capacious enough to accommodate wildly discrepant meanings'. Following this, I suggest that the diversity and disparity between discipline-specific theorisations and understandings means that a cautious approach is required. Thus, the wider modelling of how the past comes to meet the present in various areas of everyday life is considered in the fullest manner with an aim to keep this breadth of interpretation open throughout its application.

The theoretical assemblage of temporal understandings and motivations is set against the bodies of work studying the fairground and its heritage equivalents. I investigate whether the observations and voices of engagement I encounter on site (as audience and heritage protagonist) can be contextualised within the array of existing theories, supporting one theory against another, or whether these theories, as a discourse in flux, ultimately fall short. This work will broadly fall under a grounded aesthetic model such that a 'correct' theory of heritage relationships will neither be proposed (and applied to heritage museum practice etc), nor sought (through examining practices and opinions of heritage museum visitors). A more interactionist model will be utilised recognising the polysemic and polymorphic understandings of the heritage experience.

⁴⁰ This movement of heritage from a thing to a process is a reverse track of nostalgia moving from being a process connected feeling to a thing (objects that provoke a feeling), part of the later work of the thesis.

⁴¹ Roberts and Cohen (2014: 244) frame the argument as 'big H' versus 'heritage-as-praxis'.

⁴² The debate here is more constructive and mannered than the 1980s heritage debate.

Intermezzo

The fair's capacity to appear in many guises to many people, to reflect back different images to different audiences, is a consequence of its complexity and novelty, as well as our incapacity, inability, unwillingness or simple lack of practice in making sense of it. (Walker 2015b: 338)

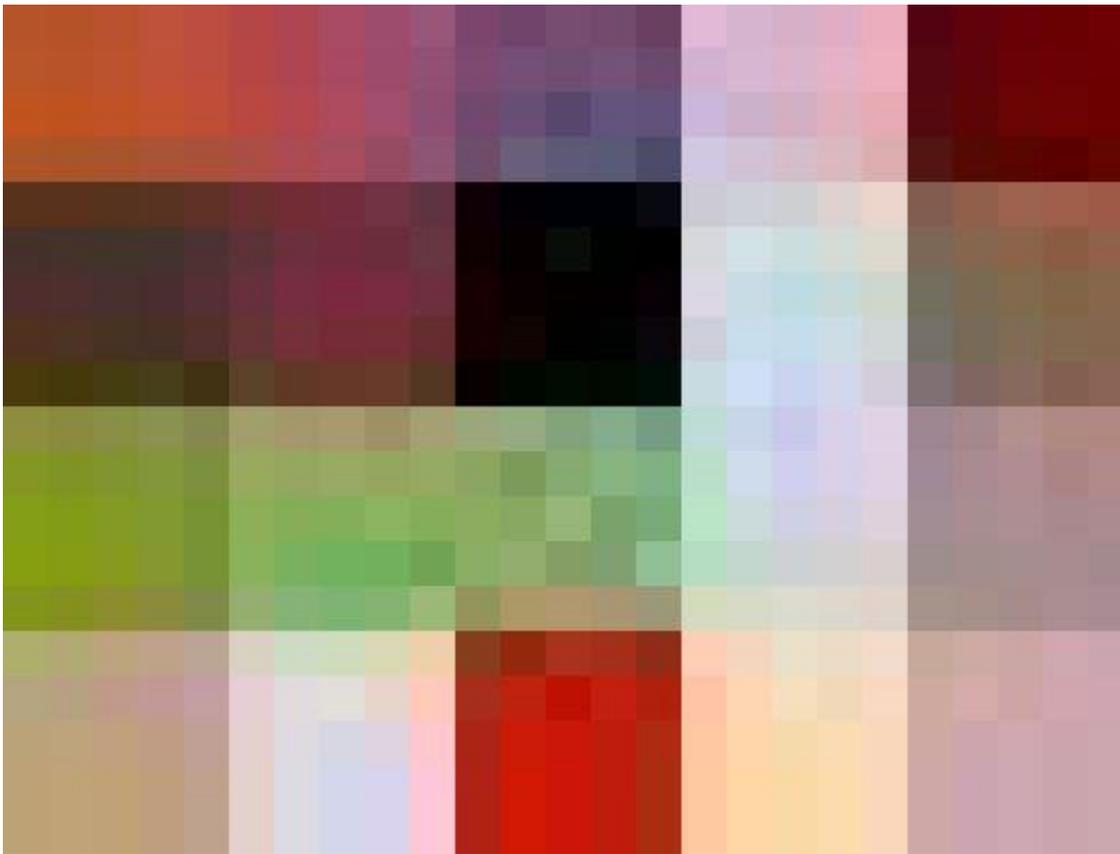
This selection of photographs and extended captions serves a number of purposes. It provides a preliminary entry into and guide to chapter 3, but differs from that chapter by setting out a base-line of how we see and what we see. It develops, via visual cues, a panoply of structured readings of the fairground, allowing chapter 3 to be understood from multiple and simultaneous perspectives. Chapter 3 is concerned with the make-up of the fairground in terms of objects and affects, the communities of interest within the fairground, and the process of modernisation. These concepts are intricately linked; different communities 'see' different things and register both the actuality and interpretation of modernisation in diverse ways.

The fairground is strongly geared towards the visual; performers in the past dressed up and paraded, fairground art combines the garish colours of a fantasy world with themes and styles from everyday visual culture, the modern fairground machine moves towards encompassing what Nye (1996) calls the 'technological sublime'. The fairground has a visual coherency and identity but evolves through new themes of decoration and plundering of cultural iconography. This series of photographs partly draws on that visual aspect in an isomorphic fashion (the fairground presents spectacles and these photographs record those spectacles as they are encountered). Other sensory spectacles are part of the fairground – smells, sounds, social and proximal codes, affects – and these can be evoked via photography.

I discuss each photograph from the standpoint of various imaginary questions; how might this photograph arise (if at all), which community of the fairground might have created this photograph, how might this photograph circulate and be appreciated in a community-specific manner, what is the context of photography and image culture when this photograph was produced. On occasion I step outside of the isomorphic immediacy and move to an isomorphic meta-level, photographing the act of creating photographs.

In this series of photographs I am searching for a degree-zero of the fairground through photography. Readers/viewers of this selection of photographs will already have a conception of the fairground developed from within their community of interest (including the disinterested community). I intend to take the reader/viewer outside of their community to appreciate other communities, to see through the eyes of (for example) showpeople and enthusiasts, to see context-specific new isomorphisms and through this to evince a generalised heteromorphism (the disarticulation between the visually engaged and the visually recorded).

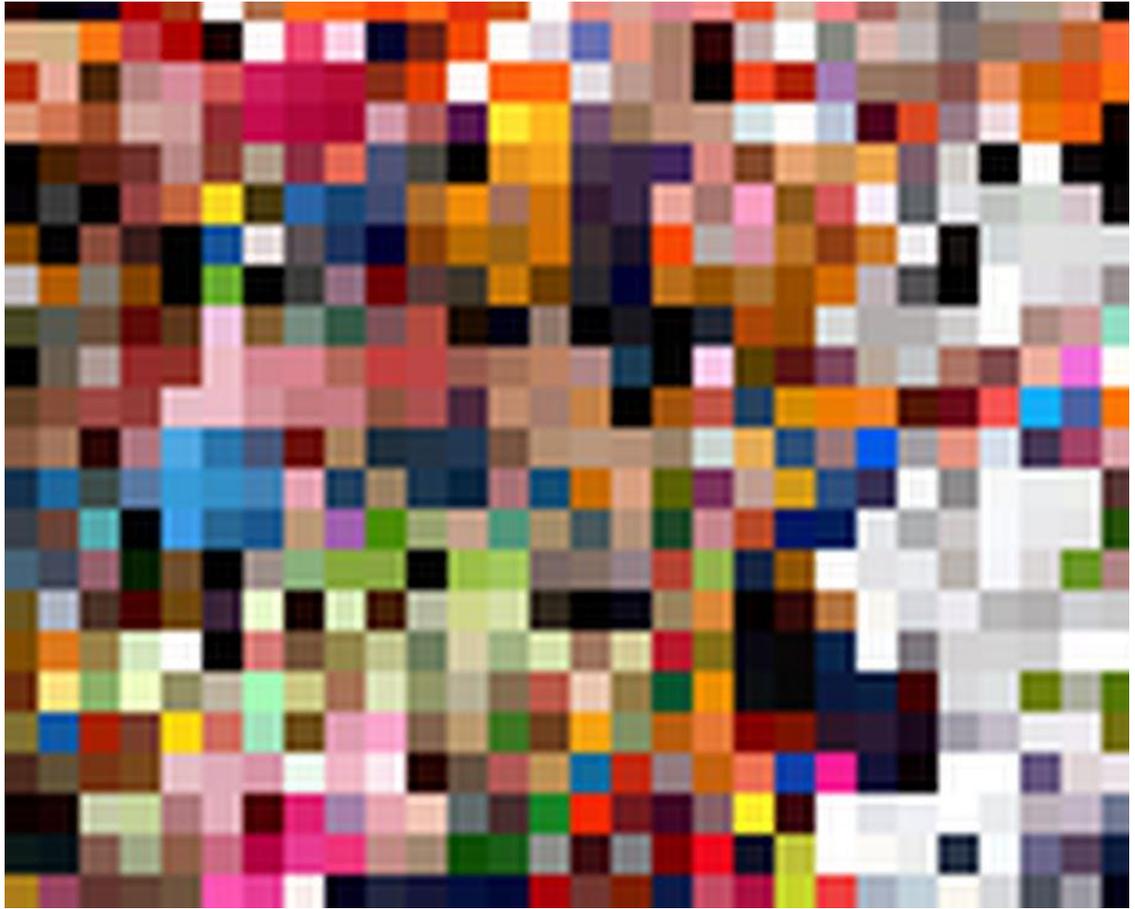
This intermezzo can be considered as developing a 'scopic regime' (Metz 1982), encompassing both what we see and how we see within an expanded visual economy of the fairground. Rowe (1995: 13) understands this use of economy in terms of how 'material resources are deployed in the physical production and symbolic communication of cultural objects', and these photographs tease out the different objects and different uses as we see (an understanding through visual methods) the ways of seeing them.



Fairground stall, pixelated 1, photograph Ian Trowell

Fairground photographs not taken (by the visitor to the fairground) originate from degrees of (in)visibility alongside choices not to take the photograph:

- The unseen is the visual of the fairground that remains out of visibility for the *majority* of the communities who interact with the fair.
- The unnoticed is in the realm of visibility for all of the communities associated with the fairground, but the visibility is hindered and discouraged by the trace nature of the objects.
- Closely related to the unnoticed is the overlooked – seen but then chosen not to be seen, subjectively made trace.
- The seen of the fairground can also remain unrecorded by choice, an after-consideration that forces an isomorphic disjunction (I choose not to photograph what I see).



Fairground stall, pixelated 2, photograph Ian Trowell

A photograph not taken can emerge in the photograph taken, as an isomorphic surplus (something not noticed amidst the constellation of things noticed and photographed). This makes the unnoticed an evocative category. Gordon (2008: 103) calls this 'the context between familiarity and strangeness' that the photograph has an uncanny habit of conjuring up, emphasised further by Smith (2013: 94) as the edge of sight: 'as photography shows us more, it also shows us how much we don't see, how much ordinary seeing is blind'. Here Flusser (2000: 8) presents a pessimistic warning, suggesting that the connotative (ambiguous) overwhelms the denotative (unambiguous), as the perpetual re-deconstruction of the photograph evinces a non-linear time as the same photographic moment (captured in the image) is stretched out in the present time of the observer. The photograph begins to unravel as an empirical document, undermining its fixity of meaning, arrangement, structure and purpose. It seems to hold our attention for an eternity.



Fairground stall, photograph Ian Trowell

The 'who' of the fair populate the multiple 'when' of the fair - some definitions:

When	Who-specific epistemic domain of visibility
Absent before - a time when the fair is not there but is imminently and knowingly approaching	None until appearance of posters and advertisements
Transition period 1 – arrival and build-up	General public – unseen Showpeople – seen but unrecorded Enthusiasts – seen and recorded
Present/operating	All communities – seen (recorded/unrecorded)
Present/closed	General public – unnoticed Showpeople – seen but unrecorded Enthusiasts – seen and prioritised
Transition period 2 – pull-down and departure	General public – unseen Showpeople – seen but unrecorded Enthusiasts – possibly seen and recorded
Absent after - a time when the fair is not there but is just departed	General public – unnoticed Enthusiasts – unseen Showpeople - unseen



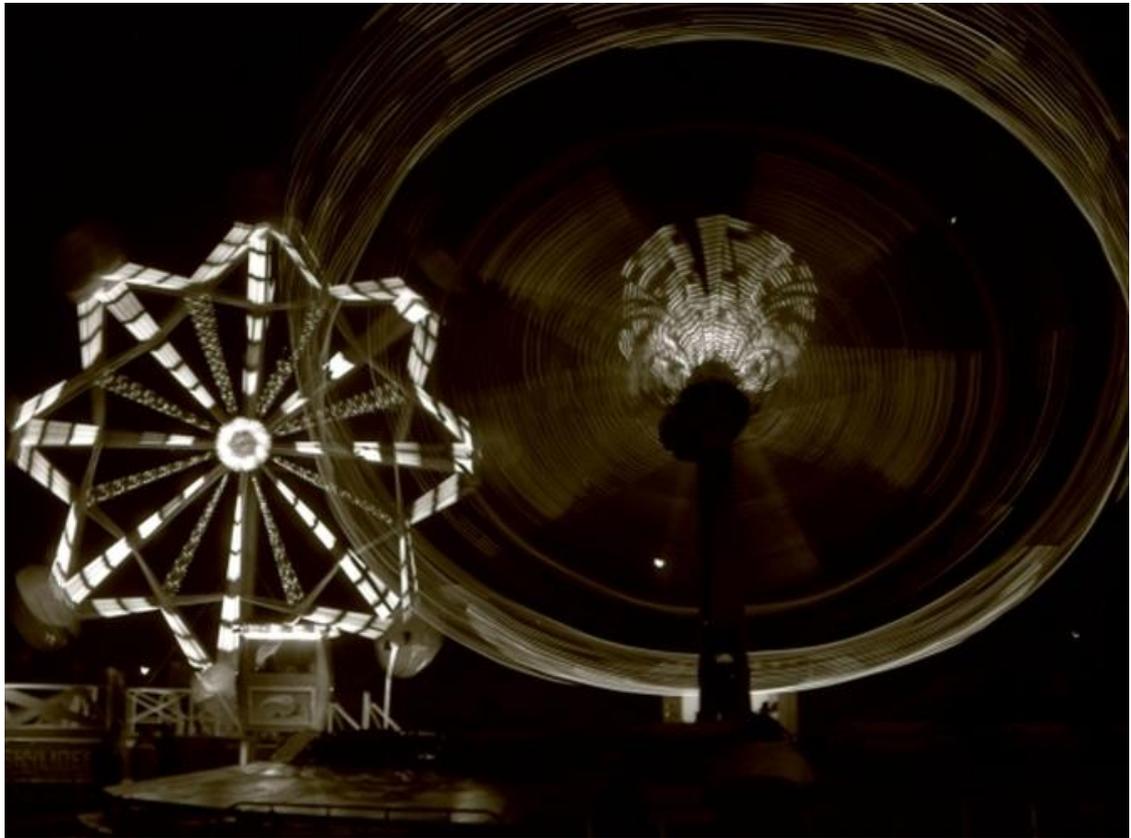
Build-up scene, photograph Paul Angel / copyright NFA

This is a scene from the transition period of building up. It is taken from the collection of the enthusiast Paul Angel (NFA) but offers a deeper reading. It is early morning and the overnight build-up of the Octopus has delayed into daylight, thus attracting three members of the public who would not normally see this procedure. Paul, as a member of the enthusiast community, has stepped back 'outside the frame' and photographed not just the chrysalis-like structure of the ride, but also the boys, a showman (extreme left), a gaff-lad (centre of ride) and possibly another enthusiast (leather jacket and flared trousers). It thus has good demographic payload. There is a hint of a rite of passage - watching a fair build-up, imagining what the ride is and what it will do, planning your thrills and prepping your courage, hanging about but not interfering, maybe hoping for the offer of a helping hand in exchange for a free go when the fair is up and running.



Pull-down scene, photograph Ian Trowell

Pull-down and departure. After the last ride has taken money, under the hours of darkness, the fair has gone by the morning. To the public this is unseen, to the enthusiasts it is often unseen (too late and too dark to take photographs), to the showpeople it is unrecorded. Here is a photograph not taken. What is shown here is approaching the balance point between the transition period of pulling-down, and the category absent after. Here the fair has all but finished dismantling and packing up on to lorries, which have departed the scene - all that remains is a tightly sealed catering unit ready to be hooked and towed away. This rapid departure is often twinned with having to arrive and build up at the next place within the timeframe of the early morning hours, known as a 'night attack' in the fairground business, and described by Starsmore (1975: 35) as a 'rapid and brutal process'. This is the last photograph before nothing, the final frame of the film that convinces us we see movement. Something (just) then nothing.



Fairground night scene, photograph Ian Trowell

Amateur photographers may venture onto the fairground with a specific visual mission to search out raw material for various forms of representation and artistic expression. The fast action motion of the fairground machinery combined with the saturated lighting elements makes composition using the full extent of available controls an attractive challenge and opportunity to out-smart their colleagues in the photographic community. This is a separate community to the ones described above. The amateur photographer does not approach the camera as a tool to capture the visual, but has an inverted perspective of affordance whereby the visual is engaged as a tool to operationalise the camera. Flusser (2000: 58) amusingly refers to camera clubs as 'post-industrial opium dens' with members 'consumed by greed' with a need to justify and maximise the capabilities of the photographic apparatus.



Fairground traces, photograph Ian Trowell

The fair has gone - no enthusiasts or showpeople interested, no general public, so another photograph not taken. Or possibly not. It does present an interesting aesthetic rendering of the earth for a fan of land art, a student of Robert Smithson for example. The marks and remnants on the grass form a trace, dependent upon both a presence and an absence, existing in a slippage between the two. The fairground expunges a detritus such as broken light caps, coins despatched from the pockets of rotated and inverted riders and lodged into the earth, vinyl record fragments, vomit and spillage, pressed down shapes (rings in the grass) such as here caused by either coverage by an object or repeated footfall. A game of forensics can be played, reconstructing a myriad possibility of previously occurring scenarios. The fairground layout can slowly be reconstructed; vomit - often in garish pink reflecting the vibrant candies that the fair thrusts upon punters - might indicate the disembarking points of spinning rides, spilt coins the perimeter of a vigorous or inverting ride. Here we have pressed down marks showing areas where the grass was covered by structure but is now emerging and grasping at sunlight with an off-green pallor, alongside areas where the grass is simply worn away by human presence.



Fairground stalls, photographs Ian Trowell

In the previous photograph there is evidence of wearing away on the ground through footfall at two levels, an intense wearing away to almost pure earth where the stallholder is confined within the stall to walk a small area in constant pattern hawking for business trying to attract the attention of the passer-by, next to a lesser wearing away indicating the perimeter of the stall as the public come in orbit as they walk around the fair. There are also two topologies of round stall; the foreground circular pattern showing the stallholder confined to small centre circle associated with roll-down games, and the second, third and fourth circular patterns showing the stallholder constantly walking a narrow ring-shaped perimeter associated with hook-a-duck or goldfish-bowl stalls.

The two stalls above are examples of this. The top photograph has the showman confined to an enclosed outer perimeter (but he is having a sit down). The bottom photograph has the showwoman encased in a smaller centre-circle.



3x to be purchased / 3x dropped / 3x abandoned / 3x eaten and discarded / 3x returned – photographs Ian Trowell

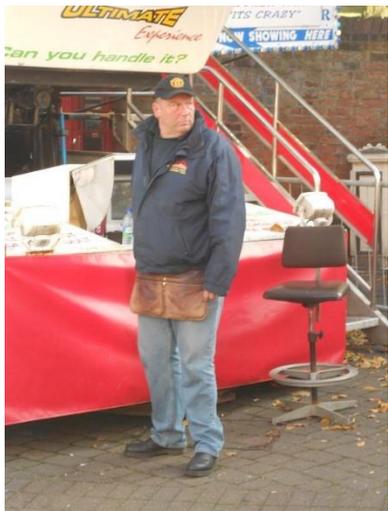
Angela Carter Here Today Gone Tomorrow (South Bank Show TX 28 November 1982) on fairground food: 'Not real nourishment, it doesn't stay with you. You lose your dinner at the fair. Incipient nausea is part of the fun'.

... I can offer some examples of this rigorous method of reasoning and working out. Consider the hot-dog deduced as dropped (second row, second picture). My argument here is that if this had been sampled and abandoned as inedible or unfavourable then the evidence would show two halves of the bread and the sausage with just a small but equal fraction missing, what we might call half a whole. However, a whole half of bread and whole sausage suggests that the food package came away at the join leaving just a half of bread in the hands of the (presumably disappointed) punter. That this other half of bread is not in evidence suggests it has been eaten, which further supports an element of disappointment at the dropping of the majority of the food.

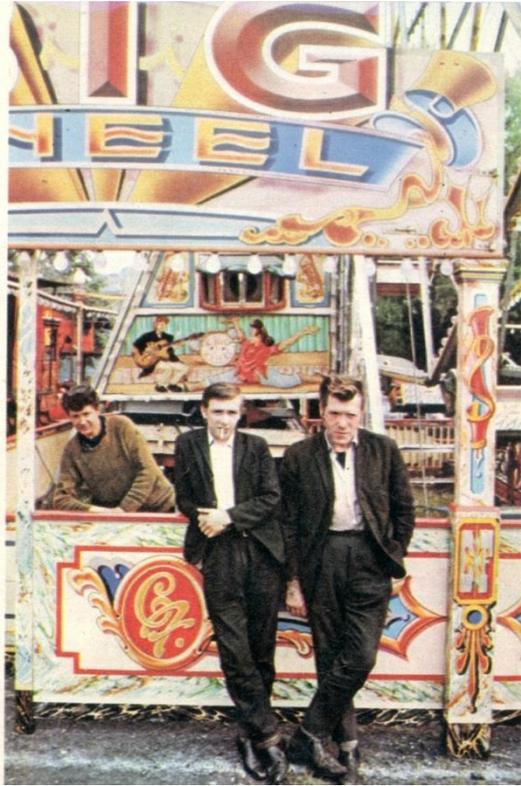
Secondly, consider the marshmallow sweets (third row, third picture) deduced as abandoned. My argument is that if they had been dropped they could have quite possibly been picked up to resume consumption since they are partly shielded in their wrapper.

Finally, the trace of the vomiting (all images in the fifth row) induced by nauseogenic fairground rides can be connected to any of the practices of consuming (whole, partial by accidental dropping, partial by elected abandonment) since it reveals what is lying uppermost in the stomach. This will include food purchased and eaten on the fairground and, if you are really unlucky, remnants of undigested meals taken earlier in the day. A closer inspection of quantity, configuration and colour intensity (to declare a whole or half meal, to discern between the sweet and savoury, or indeed their culinary conjugation) might be possible for those inclined to such forensics...

Henshaw (2014: 136), in her innovative study of the 'urban smellscape', considers as 'vomit habitus' the 'quiet corners to throw up in' during a night out on the town drinking. The enforced instantaneity of the fairground ride generally limits the time to make such a decision.



Fairground stances, photographs Ian Trowell



Photograph details from article / copyright Don McCullin

Don McCullin produced these stunning images as part of a feature on the fairground for The Observer (29 August 1965) coinciding with the birth of the colour supplement. McCullin had documented the Vietnam War and returned to the UK as an angry young man, looking to document aspects of an undeclared 'war at home'; poverty, divisions, abject communities, subcultures, down-and-outs. Serving a middle-class audience, the Sunday supplements lapped this up and mixed it with the Pop art of the time. This is an early depiction of the communities of the fair for an audience outside of the 'usual' communities, therefore a careful unpacking is required.

McCullin manages to combine and effectively disarticulate three distinct communities who can be found on the fairground before it opens for business (present/closed in my schema above): an array of latent teddy-boy gaff-lads, a pair of female punters hanging around the fair looking to catch the eye of the gaff-lads, and finally images of showpeople waiting for business. The three images are remarkably similar in composition, with a front facing position depicting an upright pairing of subjects who glumly stare back at the camera, whilst a sense of boredom and restlessness broods in the background conjuring up a vaguely pervasive aroma of hot-dogs and diesel that ebbs and flows between periods of opening. As technically astute and moving the images are, the whole lends itself towards the categorising of otherness, merging the communities of showpeople, gaff-lads and loitering punters into a homogenous group united by a sense of dirt and pitifulness. The sociological distancing of the types also resonates within the photographs; the showpeople are clearly from the other world, the gaff-lads have been excluded from our world and now reside as a kind of underclass within the showpeople world, and finally the female punters are in our world but are being tempted into the other world through the allure of sexual encounters with the gaff-lads. The caption under the image reads 'Two girls that follow: "Have you photographed Tony, the best-looking boy in the fair?"', and McCullin's use of a red lorry in the background (a standard fairground colour at the time) along with a red glow on the matching jackets of the pair evokes the moral warnings of Little Red Riding Hood.



Showpeople pose for photographer, photograph Ian Trowell

Knutsford Fair, 2016, a meta-level photograph to show a photograph (being) taken. A crowd of showpeople hastily assembling for a photograph opportunity when the World's Fair reporter is spotted on the ground. Reading this process armed with knowledge, specific practices in staging the visual moment are carried out, conceivably attributed to this merging of family, work and leisure. The mise-en-scène is particularly meticulous and easily missed by the untrained eye. In this case the showpeople moved to frame themselves as part of the stall, standing between the pillars and underneath the vernacular array of plush tigers that might (or more than likely might not) be won as prizes.

For showpeople, visual documentation of life is set against the visual backdrop of the fair; the spectacle is simply the background. There is no method of particularity in responding to the visual of the fair as discussed with the other communities - it is simply a case of apt moments defined by people coming together and visually recording the occasion.



Extract from Chatterbox page, World's Fair newspaper / copyright World's Fair newspaper

The close-knit nature of this community clings on to various traditions, one of which is to feature an array of social pictures in their weekly newspaper World's Fair, an important publication that played the part of being the key vessel of everyday communication before the advent of mobile communications technology and social media. This newspaper serves as a medium for a multitude of rites of passage (birth, key birthdays, engagement and marriage, achievements and ultimately death and remembrance) and replays images into the wider fairground community (the readership of the newspaper is predominantly showpeople and fairground enthusiasts).

There is a special page entitled 'chatterbox' which features photographs from around the fairgrounds. A standard pose can be seen; they compose themselves and are pictured as ready to do business, on the stall, and with their weathered money bags and pouches to the front. The photographs show the blurring of the modes of home and family, the workplace, and the leisure space in one instance.



Perc exercise #1, the letter 'A' at Hull Fair 2016, photographs Ian Trowell

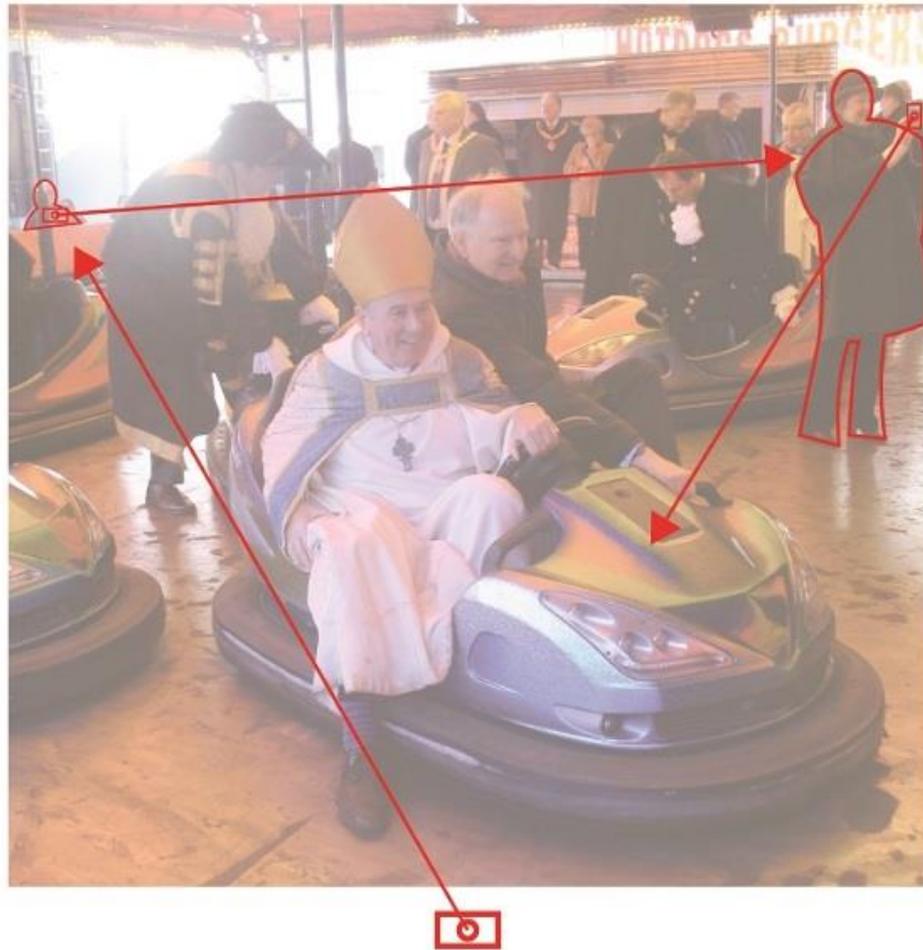


Perc exercise #2, prize stacking at Hull Fair 2016, photographs Ian Trowell



Opening ceremony at King's Lynn Fair 2016, photograph Ian Trowell

Opening ceremonies (Walker 2015a) are saturated affairs invoking quirky historical traditions such as ringing a special bell or throwing newly minted pennies into the crowd. If the practice of the public bringing cameras to the fairground is not something with historical provenance then the opening ceremony is an exception; it is a quieter moment that sits immediately before the hustle and bustle of a fairground in operation. The opening ceremony is a visual collision such that cameras (and camera phones) are wielded by all present, the event recorded by many parties including the showpeople themselves. It provides a record of the enduring importance of a specific fair, as illustrated above where the civic dignitaries are in the process of being visually captured by showpeople and punters surrounding the Dodgem ride that forms the stage for the opening ceremony.



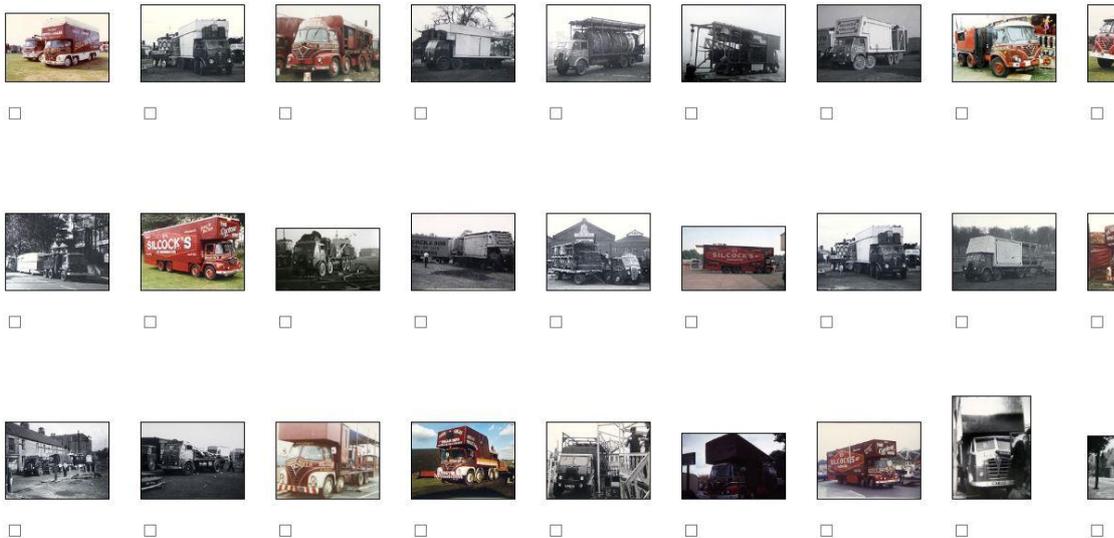
Opening ceremony at King's Lynn Fair 2016 (augmented for sight lines), photograph Ian Trowell

Outside of what is a sumptuous clash of bizarre traditions, dress codes and modes of comportment a closer examination of the photograph shows three realms of visualisation nested like a set of Russian dolls in the visual collision. The researcher and recorder of the photographic practices (myself) tries to survey a whole scene and photographs a member of the public (on the extreme left edge of the photograph outside the stage of performance) who is himself photographing a close-up of the spectacle of the opening ceremony. This person seems to be focussed on a dignitary who is herself photographing the spectacle. Here we glimpse the diageitic code being transgressed as the friends and consorts of the dignitaries start to take a series of photographs and abandon their roles of actors, effectively shifting the functioning definition of the civic community from the role of spectacle to the role of visual consumers and creators, as they partake in the consumption of their own spectacle.

Deleuze (1989: 30) reads semiologist Peirce alongside three kinds of image; firstness (referring only to itself), secondness (referring to itself through something else) and thirdness (refers to itself only by comparing one thing to another). There is a shift between cardinal and ordinal. In the three images above it is both cardinal AND ordinal – there is a counting and dependency on order.

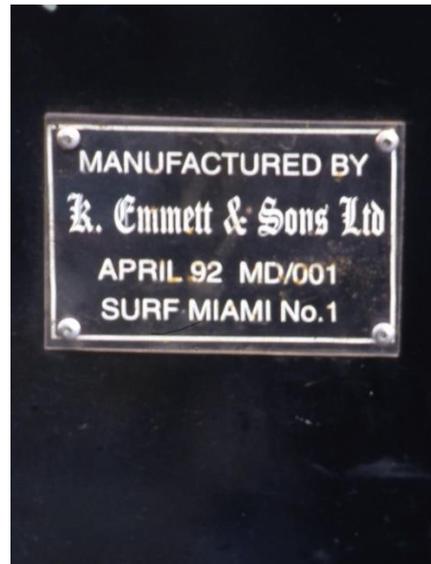


Enthusiasts chase down a lorry / copyright Shaun Martin



Screen grab of thumbnail view of search for transport, NFA digital database

Fairground enthusiasts extend both the way of seeing and the when of seeing that challenges the fairground's own visual output. Enthusiasts extend the temporal conventions of the fair - seeking out and recording the temporal interstices of pull-on, build-up, pull-down and departure. Another meta-level photograph shows enthusiasts specialising in fairground transport active during the pull-on of Knutsford Fair; an extension of what is considered as the visible output that the fairground promotes, such that these trucks are normally placed 'off-stage' during the fair being open. Rushing to capture the perfect view of the lorry, enacting a kind of paparazzi of the mundane, one can assume that the same image (possibly repeated numerous times as the digital affords endless capture) is captured by BOTH enthusiasts. These images are shared on specialist social media sites, tending towards convergent styles of depiction.

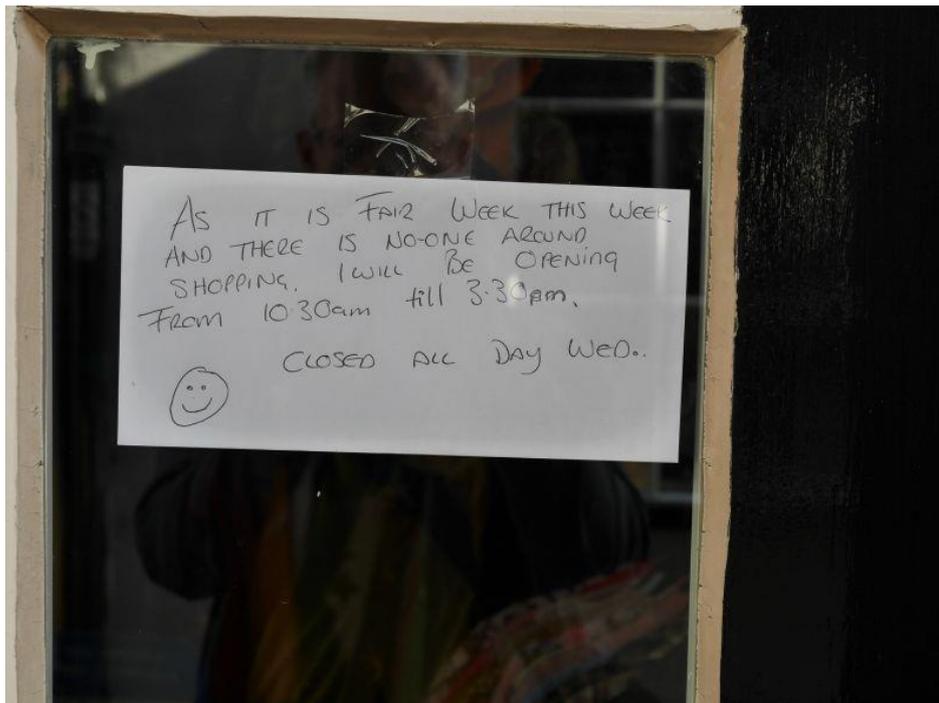


Manufacturer plate images by Paul Angel, Mike Willis, Stephen Smith / copyright NFA

The phrase 'wheel-nuts and hub-caps' exists as a moniker of self-deprecation to remind enthusiasts of the quirky nature of their hobby. It serves as a (fictitious) contour point towards the other side of the realm of what can be considered as the communicated and visual aspects of the fair - the super-object of the fair, a set of first-order-objects (the rides, stalls, games), and a set of second-order objects designed specifically for visual engagement such (signage, prizes, lighting). The fairground enthusiast sees new things – first-order-objects not designed to be seen in general view (such as the lorries and living wagons) as well as sub-objects that, even though clearly existing as potential visual phenomena, are not tasked with being seen as part of the fair presenting itself - the wheel-nuts and hub-caps, the Gödel endpoints of objects split down. This is an audience-specific shift between unnoticed and seen.

An actual example is compiled from the NFA collection with the tendency to photograph manufacturer plates tucked away on the rear-most structures of rides. Whilst these sub-objects are part of the visual economy of the showpeople community, and part of the visual economy of a small legislative community of equipment manufacturers and inspectors, they are clearly not destined to be part of any other visual economies. Other unauthorised sub-objects that receive regular attention include technical and mechanical parts of the rides, generators, interiors of pay-boxes and fairground art scrutinised at a microscopic level.

In many ways the enthusiast community has the most straightforward and directly accountable relationship to the fairground, with members recording the objects of the fairground as they present themselves - a 'what you see is what you get' relationship. The perplexing capabilities of cameras are not engaged in the kind of battle that professional and amateur photographers would invoke when seeking out the fairground, instead the emphasis is on clear and concise images that show exactly what they show and say to other enthusiasts 'I have seen this' or more precisely 'I have achieved the seeing of this'.



Shop closure notices during Boston Fair 2016, photographs Ian Trowell

The proximate public splits between those who engage the fair and those who feel it is an inconvenience. Shops in particular can feel a grudge at losing business or somehow being cheated out of decency and paying-their-way. Walker (2013) discusses this in regard to Loughborough Fair, whilst the photographs above are taken from Boston (Lincolnshire) during the 2016 fair. Is this a form of visual activism by negatively disengaged members of the public, or maybe the presence of the smiling emoticon indicates an embrace of the fair? The owner of the shop closing down to partake in the festivities as a punter?



Extended street stall (Llandudno 2015) and impromptu café advertising (Stamford 2017), photographs Ian Trowell

Engagement but not necessarily on the fairs terms. Shopkeepers using the presence of the fair to extend their boundaries of commerce into the street. The fair brings the closure of the road allowing pedestrians to claim the space for their perambulatory engagements with the fair. The shop exploits this space, adding to the overall cluttered topography and visual excess of the fairground. In the second picture the argot of the fair is brought in to enliven the café space.



Fairground posters, photographs Ian Trowell

Trying to capture something not visible... rhythm and its dislocation.

Edensor (2010) provides a clear insight into the rhythms that structure the city and everyday life, offering an opportunity to consider the new rhythms and disruptive aspects of the fairground. Firstly, there is the contrast between the over-riding or outermost rhythm of the city and the rhythm associated with the presence of the fair itself. Whilst life in the city is dominated by diurnal patterns and week/weekend demarcations, the fairground can be seen often as an annual or seasonal occurrence, part of the longue durée of barely perceived change.

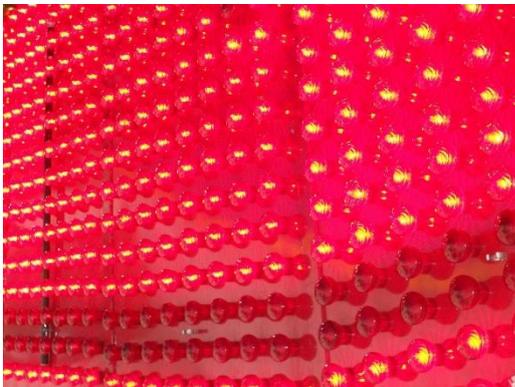
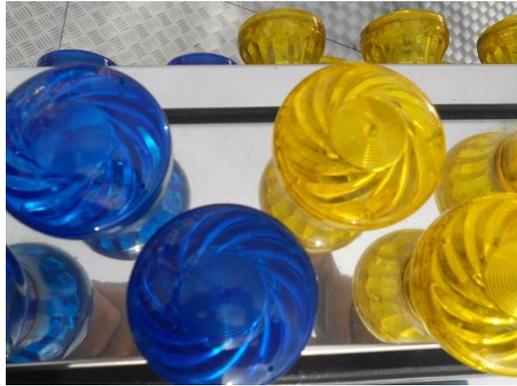
In my home village (Spondon) the fairground came at the same time every year and generally endured the same weather - hence 'fair weather' as a term in use amongst the locals. A poster in the chip-shop always confirmed its imminence. A materialist manifest of the absent before.

The second photograph shows a poster inadvertently left up, and nearly a year out of date so effectively becoming in date again. The fair was coming last year and it will come this year.



Stamford Fair 2015 and Boston Fair 2016, photographs Ian Trowell

Edensor's second rhythm concerns the micro-rhythms of the city itself, understood through routinized and time-stamped practices of commuting, parking, shopping, working and taking a lunch break. In turn, the fairground breaks up these rhythms and introduces a new set of possible rhythms around the visit to the fair, periods spent hanging around and watching, the duration of a ride, etc. The parking zone (a timed dictatorship) is disrupted with the Dodgem track arriving and imposing its own time zones of motion and inactivity. A deactivated bus stop is stranded in the middle of the fairground, its timetable now suspended and replaced by the new timetable of the juvenile rides mimicking the workaday forms of transport.



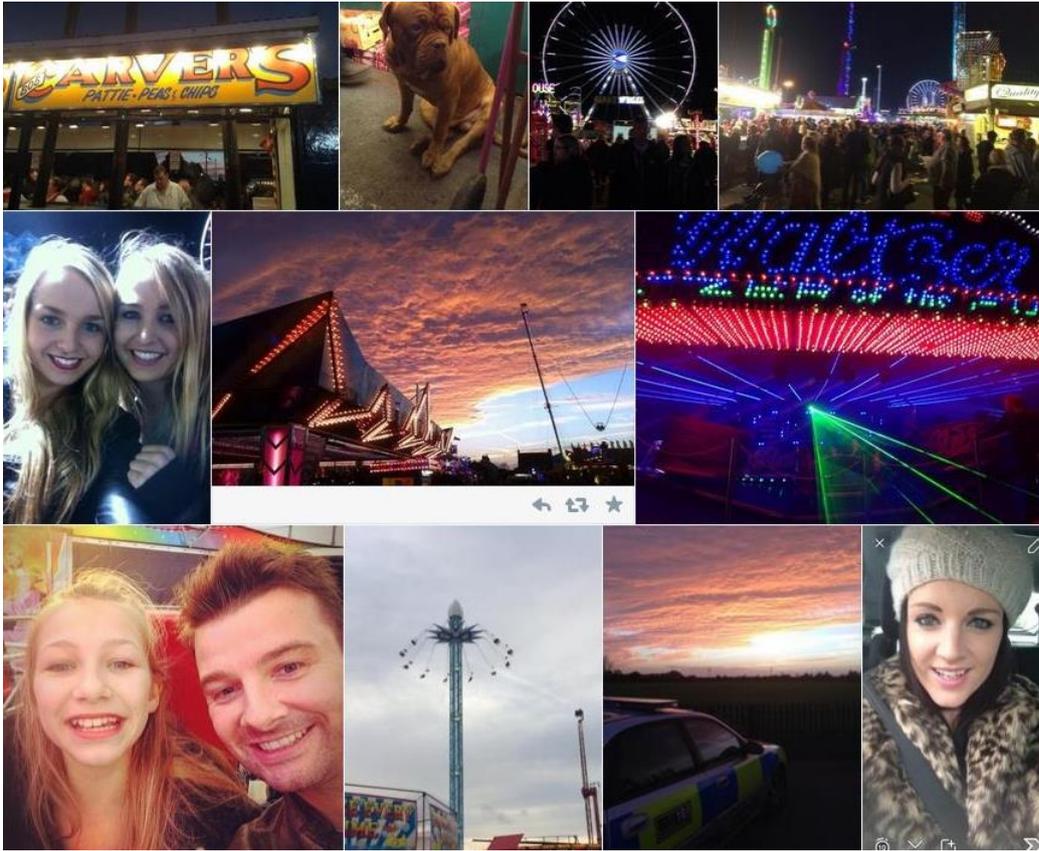
Ilkeston, Belper and Ripley Fairs, October 2016, photographs Ian Trowell

Light as an object, experienced as a shining jewel or piece of confectionary, imaginarily tactile, clustered in abundance.



Ilkeston Fair 2016, photograph Ian Trowell

Light as affect, the diaphanous glow of the bulbs. Light illuminates and casts an appearance onto what it can reach. Light from bulb clusters connects rhizomatically and creates an approximate blanket of illumination onto the fairground. The sky is lit up just beyond the tops of the highest rides, or to the reach of spot-lights mounted on the canopy of the Waltzer. The night-time fairground space is illuminated as a liminal space. Dark hours and dark places are normally out of bounds.



Sarah Lusy Redmonds
11 October 2014 · Hagley Spa Hall

These brain freeze lollies are to die for and free selfie with the owner there. My son had Hawaiian, cherry and lemon & lime flavour.



Like · Comment · Share

Caerwynn Crooks likes this.

Write a comment...

Liam Michael Godderz
11 October 2014

At Hull Fair with my girlfriend and her friends



Casualty & Holly City Spiders and Beant
741 members

The East Riding of Yorkshire - Past, Present and Future
Ferry Maffa joined

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Organization · 213 likes
Graham Smith likes this

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Facebook © 2015

Facebook and Twitter feeds screen grabs by Michael Smith

Larsen and Sandbye (2014) attempt to register the pulse of the social movement of everyday photography - photography of the everyday by 'everyday' people - under the rubric of a new media ecology. This registers a shift from mementoes to moments, capturing a statement of being-there/doing-that rather than simply a memento of the 'there' and/or the 'that'. Villi (2014) builds on this work and reassesses the camera (or camera-enabled device) as mutating from a time machine (communication over time, a photographic image linking a there then to here now) to a tele-machine (communication over space, a photographic image in transmitted and distributed digital format linking a there now to a here now).

Examples of a Twitter feed and a Facebook page from the engaged proximate community. Whilst the inclusion of the selfie is apparent across the tableau format of images offered by the social media devices, other modes of representation and visualisation start to emerge such as capturing the visual offerings of the fair- lights, crowds, technology set against the skyline. Up until the camera-enabled phone the public would not generally photograph their visit to the fairground. Too excited to consider, too difficult to capture.

This community do not have such an isomorphic relationship between what is initially engaged visually and the possibility of visually representing the results of their further engagement through either tangible (going on rides) or less tangible (being disorientated, being in a crowd) means. If one purpose of going to a fair is to experience a thrill then the object that provides the thrill may be considered as separate from the thrill-in-itself.

This gives rise to a heteromorphism of the visual engagement and visual representation of the fairground.



Fairground passengers / copyright Shaun Martin

Shoes, shoes, shoes

A strange ritual arose circa 2010 with the removal of footwear and assembling them (with bags and purses) in a mound on the checker-plate platform of the ride.

This can be considered as part of the common culture of remaking identified by Willis (1990) in his work detailing the small modes of consuming, doing, recombining and repurposing amongst working-class adolescents. Similar practices are developed about comportment whilst riding on certain machines - from clapping your hands, raising your arms, standing up whilst riding, wearing the garish tat and consumables offered on the fairground (such as bright red candy dummies) as adornments. These practices developed by the punters can have a variety of destinations. They may be discarded as the peripheral meme in modern day society, they may result in legislation from the Health and Safety Executive when there is a feeling that safety is breached (such as with standing whilst riding), or they may be absorbed by the showpeople community and re-incorporated back into the set of practices facilitated by the showperson operating the ride. For example, the practice of the crowd raising hands as an act of bravery whilst the ride is in motion has been co-opted by the fair such that most rides now have a soundtrack sequence encouraging riders to put their hands in the air. Football fans have a similar knack for cultural appropriation and remaking, by pinching pop songs and changing the lyrics. As with the fairground, this has similarly been co-opted by football clubs to provide a top-down intrusive prompt over the pa-system to sing a certain song the club might recognise as popular (Laing and Linehan 2013: 315).

Photographs not taken. There is a consequence to this heteromorphism between the visually engaged and visually represented, in that certain ways of seeing and practices of engaging the fairground escape documentation per se. The photographs of shoes were not sourced from archives or social media feeds, they had to be taken after a consideration of their possible need and absence was undertaken.



Minion prizes at various fairs in 2016, photographs Ian Trowell

From field notes 2015 taken at Knutsford May Fair and Grantham Fair 2016.

'evidence of the ephemerality and associated fluidity driven by the patterned plundering of new themes, whereby showpeople copy what other showpeople are doing, can be suggested by the rough observations of a similar survey performed barely two months later at Knutsford May Day Fair. Here the fairground had been culturally swamped by the Minions craze only evidenced in part at Grantham (Minions was set to be a key children's film for summer 2015). Over half of the 50 stalls had been transformed to a Minions theme, facilitated through the current trend for quickly prepared and easily interchangeable vinyl skirting and signage. A follow-up survey of Grantham Mid Lent Fair 2016 saw the Minion theme in rapid decline, replaced by a mixture of emoji toys and superhero figures.'

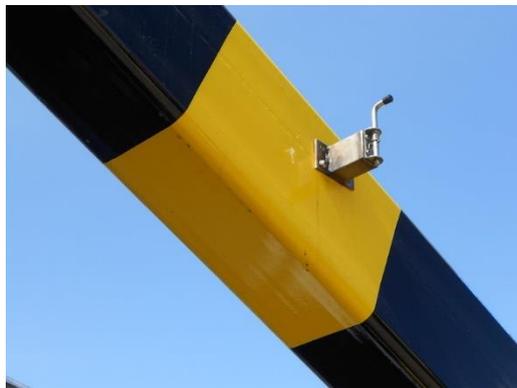


Vinyl printed decoration on stall (2015 and 2016), photographs Ian Trowell

Same place, different years. Whitby Regatta Fair 2015 (Minions) and 2016 (Emoji).

The immediacy and rapid ephemerality of the themes dictates faster response modes of decoration. Traditionally painted aspects of stalls and games are replaced by vinyl skirting that can be sourced quickly and cheaply. It can also be stored away in the case of theme recurring (Both Minions and Emoji were set to release a new movie for summer 2017, which decoration will win?).

The material infrastructure of the fairground starts to change.



Fairground ride details showing sign for danger, photographs Ian Trowell

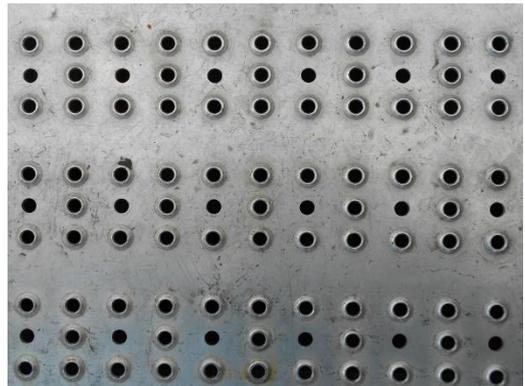
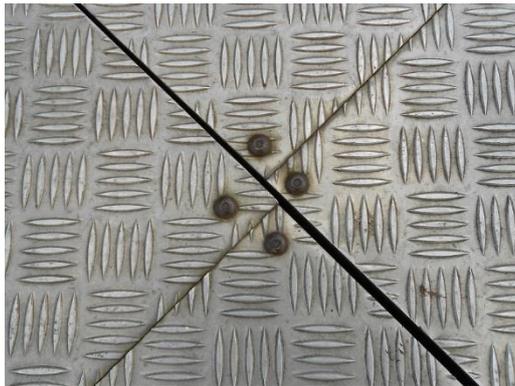
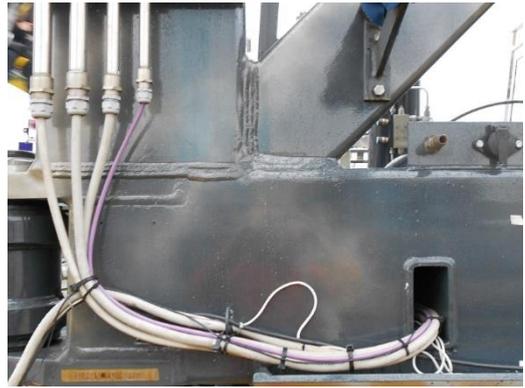


Safe danger - The aesthetic starkness of yellow and black hatching signifying 'danger' has spread across the whole fairground, starting with extreme rides that might be considered as 'dangerous' and travelling to any manner of ride or attraction. Quickly, the yellow and black became a new visual syntax of the fairground. An industrial signifier, it is applied in an industrial manner with vinyl sticker sheets.



King's Lynn fair 2014, photographs Ian Trowell

Cinematographic space - reflection and shadow enhance the illusory border of the fairground.



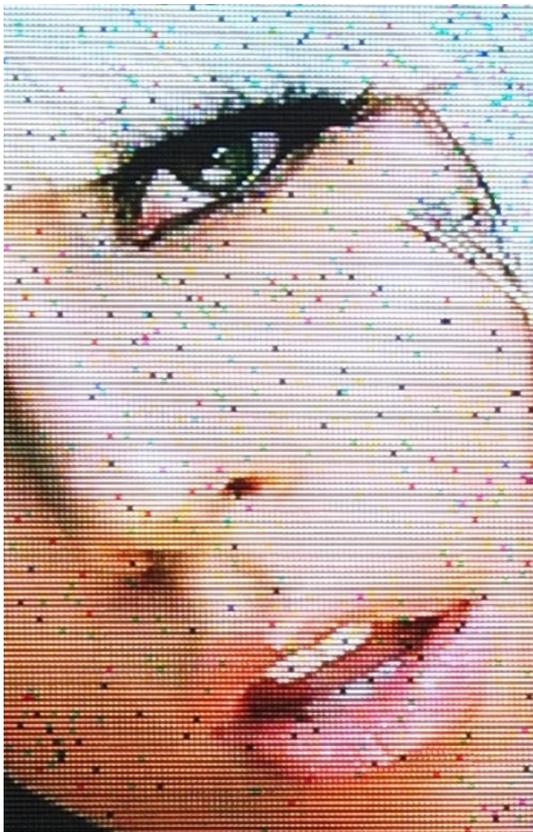
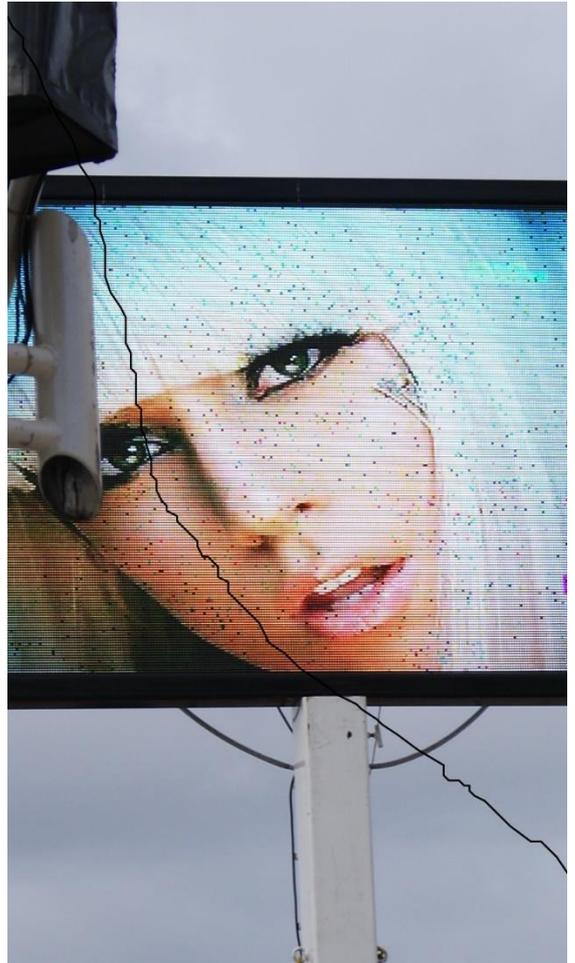
Fairground rides detail of structure, photographs Ian Trowell

Metal plate, reflective surfaces, exposed pipes and technology, functional and ultra-modern. This is the tactile fairground of 2017.



Utilisation of screens on the fairground, 2015 / copyright Shaun Martin

Screens appeared as essential accessories around 2015....



Back to the pixels

Chapter 3 – The Pulse of the Fairground

I remember the first Twist. It became a lot more exciting. It felt like it was the first modern ride ... I still come to the fair to see the changes, I'm fascinated by the LED lights. (Female, 60s, Loughborough)

In this chapter I look at how the fairground changes and how this is experienced by different groups. The chapter draws upon testimony and uses these memories as a springboard to investigate the dynamics of the fairground in synchronic and diachronic scope.

Taking the response above, I propose that it offers various insights. The first and most obvious is the importance of a certain fairground ride (in this case the Twist). The specific ride (first-order-object) comes up in other responses, for example another Loughborough respondent (female, 70s) recalls a multitude of machines in 'the Caterpillar, for you and your boyfriend, and the Moonrocket and its orange centre, the Cakewalk and Waltzer'. Here we have different nuances that suggest the temporary social opportunity of the fairground offered by certain rides within the generalised heightened atmosphere (the Caterpillar as a private space to either progress or instigate an intimate relationship)¹ and the memory of a specific bright colour (orange) associated with the fairground.

A King's Lynn respondent (male, 70s) recalls vividly his memories of the Mart: 'I came in the 1960s – it took three buses. The Big Wheel is my main memory. We'd come for the whole day'. Here, alongside an expression of joy for the Big Wheel, the spatial border of the fair extends as I propose in chapter 2; the intricate bus journey to reach the fairground is recalled first and foremost, suggesting it is an important part of the fair itself as it now forms a historical carrier for, and accelerator, of anticipation. Another King's Lynn respondent (female, 70s) evokes the Caterpillar as contraption by recalling 'Caterpillars with hooks going over'. Again, at King's Lynn, a respondent (male, 70s) lists 'Waltzer and Bumper Cars – real old attractions' as their key memory, and this shows how rides attain regional nomenclature (Bumper Cars = Dodgems) and perhaps more subtly an indication of time passing, with the phrase 'real old attractions'.

Other objects were also recalled with a special significance. An elderly respondent at King's Lynn (male, 70s) took a view from the modern fairground to look back at transport: 'Prestige now, everything new. The old Scammells and Tilling Stevens lorries have all gone'. His colleague recalled the nature of the building-up: 'Manual work and hard labour, now gone. Everything's now hydraulic'. He continued by expressing his interest in the engineering of the

¹ The Caterpillar has a mythical status due to its association with teenage fumbles. The ride consists of a standard undulating circular motion with a clever hood that opens out over the cars and covers the riders. It will then fold back up without warning, meaning that those first attempts at intimacy are always on the cusp of being made very public. In the 1930s it competed with a ride called the Tunnel of Love for the sexually-frustrated teenage market. This ride had a demarcated back section so the avoidance of being seen is controllable and strategic, whereas the Caterpillar has a daring and chaotic aspect. A couple in their 80s as part of the Loughborough respondents recalled how their relationship started at the fair.

fairground whole (super-object): 'I was fascinated by the technical side as I worked in the manufacturing industry. I love how it fits together in the space, just so'.

It is the difficult notion of time that I now return to in the revealing first statement above. Time is introduced in two aspects; firstly, by projecting back to the time of the fair (1960s) and subjectively situating and celebrating something (the Twist) as modern, and secondly, there is an indication of the passing of time through the ageing of the self, and how this affects the relationship to the fairground. The respondent feels a need to impress that they still come to the fair, against the odds, if only to see 'the changes' and not be part of their previous self in engaging the thrills. Both flows of time (the fairground and the self) are important in the consideration of heritage and emerge in the case studies that follow on from this chapter. The fairground changes (modernises) and so aspects (first-order-objects, decorative schema, integrated cultural flows such as popular music) progress and inevitably leave behind unviable formats, eventually picked up by heritage activists. The fairground visitor also ages and might possibly feel that they are no longer able to participate in the fairground amidst a younger (teenage) audience, and so a heritage experience also offers a legitimised space to be young again.

The modernising fairground object

For the Loughborough respondent, the Twist in the 1960s gave them a feeling of engaging something modern. Something they describe as 'the first modern ride'. How might this short statement be unpacked? We can note initially that the Twist arrived at Loughborough in 1962 when the ride was a near-new concept.² The respondent would be in their early teens at this time, and (if usual patterns are followed) would be engaging the large rides for the first time. Thus, the Twist could well be their first adult ride, a rights of passage so to speak, and so be associated with being modern through the fact this was their time to say what is modern or otherwise.

However, the Twist was certainly different, and it was a structural break from previous adult rides. In proposing my methodology and set of analytical tools in chapter 2, I indicated a use of nested syntagm and paradigm structures such as developed by Barnard (2002) in his study of fashion. The Twist is an adult ride, and a string of examples of such rides has been the mainstay of the British fairground for over a century. This was not always the case, and the early fairs grew with a predominance of shows and games, allowing the specific side-show to create an enclosure of high-level and vivid suspension of disbelief. Thus, like a meal that consists of a starter option, main option, and dessert option, a syntagmatic whole of the early 19th century fairground existed with shows the main event and smaller aspects such as crude hand-turned rides and games as equivalent to starters and desserts. Changes at the paradigmatic level (interchangeable 'or's of a sentence) saw shows updating (menageries replaced by early cinema), but the syntagmatic whole (a sequence of 'and's) remained stable. The late 19th century saw an industrial revolution on the fairground (Dallas 1971: 21) and the large ride becoming dominant. This is a syntagmatic shift, an equivalent of the logic of meal

² My previous research on the Twist for the NFA has the ride produced by Edwin Hall under licence from the USA in 1960 as a short batch of machines for the Butlins park franchise. More machines for the travelling fairground were produced by Edwin Hall from 1962, including a model for Herbert Silcock which attended Loughborough Fair.

being turned around by 'going straight to dessert'. The ride itself starts to evolve, and can be pinned to its own syntagmatic and paradigmatic structure. According to Dallas (1971: 123), this is a new pulse of the fairground: 'As long as new rides are being produced, which excite the public and offer good return on capital, the travelling fair will retain its vigour'.

Braithwaite (1968) charts the development of such machinery, and, even though he doesn't have recourse to structuralist theories, plots out various key structures (such as the revolving top frame, fixed roundabout, wheels-within-wheels) that form a form a syntagmatic whole and evolve through paradigmatic changes. This is a nested structure, the ride considered as a structural system within an assumed wider structural system of the fair (in which the ride predominates). Thus, the undulating roundabout commences with the Switchback and Scenic Railway, evolves through changing the mode of mount (gondolas, dragons, etc), then evolves at a constructional/material level to become lighter and faster (Ark Speedway), and then evolves the gondola further to offer additional movements (a Mont Blanc car that pivots outward, a Caterpillar that has an unfolding hood structure, the spinning tub of the Waltzer). The Twist, in 1960, was entirely new; a different configuration of parts offering new movement. It was a (another) syntagmatic shift rather than a paradigmatic evolution.³

As figures 3.1 and 3.2 show, the Twist was an exposed structure that went against the tradition of hiding the machinery and technology that created its movement. The photographs show Silcock's machine at Loughborough in the 1970s, occupying the same position and having the same appearance as it would have on its debut in 1962. By the fact that it is clearly different to other rides, it is understandable to class this as modern, and a closer examination of the side of the pay-box sees the owner declare its futuristic status with the word modern set out in a connotative deco-style lettering amongst the fairground scroll. The ride was not just a leap forward in terms of movement and an appearance that expressed movement by exposing structure and workings, it also set out a need for a different approach to decoration, though such an approach would take a while to be realised. In the 1960s (and through to the 1970s as the photographs illustrate) there was a tendency to continue using painted art where space and surface permitted. Weedon and Ward (1981: 215) praise Fred Fowle here in developing an expressive style of scroll work in a tight space that denotes movement, and the next generation of Twists followed in the mid-1960s with a floored structure and ornate centre generating more space to apply paint to. Whilst the movement of the ride is modern, this is something of an anachronistic gesture that ties the ride back into the tradition of using painted surface to both hide mechanism and express movement in line with the simulative nature of the ride (figure 3.3). This is understandable, as the post-war tradition of expressive fairground art had set a visual branding of the fairground, and it would be a brave gesture to move beyond this. Starsmore (1975: 107) went as far to suggest (on seeing a structurally exposed Meteorite ride) that 'although it is possible to manufacture machines without any but the simplest decoration, they would not be in the real fairground tradition'. He would quickly be proved wrong.

³ Braithwaite (1968: 109) only mentions the Twist as part of a new expression, linking it more to a dance movement (not explained). His glossary of rides gives a little more detail suggesting it as 'a further development of the *wheels within wheels* concept, the Twist is a comparatively new roundabout' (175). Starsmore (1975) doesn't index the Twist, but briefly includes it as part of a survey of American rides (92).



Figures 3.1 and 3.2 – Silcock's Twist at Loughborough, 1970s, photograph Ron Kinder / copyright NFA



Figure 3.3 – Painted Twist, 1980s, photograph Ian Trowell

Stepping back to 1960, the first Twist rides in the UK took a variety of names such as Whirlaround (expressing pure movement), People Mover or Merry Mixer (a social inclination), and Grasscutter (to emphasise how the ride skimmed the surface). The success of Chubby Checker’s ‘Twist’ song in 1960 and 1962 ensured a dance craze, and the fairground kept up a regular habit of adopting such crazes as nomenclature to approximate movements. Strangely, the Twist ride didn’t approximate the dance in any way, with the hurtling motion of the cars throwing the riders back-and-forth in a way that resembled an anarchic and accelerated barn dance or May pole celebration rather than a dancefloor sequence.⁴ The ride did not require decorative surplus (second-order-objects) to hide motion and suspend disbelief (to make people think they were dancing the Twist in a dancehall), but initially accrued these aspects almost as if to preserve the tradition of fairground decorating.

Manufacturer	commence production - cease production – approximate number of units		
Edwin Hall	1960-65 30 units		
Bennett	1962-72 30 units		
Pollard		1972-77 8 units	
Church		1974-77 30 units	
John Wall		1972-77 12 units	
Eli import		1977-83 20 units	
PWS Sizzler		1981-95 50 units	
Hammond		1983-2017 50 units	
Thurston		1995-2004 10 units	
Emmett		1999-2002 10 units	
PWS mark2			2003-2017 15 units

Table 3.1 – Twist production in the UK, 1960-2017

This implies that the ride was modern in only one aspect in the 1960s, but the remarkable resilience of the ride meant that its full modernism came to flower in 1980s. The Twist in the UK holds what I propose to be a unique accolade. It was first produced in 1960 and has been produced yearly, in some capacity, up until the time of writing this thesis (see table 3.1). Companies have changed but the basic principle of the ride – an exposed set of counter-rotating spokes – has remained constant.⁵ By the 1980s the exposed machinery of new rides became a dominant theme, and recourse to simulation dwindled.⁶ Rides such as the Orbiter,

⁴ Bradley (1992: 116) deconstructs the dance as a ‘repetition of one movement, more or less, over and over again’, suggesting that it gave a ‘dancer’s high’ in the mode of jouissance. This definition allows some overlap to the fairground ride.

⁵ The only exception is the prototype lifting Twist from 2012 for the Crow family. This did not catch on as what we might consider as a part-paradigmatic/part-syntagmatic shift of the ride.

⁶ Weedon and Ward (1981: 173) suggest the Whip as the first ride to embody the sleek look and fast action, to the point that speed in itself was celebrated (rather than speed being the product of what is

Meteorite and Swingaround proposed and offered pure movement of an abstract machine, the passenger experienced becoming a cog or mechanism in a vast contraption that served some unknown purpose, rather than a fairground machine simulating a different machine (car, motorbike, rocket, parachute). The Twist became the Sizzler with a new model by Perrin Stevens in 1981, delineated from previous models with a sleek aesthetic of fibre-glass blocking and checker-plate flooring (figure 3.4). To many enthusiasts this signalled the decline of fairground art (by considering fairground art as something that is either carved or painted by hand), but in terms of a visual impact on the fairground there was an embrace of modernism verging on futurism. The Sizzler now both proposed and offered pure movement as a modern expression of technology. The sleek adornment of lighting and reflective metal sheeting became part of the fairground aesthetic which happily mixes styles and references from all periods (figures 3.5 and 3.6). The Twist briefly landed upon a minor movie *Twister* (1996) allowing a rebranding of rides produced from 1996 onwards, and continues as a hybrid title of Twist/Twister/Sizzler.⁷



Figure 3.4 – Sizzler Twist, 1980s, photograph Ian Trowell

This excursion of change and reinvention via the Twist ride was prompted by the observation that it appeared modern and exciting to a respondent when she cast her mind back to her clearest memories of the fairground. I have used the Twist to show how a first-order-object (fairground ride in this case) can evolve at the paradigmatic and syntagmatic levels to offer decades of thrill, and how aspects of appearance and aesthetic endeavour also evolve to push out old styles and bring in new ones. Our respondent ends her short recollection by stating

simulated, such as on a Speedway with motorcycle mounts). The Whip did not require clever disguise and ‘the imagery was irrelevant to the nature of the ride and the simplicity of the cars, whose shape did not pretend to be anything else than a round metal tub’.

⁷ *Twister* contributed towards a franchised theme park ride, an arena where official franchising works at an insidious level. Films are made with action scenes that lend themselves to amusement park rides (think of the mine train scene in *Raiders of the Lost Ark*), whilst the amusement park ride Pirates of the Caribbean eventually led to a film franchise. See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Twister...Ride_it_Out (accessed 4 July 2017) for history of Twister ride replacing Ghostbusters Spooktacular and then being replaced by a ride based upon a talk show.

that she still attends the fair to see the changes, and is fascinated by the LED lights. Though it fittingly aligns with the progress of the Twist towards an illuminated spectacle of modernity, this is primarily an observation about her own ageing process and relationship to the fair. This forms the next section of this chapter.



Figure 3.5 – Twister Twist, 2000, photograph Ian Trowell



Figure 3.6 – Twister Twist, 2000, photograph Ian Trowell

The ageing fairground subject

Figures 3.7a-c show Oxford St Giles Fair around 1960.⁸ Whilst I acknowledge that certain fairs still attract an audience of all ages, the predominant audience now consists of teenagers sampling the thrill rides and small children brought along by their parents to enjoy the games and juvenile rides which are unequivocally branded to popular cartoon franchises. What is evident in the Oxford photographs is a mixed age of people of both genders, something that is uncommon in the modern fair.⁹ Many respondents in my research felt left behind by the fairground as a natural occurrence, though still attended aspects such as the opening ceremony. The fairground ride after the 1980s set a new standard in thrill and velocity, signalling the bravest to perform their courage. Rides became gigantic structures that emerged as engineering projects to focus equally on height, force and complex extremity of movement, and the ability to be transported and built up using new methods. As the rides became the realm of the teenagers due to their white-knuckle nature, the attributes of the fairground in terms of music and artwork catered increasingly for this market.

A couple in their 80s at King's Lynn expressed their interest whilst acknowledging that the rides were not for them: 'We've come to see the opening ceremony, heard about it on Radio Norfolk. The new super-doooper rides sounded interesting'. As they spoke the propeller-like structure of the giant Booster began to turn, and one of the respondents gestured and exclaimed: 'It's going, my God'. A respondent at Loughborough (female, 70s) was forthright about how she couldn't engage the fairground: 'I went on the Ghost Train five years ago, younger people took me. I feel too old to visit now'. However, a respondent (female, 70s) with grandchildren felt able to continue visiting: 'I still come down with friends, sometimes with grandchildren. I hope it never finishes', while a Loughborough couple in their 80s who met at the fair still visit: 'We still come, the memories come flooding back'.

Even respondents from the enthusiast milieu tire of the modernising fairground, stating here both a lack of interest in the modern and a physiology unable to cope with fast and spinning rides:

At the moment I've lost interest in wandering around fairs with a camera, it all seems to be 'same old, same old' and you can only take so many pictures of the same thing, and I'm even considering giving Goose Fair a miss this year. Partly contributing to this is things don't seem as interesting as they used to be, most loads are now anonymous artics, very few lorries are lettered or decorated, most seeming to be white or grey, I just wished I'd spent more time in the 80s & 90s around the grounds. Just looking at the old pictures from Richard Furniss & Chris Russell (digitised collections on a fans forum) shows just how much things have changed, and from the enthusiast view possibly not for the better. Not only that but old age is catching up and I can't go on the rides now without feeling ill.¹⁰

A role of the heritage fairground is to offer a space for these ageing fans of the fairground to become young again, and we see such occurrences in the heritage chapters that follow. This is an aspect of the difficult fun of the thesis, in that the past is engaged not solely as an

⁸ They come from the NFA Lionel Bathe Collection which I catalogued. None of the negatives were labelled however a diary of Bathe's travels allowed some images to be located and dated.

⁹ See interviews with Jack Schofield (chapter 6) and Joby Carter (chapter 7) for discussion on this.

¹⁰ Email correspondence, male fairground enthusiast, 50s.

authorised set of objects and discourse that tell an edifying and pedagogic story but often as a time and space shift back to a younger self.



Figures 3.7a-c – 1960 crowd scenes, photographs Lionel Bathe / copyright NFA

Imprinted affects and cultural hybridity

I have indicated the importance of music with Walker's description of the Waltzer ride doubling as a nightclub space in chapter 2, and it is clear from the above that music is both integral and also changing within the fairground. Further testimony offers an insight into the complex relationship between the fairground, the sound of the fairground (heard as noise or music), and the importance of music as a subcultural identifier.

Firstly, the fairground is identified as a place where music can be heard per se, an opportunity that is denied either by social codes in the time of early subcultures, or by age-specific barriers in the modern age of clubs and raves. The fairground of the 1950s and 1960s on occasion provided what could be considered as a replica of the official spaces of subcultural music consumption, with the structures of the rides such as the Waltzer and Dodgems acting as parallels of dancehalls, but allowing a younger audience to participate. Chambers (1985: 72) details how many youth clubs would have strict rules expressing 'No Jiving, No Rock'n'Roll', emphasising the barriers that the young would face in experiencing this music. *World's Fair* newspaper of 28 May 1955 reports the practice of rock and roll dancing on and around a fair ride, whilst the notebooks of Jack Leeson kept at the NFA mention Dodgem tracks being used as a venue for dancing competitions as a precursor to the fair opening.

A respondent at King's Lynn (male, 50s) recalled how the music of his youth was hard to track down and the fairground offered a rare chance, a 'good place to hear music not heard otherwise, apart from Radio Luxembourg there was nowhere else to hear it'. This is confirmed by Hanna (1988) who summarises his life as a teenager in search of the new sounds:

The BBC still had the ghost of its puritanical founder Lord Reith hovering over it and virtually ignored Rock and Roll completely. Radio Luxembourg played lots of it but the signal was weak and subject to constant fading and interference. The cafes and milk bars had juke boxes but usually the wick was turned down by the proprietor if we selected too many rocking discs.

Richard Hoggart, in his key work *Uses of Literacy*, identifies the fairground as part of his litany of aspects of attack on working class cultural standards, drawing on the demise of the carved horse as a precursor to his distrust of modernism and imported American pop culture. Music is implicated here, with Hoggart bemoaning the replacement of old organs with 'bigger and louder relay systems'. However, for the visitor to the fairground, this sound was irresistible.

The early links between subcultures and inter-urban spaces is relatively unexplored, though Gelder (2007: 3) sets out what he describes as a set of 'cultural logics' for subcultures and includes the suggestion that 'subcultures generally come together outside of the domestic sphere, away from home and family'. Certain spaces became associated with certain subcultures (mods in the fashionable café and bar, bikers in the 'greasy spoon' café, teds in the dance hall, hallowed nightclubs for the northern soul scene), but the subcultural space of the fairground remains in question. Furthermore, the fairground as an unclaimed subcultural space invites a region of dispute and territoriality, a further trait identified in Gelder's logic (above). In the same way that the British seaside emerged as an arena for numerous elaborately staged and highly theatrical battles between mods and rockers, the fairground saw a handful of replica clashes. Cohen (1972) lists the key battles in the mods-rockers dispute and includes Woking Fair (May 1964) as a recorded fracas, whilst the *World's Fair* lists an outbreak

of violence between teddy boys and the fair itself at Abington Park, Northampton amidst the more regular reports of trouble at seaside amusement parks.¹¹

Certain respondents specified how the music is enervated on the fairground, a general effect that they do not relate to a particular ride or aspect. The sound of the fairground extends the physical border, and a respondent at King's Lynn (male, 60s) impressed upon me how this sound still excites him: 'I hear the music and my adrenalin still starts pumping'.¹² Another King's Lynn respondent (male, 70s) simply states how hearing '1960s music, Roy Orbison' on the fairground 'made people go bananas, you got goose-bumps'. This enjoyment of the music extends into the modern period, a teenager at Stamford stated that the fairground offered her 'old club music, up to date club sounds, my music', whilst an older respondent (male, 50s) felt that the fairground made 'modern music sound good, creating a frenzy'.

Strong and more concise memories are also formed, with ride types and specific songs combining. A fairground enthusiast (male, 50s) recalls his time as a young boy and a teenager:

The first Waltzer I ever rode on was Michael Albert Collins' machine at Rotherham Statts in 1969. The machine was new that year and stood out because it just looked so colourful and clean. It was an amazing ride that Friday night to 'Sugar Sugar' by The Archies. 'Sugar Sugar' was playing on virtually every machine that night ... Whenever I hear 'Nutbush City Limits' by Ike & Tina Turner or 'That Lady' by The Isley Brothers I'm immediately transported back to riding Marshall Waddington's Speedway in about 1972 or 73, with the exotic blue lights around the arched bottom edge of the rounding boards flashing away, and a strobe enhancing the experience of speed. Inside the front quarterings was 'Patrons Ride At Own Risk' which made the ride that bit more exciting and dangerous. Magic really.

These vivid memories start to link aspects of the machine in terms of motion or special effects (lighting, decoration) with certain pieces of music or genres. Swinbank (2000: 12) returns to the scene of the Waltzer:

Local teenagers would hang around the steps of the Waltzer mesmerised by the flashing lights and listening to all the great records. 'Shout' by Lulu and 'It's all Over Now' by the Rolling Stones. Every record was a classic and you would think they had been recorded with the fairground in mind.

This is a scene confirmed with a respondent (male, 60s) who corresponded via email about his general memories of the fairground in the 1950s and 1960s:

When Rock and Roll first came on the scene in the 1950s the ONLY place you could hear Little Richard, Buddy Holly, Chuck Berry, Elvis Presley, Gene Vincent and Eddie Cochran at loud decibel levels was at the fairground and we would all dance around the edge of the Waltzers

The fairground offers a way of hearing that adds a unique quality to listening to music, even if those particular songs then gain a specific resonance on the fairground. This combines aspects that are fixed to the fairground (the soundscape) alongside aspects that change rapidly (songs,

¹¹ 'Showmen thrash teddy boys', *World's Fair*, 20 August 1960, p1, 'Weather and gangs mar the Easter opening', *World's Fair*, 4 April 1970, p1, refers to 'gangs of skinheads and greasers terrorising holidaymakers on the seafront and keeping the police busy'.

¹² See chapter 2 for testimony on the sound of the fairground extending the spatial enclosure of the fairground.

genres), a complex flux that can often give heritage a contingent and epiphenomenal character.

The soundscape of the fairground initially consists of an overlay between various sources of sound including music, the exaggerated noise of machinery, amplified electronic special effects and the human voice as shouting and screaming (from the point of view of the punters) and 'bawling' (from the showmen), constantly backgrounded by the hubbub of raised voices in excited conversation. These source sounds are then experienced in a number of translating modes - as accumulation towards homogenous cacophony (music heard with other music for example), as combination towards heterogeneous cacophony (different source sounds together) and as 'sound-in-motion' whilst being hurled in all directions on a speeding and twisting fairground ride.¹³ The experience of listening to music on the fairground is phenomenologically complex when considered at the level of the totality of the bounded fairground itself.

Consequently, as a hearing experience the fairground offers music on two levels; as part of complex and always changing cacophony on the fairground itself, and as an outlay of specific music on the individual rides. This 'stripping out' of music from a proposed total soundscape of more-than-music and destroyed purity of transmission towards a singularity of sound (a piece of recognised music) is then immediately counteracted with a 'building up' at the level of listening and responding.

DeNora (2008: 78) introduces the idea of entrainment in which we take the rhythm of the music into our bodies and respond by tapping our fingers and stamping our feet, and this activity is expanded on a fairground ride such as the Ark Speedway or Waltzer. A crowd on a ride gathers on the wooden gangways forming a circumference within the enclosure (known as gratings) to add to the atmosphere by shouting, singing, clapping, stamping and dancing. In addition, the operator of the ride provides cues to encourage collective shouts, screams and the raising of hands such that nuances between ride types develop to further entrainment. The Ark Speedway provides simulative motorbikes that resonate with Willis (1978: 72), who suggests homologies between rock and roll music, rhythm and riding a motorbike. The motion of the ride merges with the expressive content of the songs (lyrics and general sounds) such that the narrative of records can be acted out by the punter on the ride.¹⁴ Meanwhile, the Waltzer came to prominence with the rise of euphoric and polyrhythmic disco music, invoking

¹³ There is also the strange sound of the 'slowing down of the music when the knife was engaged to start the ride.' (Lovell 1989), a key memory reported by numerous fairground enthusiasts. This is the moment when the power shared to operate the whole ride (music, lights, motion) is diverted to the task of starting the motion of the ride, meaning that the lights dim and flicker and the turntable labours and slows the music down by a few rpms.

¹⁴ Narrative includes classic finding/losing love stories, epiphanic deliverance within a scene (Northern Soul narratives about finding true destiny 'out on the floor') as well as stories of the motorbike itself (Shangri Las 'Leader of the Pack' being a good example). The Ark Speedway also worked well with many glam records on the popular axis (Sweet and Mud as opposed to arty glam of Roxy Music) which played with a motorbike theme, allowing an unexpected popularity of some heavy metal records on the ride. Chambers (1985: 122) identifies 'the road as a central metaphor' in heavy metal. A popular song played on the Speedway Ark was Hawkwind's 'Silver Machine' (1972) which also saw a quick succession of rereleasing in 1976 and 1978. The track is post-hoc claimed as proto-punk sound, with its initial situating slightly outside of both the heavy rock and over-elaborate prog genres.

pure abandon and a randomised (but frenetic) motion providing 'anti-structure' to the Ark Speedway's cool and linear narrative.

The soundscape varies whilst the fairground is open, with set patterns determined by the time of day, around the crossing over into the night-time trade as a kind of curfew when 'the rides get a bit faster and the music gets louder' (Lovell 1989).¹⁵ In the past this would have been rock and roll music or 1970s disco sounds: in the current era it means niche genres of club music with a more beat driven mentality of bass and kick drums. The Waltzer is emblazoned with a slogan across the front of its proscenium to attract custom, and this will often refer to the prowess and power of its sound capabilities: 'Only one can rule the night' or 'Waltz around to the best sounds in town'. Whilst it is a common misconception that twice the sound makes twice the volume, I can safely state that the fairground is a loud environment due to the individual volumes of the competing sound systems.

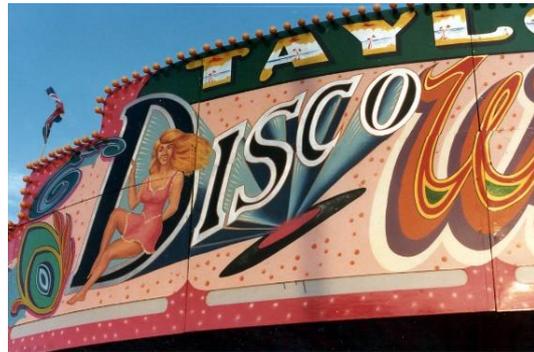
Emerging subcultural artwork

As the fairground became teenage-oriented, and as music began to define the experience in a more polymorphous and vibrant fashion, the visual identity of the fairground switched to align itself with the new pop culture and subcultural iconography.

Prior to these fast machines, the heavy standing top roundabouts developed as Steam Switchbacks (in the steam era) and then as electric Scenic Railways utilised an abundance of carved work finished in opulent gold. In the absence of popular culture this decoration reflected classic art reproduced for the masses, the rides resembling gin palaces and decorative public houses, drawing on an 'aspirational baroque' with examples of rococo, art nouveau and German Jugendstil motifs (Weedon and Ward 1981: 152). A painted style merged with the carved excess, rounding boards and shutters depicted English rural and seaside scenes or dense jungle scenes with labyrinthine foliage and lurking beasts. The first generation of painted fast rides looked to artists such as Fred Fowle, who began to set new standards in combining aspects of everyday imagery from films, pop music and packaging into designs repeated on the cars and panels of these circular machines. Fowle worked on many levels with his magpie's eye to detect snippets of lettering and design in the post-war visual surplus of advertising and popular culture. He reworked these designs and words into the fairground expressing multiple levels of iconicity. Reluctant to paint figurative work, Fowle instead engaged the subcultural scenes by plundering phrases from rock'n'roll, mod and psychedelic culture, and designing lettering styles that had synaesthetic qualities.

Figurative work, under the guise of Sid Farmer, engaged the music scene with Farmer initially painting dancing scenes of the public as waltzing partygoers, with cascading balloons and streamers mixed with dancing couples. Weedon and Ward (1981: 253) situates Farmer's circa 1956 decoration and subsequent naming of William Codona's Ark Speedway with imagery of Bill Haley and the Comets as the first example of figurative iconography from the subcultural domain, linking the artwork to signify something beyond music and represent 'potent images of this emergent subculture'. The ride was simply called *Rock'n'Roll*, with the artist applying the established techniques of perspective to frame the singer and his musicians in a dynamic

¹⁵ This might explain the lack of subcultural youth in Figures 3.7a-c.



Figures 3.8a-h – subcultural references, photographs Ian Trowell

tableau across the front of the ride to be complemented by scenes of energetic dancing on each of the shutters.

These vibrant aspects of artwork, shown as a diachronic selection in figures 3.8a-h, emerge as important examples of second-order-objects (decorative object-about-object), but attain a triangle of signification. There is a synecdoche aspect with the part (artwork) referring to the whole (ride), a metonymic aspect with the artwork exhibiting its contiguity to the music scene (without referring to the fairground), and a metaphoric aspect with the music invoked through the ride. As we will see in the chapters that follow, this imagery and association has a strong hold in the heritage sector.

Chapter 4 – A Heritage Excursion

This chapter introduces the idea of fairground heritage as visitor attraction through a preliminary series of micro case studies – considered as a ‘furrow’ - that precedes the categorised case studies proper. It also sets out the link between farming, the fairground and vernacular exhibition, and investigates the Eastern England landscape as a natural site of fairground heritage through this connection. This proposal and furrow forms an alternative narrative bridgehead into the chapters that follow, themselves each having farming connections (museums set up by farmers or on farms, steam rallies as agricultural spectacle).

Whilst the link between farming and preservation/display culture is touched upon by Samuel (1994: 249) as simply a point of observation, Wilson (2002) offers a passionate cry from an entrenched situated position to prioritise the world of Eastern England, the author previously involved in setting up one of the numerous agricultural museums in the region.¹ Wilson outlines the importance of farming to the region, and emphasises how such an occupation thoroughly engages the farmer. It is from this intensified engagement that vernacular museums emerge, wishing to tell a story through machines and objects. Wilson admits that ‘the material fascinates some, but is a complete mystery to others’ (10). What I will now do is track a similar journey east to plot emergent museums, the shared practice of fetishizing and displaying increasingly granular parts of equipment and machines, and the spurious audience strategy of what I call a ‘farmyard legibility’. In addition, the link to the fairground is cemented, with this crossover seen most prominently with the company Savages of King’s Lynn in the latter half of the 19th century. This company moved from being a pioneering agricultural manufacturer in the centre of the large-scale and industrially-minded farming community, to positioning themselves at the forefront of the fairground manufacturing business in terms of innovation, ingenuity and volume of production. The tradition of the farmer as eventual curator also forges a strong dynamic that obviously resonates in these collections - drawing on the aforementioned link between the agricultural object and fairground object as having coherence in contiguity, the tradition for storing, recycling, rebuilding and tinkering, and the natural tendency to group such objects in homogenous groups (to facilitate recycling).

The terms Eastern Counties, East of England and East Anglia are all somewhat flexible and overlapping, though it is generally taken to be the farming flatland that is principally centred on Cambridgeshire, Norfolk and Suffolk, often including the southern and eastern edges of Lincolnshire. They are formulated more as type of terrain than as a cluster of places, and this remote and vast farming region of reclaimed fen and sea areas is then associated with a dedicated agricultural tradition giving rise to certain characteristics and ways of life. As the regional photographer Justin Partyka (2004: 8) quotes, the old East Anglian proverb runs: ‘A farmer should live as though he were going to die tomorrow; but he should farm as though he were going to live forever’. This proverb can be taken as a basis for understanding how the terrain, the industry and the individual farmer comes in to being as a connected grouping of

¹ Museum of Lincolnshire Life established 1960s, Museum of East Anglian Life established 1967, Norfolk Rural Life Museum established 1976, Cambridgeshire Farmland Museum established 1994; all of these pioneered by private collectors with fascination for rural means and methods.

concepts, and how this is further connected to the industrial fairground and its heritage tendencies and strategies. It is a complex mix of landscapes, movement, lives and characters.

The Eastern Counties are roughly delineated from the rump of the UK by the original A1 road, though this road itself has a history that sees it almost merge into the esoteric character of the region it sets out to demarcate. The original A1 road formed one of the principal spines of the country, running out of North London through Hertfordshire, Cambridgeshire and then skirting the Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire border before heading up to the North proper.² With the opening of the M1 through the 1960s the A1 became annexed in its lower regions, and subsequently a string of small businesses, rest stops, guest houses converted from old coaching inns and food outlets quickly withered and went into decline. These no longer functioning buildings and services marked out much of the road as it bordered the Eastern Counties, such that the road itself felt slightly alien and forsaken.

The major road into the Eastern Counties when approaching from the northern aspect of the A1 is to turn off at the large offset junction with the A17 on the eastern edge of Newark. The road is long and straight and drives into the heart of the Eastern Counties, quickly despatching signs of the urban nexus with Newark Showground passed after a mile or so. This venue is on the edgelands of the Eastern Counties but serves as a functioning space for various semi-agricultural pursuits such as hot-rod shows and truck-fests, paintballing extravaganzas, retro music festivals and giant antiques markets. The A17 then ploughs through typical Eastern Counties terrain; desolate houses and farmsteads strung out along the road and battered by the relentless exposure and wind. Signs of activity are seldom glimpsed and people seem bunkered in such that the vernacular arrangements litter the fields and large gardens. Here are worn and weathered surfaces etched onto redundant signs and reclaimed vehicles and portable structures. There is a post-apocalyptic and survivalist aura, with run-down sheds, seemingly nuclear-proof shipping containers alongside collapsed caravans, curtain-side lorry trailers flapping in the wind, sunken tractors and abandoned and dilapidated boats seemingly miles from any water. The land here is flat and worked, with seldom a hedgerow and large constellations of industrial sized greenhouses.

Partyka's calling upon the proverb of the East Anglian farmer sets the tone for his own photographic project, studying down at heel farmers forced to move into mobile homes alongside their deteriorating farmhouses, with surplus belongings piled up and spoilt by the excoriating Russian winds and ever-present wetness that threatens to rise up from the reclaimed waterscape. He struggles with the contradiction forged by the romanticisation of the Norfolk and Suffolk landscape by painters such as Constable, Gainsborough and the Norwich School of landscape painters, and the intense poverty and brutality of exposure he witnesses in the here and now. His intention is to capture the noble farming pictures of P.H. Emerson and his 'naturalistic photography' explored between 1885 and 1893 (figures 4.1a-b) that resonate with the heroic pictures of the landscape tradition.³ Whilst Partyka doesn't intrude and record the pitiful conditions prevalent in his 2004 study, he fixes his work on the farming traditions

² Moran (2009: 71) notes that the A1, and other motorways in general, signpost a generic north, south and west but never an east.

³ See Matless (2014: 62-7, 164) for a cultural geographic reading of Emerson.



Figures 4.1a-b - P.H. Emerson's evocative photographs of Norfolk farming, late 1800s. 'Coming home from the marshes' and 'Ricking the reed' (1886) source British Library / public domain images



Figures 4.2a-b - Justin Partyka's East Anglians series, 2004 / copyright Justin Partyka

whilst capturing the observable characteristics and essence of the workers: dirty overalls and tattered tweed jackets crusted from years of hard labour, a fierce local dialect and range of phrases, and an intense distrust of strangers (figures 4.2a-b), emphasising the aura of backwardness that can be associated with the region.⁴ In his article he recalls observing a number of farm sales whereby old tat was keenly surveyed and traded from farmer to farmer,

⁴ Hill (2016: 144) gives a historical perspective on this.

picking out the example of a set of rusted old chain harrows being sold for the miserly auction price of five pounds. This slight observation is key in my own research that is set out in this chapter, the making precious of archaic and seemingly useless agricultural remnants.

Another Eastern Counties photographer, Mark Cator, also claims a lineage to P.H. Emerson with his project *Hinterlands* published in 2005, and offers a glimpse of these fetishized agricultural remnants. Cator's work is strikingly different to Partyka on both a pictorial and conceptual level. Drawing on the interdisciplinary architectural theorist Giuliana Bruno, he pursues an 'intertextual terrain of passage' and secretes visual clues of sequence within his images. The Emerson link is thus a ghostly demarcation, with Cator tending to avoid the presence of people in his images but always including a trace of their presence past (and to come). Much of Cator's work depicts signs of activity and flow, a going, gone and elsewhere compared to Partyka's subjects that are seemingly rooted into the soil. Whilst Cator has several images on the Yare River close to Strumpshaw (detailed below) it is his image entitled *Juby's Farm, Belaugh* that I wish to include here (figure 4.3). Various farm implements are positioned in a vaguely structured cluster that give them an appearance of falling into the outer remits of a dyspraxic rendering of 'sculpture in the expanded field' defined by Krauss (1986). These objects hold a strange attraction and migrate into the vernacular museum that I now cover.



Figure 4.3 - Juby's Farm by Mark Cator, 2005 / copyright Mark Cator

Rundles of New Bolingbroke

J.H. Rundle Limited (or Rundles) is a long established agricultural engineering company based in New Bolingbroke, in the Lincolnshire district of East Lindsey. The village is formed along a single road (Main Road) with flat fenland either side creating a continuous and uniform vista of farmed fields meeting an open sky. The fields contain drainage systems, invisible from a glance to the left or the right, but forming a rectilinear system of slightly offset grids and shapes resembling a neo-geo artwork when seen in plan view (figure 4.4). The village lies between the more significant east-west through roads; the A158 which links South Yorkshire, via Lincoln and Horncastle, to the popular holiday destination of Skegness, and the A52, linking the East Midlands cities of Derby and Nottingham via Grantham to Boston and an upward sweep into Skegness. Up until 1970 the village was served by the evocatively named 'Kirkstead and Little Steeping Railway', which was known locally as the 'New Line'. This linked to the hub station Woodhall Junction, a remote but once principal node in a triplicate of local railways, all now disused.⁵ New Bolingbroke is not a place frequented, or even passed through, by tourists.

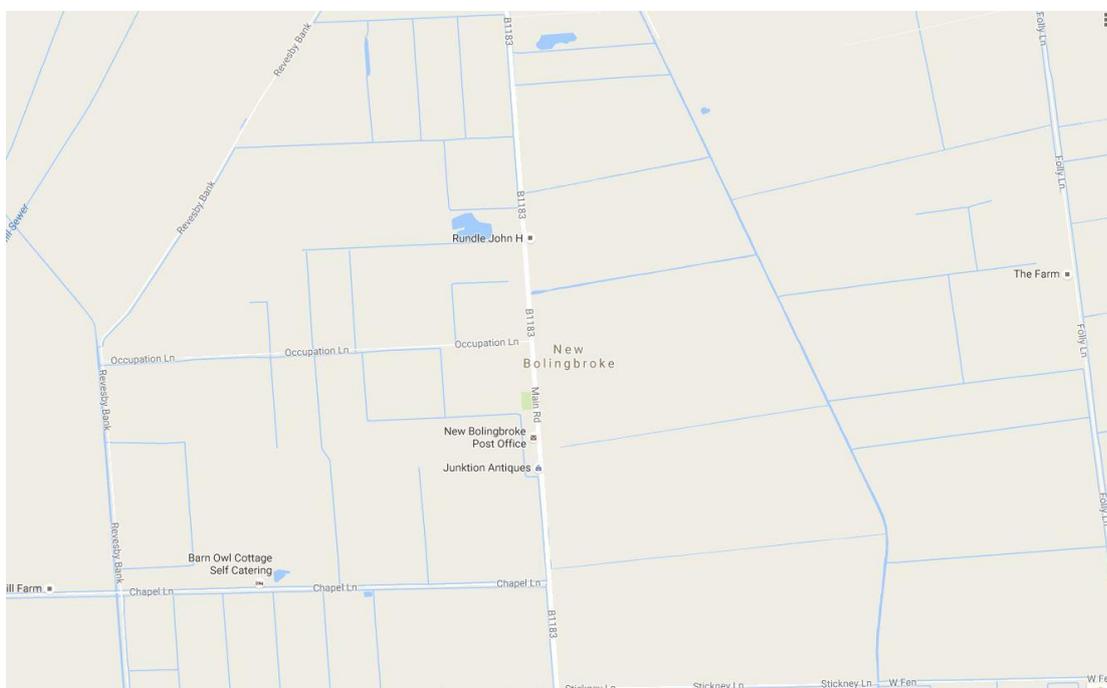


Figure 4.4 - New Bolingbroke, Lincolnshire, Google Maps

Rundles was formed in 1913 by John H. Rundle, the son of the local vicar. It was built upon by his son, who shared the same name, and is currently managed by the next generation; Ken, Alan, Jack and Sheila. The company, its premises and habitus is very much in the agricultural vernacular that I wish to develop here as a precursor to both the fairground museum and steam rally. The current Rundles conform and contradict aspects of the stereotypes of staid farmers that I set out above. All of the staff are robust in appearance and demeanour, are generally clothed in overalls bearing the oil stain medals of tinkering, commitment and

⁵ J.B. Priestley makes the Eastern Counties his last call, forming the penultimate chapter in his *English Journey* before the final leg back to London. For Priestley, this category begins with a trip to Beverley and Hull where some sense of continuity with what has been encountered previously is maintained. A sense of change is noted when he departs Hull to head for Lincoln and then Boston, with Priestley confounded by a train that seems to take forever to travel what appears to be a short distance.

virtuosity, but in contrast to the reticent and untrusting character suggested by Partyka, the Rundles are incredibly welcoming and communicative.



Figure 4.5 - Rundles homepage, September 2016

The company embody the technology transfer between agriculture and fairgrounds. Their principal business was steam haulage and this evolved to threshing equipment and more specific agricultural engineering services. Through an awareness of modernising techniques of agriculture Rundles engaged various new methods such as industrial corn drying in the 1960s, allowing their expertise and services to expand within the specific agricultural remit. Their fairground work evolved principally through Ken Rundle who provides services as a fairground inspector and also undertakes engineering jobs, conversions and refits on in-situ fairground rides (for example, the restoration of the Ark at Strumpshaw Hall - discussed below - was undertaken by Ken Rundle). In recent years the company has started building new Gallopers with a traditional look and feel, and also taken on disused rides for renovation and selling on. As the screen grab from their website shows (figure 4.5), the company is an agricultural engineering service with the prominent image of the motor taking pride of place on the homepage, however the fairground angle is evident through the letterhead of the company and clickable links.

As well as embodying the working crossover between agriculture and fairgrounds, from around 2010 Rundles started to open up their premises to interested enthusiasts with a 'steam up' day in October. This move towards exhibition culture stems from a passion for collecting, treasuring and preserving haulage engines from the company's own dynasty, and a recognition that others may well have an interest in this. At the same time the open days allow an uncensored view into the working practices of the company, and show how the agricultural tradition of salvaging, storing, classifying and re-using materials, parts and objects comes to be. Furthermore, by simply presenting much of the premises 'as it is' and allowing visitors to walk around the various yards and sheds the practice of vernacular curating begins to establish itself, and this is something that resonates and unfolds as a narrative through the micro case studies in this chapter and some of the larger collections in the following chapters.



Figures 4.6a-e - Fairground objects at Rundles, October 2015, photographs Ian Trowell

My visit to the 'steam up' was undertaken in October 2015 on a bright and busy autumn day. The wider range of attractions include a number of vintage engines in steam within courtyard areas, a large barn turned over for model and picture displays, and a makeshift area for serving refreshments, however I wish to focus on the vernacular groupings of various objects moving through different categories of use. The open day allows visitors to ramble through overgrown encampments containing roughly homogenous objects in various states of decay. Firstly, figures 4.6a-e show various clearly definable fairground artefacts collected and stored in accumulative systems that have since been neglected such that grass and other plants are pushing through. These complete and identifiable parts of fairground rides are second-order-objects in the schematic introduced in chapter 2. Furthermore, they have a specific status of objects-within-objects meaning that the object is appreciable as an artefact within the field of study (fairground history) but is part of a greater whole. Reaching these objects was difficult and involved balancing on various metal girders and sheets that were hidden by the immediate undergrowth.

The main image shows a fibre-glass generic vintage car that was once part of a fairground or amusement park toy-set that offered a glimpse of nostalgic reverie and a ride for children who most likely would relate to such objects through mediated children's television programmes. The smaller images show bright plastic Waltzer tubs in front of subsiding fibre-glass train engines, the dense nose-to-tail stacking of some rocket ships, a heavily weathered fibre-glass ladybird carriage and a stowed away giant boot that has devolved to a uniform colour resembling a cloying wet earth.

These seemingly abandoned fairground objects offer a magical quality to the fairground enthusiast crowd who flock to the premises on the open days. They resemble the fairground objects that might be found in showman's winter quarters, such that showmen have a tendency to simply store redundant objects in the hope of re-using them someday, or possibly as a tactile memorabilia for something that has served themselves or their forebears well as an earner on the fairground. These objects represent something of a holy grail to many enthusiasts who could get a glimpse of the past or some kind of 'proof' of the association of that object with that showman (and so rigidly fix an aspect of historical research). However, the showman's winter quarters are generally out of bounds and out of view, even to enthusiasts, so the chance to crawl around a space like Rundles offers the closest thing. This wilderness aestheticized rummaging is clearly a pleasure that doesn't easily transfer from the enthusiast to a more general audience, but the practice of bringing out derelict and forlorn objects into a more hospitable space (a small museum or a rally field) is a common occurrence.⁶

Moving from grouped but identifiable whole objects of the fairground I now wish to consider the grouped parts of things (possibly no longer identifiable) organised through their material substance or shape. Again, the categorisation I introduce in chapter 2 would class these as sub-

⁶ A possible exception to this limited specialist interest would be a further, but distinct, micro-community who seek out and share the aestheticising of abandoned amusement parks and the wider 'ruin-porn' movement. This trend was instigated by the eerie photographs of the abandoned amusement park in the vicinity of the Chernobyl disaster, and has extended into more general images of derelict parks. Photographic work tends to focus on a sharp contrast between the pleasurable intent of an object and its change through neglect and exposure to the elements to create something connoting fear and discomfort.

objects, being the bits of metal, fibre-glass or even the paint itself as flakes or residue. The simplest way to elucidate the difference between the second-order-object (such as a ladybird carriage) and the sub-object (such as a metal pole) is that the former will directly invoke the first-order-object of the fairground ride, whereas the latter will not easily be related back to a greater object. This is a sliding scale of subjectivities, such that (for example) an isolated cheese-wheel of a Chairplanes ride might, for some knowledgeable people, invoke the Chairplanes ride itself, whilst for others (including some enthusiasts) it remains some internal part of a generic machine. The vernacular curating of these sub-objects emerges with the practical arrangements of the objects and the introduction of an audience on the open days. Figures 4.7a-d shows metal as dispersed in various storage places, often exposed to the elements but grouped and waiting for a possible re-use. These objects are not public facing but the introduction of a specialist audience of fairground and mechanical device fans now offers a glimpse of a common practice and mindset of the Rundles work staff - keeping things on hand, over the decades, for a possible re-use. Certain sub-objects at certain times of productive specificity migrate to indoor spaces within the construction sheds, and may gain new labels indicative of their proposed re-use regimes. Figures 4.8a-d show examples of metal sub-objects recalled for re-use in the construction of Galloper sets.



Figures 4.7a-d - Metal objects outside at Rundles, October 2015, photographs Ian Trowell



Figures 4.8a-d - Metal objects recalled in use at Rundles, October 2015, photographs Ian Trowell

Strumpshaw Steam Museum

The collection of fairground, agricultural and steam heritage objects at Strumpshaw Hall stands at the other end of the Fens to Rundles, on the River Yare between Norwich and Great Yarmouth, parallel with the Wherry Line railway. The terrain is less bleak and uncompromising here, with organised tourist activities of birdwatching and boating prominent. The museum lies close to Buckenham station which garners a mention in Sebald's *Rings of Saturn* and the author's own train journey. Sebald's work is a complex piece of literature that exemplifies him as the 'militant elegist' (Sontag 2003: 80), drawing on Perquian techniques to enmesh various fictions within fictions drawn out by thoughts, observations and tactile objects handled that invite further explorations (a photograph in a book, a picture hung on a wall). Sebald's work is also intrinsically linked to the Eastern Counties, he walks various lines within its region describing what he sees, whilst his divergent thoughts that dwell upon an avalanche of catastrophes in recent history resonate with the remote rural landscape and eccentric characters he encounters.⁷ Near to Strumpshaw is the remarkable Cantley sugar beet factory and its 'belching smokestack sitting in a green field like a steamer at a wharf' (Sebald 2002: 29) catching the eye of the writer (figures 4.9a-b).⁸

⁷ You are left to decide whether the (psycho) geography of the region provokes such thoughts or whether it perseveres (but ultimately fails) in allaying such thoughts; the complicity is ambivalent. Cultural geographer David Matless (2014: 173-4) uses the same piece of writing as a way into an aspect of his own work.

⁸ See Matless (2014: 28) for a further reading of Cantley.



Figures 4.9a-b – Cantley sugar beet factory (Eastern Daily Press / copyright James Bass) and Turner’s The Fighting Temeraire (National Gallery / public domain image)

Strumpshaw’s website includes a history of the museum and introduces three generations of the Key family.⁹ Wesley, the founder of the museum, is described as ‘an extraordinary man, a farmer, agricultural engineer, pilot and entrepreneur’, again cementing the link between the region, the agricultural background, the transfer of technology into other areas of invention, the link to the fairground, and finally the vernacular culture of curating of exhibition (figure 4.10). Wesley Key’s interest in steam traction is dated back to the 1950s when, at the age of 15, he purchased his first engine for his premises at North Walsham. The 15 mile move to Strumpshaw is not dated, but the website claims that a large building was constructed for storage and opened as a public facing resource in 1964, with the setting up of an annual steam rally in 1970.¹⁰ Wesley’s son James Key is credited with bringing in ‘fairground equipment and memorabilia’ and the addition of a new building due to this expansion and diversification is built by James and his sister Kiki. The purchase of the large Orton and Sooner Ark is made around this time (not precisely dated on the website) and it appeared that James’ intention was to have this Ark up and running. Sadly, this was not to be in James’ lifetime, and the Ark would not operate as a bona fide fairground machine until 2016 under the guidance of William, the next generation of the Key family (figure 4.11).

The Ark at Strumpshaw was purchased in the winter of 1996, along with a Lakin Skid (or Swirl) that has deep roots in the region. This Skid was new in 1939 for the premier East Anglia fairground family of the Thurstons, with this example being the second of three Lakin Skids travelled by Stanley Thurston (a fourth was travelled by Charles Thurston).¹¹ It then passed on to the amusement park at nearby Great Yarmouth in 1944, remaining there for nearly 40 years, to be sold to London showman Albert Boyd in the 1980s and eventually purchased for Strumpshaw. Restoring a machine such as a Skid to operating standards is very time-consuming and expensive, and it is suggested amongst fairground enthusiasts that the ride was worked to near exhaustion by the Boyd family - thus the restoration was never completed and the project abandoned in 2013. In contrast, the restoration of the Ark has been more resilient and persistent with it finally completed through the crucial interaction of historical

⁹ See <http://www.strumpshawsteammuseum.co.uk/about> (accessed 4 November 2016).

¹⁰ The move from farming and engineering at North Walsham to Strumpshaw was a marriage into the wealthy owners of the estate, the Holmes family (from personal interview October 2016).

¹¹ Author’s research notes into history of platform rides.

fairground passion and engineering expertise of Ken Rundle, linking the instances of Rundles and Strumpshaw through a physical object as well as a set of isometric points of interest and



Figure 4.10 - Wesley Key with the original museum, photograph Strumpshaw website



Figure 4.11 - William Key, photograph Strumpshaw website

pedigree. The Ark is a rare five-hill Orton and Spooner machine, with around 15 examples built but most of them being converted to four-hill machines.¹² The Ark was built in 1932 and had spent over half a century with the London-based Presland family, arriving at Strumpshaw after a short spell in store with another preservationist.¹³ Its official return into working service was celebrated with a large cake covered in white icing and mounted with a photograph of the Ark and decorative fairground blue piped cream. My underestimating the time taken to drive to Strumpshaw, a common problem when driving east, meant that I arrived slightly late and the

¹² Five hills (and five dips) in one revolution gave a very vigorous ride that was not in suiting to all punters.

¹³ *Platform* number 125 (August 2016) has a short feature on the ride.

cake had been partially demolished (figure 4.12). The photograph that adorned the top had been placed on the foil base and the congratulations message that had been carefully applied to the cake's surface now resembled the deconstructed and erased verbal structures of the *Tel Quel* poet Denis Roche, leaving the late arrivals with the task of deciphering what might have once been there (but at least I got some cake).



Figure 4.12 - Cake (partially eaten) to celebrate opening of Ark, photograph Ian Trowell

The museum is only open Sundays and bank holidays, and occupies space in the old farm and purpose built shed style buildings sheltered from the main hall by groups of dense trees (figure 4.13). The hall itself, a listed building, is still the residence of the Key family and does not form part of the public facing attractions.¹⁴ Within the museum there is a small gift shop and cafeteria, though the whole set-up at the time of visiting gives the impression of something distinctly vernacular, driven out of enthusiasm rather than a structured plan of commercial, educational or touristic concerns. Without creating a full descriptive account of Strumpshaw Museum as a case study, it is these vernacular characteristics of display, and the blurring between the farm and the fairground, that I wish to emphasise.

Firstly, there is an amateur attempt at signage and information. This includes long texts detailing histories of objects driven by the passion of knowledge and collecting, and disregarding the ability of a text to achieve the grabbing and nurturing of either the disinterested or under-informed passing visitor. The common theme here is to reproduce large tracts of information giving a blow-by-blow provenance of an article as it passes through various states of ownership. This information is normally accompanied with poorly reproduced photographs showing the same object in plain view at various points in its history. Display

¹⁴ See <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1051497> (accessed 4 November 2016).



Figure 4.13 - Satellite view Strumpshaw Hall and Museum, Google Maps



Figures 4.14a-b - Information displays at Strumpshaw Hall, photographs Ian Trowell

boards are utilised with a sense of random recycling and salvaging, such that no consistent rhythm of visual engagement is attempted and various displays were either coming away from their boards, or the fabric of the board was coming away from its base (figures 4.14a-b).

The principal environment is a large farmyard shed built to modern agricultural construction standards, and the museum does little to affray this sense of bare functionality. Thus the cold feeling of stumbling in to a barn of hoarded or discarded junk objects, such as experienced at the Rundles open day, is never far away. There is little attempt to hide the bare functional structure of the interior of the building which is, in effect, simply the obverse of the exterior. Something built to stay upright and keep out the elements, and falling in line with the functionality of agricultural storage architecture. Roof girders and skylights dominate the perspective (figure 4.15), and objects are parked either side of a marked red line painted on the floor (possibly the only concession to a sense of being in a themed museum space). The restored Ark is positioned within the confines of the shed, built up wedged between various structural pillars and girders (figure 4.16).



Figure 4.15 - Main display avenue at Strumpshaw Hall, photograph Ian Trowell



Figure 4.16 - Newly operating Ark at Strumpshaw Hall, photograph Ian Trowell

Objects are grouped as either wall-mounted or floor-mounted and fall into generic sets that draw from a mix of the fairground, the farmyard, engineering and traction. There is no sense of curatorial didacticism such as you would expect in a more formal museum, neither is there a sense of affordance offered by the objects - instead we have a literal outpouring of the love and endeavours of the farmer turned engineer turned lover of the mechanical fairground. The grouping of things on the wall spaces seems to be a sign of itself and so no sense of flow from space to space, introduction to a new area or context is given, with the objects either positioned directly on the corrugated surface and whitewashed bricks, or pinned upon a mix of intermediate surfaces such as sheets of plywood. Figures 4.17a-e shows a selection of wall-mounted objects including spanners in what might have been an ascending order of size but now seems random with one or two missing,¹⁵ domestic product shop signs in a poor state (including the ubiquitous Brasso as the lifeblood of the vintage movement), something labelled as 'old horse bits' which applies to the device fitted into a horse's mouth to enable control to be gained (and not bits of old horses), glued on brass plate mementoes from steam rallies, and finally a cluster of functioning electrical switches and junctions left visible and so forming their own serendipitous display. This inclusion of electrical parts has a parallel with Andrea Fraser's performative work *Museum Highlights: A Gallery Talk* (1989) in which, as part of her strategy of institutional critique, she brought visitors attention to 'lighting fixtures, drinking fountains, security systems - in other words, to the museum's infrastructure, not the artworks on display' (Miller 2015: 92).

The floor (and ceiling) objects at Strumpshaw (figures 4.18a-e) commence with a garden gauge train engine mounted on a short length of track flanked on one side by a mixture of inoperative arcade devices backing on to brightly painted corrugated iron and on the other side by fairground models in a Perspex case.¹⁶ As you progress through the museum there are cockerel and ostrich Galloper mounts suspended from the ceiling, ubiquitous tractors through the ages and a selection of small engines, pumping systems and waterwheels.

Within the space of the museum there are moments within the organised systems where sub-systems appear at a different scale and overlap or intermingle. For example, figure 4.19 shows a stuffed bird mounted on a worn green plinth within the space of the traction engines, and this formed one of several taxidermy objects that supposedly reinforced the idea of the farmyard space and brings with it an associated haphazard legibility. At the outer limits of the museum display area there are no borders or barriers indicating that formal grouping or accessible space was now ending, and there are examples where categorisation breaks down in full view such that the chaotic ensembles seemed a natural progression back towards what was glimpsed in some of the more derelict areas of the Rundles spaces on their open day. Figure 4.20 shows what was presumably once a visible grouped display of wall-mounted objects including bird clappers, thatching needs and something simply called 'humbug' that had been overburdened with some fire hoses, clearly modern and active metal stepladders and scaffolding poles, and detached signage.

¹⁵ You are reminded here of the classic visual trope in horror films where a camera pans slowly past an array of domestic (but ferocious) knives such that one of the clearly large knives is missing (and so presumed to be in the hands of the attacker). What is invoked here is a little less clear; someone, somewhere, is tinkering with a very large spanner, tightening or loosening a very large nut.

¹⁶ Coulls (2003: 35) suggests that the Strumpshaw engine is a rare surviving example of a Triang model, though it resides at Strumpshaw in a relatively forlorn state.



Figures 4.17a-e - Wall-mounted displays at Strumpshaw Hall, photographs Ian Trowell



Figures 4.18a-e - Floor-mounted displays at Strumpshaw Hall, photographs Ian Trowell



Figure 4.19 - Stuffed bird at Strumpshaw Hall, photograph Ian Trowell



Figure 4.20 - Object display breakdown at Strumpshaw Hall, photograph Ian Trowell

King's Lynn Museum

King's Lynn provides a key to the origins of connections between the region, the agricultural tradition and the fairground, and so forms the final part of this triumvirate of micro-studies. My visit coincided with the Mart Fair and also an exhibition entitled *Art of the Mart* at Lynn Museum, and so this study uses evidence and observations from both of these events to knit together a possible structure of interdependence.

Underpinning any discussion on the historic character of King's Lynn with regard to the farm and the fairground is David Braithwaite's 1975 work *Savage of King's Lynn*. Braithwaite, having already established himself with a serious study of the fairground from an architectural perspective seven years earlier, sets out to provide a thorough and contextual history of Frederick Savage, the principal character in the switch from engineering and innovating agricultural mechanisms to fairground mechanisms. In his foreword to the book he states the obvious link between the region and the agricultural industry - 'that the finest arable soil in England should advance the most sophisticated farm machinery' - whilst at the same time suggesting a 'bleak and depopulated deceptive balm' of the region.

The link between farming and the fairground in general is specified initially through the set seasonal regularity of the harvest festival, where an intensification of work for labourers is ended with a celebration for all (Braithwaite 1975: 23), bringing in a variety of itinerant showmen and merchants to create a spatially fixed but temporarily staged nexus of abundant pleasure and reverie. Attached to the celebratory function of the harvest festival ran parallel traditions of hiring labour, and these in turn established their own autonomous expressions of fairground festivity. Finally, dating back even further, are fixed dates for trading of certain goods attached to ancient charters, such that a trading event took on greater significance in the more remote regions when the arrival of a market was a cause for celebration in itself. The subsequent progressive technologies of the railway, warehousing and refrigeration meant that the trading purposes of these events began to dwindle, however the attachment of showmanship and revelry proved more resilient and the fairground maintained the chartered presence of the market event.

This mix of rationale for the fairground, and its associated diachronic flux, cannot be applied evenly and consistently across the UK region, and Braithwaite's arguments suggest that the agricultural embeddedness of the Eastern Counties, with the set rhythms of labour intensity and harvesting, meant that fairground retained a traditional sense of importance and meaning.¹⁷ However, in slight contradistinction to this, it is also imperative to state that King's Lynn Mart was originally a trading fair held in February (an indistinctive time of the year in terms of the agricultural cycles of peaks of labour and harvesting). Instead, what gave the Mart its prime importance and associated longevity was its date as the first fairground engagement for the business itself, thus the fair became in part a celebration of the wider world of the fairground for the showpeople. There is also another aspect of the fair specific to the Eastern region, the geographical situation of King's Lynn, and the climatic conditions of a typical February, that sets out a type of character to the whole event. The town is built up alongside

¹⁷ Braithwaite (1975: 23) suggests 'country-folk cling tenaciously to time-honoured customs'.

the River Great Ouse and can feel thoroughly and uncompromisingly cold and exposed in the winter, with February having an average low temperature of 1°C.¹⁸



Figure 4.21 - King's Lynn Mart general view 2016, photograph Ian Trowell

The fair is held on the Tuesday Market Place, a bounded area that retains a powerful sense of historical presence and dignity with tall Georgian buildings, the Victorian Corn Exchange Theatre, and the Duke's Head Hotel forming a natural barrier to keep the fair inside and the cold outside (figure 4.21). Traditionally the fairground itself would then include its own outer barrier of inward facing side-stalls and side-shows, with the densely packed rectangular fairground in the middle consisting of around ten large and modern fairground machines. The initial chapters of this thesis document the different elements and coming-to-be of the fairground atmosphere, and it is not necessary to repeat this work here in emphasising a possible magic and allure of the Mart, though it is important to say that the presence of the Mart can also be understood as a defiance of logic; a defiance that permeates many fairgrounds in different ways and to different extents. It is cold, too cold, to come out and celebrate in February, but the tight knot of the fairground and the energy of the lights, sounds and movement, and the density of the smells, defeats this logic and draws people in. The arrangement of the fair doesn't disrupt the incursion of the ice wind from the Wash and River Great Ouse, but the relentless energy of the event and the numbers in the crowd forms something of a barrier of solidarity, from the opening ceremony (figure 4.22), through half-price day, to the final night.

Both Braithwaite's discussion of the Mart (1975: 24) and Starsmore's description of the same fair (1975: 38) omit the suggestion of a reason why the fair has persevered and thrived beyond the buoyancy of an associated market function, and it is my opinion (alongside the fair being

¹⁸ See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/King%27s_Lynn (accessed 4 November 2016).

important as the opening event for the showland calendar) that the nature of the region, the timing of the fair and the nature of the people within the region all play a part. Hence, whilst Braithwaite makes the key connection between the engineer Frederick Savage observing the mechanical prowess of the early roundabouts and imagining the future possibility of taking these devices to the limit, there is a consensus appreciation of this mechanical wizardry at a more diffuse level. Testimony gathered from an elderly attendee at the fair on my visit in February 2016 records a fascination of ‘how it all fits together just so’ and of the pleasures of just observing, smelling and listening to the engines (with a confessed nostalgic pining for ‘old Gardner engines’).



Figure 4.22 - King's Lynn Mart opening ceremony 2016, photograph Ian Trowell

I make this point to emphasise and bring together the general thrust of connections in this preliminary furrow, but clearly a key factor is also the direct link between agricultural and fairground engineering embodied by Frederick Savage. This is where Braithwaite's work stands out, plotting Savage's own beginnings amidst contiguous Norfolk contemporaries such as Sidney George Soames of Marsham (reputed to be the inventor of the first steam roundabout, c1865), William Reynolds Jnr of Coton and Charles Thomas King of Little Swaffham (rival inventors of the Gallopers, 1885), and Charles Burrell of Thetford (pioneer of traction engines and developer of a prototype dancing machine, c1880). Savage was brought up as an agricultural odd-job man fighting against a poverty imposed through the mishaps of his parents. During this time his work included hurdle making and rook-scaring, this latter job proving to be the last straw in a career going nowhere (Braithwaite 1975: 32). He switched to an apprenticeship in agricultural engineering, and here his innovation was brought to the fore; his design of a primitive car to enable him to engage in courtship with his future wife was an example of the tradition of tinkering with vehicles, something that is still common in the Fens. He moved to King's Lynn in 1851 and began to assert his ingenuity through the shows arranged

by the Royal Agricultural Society, winning prizes for his developments in threshing devices, seed-drillers, cake-breakers, winnowing machines and eventually portable engines. The technology transfer to the fairground emerged through the proximity of Savage's works to the Tuesday Market Place, and the fact of the Mart being the first fair of the year and so an opportunity for showmen to repair and upgrade their equipment. Within a decade Savage was the principal roundabout manufacturer and a noted figure of success and innovation in King's Lynn, helping him attain commemoration through a statue in 1889 and the proud position of mayor of King's Lynn in 1892.

King's Lynn (at the time of writing this thesis) is blessed with three museums and Savage features in all of them. His position as an agricultural and fairground engineer is recorded in a small photographic display in True's Yard Fisherfolk Museum however this conserved space is more about the living and working conditions of the historical fishing community of the town. A more recent development is the Tales of Lynn Museum, and this pays homage to Savage with a curated video project. The well-established Lynn Museum has a larger display of Savage related material, and has the company's plans and drawing (plus artefacts) in storage. Between July 2015 and July 2016 they staged the *Art of the Mart* exhibition, allowing the people of King's Lynn, along with visitors to the region, to celebrate and sample the life, work and impact of Savage. The title clearly played upon the longstanding history and significance of the Mart in King's Lynn, and the exhibition extended throughout the whole museum to include walk-around displays with themed historical information and timelines (figures 4.23a-e). The present day Mart was included with the new fibre-glass horse built to commemorate the fair itself on display, along with the bell that chimed for the opening ceremony.

There is clearly a gulf of difference between the laying out and description of material here compared to Strumpshaw, with qualified curatorial staff able to both apply an informed approach to display and interaction, and to maintain a critical relationship with the source material and subject. This comes across in various ways: firstly, there is a stricter thematic remit; secondly, there is contextual narrative that flows through each area; and finally, the information displays are consistent in all aspects of design, reader level pitch and text/picture balance and thresholds. The written displays are informative without being overbearingly didactic and incessantly granular in terms of what might be considered trainspotter detail, moving towards the dialogical and participative with a dedicated section where children can create their own plans based upon the working practices of a draughtsperson. The neat touch of displaying the drawings created with a sense of importance, or allowing them to be inserted in proper map drawers (figures 4.24a-b) gives the required confidence of participation allowing children to be engaged with a lasting effect. Finally, the use of inspiring objects is tactical and more sparing than the overwhelming bombardment with anything and everything at Strumpshaw. This allowed the sense of age and craft for objects such as the cat head and carved arch from the Menagerie (figures 4.25a-b) to be appreciated with more focus and conceptual space. The museum ran a series of events associated with the exhibition including family fun days, city trails, talks, drawing classes and a play from the local youth theatre based upon the aforementioned cat head.¹⁹

¹⁹ Details taken from flyer for exhibition.



Figures 4.23a-e - Displays at Lynn Museum, photographs Ian Trowell



Figures 4.24a-b - Interaction at Lynn Museum, photographs Ian Trowell



Figures 4.25a-b - Up close inspiration at Lynn Museum, photographs Ian Trowell

Conclusion

My intention with these three micro case studies has been to understand the triangulated links between farming, fairground and vernacular exhibition culture unfolding within the specific region of the Eastern Counties, in advance of the four main museum case studies and their own intrinsic links to farming. Taken as single side between two vertices of a triangle, the connections between farming and vernacular heritage practices remain unexplored, and would form a thesis study in their own right. Here they are included to indicate a wider relationship with the fairground (and its heritage), and the proliferation of the final site (King's Lynn) to include the fairground itself and the local museum has perhaps pushed out beyond this scope to start to question how a critical framework can be set up and investigated around how a fairground heritage site comes to be and functions. It is, however, also convenient that the first case study in the following chapter - the Thursford Collection - links naturally back to King's Lynn Mart.

Chapter 5 - Housed Collections / Grey-Museums

This chapter looks at examples of collections of vintage fairground equipment presented in a set space for public consumption, what I term as grey-museums. Each of these collections extends from simple exhibition to a working space engaged by the visitor, though this is articulated and achieved to differing degrees. Whereas the other chapters on vintage presentations (steam rallies, living museums, and vintage fairs) are gathered into a single piece of critical and reflective writing, this chapter retains a fragmented state. The reason for this is that vintage presentations in the other chapters have enough homogeneity to allow a single discourse to unfold utilising in-text pointers to reflect on specific nuances that indicate a change of focus of study at certain points. My argument here is that the four collections I have examined have wholesale differences at every level; rationale for acquisition, rationale for showing, type of locality, inclusion within a wider instantiation, method of presentation. Whilst the collections exhibit crucial differences, I also feel that as a set they present as a complete a picture as possible regarding the attempt to capture the heritage of the fairground in an enclosed collection of objects.¹

For study in this chapter I am focusing on four collections:

- The longest established collection housed at Thursford in Norfolk, which has now branched out to include winter wonderland shows. This collection emerged through the endeavours of a local collector and opened as a public attraction in the 1950s.
- The Scarborough Fair Collection which is the preserve of an ambitious collector and opened as a public attraction in 2008.
- Folly Farm in Pembrokeshire which began as a petting farm, added vintage fairground attractions in 1995, and expanded as a large zoo in 2002.
- Dingles Fairground Heritage Centre in Devon, now established as the principal fairground museum in the UK with an aim to preserve and present our fairground heritage.

There is a slight subjectivity in the order of these four case studies, in that I imply that each successive case study engulfs the previous one and moves it forward in a certain direction: size of collection, constellation of attractions, sharpness of focus on the question of the heritage object. This evolving process parallels Whybrow (2011: 42), who works through a varied range of art encountered in the city, and suggests each site visit adds a 'striated layer of possibility' to understanding a greater quest. Each collection maps from the previous one as a playing of the game of exquisite corpse, with a hint of cheating in that there is an amateur purposeful copying and apparent awareness of intent between collections, but at the same time things get misread and carried across in a manner that inadvertently creates something else.

In chapter 4 I used a set of micro case studies to explore the mix of terrain, region and agricultural background in setting out an additional contextual driver, and the farming connection is highly relevant in this chapter with each collection set up by a farming family,

¹ See appendix 1 for details of other significant collections.

often utilising the site of the farm itself in terms of the rural situation and actual buildings (or purpose built structures that are still of a farming vernacular), and in some cases proudly declaring this connection.² It is my contention that this link is forged through a longstanding affinity rather than some kind of step in the dark necessitated through an economic downturn in farming. This brings in to sharp focus various themes examined in the previous chapter that will shape the experience of the collection; the rural location of the site, the rural feel of the site itself on arrival, the seemingly inseparable link between agricultural and fairground technologies, the patterns of curatorial processes and drivers for retaining and collecting.

My method in this chapter can be broken down into four main systems of enquiry:

Firstly, I document an extensive introduction and historical context that includes the collection coming to be as an idea and then an actuality, the reaction to the collection from various quarters from those communities of interest looking towards fairground heritage, and a detailed study of the location and site of the collection. The latter looks at the wider context of the local area in terms of class demographics, touristic functions and a fairground historical context.

Secondly, I document the historical fairground context. This moves away from considerations of location, site and collection as a strategy, and looks towards the key objects included in the collection and how the theme of the fairground is constructed and articulated.

Thirdly, I describe the visit to the collection recording the details of date, circumstances and general undertakings of interviews before providing a slowly roving eye (and ear and nose) that moves from outside the enclosure of the collection, into the key building(s) and through the exhibits to develop a description of the whole environment as encountered through rooms, routes and chambers with regard to spatial and atmospheric aspects of the site. This atmospheric whole, what I call the super-object, is then followed with a description of the first-order-objects that reside in the collection in terms of how they are encountered, and a detailing of any second-order-objects such as lighting and artwork.

Finally, a dedicated section records observations on audience practices and motivations, and introduces feedback from any recorded interviews.

Each case study is then finished with a short conclusion allowing key ideas and observations to be gathered and carried between other case studies. The chapter concludes with a tabulated summary and comparison between sites.

² For example, the home page of the Folly Farm website has a section entitled 'Our Story' which begins with the words 'We've always been farmers'.

Museum case study 1 – Thursford Collection

Introduction and context

The Thursford Collection is a significant grouping of organs, engines and uniquely vintage fairground rides set within an atmospherically curated environment that intends to extend towards some kind of larger sensory experience. The reverse of the cover of their current booklet (figure 5.1a) includes a photograph of their Gondola Switchback ride picked out in gold with a cropped and airbrushed black background over which the following is written:

Thursford is much more than a museum. It is a place to enjoy, to relax in. You can browse in the shops, admire the engines, enjoy a snack in the old barn, try a home-made speciality in the ice-cream parlour. You can relish a ride amid the gold and plush of the Gondola roundabout, listen to the organs.

As I illustrate in my site visit description below, the black background - though perfect in forming a chiaroscuro effect here - is actually a key atmospheric feature of the museum. The advertising phrase quoted above, 'more than a museum', could be construed as a simple intro device to preface the litany of add-ons that can be sampled on your visit, however it hints at Thursford being something above and beyond a set of curated and subject-specific objects to sample. The front cover of their publicity brochure (figure 5.1b) is a little less dramatic and opts for a lavender base (a significant colour in this region of Norfolk) which then splits attractions between the collection, the Santa Magical Journey and the Christmas Spectacular. These latter two attractions are season-specific (and were not operating at the time of my visit) and it is evident that Thursford has built up this angle as a viable concern on top of the main collection of fairground and steam artefacts. The 12-page brochure then features double-page spreads for the collection, the gift shop and food, a page for a wedding facility and list of special events, before returning to double-page spreads for the Christmas Spectacular and Santa Magical Journey. Thus, aside from the front cover and general information on the back cover, the collection aspect of Thursford occupies just one fifth of the publicity (figure 5.1c). This design carries through the lavender colour (a distinctly non-fairground hue), offsetting it with beige and gold which serves little more purpose than maximising the richness of the lavender. There are no attempts to revive or invoke a fairground typography, and a diagonal sequence of four photographs depicts the Gallopers, two different organs, and a receding vista of illuminated engine fronts and canopies. The emphasis on engines is amplified with the presence of two red silhouettes at the lower edge of the diagonal, whilst the added feature of live organ music is advertised with a staged photograph of organist Robert Wolfe resplendent in tuxedo and bathed in pink light, depicted in the act of playing with both hands poised on the 'Mighty Wurlitzer' triple bank of keyboards.

The Thursford Collection is about one individual; George Thomas Cushing (1904-2003). The interior of the collection through its exhibits and information panels namechecks the founder at every opportunity, and the booklets produced through the years tell the story of Cushing from his beginnings as contractor with steam engines, his first purchase of his own working machine, his dismay at the decline of the engines in agricultural Norfolk, and his decision to start collecting, displaying and eventually creating a permanent home for display. The story of the man and his collection has been repeated and republished through the years, with general booklets being produced to contextualise and give a historical strand to the collecting practices

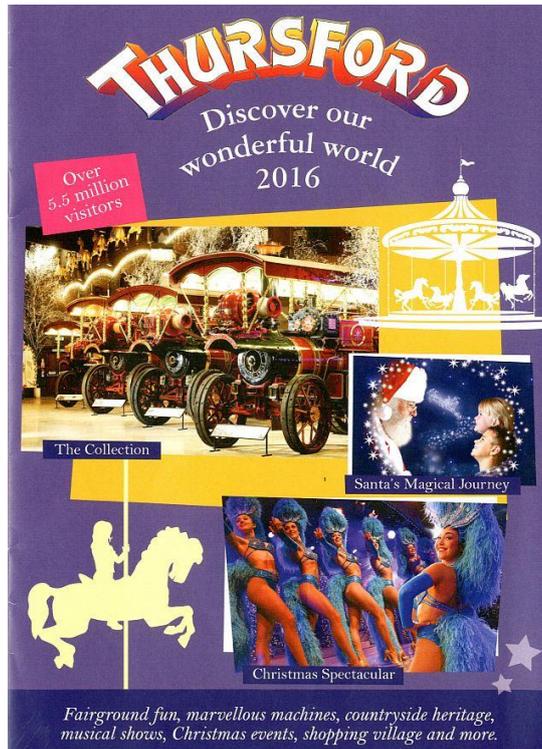
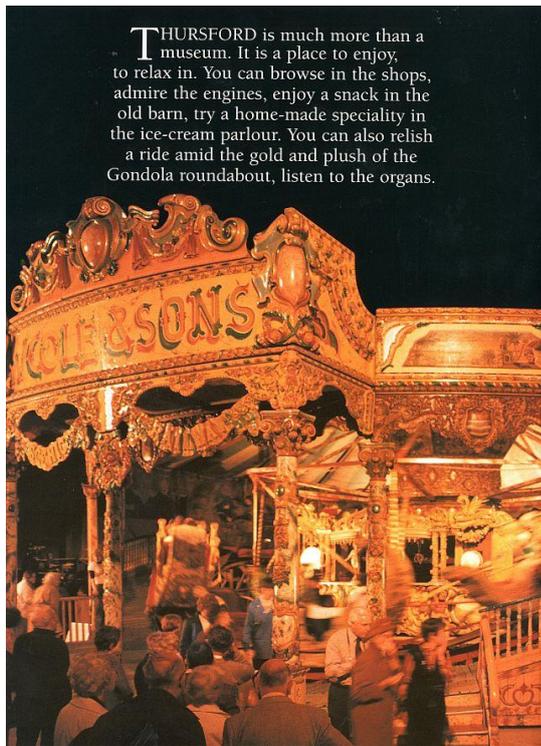


Figure 5.1a-b - Publicity leaflet for Thursford Collection

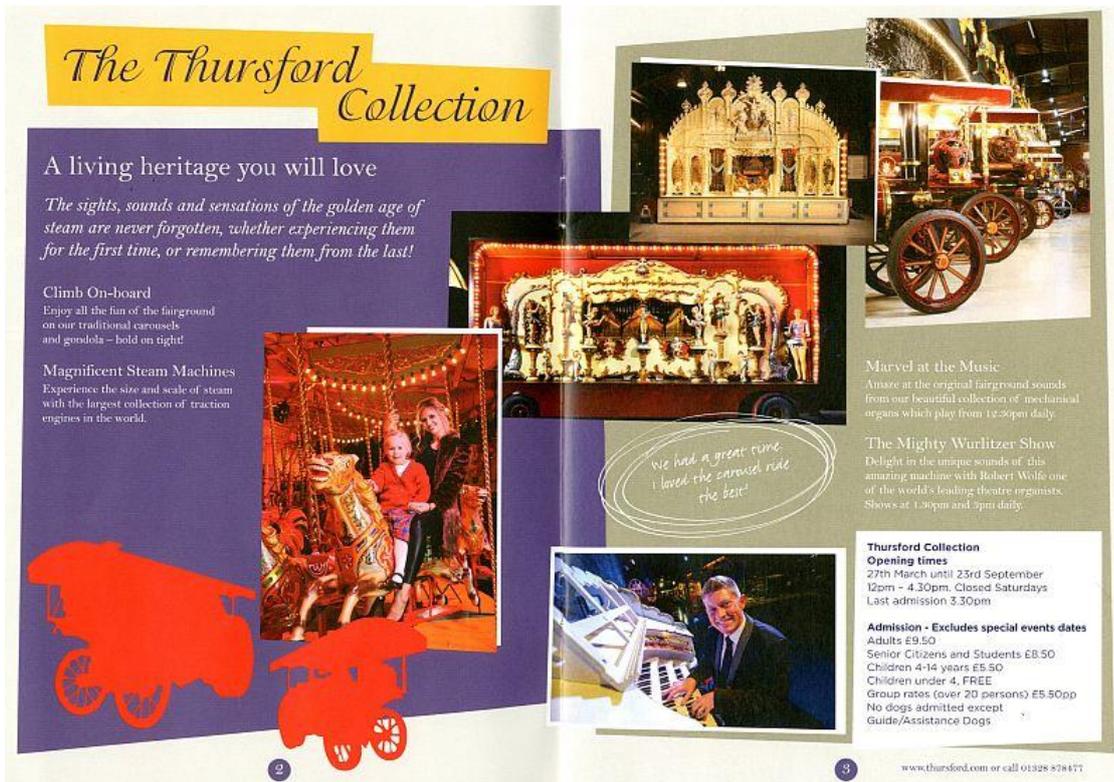


Figure 5.1c - Publicity leaflet for Thursford Collection

of Cushing.³ Initial booklets were produced by Anthony Beaumont who generally intoned a sense of disgust of the present and a dread of the future to situate the Thursford Collection as a kind of historical necessity for common sense. In his original booklet (Beaumont 1966: 1) he echoes the complaints of Richard Hoggart in his seminal *Uses of Literacy* and sets out against 'the pop record, juke-box and transistor radio', before moving on to the specifics of heavy-duty road haulage to suggest 'our heavy road transport was not always the province of the now efficient but uninspiring internal combustion engine'.

Following his publication of *English Fairs* (1975) and the hosting of the exhibition *The Fairground* (1977) in the Whitechapel Gallery, the writer Ian Starsmore worked with Thursford to promote the collection and the life of Cushing. Compared to Beaumont's outpouring of ills and simple listing of preserved things, Starsmore has a more artful and broadly scoped way of developing a narrative, and subsequently develops a story linking the King's Lynn Mart and Norfolk life in the shaping of Cushing's character and interests. Cushing, or 'young George', is pictured as a hard-working farm hand who moved to work with road-rolling engines on the Norfolk lanes, sheltering from the Norfolk winds that 'don't go round you, but through you' in a small living wagon. The sensory descriptions are extended with recollections of nothing beating 'bacon and eggs cooked on a coal shovel in a road engine firebox while the dew is still on the ground' (this nostalgic delicacy is not offered in the restaurant).

The current booklet (undated, circa 2010) includes Starsmore's work but this is prefaced with a more recent essay by Charles Roberts who takes time to build an atmospheric, but imaginary, picture of the Mart in 1920. The spectacle is described in the following words:

Gleaming in the brightness of thousands of tiny light bulbs are mighty showmen's engines, roundabouts, side-shows, shooting galleries, swings and stalls and switchbacks. There is a hint of smoke in the air as the great engines gently rock and hiss, producing the power for all around them. The marvellous sounds of mechanical fairground organs mingle and rise over the hum of a packed and lively crowd. Every so often the shriek of a steam siren exuberantly drowns everything. For everyone, the sense of smell is excited by a potent cocktail of aromas on the evening breeze, of steam and hot oil, toffee apples and roasting nuts, the sweet tang of paraffin and the sulphur scent of coal fumes. Amongst the crowd is a teenage boy, George Cushing, gazing wonderstruck at the enormous, simmering steam engines. Did he but know it, it was both the beginning of a lifelong love affair with steam, and the seed from which the Thursford Collection was in time to grow.

Whilst this somewhat verbose prose clearly links to the section of the previous chapter describing King's Lynn, Frederick Savage and the Mart, with a particular resonance to the elderly gentleman interviewed who is simply enjoying both the past and present of engines and mechanical virtuosity, there is also something more important here. The Mart is used not as a basis for the museum, in that the Thursford Collection will recreate the Mart, but as a point of influence - a seed - for the man who set up the museum. This lengthy paragraph provides a context for the experience of the museum; the tension between recreating an instance of inspiration (the Mart in 1920) and simply displaying the labours of a life that have been shaped by the fascination of such an instance – a kind of autohagiographic collecting policy.

³ The NFA has material archived including Cushing guides and Anthony Beaumont's picture-based publications detailing the *Organs and Engines of Thursford*.

Cushing's claims to be a pioneer in preservation are numerous and significant. The displays throughout the museum attached to each engine detail the endeavours that Cushing went through to salvage the particular engine, how his actions at the time were both pioneering and perceived as ill-advised and nothing short of an idiotic folly. He claims to be the first person who buys an engine for preservation - with the purchase of the Burrell engine *Victory* in 1947 - and as he moves to acquire more defunct objects remarks are recorded such as 'collecting elephants for pets' and 'another steam engine for his graveyard'. Cushing views it differently, and his interview with Ian Starsmore in the booklet records his feelings at the time of steam engines becoming redundant: 'To me it was as though the crown jewels were being sold for scrap, and pebbles were worth more than diamonds'. Cushing bought Laurel Farm, the present home of the collection, and began to fill it up with engines. He also developed a particular fixation with the Norfolk tradition, championing the proud heritage of the region with an emphasis on engine makers Burrell of Thetford and Garrett of Leiston, and striving to acquire all of the redundant showmen's engines from the local Thurston family.⁴

As with other longstanding vernacular collections set up by an impassioned individual, it is difficult to place a specific date on the shift between housing a collection for storage purposes and allowing the odd passing enthusiast to call in, and opening up the collection premises full time to the public. The booklet suggests 1959, making Thursford the earliest specific collection of fairground artefacts open to visitors - though at that time the main attraction was a large Marengi organ built up in a shed and played to visitors such that, as one interviewee recalled, 'It was a welcoming, informal but strange experience, to enter the barn, sit on a hay bale and listen to the organs play'. The significant purchase of the Gondola Switchback in 1978 (detailed below) meant that a new extension shed had to be built, and the museum then developed a series of Christmas concerts from the late 1970s which grew in popularity necessitating more space. These concerts began to prove more successful than the museum as the travelling habits and demographics of the holidaying population began to shift towards a 'turkey and tinsel' experience, and the development of the Christmas themed area as 'Santa's Magical Journey' became the principal attraction.

The Thursford Collection is located in North Norfolk on the A148 between Fakenham and Holt, the road forming the main route from King's Lynn to Cromer and the associated seaside towns to the east and west of the popular resort. Thursford itself is stretched out and struggles to gather into any significant cluster of buildings with the isolated parish church to the north of the road and the old station to south, situated on the disused Midland and Great Northern Joint Railway (romantically mimicked as the Muddle and Get Nowhere Railway). This is a more gentle and touristic Norfolk than the harsh Fen landscapes and the cold wind blowing off the Great Ouse through the buildings of King's Lynn. As the roads head north and east out of King's Lynn there are numerous small villages utilising the iconic and rustic Norfolk flint building materials and red pantile roofing (figures 5.2a-b), with lavender fields and themed visitor attractions, grand estates such as Sandringham, Houghton and Holkham Hall, odd collections such as the Fakenham Museum of Gas, and finally small towns like Holt and Burnham with

⁴ Whitehead (1964) covers the history of Garrett whilst Clark (1952) covers Burrell and argues that Thetford was the ancient capital of East Anglia and an agricultural centre, introducing the first heavy-duty steam road haulage engine in 1856.



Figures 5.2a-b - Flint and tiling native to Norfolk, photographs Ian Trowell



Figure 5.3 - Rural land around Thursford, Google maps

antique shops, book shops, galleries and bespoke clothing shops. The farmed land here does not give off an air of bleakness or entrenched desperation such as is evident when travelling through Lincolnshire, instead you are given the impression it somehow looks after itself (an illusion of course). There are also clear demarcations within the built environment between

the historic regimes of workers, landowners and merchants, as documented in Hill (2016: 22) with his extensive research into Houghton Hall. However, the aerial map (figure 5.3) shows the lush shades of green and clearly striated fields forming a patchwork of idyllic rural bliss. The area is a holiday destination for middle-class families or young hipster couples from London, whilst also serving as a region for coach holidays in which predominantly older groups are based at a large hotel such as the *De Paris* in Cromer or *Le Strange Arms* at Old Hunstanton. It is these coach trips that will offer a rigorous day-by-day timetable of visits around the region, and potentially include Thursford in the itinerary of attractions, though this is a tenuous market to depend upon.⁵

Historical fairground context

Cushing's collection is primarily traction engines and organs, with examples taken from the fairground and beyond the fairground. His key fairground purchase was the Gondola Switchback in 1978, and this is rightly stated as being a significant piece of fairground history. The ride is an example of a Steam Switchback, one of the earliest types of steam roundabouts that signalled the changing shape and industrialisation of the fairground from a province of shows and games to a theatre of machines. The Switchback has multiple claims to contemporary value that hones in on the region. Firstly, it is a product of the Savage company, locally based at King's Lynn. Secondly, it was new to the Lincolnshire travelling partnership of Aspland and Howden in 1888, and a regular attendee at the Mart. Thirdly, as Scrivens and Smith (1995: 2) argue, this ride travelled as 'the most lavish machine ever produced'. Finally, the example at Thursford is one of only two surviving examples in the world. Although these machines were popular around the end of the 19th century, their ornate decoration and huge structure soon meant that they became impractical for a showman that needed to travel longer distances and a public that needed newer thrills that drew upon different simulations and faster speeds, meaning the rides were quickly laid to rest, salvaged for parts or scrapped. The thrill of travelling in an ornate gondola, an aspirational flight of fancy for the average worker in either town or country, was eventually nullified as new dreams were offered with opportunities to sample racing cars and motorcycles. Aspland and Howden's Gondola Switchback travelled to the end of the 1920s, and would have been amongst the last of these large rides still active. Unusually, the machine was carefully put into store allowing it to be bought by the West Country showman family of Percy Cole to re-emerge after the Second World War. Whilst being much changed through its early life, and its new life, it retained the spirit of an ornate thing from the past and travelled to large fairs and rallies up until the 1970s. It was part anachronistic oddity and part a crucial link to the past days of a different world of both industry and leisure. As Scrivens and Smith (1995: 6) argue, 'that Savage's original Switchback should survive is important, although realistically there is probably very little that can be traced back to 1888'. On arriving at Thursford in 1978 it underwent a full scale renovation (see figures 5.4a-d), and in recent years the frontispiece has been returned to the name of Aspland, though this attracted some consternation from quarters of the preservation

⁵ The tradition of going to seaside destinations such as Great Yarmouth and being confronted with an array of day out coach trip offers being sold from pitches along the promenade is a thing of the past, though in the 1970s and 1980s this would have been a major market for Thursford. The currently popular all-in coach trip holiday tends to avoid destinations that have a higher premium for entry, thus making dependency on this somewhat uncertain and linking to concepts such as the secondary spend.



Figures 5.4a-d - Switchback detail at Thursford Collection, photographs Ian Trowell



Figures 5.5a-d - Gallopers detail at Thursford Collection, photographs Ian Trowell

movement who felt 'its continued existence to this day was due to the Cole family ownership' (Steptoe 2002: 166).

The second ride in the collection is a set of Savage built Gallopers purchased in 2002. The ride is somewhat famed for having a family of dedicated owners - the London based Gray family - enjoying continuity from a new purchase in 1896 to sale in 1983.⁶ As with the Switchback, this ride has seen numerous renovations and alterations including a conversion to an electric drive by Rundles. It is presented at Thursford within the strange confines of the current museum environment, whereby rides are kept in a darkened enclosure and brightly lit by spotlights. Whilst I discuss this in full detail below as part of documenting the site visit, it is worth noting that the bright and classical appearance of the Gallopers, their distinctive design flavour of fairground colours painted on to flowing horses and mounts, seemed to be lost within the overwhelming and somewhat forced magic of the whole environment. Figures 5.5a-d show some detail of the ride trying to focus on the colour, but the bright lights of the spot beams bouncing off surface distort the 'fairground reality' of the colours.

Description

This site report and consideration of the Thursford Collection is based upon a visit in September 2016. On the occasion of my visit the audience consisted of a small knot of pensioners, with some guests in wheelchairs assisted by their helpers. There was no evidence of coach parties or families, though it was to be noted that the school holidays had just ended and the 'turkey and tinsel' season was still a month away. Visitors were spread out between the restaurant, gift shop and main museum exhibition space. The newer spaces housing the Christmas show and Magical Journey were not open to the public so it is not possible to comment on this space.

Figure 5.6 shows a closer view of the satellite image of the site, indicating on the right the large car park, a small wooded band to pass through to enter the grounds of the collection, and an immediate green space. Since this image was taken an impromptu but possibly permanent tent structure had been put up as a wedding venue. The large shed building with the lighter shade of grey roof is the new section housing the Christmas shows, with the lightest roof housing the collection available to visit on the day. Smaller behind the scenes outbuildings and machinery parts can be glimpsed on the image, alongside a number of private residential properties.

On leaving the A148 and heading north for a mile or so on country lanes you are greeted predominantly with farmland, including a 'natural' site close by to the Thursford Collection that had an array of brightly coloured but heavily battered tractors either abandoned or parked up. In a similar vein, Candlin (2016: 152) visits a number of museums akin to Thursford where the building and theme of collecting/display is embedded into the surrounding environment, and suggests that this gives rise to incidences where 'objects migrate in both directions over the threshold'. Arriving at the main attraction there is a large car park bounded by mature coniferous trees emitting a pleasant and relaxing odour of pine needles and sap.

⁶ The history of the ride is detailed in Scrivens et al (2013: 43).



Figure 5.6 - Satellite view of Thursford Collection, Google maps



Figure 5.7 - Entrance to Thursford Collection, photograph Ian Trowell

The entrance to the grounds of the collection is signalled by a large red sign forming an arch on a wide pathway cut between the trees, leading to a small green hut with a red pantile roof (figure 5.7). On approaching this path you are immediately struck by a muted sound of organs playing, giving the impression that perhaps the noise (music) is spilling out from within the sheds housing the main collection. However, it then becomes apparent that the music is emerging from within the woods, and a brief inspection revealed various ground based mushroom shaped plastic BOSE speakers finished off in a green weatherproof coating giving



Figure 5.8 - Partially hidden speakers at Thursford Collection, photograph Ian Trowell



Figure 5.9 - Tree decoration at Thursford Collection, photograph Ian Trowell

them the appearance of a technical device such as a small weather station (figure 5.8). This creeping but overpowering ambience, an instance of what Labelle (2010: 57) might consider as an 'occupation of the background', reminded me of sectors of theme parks such as Alton Towers where woodland walks are given soundscaped themes of hauntedness, tropical Amazonia or pirate atmospherics of creaking boats and mumbled parley to create a constant siege mentality of stimulation or stupefaction, such that a person has no respite from the themed totality of where they are. On getting closer to examine these speakers I then became aware that all the trees, bushes and shrubs are intertwined with wired electric fairy lights (figure 5.9). Though not operating in the daylight hours it is left to the imagination to envisage how these lights and sounds would converge in the winter evenings, with the naturalness of the pine trees seemingly offset by the total proliferation of plastic speakers and lighting creating a manufactured and artificial environment.

When passing through the woodland border a pair of signs (figure 5.10) indicate the scope and order of events and attractions for the day, such that organs are to be played at certain points in the day, a Wurlitzer show is given on two occasions, and fairground rides could be granted on request. The signage utilises a small amount of gold scrollwork as associated with the visual lexicon of fairground and entertainment.

An open space included an unoccupied 'smokers' den' (not photographed) and the aforementioned wedding venue, before the courtyard of the main entrance is reached. This draws upon the imagery of an old Norfolk village with the flint and red roofing structure, and incorporates a small clutch of gift shops selling soaps, chocolate and other trinkets. Even though this is a new build (receiving an architectural award in 1989) it trades upon an 'olde worlde' image (as quoted in the publicity leaflet) and includes quaint items such as weather vanes, coach lamps and a bright red post box to give the forced architectural impression of a real village (figure 5.11).

Whilst the main collection building is hidden behind the entrance village, the new Fantasy Land extends in a highly visible manner back across the open space (figure 5.12a). Here a mixture of evenly spaced turreted brickwork resembling the ubiquitous failed neo-Mannerism (or toy-town) design of the last decade of the 20th century (common on large supermarkets) is mixed with a sequence of Norfolk flint false arches, creating something of a jarring encounter that presumably didn't win any regional awards from the Norfolk Association of Architects.⁷ On closer inspection (figure 5.12b) it is easily seen that this is just a façade, with the join evident to main structure of 'olde worlde' and the large metal shed looming large behind, with the fake Victorian coach lights replaced with an 'olde worlde' surveillance camera.

Entrance to the main collection is through a double-door into a small foyer with a set of pop-up displays to the right advertising Christmas events and the new wedding facilities, a coffee bar to the immediate left and a restaurant in the converted original barn beyond and just to the right of the coffee bar. This area resembles the foyer space of a motorway service station and, after reflecting upon my experience of the collection itself, this analogy seems most apt as you definitely feel like a customer moving numbly through various zones of processing. Ignoring the distractions in this foyer you can progress forward into the large gift shop which

⁷ Hill (2016: 146) describes the strategic use of traditional brick and flint in the design and construction of the modernist University of East of Anglia.



Figure 5.10 - Entrance signage Thursford Collection, photograph Ian Trowell



Figure 5.11 - 'Olde worlde' village at Thursford Collection, photograph Ian Trowell



Figures 5.12a-b – Thursford fantasy land façade and close up, photographs Ian Trowell

houses the admission counter on a central hexagonal island. The gift shop sells generic products associated with these rural visitor spaces - jams, spreads and pickles that are badged up as being specific to the place but are actually made in some factory in a less than picturesque setting, children's books, trinkets and items of clothing suitable as gifts. There are a selection of Thursford branded products that draw upon the collection and collecting history of George Cushing such as booklets and DVDs, as well as recording and films of the organs and Christmas spectaculars.

On leaving the gift shop a set of doors takes you into the main collection room and there is a moment of shock and awe as you take in the specific environment of the large room housing the collection. The room is darkened with no ceiling outlets to bring natural light in, with the walls and ceilings painted in either black or dark brown. Light is provided in an overly orchestrated manner with a dense combination of floodlights from the ceiling, floor spaces and within the attractions. In addition, the room is populated with ornamental birch-style trees that are sprayed white and illuminated from below, in turn making the tree itself a kind of magical source of light. This is a very strange effect, creating a kind of dream world or fantasy world, and I struggled to link it back to any semblance of reality or nostalgic contextualising of the fairground, certainly not a recreation of the small boy George Cushing stood transfixed at the Lynn Mart in 1920. These illuminated trees (figures 5.13a-b) reminded me of the overgrown artefacts in Rundles which resembled the very specific fantasy for a fairground enthusiast rummaging around in the abandoned or neglected confines of a showman's winter quarters yard. Presumably this was not the desired effect here at Thursford, and the darkened space with eerie spotlights creating unnatural colours was carried over from the thematic spaces of the Christmas rooms. This effect is employed to show the fairground rides (figure 5.14) and the organs that flank the large room (figure 5.15). It is interesting to note that the booklet listing and depicting the exhibits chooses to crop each photograph and present it on a plain white background, showing the natural details of the artefacts, indicating a tension between possible modes of presentation.

The main sight directly in front of you when entering the room is the stage for the Wurlitzer organ with a bank of cinema seats allowing spectators/listeners to experience the timetabled performances of the organist Robert Wolfe. The stage and the seating area obviously conform to the darkness of the room and the areas are lit with various spotlights creating colours and ambience. The stage itself is an over the top mix of textured layers and iconographic elements



Figures 5.13a-b - Illuminated tree detail around Switchback, photographs Ian Trowell

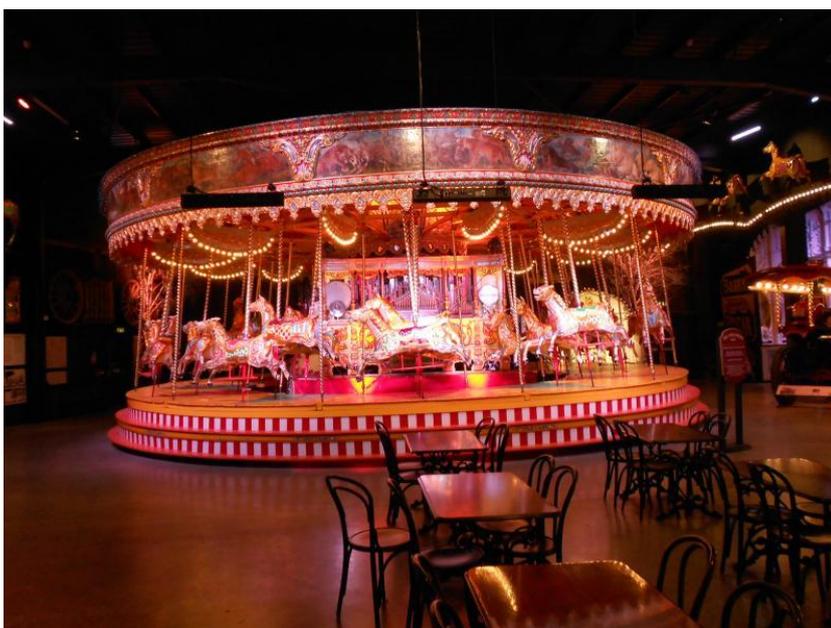


Figure 5.14 - Gallopers at Thursford, photograph Ian Trowell



Figure 5.15 - Organ at Thursford, photograph Ian Trowell

drawing from the scenographic tradition of British music hall (figure 5.16). The front of the stage features hanging mirror balls, Blackpool illumination style signs and velvet tassels creating an initial set of gentle arches. Beyond this is the organist and his instrument facilitated by a hidden system of rails and jacks to allow different organs to be brought into use, there is then a large hanging of gateau style curtains flanked by prominent union jack flags, and finally there is a set of ornate garden arches that look like they could double as space delineating objects in the wedding tent. The organist performs at set times between which the various large fairground and dance hall organs that line the perimeter of the collection room are programmed to play. This end-to-end aural log-jam is managed by a hidden mixing desk directly to your right as you enter, in a panoptical elevated space that is diminished in the darkness that resembles a DJ booth at a nightclub (figure 5.17). Within this raised ante-room are various engineers and programmers who sequence each organ and balance the sounds through a variety of software systems and monitors. Strangely the flash of the camera reveals a little bit of superfluous Norfolk flint effect on this small portion of interior wall, a throwback to when the room was not a darkened space. The whole sound of Thursford is thus a programmed, sequenced and controlled experience, and there was no time during my visit when a clash of sound sources such as would be typical on the fairground (past and present) is allowed to break out. In addition, between the scheduled events that created music there is a focused silence, almost an anticipation of the next announcement. This meant that the visitor experience of Thursford is also heavily circumscribed and controlled, in that the sound overrode other considerations.⁸ As part of this, visitors are greeted with announcements that a certain organ is about to play, that a certain performance is about to begin, or a certain ride is about to start up, furthering the feeling of being processed. The wall displays feature various clock emblems with times marked for the playing of organs (figure 5.18) so that a visitor could feasibly pace or extend their visit to catch certain performance, automated or otherwise. Signs also function as pre-digital era warnings to protect the proprietary nature of all sounds, stating clearly 'no tape recording'.

The organ displays by Robert Wolfe are clearly a main attraction for the visitors, giving them a chance to sit down and sample the show. I have already described the lavish stage set up, but whilst the organist is playing the visual panorama went up another notch with the lowering of a projector screen to his left.⁹ After announcing his intentions with a hint of showmanship (figure 5.19a) Wolfe launches into various old-time numbers, and the audience have a chance to watch the performer or watch his real-time representation through various camera angles emphasising his virtuosity (figures 5.19b-c). The multiple cameras focus on his feet, hands and also an overhead shot, with the mixing desk described earlier presumably cutting and mixing a live feed. Wolfe is both dismembered by the cameras and disembodied by the video feed to the screen, his hands and feet becoming metonymic signs for his virtuosity. As an added attraction he performs some soundtracks taken from silent films and here the screen

⁸ Bagnall (1996:236-8) discusses confirmatory emotional flows of consumption alongside a rejective mapping that uses personal memory to challenge an overdetermined site and tear up the script. The scripted nature of Thursford would seem to foreclose this opportunity.

⁹ This strange ritual of organ playing seems to be a subcultural trope on this scene. It occurs in the next study (Scarborough Fair Collection) and is also encountered by an equally astounded Candlin (2016: 173) at the Cotton Mechanical Museum in Suffolk.



Figure 5.16 - Main performance stage at Thursford, photograph Ian Trowell



Figure 5.17 - Sound sequencing and mixing booth at Thursford, photograph Ian Trowell



Figure 5.18 - Warning and timetable clocks at Thursford, photograph Ian Trowell



Figures 5.19a-d - Performing and projecting on the Thursford Wurlitzer, photographs Ian Trowell

projection splices scenes of steam engines hurtling through railway stations, cutting and tunnels (figure 5.19d).¹⁰

Whilst the chiaroscuro contrasts between a darkened space and precise spotlights overwhelms the sense of the whole, and so detracts from the detail of the parts, there are various structural formats of display evident. The stage and seating take a central role, and the rest of room is bisected with a line of engines from Cushing's extensive collection. Each engine is picked out with its own series of spotlights and includes an extensive information panel that often links the object to local connections such as the Thurston family as previous owners or companies such as Burrell and Garrett as manufacturers. The two principal operating fairground rides are positioned either side of the line of engines, and are shrouded in the fantasy mix of darkness and muted colours picked through spotlights, illuminated trees and large globe hangings suspended in what appear to be ornate hollowed out mirror frames (figure 5.20). The Gallopers and Switchback do not look like they are part of any kind of realistic fairground of the past, and the strong nostalgic connections that can be formed through evocative fairground lighting - traditional bulbs in white or orange - are obliterated with the installation of theatrical lights casting different shades throughout the canopied space of the ride (figure 5.21).

As part of the processual and timetabled schedule of experiences the announcement of either the Gallopers or Switchback starting up is given following the completion of one of the Wurlitzer shows. As the ride fills and commences rotation, an organ as part of the machine

¹⁰ Keiller (2013: 161-171) documents this filmic phenomenon as 'phantom rides'.



Figure 5.20 - The Thursford fairground on approach, photograph Ian Trowell



Figure 5.21 - Atmospheric lighting in Switchback, photograph Ian Trowell

provides an authentic soundtrack, though combined with the strange lights and the silence that bears down immediately before (and after) the ride, it feels a little like a disco at a funeral. The Switchback is operated with staff in-situ, one person powering the ride whilst a second person cranks concertinaed sheet music through the organ. In contrast, the Gallopers have moved over to electric drive, and embody a quite surreal mode of operating involving a staff member standing at some distance from the ride at the end of an electric cable holding a large switch. It gives the impression of standing at a safe distance to explode some suspicious package or demolish a small building.

The walls of the exhibition room are covered with agricultural and fairground vernacular in the ad-hoc spirit previously described at Strumpshaw Hall, with the darkened enclaves making the object and information sheets difficult to pick out beyond being vague shapes (figures 5.22a-e). The grouping by type is replicated but there appears to be an attempt to create geometrical clusters with circular objects such as large cogs forming pyramids, a selection of valves set out as a Fibonacci array, and shovels and other long handled implements forming a curved parabolic boundary with a rhythmic sequence of spanners. These objects are possibly harking back to trade displays and advertisements from the late 1800s assembled by the manufacturers, but here they appear lacking context, particularly the cogs, spindles and pulley wheels that are painted in a disciplined scheme of red, green and white. The close similarity of some objects (particularly the valve units and pumping parts) resemble the typological artistic projects of Jim Golden or Allan McCollum and his *Individual Works* series in which seemingly mass produced objects are given time and attention to reveal differences, common identity and meaning (figure 5.23). Parallels can be drawn between the artist and the displays here, a skewed fascination and celebration with the pure object such that it becomes an outline that forms a linked element in a greater whole that persists as a pure celebratory pattern. This detours the regards of correct museological practice as the object breaks away from the focus on itself as worthy of conservation and contemplation, and becomes akin to a structural brick or globule of paint on an interior wall. There is also a blurring of figure and ground, an effect investigated in a similar context by Gombrich (1979) who documents the grouping of shapes within a singular gravitational field as part of 'the sense of order' that underpins his work on art history. Kirchenblatt-Gimblett (1998: 25) remarks that the practice of grouping objects for display can have effects that pull in different directions such that objects are:

at their most documentary when presented in their multiplicity... signs that point away from themselves to something else, to life... hyperbolising their status as artefacts by advocating that they may be examined in large numbers and series, a task anticipated and facilitated by the collecting process itself and well suited to typological exhibition arrangements.

There is a further direction indicated here as the object – individual or in mass – eradicates its heritage usefulness.



Figure 5.22a-d - Wall mounted displays at Thursford, photographs Ian Trowell



Figure 5.23 - Individual Works by Allan McCollum, source and copyright the artist

Audience and feedback

Whilst the visitors to Thursford during my visit were clearly enjoying themselves, it was impossible to escape from an overview that was determined by the pressure of regimentation and atmospheric smothering. From within these operating procedures it is difficult to see a possible autonomy of the fair as a super-object, the two fairground rides as first-order-objects, or the individual artistic and aesthetic details of these rides as second-order-objects (these latter aspects were particularly obliterated under the lighting regimes on and around the rides). The contextualisation of the experience of being at Thursford is overcoded with a fantasy or dreamlike feel vaguely related to Christmas and the wonderland nature of winter, combined with the dictatorial movement through the space via a timetabled and announced loud sound system. This sense of an imposed alterity is evident in the online feedback of Thursford, with many visitors struggling to apprehend what they have experienced in line with their expectations. A typical statement from the TripAdvisor website is as follows: 'The attraction does not seem to know what it is, is it a steam museum, theatre, events centre, freeze storage for a crematorium or somewhere it is Christmas everyday'.

Identity crisis aside, the power of performance and music within this atmosphere is clearly working, with visitors attentively listening to and watching the intermittent displays of polymorphic virtuosity of Robert Wolfe and the remotely operated standalone organs that loomed large on the hall's perimeter under theatrical spotlights. Wolfe receives regular accolades as part of the majority of positive feedback about the Thursford experience, and the direct link back to the experience of ornate theatre and cinema organs (in use well past the

1950s) figures heavily in visitor contextualisation of their time there. This music and mode of presentation is from the past, in most cases aside from the cinema a distant past, but a past that has been kept flickering like a kindled flame through the traditions of steam rallies. The sheer presence and operational power of these instruments, and the steam traction engines that form a spine across the centre of the hall, is enough to fix their shock and awe value - a tactic that is well used at large museums such as the National Railway Museum with their main exhibition space built around a turntable with an array of dominating engines positioned like centripetal radial spokes. It is questionable how many people remember these engines, these organs, and a ride like the Gondola Switchback in their common usage on the fairground bearing in mind that the fair went through an aggressive modernisation on all fronts of transportation, music and thrill rides in the 1930s. George Cushing is evoked as a teenager at the Mart in 1920, but George and his contemporaries who may have witnessed these sights, sounds and smells have all passed away.

The persistence of these objects flourishes at different levels. There is the aforementioned power and mechanical prowess that is justified by the sheer monolithic presence of a pristine traction engine or the drowning noise of a fairground organ. This awe of the powerful is a common fabric through our historical viewing habits, and the display of these objects as a kind of Stanley Kubrick monolith does not require what we might term as a 'Wittgensteinian thread' of handed down familiarity.¹¹ The importance of handed down experience, tenderness and familiarity emerges instead with the practical restaging of the use of these organs, engines and rides, and it is evident with the electric cable and distanced (and somewhat disinterested) start switch operating of the Gallopers that these are being appreciated as monoliths rather than reminders of working practices.

A general memory of the past surfaces in other ways, with a visitor I interviewed commenting that the rides, engines and organs remind him of 'a gentler age... not that long ago', affirming Samuel (1994: 92) and the concept of a common desire for a 'simpler life', similarly evoking the ideas of Lasch (1991: 93) who suggests that 'nostalgia finds its purest literary expression in the convention of the pastoral'. In his three-tier schema of nostalgia, Davis (1979: 17) defines 'first-order nostalgia' as simple nostalgia, where things in the past are seemingly better.¹² The powerful emotive orchestration of the ambience and the music within Thursford allows such thoughts to come to the surface without questioning their veracity or locating them with a specific deictic marker. Thus, while Thursford is a powerful source for conjuring up a vague past of nostalgic warmth, it does not attempt to conjure up the past of the fairground.

Conclusion

The Thursford Collection is rooted in a strong narrative tradition that draws on a mythologised history of the founder George Thomas Cushing. This provides two key characteristics: the practice of situating the fairground heritage collection in a romantic narrative that draws upon powerful engines and machinery of the past and the entrancement of a young fairgoer, and the interweaving of an agricultural context. This agricultural theme as both back-story and

¹¹ Kubrick's seminal use of the monolith is from the opening sequence of the film *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968).

¹² Second-order nostalgia would question those thoughts, third-order nostalgia would involve phenomenological objectification to examine why you are feeling those thoughts.

present day setting segues from the previous chapter and the three micro case studies explored therein, and also cements a theme that carries through into later case studies.

Thursford also allows a first glimpse of the architecture housing these static collections, and the necessity to navigate the 'big shed' structure. It is debateable as to whether Thursford achieves a transition to the fairground experience once inside the building, instead it creates something significantly different and intricately composed and structured. This is a somewhat fantasised winter/Christmas experience that relies upon darkness and discrete, highly contextualised, uses of light. The corollaries of this are a heavily prescribed and structured, sequenced experience of the space and its exhibits, and an inability to call back on real life experiences of the fairground as a whole or as predominant and memorable first-order-objects. The fairground presented in Thursford is not drawn from a real life experience, but instead sits within some kind of dream-space where fairground objects and affects are sequenced out into a conveyor belt of experiences. As a barometer for the necessity of authenticity to create a real space and experience, we are left none the wiser.

Thursford feels like a personal collection that has become a mode of making a living, and so it has to perform in the tourist market. To achieve this it has opted for a significantly different experience. It clearly contains important fairground heritage aspects such as the Switchback Gondolas, but the collection as a whole has veered away from attempting a fairground recreation and so invites caution when using it as an example of how we might situate a dialogue with the wider heritage movement.

Museum case study 2 – Scarborough Fair Collection

Introduction and context

The Scarborough Fair Collection is an example of a dedicated collection of fairground rides and associated artefacts from the fairground, mechanical organs from theatres and ballrooms, vintage mechanical devices and their associated marketing materials and accoutrements, sharing a structural similarity to both Strumpshaw in terms of its exhibits being from everyday domestic and rural industrial use, whilst also aspiring to attain some of the grander theatrical attributes of the Thursford Collection. It is also the endeavour of a single and dedicated individual.

The owner and originator of the collection is Graham Atkinson, whose background moved from farming to owning and operating a large caravan site. All of these historical and geographical factors have a bearing upon the collection and I will develop some of these strands here in this section. Atkinson entered the collecting market as major player in the 1980s with the purchase of the Munich Oktoberfest organ, followed by the substantial acquisition of the Buxworth Steam Group artefacts following the bankruptcy of Tony Marchington in 2003.¹³ The website for the collection records this as a step up from a ‘casual love for the glories of the past’ to a ‘passion that completely took over his life’.¹⁴ Furthermore, the language of the website reflects a stressing of the importance of certain objects, claiming the aforementioned organ as ‘world famous’ and the Burrell engine *Iron Maiden* as ‘the most famous showman’s engine of them all’. Atkinson is in the upper echelons of collectors interested in the strenuous tasks of restoring and presenting large artefacts such as organs and engines, and it is evident that competition and prestige operates here. For example, the website offers no context for the claim of *Iron Maiden* being world famous, and the feeling is that the claim reflects as much on the owner (Atkinson) as it does on the artefact itself.¹⁵ Atkinson’s earlier purchases of organs and engines prior to these two significant artefacts are not mentioned on the website.

The website also records the birth of the actual collection as a housed tourist attraction, suggesting that the growth in size necessitated new storage facilities and ‘the idea of building an entertainment venue was considered, after all why should such wonderful items only be enjoyed during the summer months?’. There is no date given to the opening of the building, but the local newspaper *The Scarborough News* announces the forthcoming attraction in April 2008.¹⁶ The collection has continued to grow in all directions (ballroom artefacts, transport,

¹³ Tony Marchington is another entrepreneur turned steam preservationist from a farming background, who set up the Buxworth Steam Group which consisted of numerous engines (including *Iron Maiden*) and fairground rides. Marchington purchased the famous steam railway engine *Flying Scotsman* in 1996 and his failed endeavours to make this venture into a permanent attraction contributed in part to his bankruptcy.

¹⁴ See <http://www.scarboroughfaircollection.com/collection/> (accessed 4 November 2016).

¹⁵ The *Iron Maiden* is a Fowler engine made famous for its central role in the 1962 Ealing comedy film of the same name. By this time the engine was in preservationist hands with John Crawley, having been purchased from fairground use with the Derbyshire-based Oadley family. It was known as *Kitchener* in its working life and preservation life, but its role in the film resulted in its name changing and subsequent fame - a possible suggestion that media fame outflanks fairground authenticity.

¹⁶ See <http://www.thescarboroughnews.co.uk/news/fairground-collection-set-to-entertain-1-1417523> (accessed 4 November 2016).

fairground), and the inclusion of key fairground artefacts has meant that it has become an attraction for those interested in fairground heritage. It housed an annual fairground model show up until recent years and was the venue for the FS AGM in 2010 and 2012, cementing some link with the fairground enthusiast community. However, the key audience is a mix of holiday makers from the surrounding area of Scarborough and Bridlington, and the captive audience in the caravan sites that surround the collection.

The collection is situated near to Leberston, within the confines of Atkinson's Flower of May Holiday Park, offset just from the precarious East Yorkshire coastline six miles south of Scarborough and two miles north of Filey. It sits within a large caravan site, which itself forms part of network of other sites, and these are important when I come to unpack the specific nature of the site. First, it is worthwhile reflecting on the name 'Scarborough Fair', since Atkinson has chosen this as a reference point even though the village of Leberston is closest by, and the significant resort of Filey is closer than Scarborough. The resonance of the name Scarborough Fair extends in two directions; firstly it is a title made famous by Simon and Garfunkel (in 1966) and subsequently brought to further prominence with its atmospheric use in the 1968 film *The Graduate*. The song actually links back to an old English folk ballad, though it is questionable how much popular cultural coinage this would have had prior to the song's rebirth with the film in 1968. The folk song refers to the fair at Scarborough, but its approximate date of origin and lyrics relate to a trading fair, which would be the origins of many English fairs. Furthermore, it is suggested that the ballad evolved to reference different fairs or no fair at all - the point of the ballad being a set of impossible tasks exchanged as a duet to refer to the (im)possibility of a love affair to come.¹⁷ Thus, as a living memory (or celebration) of the extant Scarborough Fair it is doubtful that the song had a connection and recurrent usage before its recurrence in 1966/68. Nevertheless, Scarborough Fair as a modern day funfair was indeed an important event, falling in the October of every year as part of the back end sequence of fairs that lit up the dark autumnal nights. The Yorkshire visitors to Atkinson's collection would likely associate Scarborough Fair with both the popular song and the funfair.

Scarborough is part of North Yorkshire, though it also considered generically as the East Yorkshire coast. The delegation of Yorkshire into four regions is not a smooth border; in contrast it has fractal fingers and incursions on all internal edges. The coastal edge of North Yorkshire runs down as a strip of land to include Filey, though the border to the East Riding of Yorkshire is crossed before you get to Bridlington, the other popular resort in this area. Instead of working within these regional boundaries, I will consider the generic east coast of Yorkshire as a string of popular seaside resorts running from Bridlington at the base, through Filey, Scarborough and north to Whitby. This stretch of coast is a popular holiday destination for the large conurbations of Leeds (and West Yorkshire), Sheffield (and South Yorkshire) and Middlesbrough and the North East. Hence, destinations such as Scarborough and Bridlington are popular with working-class communities from these areas, and so the resorts reflect such an audience. The collection takes up a doubly strategic position on this coastline, firstly in relation to a vague 'class line' centred on Scarborough, and secondly as an attraction nested within a large caravan site / holiday park.

¹⁷ See [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scarborough_Fair_\(ballad\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scarborough_Fair_(ballad)) (accessed 4 November 2016).

Scarborough itself is a boundary point that has a polymorphous and porous quality - there is no boundary line within the town that marks out the boundary formed by the town, creating a kind of dual space in a single space such as fictionalised by author China Miéville's 2009 novel *The City & the City*. What I am saying here is that north of Scarborough there is a focus on heritage such as the North York Moors Railway, hiking green spaces and rugged terrain, small attractions and tea rooms, and a more middle-class mode of holidaying. South of Scarborough is set out with holiday camps and a more cheap-and-cheerful vernacular of fast food, leading in to Bridlington with its focus on amusement arcades, ice cream, pizza and burgers. Figures 5.24a-b show the zoomed out maps north and south of Scarborough marking out the green terrain to the north and commercially developed spaces to the south. Even though this only shows marking out of national park areas, there is a clear tendency to over-develop the area south of Scarborough with interlocking and expansive caravan sites. Scarborough itself has a mix of attractions, though it leans towards its 'southern' status with a 'kiss-me-quick' atmosphere of arcades, ice cream parlours, cheap shops selling seaside trinkets, an assortment of joke shops with window displays of rubber dog turds and garish bars selling shots and cocktails to the large crowds of stag and hen parties. Its heritage side is evident with the castle, pavilion, Sitwell family connection and Anne Bronte's grave, though these sites seem to struggle to attract the flows of working-class fun-seekers.¹⁸ With this in mind it is insightful that the Scarborough Fair Collection has chosen a large scale advertising campaign in Scarborough, with posters on the back of buses and the sponsorship of road islands and small planted spaces in the town (figure 5.25).

South of Scarborough the flat terrain has meant the growth of large caravan sites or holiday parks, containing static multi-berth caravans which can be purchased and subsequently let out. This business model is extremely lucrative with site-holders expected to pay rent to site owners and also keep their caravan within a certain range of newness (and also purchase new replacement caravans from the site owners). In addition, the site has a captive audience where all facilities and amenities are under control of the site owners, so that everything is charged for at relatively extortionate costs. As it is often remarked in these places, you 'pay to breathe'. The working-class families opting to rent out a caravan (or holiday home) for a week are inter-generational due to the large capacities of some of the caravans (10 berth and over), meaning that children, parents and grandparents share the holiday and a timeless thread of attachment is developed. As such, the holidaying group is situated within the microbial clustering of grids and flows of oblong caravans (figure 5.26). Gray (2006: 298) poetically describes this terrain as a 'separate geography composed of rectangular and flat-roofed boxes made out of plastic and aluminium in varied pastel shades, with the parks in total forming a disjointed and hidden linear city held together by the closeness to the sea and a web of private roads and clusters of commercial facilities'. Typical large sites lying on the stretch of land between Scarborough and Bridlington include Flower of May, Blue Dolphin, Primrose Valley, Reighton Gap and Cayton Bay.

Having established that the collection is sited in this double articulation of working-class holiday audiences commonly spanning three generations, it is also necessary to point out the

¹⁸ The Sitwell family house, Woodend, has recently reopened as an office space and gallery. It is enclosed in the Regency era Crescent hidden in the centre of Scarborough.



Figures 5.24a-b - Map of tourist area north and south of Scarborough, Google maps



Figure 5.25 - Advertising sponsorship of Scarborough in Bloom, photograph Ian Trowell



Figure 5.26 - Satellite view site clusters, Google maps

THE SCARBOROUGH FAIR COLLECTION

What's On 2016

Wurlitzer Afternoon Tea Dances with Michael Carr
Every Wednesday 1pm - 4pm
Guest Organist - Paul Wednesdays in every month

Enthusiasts Day
Sunday 27 March 10am to 4pm
Normal Admission charge applies

Wedding Fair
Sunday 24 April from 3pm - 6pm
Free Admission to museum from 3pm

"Steam Up Day"
Sunday 12 June 10am to 4pm
Normal Admission charge applies

Andrew Nix & Tony Stage in Concert
Sunday 24 July at 2:30pm Doors Open 1pm
Tel: Andrew 01757 708509 Tony 01409 748295
Admission: Tickets £8-50

Silent Movie Spectacular
Harold Lloyd's "Safety Last"
Sunday 11 September 2-30pm
Accompanied by Howard Beadmont playing the "Mighty" Wurlitzer
Admission £7-50

Christmas Tea Dance
Wednesday 30 November 1pm to 4pm
Doors open 11am
Admission £7-50

"A Christmas Carrousel"
9 & 10 December at 7-30pm
10 & 11 December at 2pm
Featuring the Julie Hatton Dancers
A Magical Christmas Celebration through Song & Dance
Tickets £12 Senior/Child £11

The "Mighty" Wurlitzer
Guest organists will play the "Mighty" Wurlitzer on occasional days throughout the week.

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For more details check out the website.
www.scarboroughfaircollection.com

2016 Opening Times

23 March to 30 October 2016
Wednesday to Sunday
10am - 4pm

Closed
Monday and Tuesday
except for Bank Holiday Mondays

Closed due to private function
18 June, 25 June, 2 July, 20 August and 1 October

Admission Charges

Adult £7.50
Concession £4.50
Child (6-16) £5
Family Ticket 2 Adults and up to 4 Children £22
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Facilities

Gift Shop • Cafe/Licensed Bar
Disabled Access • Free Coach and Car Parking
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*Some of our exhibits may be away visiting
Steam rallies at home and abroad.
The organs in the museum ballroom will not be
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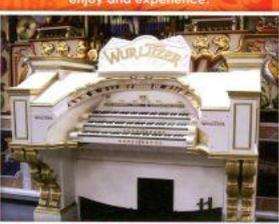
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Our undercover museum can be enjoyed whatever the weather and there is something for everyone, and for all ages to see, hear, enjoy and experience.



Two "Mighty" Wurlitzer organs complete Graham Atkinson's extensive and exciting collection. They form the centre piece of the museum ballroom.



Listen to the melodies of yesteryear and the hits of today on the Fairground, Street and Dance Organs built by Decap, Gavoli, Morlier Ruth and Marengli.

It is where the past truly comes to life

Take a ride on the Golden Galloping Horses, the Ark, the Dodgems, the Caterpillar, the Cake Walk and the Ghost Train.





The children can take a ride on the Austin car ride, Junior Gallopers, Junior Waltzers and the Halstead hand turned roundabout.




Figures 5.27a-b - Scarborough Fair Collection publicity leaflet for 2016

fairground tradition associated with these holidays. Scarborough has a small resident fairground on the bay that contains a travelling-style Big Wheel, Twist and Dodgems, whilst previous amusements existed in the Olympia building and in the large high-lying park in the North Bay alongside the now departed zoo and dolphinarium. Bridlington has a larger extant amusement park along the narrow seafront and has past histories of smaller indoor

amusement parks. Finally, the large Butlins camp (and its attendant fairground) was located alongside Primrose Valley and this was a precursor to the holiday parks that now populate the area. Thus, there is a distinct fairground / amusement park history in the air of the region.

Turning now to examine the small six panel publicity leaflet (figures 5.27a-b) it is immediately evident that a strong fairground colour palette of maroon, red and gold has been utilised throughout. Furthermore, the letterhead of the attraction mimics the screwed down brass plate of a traction engine boiler maker, with the letters breaking out of the frame. The front panel emphasises the engine and organ, and we see Atkinson's name emblazoned on the canopy of the engine. Once folded out the remaining two panels include opening details and a list of what's on events. These are predominantly focused on the ballroom and include a regular Wednesday tea dance and various special concerts. Events include an 'Enthusiasts Day', a 'Steam Up Day' and a wedding fair, showing synergy with the Thursford Collection. The interior three panels of the leaflet are driven by photographs of the exhibits and general interior of the whole attraction, whereby Atkinson is namechecked twice in the short spaces of text and the space is referred to as a museum. The sparse texts take on the tone of the enthusiast or collector, and both engines and organs are listed by manufacturers - a language that would be meaningless to the general public but hopefully specialist enough to impress upon them Atkinson's stature as a collector.

The website follows through with the maroon colour scheme (figure 5.28) and emphasises the brass plate logo. A carousel of main images moves across the homepage featuring an engine, a ride, a sequence of female dancers and an organ close-up. There are a few short paragraphs advertising the possibilities of the day out with short references to nostalgic endeavours such as 'find out how showmen used to live, learn how a pipe organ works, experience what a disco was like 100 years ago'. The collection details come under a single page entitled 'Our Collection', though this page doesn't granularise into each individual attraction and instead lists a short biography of Atkinson's status as a collector. What is offered is a small gallery of clickable images that depict the attractions in an anodyne and de-peopled atmosphere-less fashion (figures 5.29a-d). These also include pronouncements of the owner's name emblazoned upon engine canopies (figure 5.30) whilst some interior shots badly reflect upon the haphazard and somewhat contrived contextualisation of attractions and unflattering backgrounds. For example, figure 5.31 shows a large Hooghuys organ positioned with fake Christmas trees (possibly a poor attempt to mimic the strange environment of Thursford) and an intrusive high-gloss white door set into the background.¹⁹ I emphasise this somewhat critical fine detail as it appears that neither the website nor publicity leaflet build upon either an authentic 'whole' experience of the super-object or a specific authenticity or nostalgic value of the individual objects.

¹⁹ Ad hoc re-used doors would be part of the vernacular of an indoor amusement park used to construct functional spaces like change kiosks and stowaway spaces for cleaning and maintenance equipment. In the next study of Folly Farm I draw parallels to this type of space, however my intention here is not to suggest that this door harmonises any kind of authenticity to nostalgic space in this situation.



Figure 5.28 - Screenshot of homepage for Scarborough Fair Collection website, 2016



Figures 5.29a-d - Screenshot of Scarborough Fair Collection attractions pages from website, 2016



Figure 5.30 - Screenshot of Scarborough Fair Collection attractions pages from website, 2016



Figure 5.31 - Screenshot of Scarborough Fair Collection attractions pages from website, 2016

Historical fairground context

As stated in the opening section, this collection came about through Atkinson's impetus to collect, and his financial capability to move into the upper echelons of personal collecting. The public facing displaying of the collection equally grew out of a need to house the growing collection. The initial policy seemed to be to try and collect the key objects and these are mapped out with phrases such as 'world famous', though there also appears now to be something of a 'Noah's Ark' approach to the collection with a one-of-everything policy (particularly evident with the organs). In terms of fairground rides Atkinson's first purchase was in 2003, with the 1893-built Tidman Gallopers from the private collection of Tony Marchington. These Gallopers previously had a string of owners and had spent many years at the open air amusement park at Weymouth. The following year Atkinson purchased an Ark but this languished in a field and suffered fire damage. For many years the focus for Atkinson was engines and organs, but with the public opening of the space at the back of the holiday park he began to invest with more purpose. A working Caterpillar was purchased in 2008, an Ark and Cakewalk in 2011, and Dodgems and Ghost Train in 2014. These rides have mixed pedigree and Atkinson tends not to prioritise returning to previous regimes of decoration or construction. The Cakewalk is a particularly strange example in that the ride was never a 'ride' as such; it was part of a moving aspect inside an indoor Funhouse environment at Southport Pleasureland. The parts were salvaged and passed through various owners as remnants residing in a pile (figure 5.32), however around 2010 it was built up to become a new instance of a vintage ride type and christened the 'Old Tyme Cakewalk' (figure 5.33). Atkinson's rides displayed within the collection are a montage of these 'fictitious restorations' (whereby a ride is painted to take it back to an older look and feel that pre-dates its actual existence), fictitious constructions such as the Cakewalk, and mix and match decorations. Figure 5.34 shows a close up detail of Atkinson's Ark in a vintage format, with a deliberately vintage decorative scheme applied around 2009 whilst in the ownership of the Millband family. I talk about the concept of fictitious restoration in more detail in the chapter 10, however here the Ark is simply given an imaginary look that it might have had in the 1950s. In much the same way that a showman would continually update a ride by obliterating the old artwork, Millband (the previous owner) has simply updated this ride in a new style that draws on the old, plugging in to fashion for nostalgic colours and patterns. Figure 5.35 shows Atkinson's Dodgems, a small set purchased without rounding boards but here he has added rounding boards from another set previously owned by the Tuby family, purchased when these boards were up for sale as a standalone artefact of fairground art. This is a kind of 'cut-and-shut' technique where parts are mixed together to make a new whole that might not always make a comfortable fit or be easy on the eye. In fact, further parts of the artwork from the Tuby Dodgems appear throughout the collection, as we see in the next section.



Figure 5.32 - Abandoned parts from Funhouse used to make Cakewalk, Rundles yard, 2008



Figure 5.33 – Scarborough Fair 'Old Tyme' Cakewalk made circa 2010, photograph Ian Trowell



Figure 5.34 - 1950s effect on the Scarborough Fair Ark, photograph Ian Trowell



Figure 5.35 - Dodgem rounding boards transferred from one machine to another, photograph Ian Trowell

Description

This site report and consideration of the collection is based upon an initial visit in August 2015 followed by a longer visit in August 2016. On my second visit the primary audience consisted of a coach trip of assisted elderly residents and a scattering of family groups who were holidaying in the area. Whilst the weather for the week was fine, on the afternoon of my visit there were frequent rainstorms, though this did not seem to create a surge in new visitors. The very specific demographic of the audience at this time made it impractical and outside of my ethics considerations to conduct interviews on site. Some alternative feedback is utilised through the social media site TripAdvisor.

Figure 5.36 shows a close up of the satellite image of the site, indicating the square sheds that contain the collection and attractions.²⁰ The location is towards the back of the caravan site and the approach via car instils an inevitable trepidation with regard to the restrictive terrain and character of these places. In normal circumstances you are not permitted to drive into these caravan sites unless you are holidaying there, and a variety of restrictions and penalty devices are employed with confrontational signage declaring regimes of fines and punishments. There is a strange architecture that prevails, low brick-built modern buildings with flower beds in evidence surrounded by the functional objects that allow the smooth running and profit extraction of a condensed population in a make-shift town; an overwhelming plastic landscape of septic tanks and recycling bins mixed with skips and holiday homes either on their way out (deemed too old) or on their way in (as replacements). The entrance to the collection merges with this architecture of housing estate brickwork and large green sheds (figure 5.37), here showing a small group of elderly visitors and a coach from the Wakefield area that has presumably brought in more elderly visitors on a day out from a residential home. There is a working-class ostentatiousness in evidence with the weather vane and concrete lions flanking the entrance doors, though this is possibly the first of a number of attempts to replicate aspects of the Thursford Collection - in this case the 'olde worlde' village that forms the entrance and is detailed in the previous case study. Scarborough Fair's less seamless entrance leads to a foyer room and gift shop where a ticket is purchased for the attraction.

A short corridor with laminate flooring connects the foyer to the metal sheds that house the attractions, and this is flanked on one side with a set of distorting mirrors and on the other side with a selection of ad hoc vintage knick-knacks. Objects (also seen reflected and distorted in the mirrors) include a bike, oversize glockenspiel, selection of motoring items and scale steam engine mounted on a plinth (figures 5.38a-b). There is also a pair of standard pin notice boards such as found in offices or educational establishments, making this something of a heterotopic space that is neither fun nor function, giving a feeling of walking down a hospital corridor or care home environment. The mirrors add to this heterotopic feeling, allowing the subject/object dissolution previously associated with looking in to a mirror to be re-asserted with an absent and imagined other as the reflection is morphed into widened, thinned, stretched, compressed or even multiplied versions of the self.

²⁰ The sheds have been expanded since this aerial view was made, and are being expanded further in 2017.



Figure 5.36 - Location of Scarborough Fair, Google maps



Figure 5.37 - Entrance to Scarborough Fair Collection, 2016, photograph Ian Trowell



Figures 5.38a-b - Entry corridor into Scarborough Fair Collection, photographs Ian Trowell

The corridor enters the metal sheds through a small room allowing a right-angle turn to be made. This room is even more discombobulating than the corridor, and resembles the *horror vacui* that resonates throughout Strumpshaw Hall. There is no structure or pattern to this display, and no information or context provided. It just represents a wall of objects that is approached and then forces the visitor to turn right (figure 5.39). The foreground includes an old perambulator, washing mangle and a line of vacuum cleaners, with some modern domestic style fitted shelves behind housing models, old radios, televisions and record players, and a couple of piles of books as if the whole unit has been wrenched out of someone's (current) front room. This display resembles the avant-garde art installation *Inventory* (1995) by Christian Boltanski, and described by Kirchenblatt-Gimblett (1998: 49) as an 'ironically pathetic museum dedicated to an anonymous person', creating an unintentional bridge between art and quasi-museum culture. Windsor (1994: 54) pulls no punches when describing such constellations and their purpose: 'en masse tat is capable of constructively representing that amalgam of sentimental interpretation of history that constitutes modern British nostalgia'.

Once through this room you enter the main collection area via the ballroom. This is seemingly a prime function and attraction of the day out, set to rival the grandeur of the Blackpool's Tower Ballroom (or even possibly Scarborough's own ballroom spaces such as at the Pavilion). What is also evident was another clear link to the Thursford experience, though Atkinson's attempt to cut and paste had seemingly lost much of the important detail that at least made Thursford seamless (if not strange). The Scarborough Fair ballroom is difficult to comprehend; it is certainly more confusing than grand, with a mix of overtly fake facades (pseudo weathered brick, cinema décor and random non-weight bearing Corinthian pillars) covering the metal frame of the building, and roof mounted chandeliers and mirror balls primarily illuminating the exposed corrugated roof structure (figure 5.40). Here Atkinson's 'Noah's Ark' of organs is on display all around the perimeter of the large room, and an organist plays at some distance away from the audience who are mainly seated at the cafeteria tables in the opposite corner. As with Thursford, a scrolled down slide projector screen is utilised to show a close up of corybantic body parts, whilst on stage a row of fibre-glass fairground horses stand in front of curtains illuminated in purple light. For this observer, nostalgia was invoked more for the 1990s-era David Lynch surrealist movie genre than for any sense of the entertainment past.

Leaving the ballroom, I now consider the fairground collection, set in two rooms the first of which is partitioned away from the ballroom. The sound of the space is not a hubbub of the fairground and no pop music is evident from either the rides or a more general sound system. The overwhelming sound is the organ player from the ballroom which carried through into the fairground rooms. The working attractions (rides) are staffed by volunteers and this skeleton team of operators run the rides on a rota such that it is rare that any one machine is going at any time. To partake involves the purchase of extra tickets on top of the entrance fee, suggesting that the collection is to be viewed in the first instance, and not engaged. No food, fairground or otherwise, is prepared or sold on the fairground, though cooked meals are available in the far corner of the ballroom. Subsequently, with the lack of food and sparse regime of running the rides, there is no pervading smell around the fairground area.

This lack of joining up the senses to give a feeling of being in a place that resembles or rekindles somewhere else inevitably leads to an overwhelming sense that you are still in a big shed that contains stored objects to look upon. There is no unified sense of coherent magic that draws the eye and mind towards thinking of being somewhere else, light is provided by



Figure 5.39 - Scarborough Fair ante-room between corridor and main attraction, photograph Ian Trowell

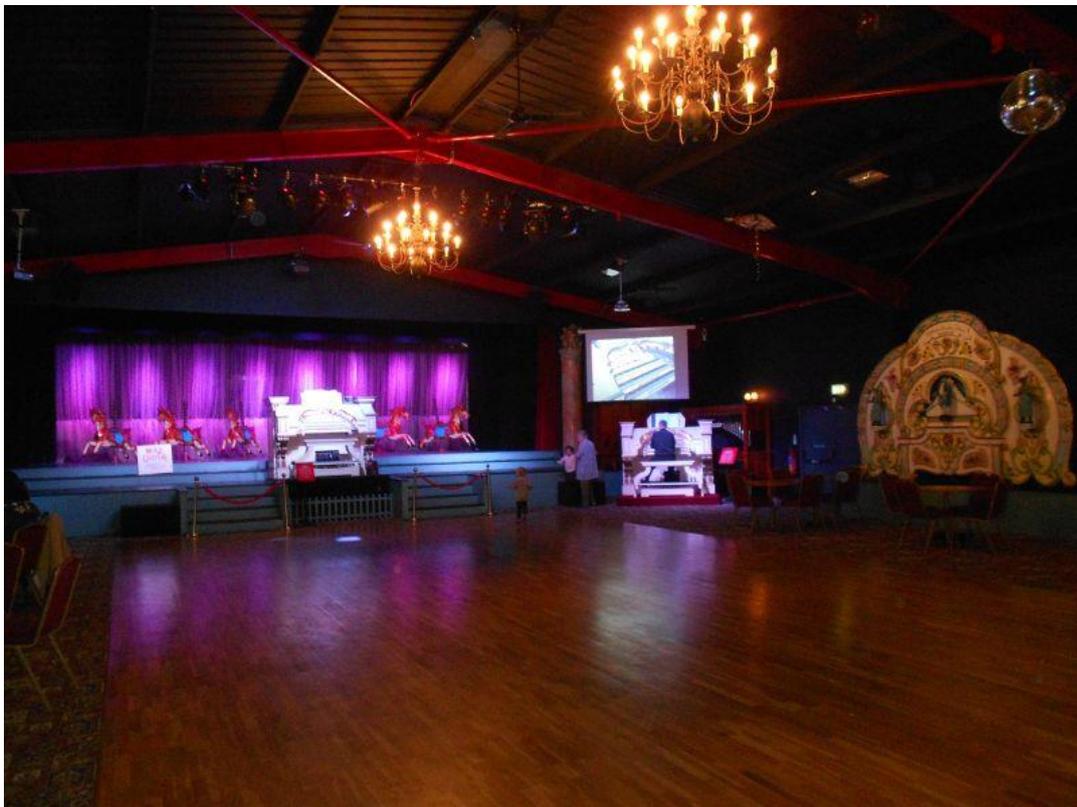


Figure 5.40 - Scarborough Fair Collection ballroom, photograph Ian Trowell

large skylight windows with no attempt to illuminate the space through evocative bulbs. The floor is a uniform pour and paint in industrial grey that has a gloss surface that reflects back the squares of light coming in through the roof. Some of this is captured in figures 5.41a-b, though what is evident in these photographs, and is representative of the whole space, is the clustering of all objects into every piece of floor space. These include everyday transportation from the distant and not so distant past, farmyard machinery, organs and organ facades and scale models of all the things that exist in the collection as 'real' objects. As with the collection at Strumpshaw, the walls are covered with artefacts such as the cluster of trade signs shown in figure 5.42.

The curated objects understood as a super-object do not translate across to be either a travelling fair or amusement park. Instead we have a scattering and stratigraphy of collected material celebrating the scope and prowess of the collector. As a respondent remarked: 'It's a hotch-potch, a mish-mash, a preservationist with a private collection opening to the public begrudgingly. It doesn't work as a fairground, it is sterile with no atmosphere'. The rides are flanked and obscured by bicycles and tractors (figures 5.43a-b) such that it is difficult to appreciate them as standalone objects and impossible to appreciate them as some realistic and coherent whole. Parts of fairground rides (second-order-objects) are leaned against complete fairground rides or attached to their sides. For example, figure 5.44 shows the Ghost Train with the purchased main rounding boards from Tuby's Dodgems attached to the side space of the Ghost Train, an area that would not normally be visible on a fairground. In the same vein, figure 5.45 shows two surplus passenger cars, two roll-up stall surfaces and an exterior panel from an Ark chariot leaning against the opposite side of the same train, again with no context or signage. The cheap plastic and metal chairs seen on the left extreme edge of the photograph are positioned throughout the building in spots that make little sense towards composing a view.

An aspect of the collection that stands out for me, and seemed to be drawing a crowd of reminiscing observers, is the gathered assortment of amusement arcade devices displayed in a mock arcade. These are notoriously difficult to keep working and unfortunately various artefacts were not responding to the coins inserted. The 'working models', or automaton dioramas, are very popular as these seemed to be a fixture in the seaside arcades of the past. These devices portray scary or saucy stories, often narrating moral tales involving drunkards in the cemetery or sleeping night-watchmen in which a barrage of opening doors and caskets would reveal demons, spirits and ghouls activated through an unseen knot of rotating cams, gears and pulleys. Such sights would often mildly traumatise or bemuse young observers (the display case is set at the eye-level height for a child as opposed to the 'what the butler saw' shows that necessitate an adult height to undertake in viewing) and these machines are often popular in auctions such as at Elephant House.²¹ Figure 5.46 shows the 'Haunted Churchyard' with the resident drunk in place, about to face up to a multitude of opening tomb covers.

²¹ See <http://www.elephanthouseauctions.com/> (accessed: 4 November 2016).



Figures 5.41a-b - Scarborough Fair clusters of artefacts, photographs Ian Trowell



Figure 5.42 - Scarborough Fair trade signs adorn wall space, photograph Ian Trowell



Figures 5.43a-b - Scarborough Fair rides with electric bicycle and tractors, photographs Ian Trowell



Figure 5.44 - Dodgem artwork attached to Ghost Train, photograph Ian Trowell



Figure 5.45 - Fair objects attached to Ghost Train, photograph Ian Trowell

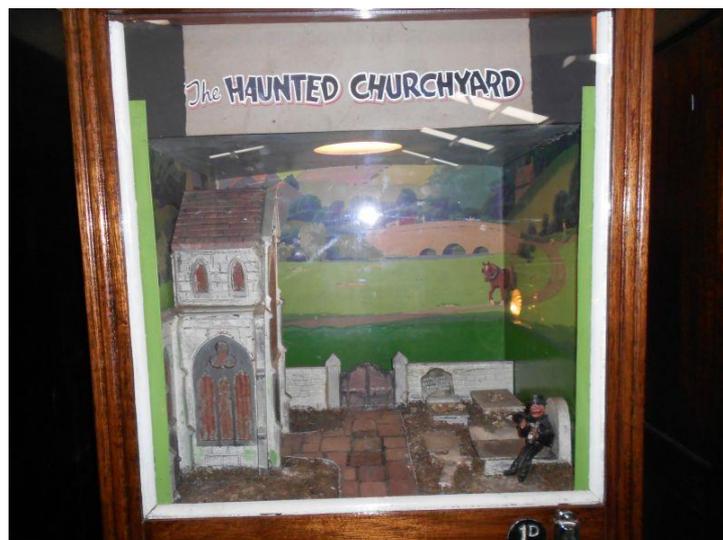


Figure 5.46 - Haunted Churchyard diorama, photograph Ian Trowell

Audience and feedback

The primary audiences on my visit consisted of families who looked to be on holiday and were sheltering from a wet and blustery day, and a considerable amount of elderly people with their carers who had arrived on pre-arranged coach trips. Many of the older visitors were confined to the ballroom and seemed content to sip tea and listen to the organ playing for the duration of my time there. The fairground rides and the interspersed farmyard and transport objects were attracting a small amount of interest, though the random attempts of information displays did not seem to be attracting any readers. These signs are text-heavy and fact-heavy, offering detailed blow-by-blow provenance chains for each artefact such as would appeal to enthusiasts of the genre who would more than likely already be familiar with the concise facts printed on each board.

The rides were operating very sporadically and some had notices indicating at what portion of the hour the ride would operate. Participating riders were quite minimal in number and I observed the Caterpillar, Dodgems and Ghost Train in operation. None of these rides generate an individual atmosphere or seem to enthral the riders, however the staff rallied around the disparate visitors to alert people to the last operation of the Gallopers for the day, and a larger congregation gathered to create what I would consider to be the only instance of fairground atmosphere (figure 5.47). Here there is a clear but momentary assignment of generational roles, with grandparents gathered to watch and strike up conversation with strangers standing next to them, children and their mothers encouraged to ride, and fathers pressed around the perimeter of the roundabout recording the event on cameras and phones.



Figure 5.47 - Final turn of the Scarborough Fair Gallopers, photograph Ian Trowell

The feedback on TripAdvisor makes interesting reading with 400 reviews added over the past four years, with key strands evident.²² There is a convergence in regard to the circumstances of the visit, particularly the rainy-day factor and the stating that the visitors were already staying on the Flower of May site (and so had free tickets for a single visit). The mode of dialogue is geared towards expressing value for money, and this is stated from the outset where satisfaction is gained, or forms a thread throughout each entry in the few occasions where the visitor feels short-changed or duped. In many individual cases value for money is directly linked to an excess of objects, and context or reflection on discrete objects is not considered. I will return to this concept when I attempt to sum up how nostalgia functions here, but first the observations of others can be drawn out to contrast with my own extended observations from my own visit.

The strange but familiar external appearance of the building draws some comments, supporting the notions of 'other-directedness' theorised by Relph (1976: 92) and extended into fan culture by Sandvoss (2005: 58). This concept involves an imposed 'other' reading upon a place or building, against expectation garnered through either routine familiarity or assumption via aesthetic appearance. Relph works with this forced shift of perspective and experience, and it can be set against the more subject-centred and privileged flaneuristic methods of the Situationists and their calls for psychogeography (in which the viewer chooses to make another reading of a place or space). Whilst it is clear that the previous case study at Thursford is also based itself in a large shed, it is not reflected in the feedback - quite possibly because the approach to the collection from the car park is heavily shaped in terms of atmosphere, and the shed nature of the building is masked by the mock-Norfolk facade. At Scarborough Fair the large shed is not disguised through either facades or controlled sight-lines, and it is met face on and looming. Feedback refers to the building as having a 'warehouse appearance' and also as 'awful looking on the outside'. In contrast, the entry corridor containing the mirrors seems to draw favour, with my micro-focused critical appraisal of this as a heterotopic space being overruled by its simple function as pleasure such that one visitor states 'the hall of mirrors puts you in the right frame of mind'. If a 'right frame of mind' is engineered in this corridor then the bizarre ante-room and its vintage cleaning paraphernalia is not just passed through or seen as confusing, it is engaged in the spirit of spectacle and fun. Strangely this works, as a selection of comments refer to this minute space and the dialogues struck up between the oldest generation and the youngest generation around memories of cleaning in the 'old days'.

The tone is thus set for a bombardment of nostalgic prompts through isolated objects, enacting what Kavanagh (2000: 98) describes as 'objects as memories to promote effective exploration of the past as a kind of dream space'.²³ This is referred to through all of the objects ranging from the farmyard, vintage transportation, organs and fairground. One comment urges the visitor to 'count how many times you say "do you remember" this is an amazing day out of nostalgia', whilst the romanticising of hard working-class life comes across with statements

²² See https://www.tripadvisor.co.uk/Attraction_Review-g190744-d2613208-Reviews-The_Scarborough_Fair_Collection-Scarborough_North_Yorkshire_England.html (accessed 19 September 2016).

²³ However, the unstructured and uninterpreted collection of bygones can invoke the wrath of museum professionals, with Jenkins (1991: 123) suggesting that 'far too many museums in Britain today merely provide a nostalgic peepshow into a largely fictitious past'.

such as 'it reminded me of my childhood in the 1950s when life was hard but fun'. These objects act as standalone prompts, they are not seen in a wider atmospheric context nor are they seen as cherished instances of the rare object-in-itself. For example no comments refer to the particular make of each organ or to the particular heritage value of a single object. Instead, there is a general transference of granular appreciation and knowledge onto the originator of the collection and those volunteers who run it, with the stock phrase 'labour of love' being commonly applied.

Conclusion

The Scarborough Fair Collection both draws on, and diverts from, the Thursford Collection. An agricultural link is evident but downplayed, and the collection is sited in a specific belt of densely populated caravan sites. As with Thursford, a narrative theme of the collection founder (Graham Atkinson) is prevalent, though this comes through at Scarborough more as a boast than a deep-reaching link back to the fairgrounds of old. The visitor to the site and collection is invited to marvel at the all-encompassing passion and power of the founder, with a presumed hope that this somehow implicates the importance of the collection.

Structurally there are further similarities with Thursford. The big shed is evident here and noted in the feedback, and the quirky facets of how Thursford is contextualised and sequenced are repeated with varying degrees of apparent success. The experience of the collection wavers between a cloning of Thursford and an attempt at a real fairground, but fails to attain either.

After navigating a corridor of mirrors, a strange collection of vintage household goods, and the organ performance area, the fairground proper is reached. There is little concession to an authentic super-object of a fairground, with decorative second-order-objects (what I classify as objects-about-objects) such as painted shutters positioned alongside operating first-order-objects such as fairground rides. There is no conceptual link such as parts of the same ride being displayed together (for example, a ride situated adjacent to its previous decoration) nor do we see the same types of ride being displayed together (parts of a Dodgem are displayed with the operating Ghost Train). To complicate matters, the whole ground space is crammed with agricultural, industrial and transport artefacts, whilst the walls are festooned with vintage commercial imagery. Finally, the fairground rides include the fabricated Cakewalk made from old parts that have no direct provenance to the artefact constructed, a confusing and categorically dangerous move that I explore in chapter 10.

The feedback suggests that this scattershot approach meets occasional and unconnected positive responses in terms of invoking memories, but the memories come from all aspects of lives past, rather than focussing on a concerted aspect (the fairground). The public-facing collection is effectively a housing space for Atkinson's own acquisitions, which he takes out to rallies and events. It occupies a space within the wider complex of a caravan site and is marketed as part of the deal for those electing to hire a caravan for the week. It is thus not necessary for the collection to somehow account for itself as a commercial viability, though the advertising of the collection around Scarborough suggests it is attempting to do so.

As with Thursford, there is a need for caution in making comparisons with wider heritage practices. The collection is tied into the desires of a particular individual and functions

relatively free of responsibilities that have to be considered when creating (fairground) heritage as authorised and viable encounters.

Museum case study 3 – Folly Farm

Introduction and context

Folly Farm is an example of a wider attraction that includes a significantly sized vintage fairground, and markets itself as a family tourist attraction in a popular holiday resort (Pembrokeshire) with heavy competition from other attractions in close proximity. These factors heavily shape the dynamic of the vintage fairground in terms of its specific content, the atmospheric articulation of that content and the adherence or otherwise to codes of authenticity regarding restoring and preserving that content.

The action of the Williams family, owners of Folly Farm, commencing a policy of purchasing key vintage fairground rides (1995 onwards), drew attention to the fairground enthusiast and preservation community, and it was generally discussed within specialist magazines such as the *Fairground Mercury* as a good thing in that key rides were being restored and opened.²⁴ In addition, the FAGB elected to hold its AGM at Folly Farm in 2002, whilst the FS held their AGM on the premises in 2005. It was, however, clear that Folly Farm could not and would not function as an educational museum or bespoke repository for fairground history. Its remote location meant that running it as a commercially viable museum was not a long-term consideration, even though early literature produced for Folly Farm by preservationist author Brian Steptoe (2001) tended to manoeuvre the venture towards this realm by suggesting criteria such as cut-off dates of manufacture and usage for included rides. Folly Farm, either as a whole or as a specific vintage fairground, is not a key year-on-year pilgrimage for fairground enthusiasts.

What is key to consider here is that the vintage fairground side of Folly Farm is both temporally and spatially sandwiched between its two other major functions. It commenced in 1988 as a pioneering farm opening up to the public to allow viewing of animal-based farm operations such as milking cattle and interaction with small animals through petting, alongside the inclusion of play-spaces and attractions based upon a farmyard theme. In 1995 the Williams family decided to incorporate a fairground into the attraction, and it was the proximity of the nearby Oakwood theme park that dictated the choice of going vintage - a fact I develop below when discussing the detailed setting up of the fairground.²⁵ The fairground side of Folly Farm then grew for seven years before a new initiative was commenced in 2002 with the setting up of a zoo. The focus on the zoo, particularly with the concurrent rise of another zoo in the region,²⁶ has meant that the growth of the vintage fairground has slowed down - though it had effectively reached a critical mass with a collection of around ten adult rides and numerous juvenile rides and stalls. Figure 5.48 shows the position of Folly Farm in regard to the coastal

²⁴ For example, in the regular 'Roundabouts' column any ride purchased by Folly Farm was recorded as a positive event, with the purchase of the Chairplanes marking the first mention in March 1998 (volume 20 number 4).

²⁵ Oakwood is four miles from Folly Farm. It is also a typical British theme park in that it doesn't have a theme, but is instead a collection of white-knuckle rides and roller coasters and so it is themed on the generic content of an American theme park (minus the theme).

²⁶ There was a small and allegedly run down zoo in operation in the area called Manor House Wild Animal Park at the time of Folly Farm opening their zoo. This has since been rebuilt and is now trading as Anna's Welsh Zoo and is owned by television presenter Anna Ryder Richardson, emerging as direct competition to Folly Farm.

sites in the area and other attractions, whilst figure 5.49 shows the layout of Folly Farm in terms of the three major themes of petting farm, vintage fairground and zoo.

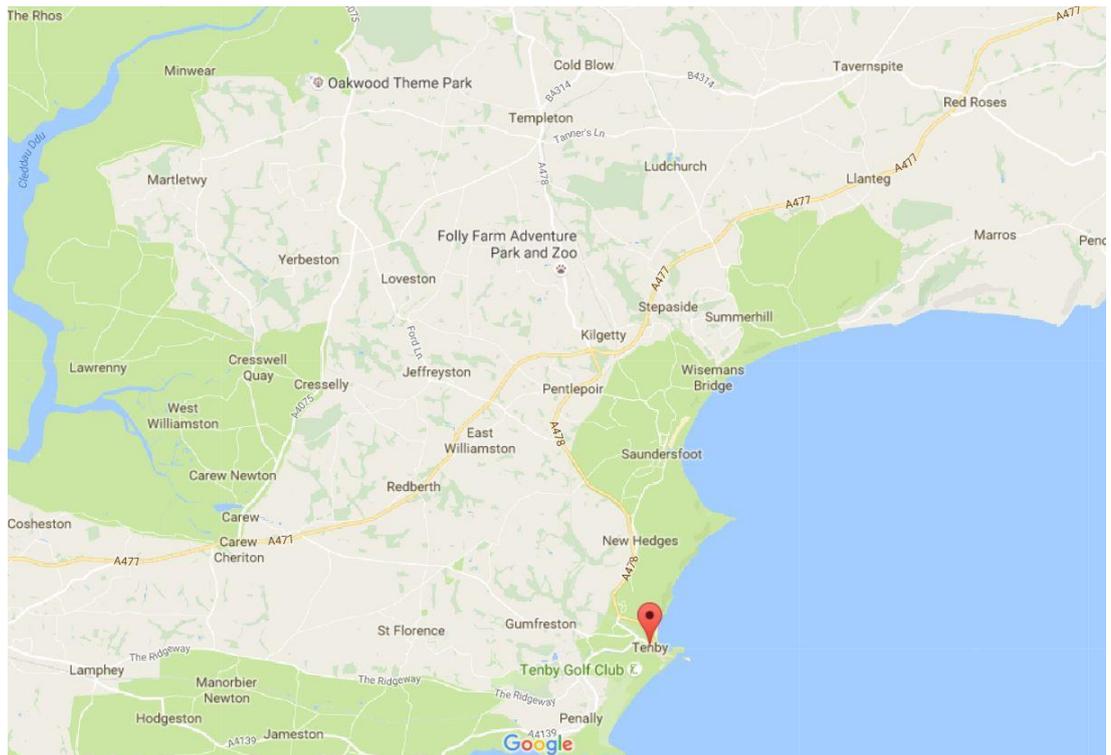


Figure 5.48 - Map of tourist area around Folly Farm, Google maps

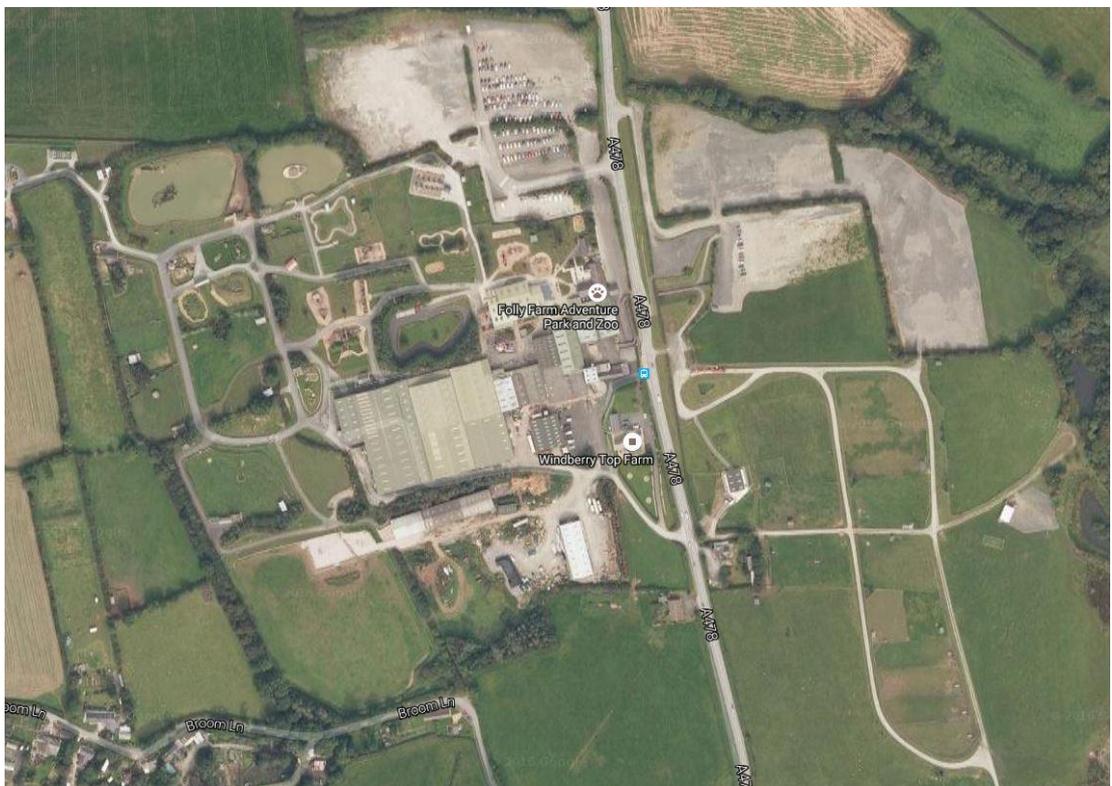


Figure 5.49 - Satellite view of Folly Farm, Google maps

The other factor to consider is that Folly Farm functions as a family tourist attraction in a very specific tourist area. It is positioned slightly inland from the popular Pembrokeshire resorts of Tenby and Saundersfoot in a region where more middle-class families choose to take their holidays.²⁷ Pembrokeshire, like Cornwall, is a long drive from most of the major cities in the UK, and the national park status means that it enjoys unspoilt beaches for windswept walking and surfing, rugged cliffs for outdoor pursuits and seal-watching expeditions and a myriad network of craft industries such as weaving, pottery, glass-working and woollen mills. Whilst both Tenby and Saundersfoot contain a small amount of seaside vernacular such as chip-shops and sweet-stalls, they are both a long way from the garish hustle and bustle of resorts like Bridlington, Skegness, Great Yarmouth and Blackpool.²⁸ A family will often drive to the region for their holiday, meaning that mobility is afforded and a chance to explore through a series of daily outings is common practice. As adventurous couples accrete families of small children, outings to surf high waves on desolate beaches or hike long stretches of the precipitous coastal paths have to be put on hold, but the region still holds an appeal. It is within this demographic that a hive of family attractions has built up around the region - reclaimed farms (such as Folly Farm) or the grounds of private houses now offering a mix of dinosaur parks and outdoor adventure play spaces. Folly Farm is in the midst of this odd socio-culturally dictated micro-geography, and sees itself as both an original stakeholder and market leader. The area is also notorious for fluctuating wet days, and so inclusion of wet weather options is paramount. This is a key marketing ploy for the vintage fairground part of Folly Farm such that the publicity leaflet specifically states 'perfect for wet weather days' and emphasises the 'all under one roof'.

With these factors in mind and by necessity of asserting difference and originality, Folly Farm moved to include a vintage fairground as a growing adjunct to a petting farm, and then extended outwards with a zoo. Its vintage fairground is clearly both conceived as *strategic-in-itself* and now existing as part of a wider *strategic assemblage*. By this, I mean that the vintage fairground was conceived as a particular idea at the time and marketed as a new novelty, and is now contextualised as part of a trio of attractions with the zoo possibly the leading attraction. As a rough measure to the balance of strategy for 2016, we can examine their folding publicity leaflet (figures 5.50a-b) which consists of two sides of six oblong panels: the front side consist of three general information panels, a single picture panel, with the other two panels split in two to give equal space to funfair, farm, zoo and adventure. The six flip side panels include two general information panels, three panels devoted to the zoo, and a single panel devoted to the funfair. This indicates that the zoo, in 2016, is the priority, though the attractions flow through the leaflet to assume a kind of semantic whole (the strategic assemblage) such that it is natural to situate a zoo alongside a fairground. Historically (in the UK) this has been the case, with fairgrounds present at zoos such as Chessington and Dudley in decades gone by, however this is a tradition that has slowly died out.²⁹ Whilst the zoo and farm can present a sensible coherence framed around an experience of viewing animals, the

²⁷ There is also a very specific demographic of working-class holidaymakers from large cities such as Swansea and Cardiff.

²⁸ Gray (2006: 284) highlights the diachronic shifting of class within geographical resorts and regions, suggesting the poles of 'excursionist-packed and rowdy' and a sedate opposite.

²⁹ Fairgrounds are still present at West Midlands Safari Park and Knowsley.



Figures 5.50a-b - Folly Farm publicity leaflet for 2016

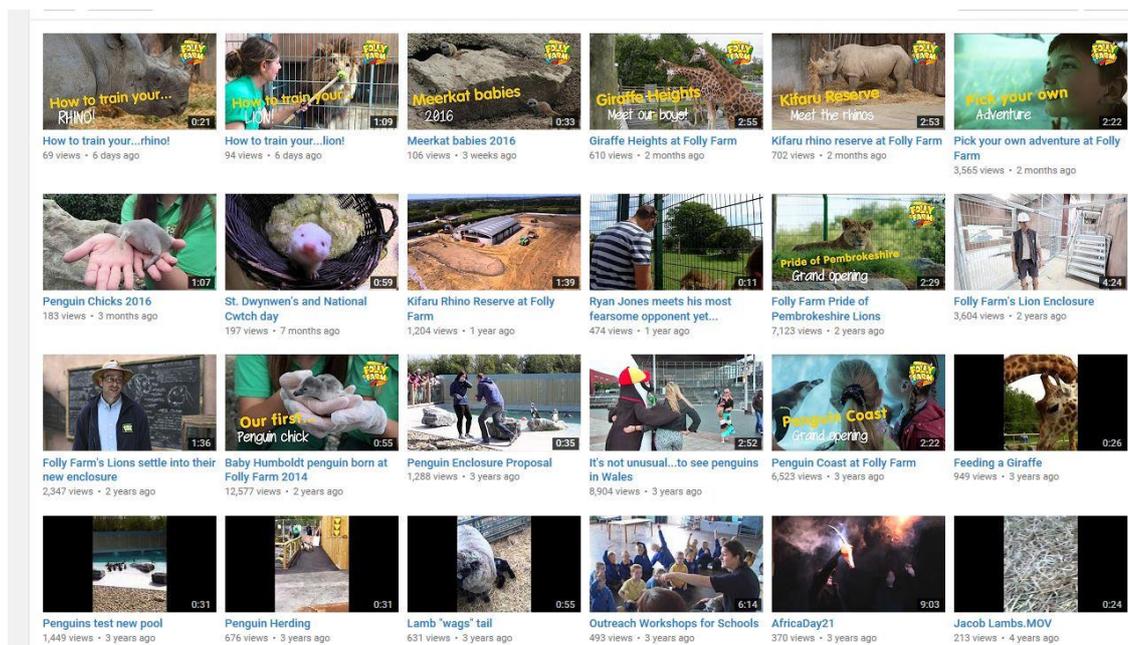


Figure 5.51 - Screen shot of Folly Farm YouTube channel (September 2016)

historical natural partnership between the zoo and fairground seems to be assumed in the leaflet, though it is quite likely that many visitors to Folly Farm would be unaware of the vintage fairground unless attention is paid to the leaflet. Advertising on posters in and around Tenby prioritises the zoo theme, whilst the YouTube channel for Folly Farm is heavily biased towards the zoo (figure 5.51 shows a screen grab of the first 24 films on the video feed, all of which are from the zoo).

The publicity leaflet declares the vintage funfair collection to be ‘the largest old-time working funfair in Europe’, and elsewhere uses the phrases ‘relive yesteryear’ and ‘take a trip down memory lane’ (twice). Unlike Thursford and Scarborough, there is no mention of the word museum, and emphasis is towards the theme of vintage and the hands-on nature of engagement. The website for 2016 includes a dedicated page for the ‘vintage fairground’ referring to ‘yesteryear’ and the practice of rides being ‘lovingly restored’ (figure 5.52). A more detailed page is accessed from here that is titled ‘vintage fairground rides’ and this includes a scroll-down listing of all the attractions including adult-sized rides, juvenile rides and a grouped mention of ‘arcades, stalls and mirrors’. This webpage functions with understandable brevity and some attractions are photographed with small children in-situ whilst each attraction warrants a precise two-line description that merges a detailing of the functionality of the attraction with anecdotal facts around historical importance and/or the rekindling of memories.³⁰ For example, the Cakewalk reveals that ‘Dancers would strut their stuff to try and win a large cake. We can’t promise you cake but this show ride will certainly make you look like you’re dancing as you make your way across shifting and bumping platforms’. Meanwhile, the Twist is introduced as follows: ‘You’ll see why this ride became linked with the world wide dance craze of the 1960s. The cars spin around in different directions, at different speeds and with jerking motions - it’s a bit like doing the “twist”’.

The rides are clearly marketed as being vintage, but there is no reference to either their historical importance as preserved and curated objects, nor to specific details of authenticity about surviving second-order-objects such as sections of artwork and mounts. Reference to restoration occurs in the leaflet under ‘beautifully restored’ and on the website as ‘lovingly restored’; these are clearly emotive words that move away from appealing to any meticulous overseers of authentic detail and work more as descriptors for promising an engaging spectacle and the rekindling of memories of affect.

Historical fairground context

The Williams family decided to introduce vintage fairground rides into what pre-existed as a petting farm mainly due to the proximity of modern fairground and amusement park rides at Oakwood, though they felt it would be both unethical and practically difficult to try and outdo Oakwood by assembling a grouping of thrill rides. A modern travelling-type fairground could have been assembled, but Tenby had the visit of the St Margaret’s Fair through the summer

³⁰ Adults feature in two photographs: an adult accompanying a child in the Jets ride indicating a possible need for an adult to supervise the control of this ride, whilst two adults are used to represent the games stall image. See <https://www.folly-farm.co.uk/fairground/fairground-rides> (accessed 14 August 2016). Figures 4.53a-d show a selection of screen grabs.



Figure 5.52 - Folly Farm vintage fairground webpage (September 2016)



Figures 5.53a-d - Screenshots of people featured on Folly Farm website (September 2016)

with established families such as the Danters visiting the area.³¹ The decision to go with vintage rides meant both a unique angle as an extension to their attractions, and the avoidance of competing with existing business. Furthermore, this was set into a context that attempted to harmonise with the history of the farm itself, and early brochures and advertising for the venture stressed the link between farming, animals and the fairground.³² This linking of the farm and the fairground differs significantly from the previous case studies of Thursford and Scarborough: in those cases the linkage emerged almost as a compulsive spasm resulting in vernacular displays of grouped tools and object parts. At Folly Farm the link is more considered and re-inserted as a thematic and commercial ploy. This strategic linking includes the function of the fairground as a hiring opportunity, an agricultural market, and a celebration of the specific annual rhythms through the seasons with occasions like planting out, harvesting, preparation of specific foods, etc. In addition, farm animals were frequently exhibited on fairground shows as either specimens of the biggest (for example a Herefordshire bull), the smallest (for example a Shetland pony) or the curious (deformations, manifestations of the extinct or noumenal, inappropriate 'happy families' of animals that would not normally coincide in peaceful harmony).³³

Glyn Williams accrued a selection of vintage fairground rides from 1995 onwards, though by his own admission he did not have a previous interest in the vintage and preservation scene.³⁴ He back-projected a scepticism of this when talking about his 1997 acquisition of the 1920s-built Chairplanes, recalling that the man he bought it from had been trying to earn a living from it by taking it to steam rallies. It was found that the main rally audience was only interested in seeing the ride as a surviving object-in-itself and taking photographs such that the ride was not effectively working as even a remotely viable business.

Glyn (and Folly Farm) became linked to the wider preservation movement due to the fact that they were purchasing key rides (the 1964-built Johnny Scott Ghost Train in 1998, the 1937-built ex-Crow Coronation Ark in 1998, the 1922-built Manning Gallopers in 1999, the 1933-built Manning Skid in 1999, the sole-surviving large Caterpillar in 1999). Whilst this preservationist connection added advertising and prestige to their operation, Glyn has consistently developed the collection as a practical concern and tourist attraction based upon a predominant market of families (and not preservationists or enthusiasts such as those queueing up to inspect and photograph the Chairplanes at the steam rally). Hence, in terms of what is purchased or how authenticity is maintained, he does not feel restricted by the unwritten and somewhat vicissitudinal rules of preservation that are explicated in later chapters of this thesis. For example, the addition of a traditional Big Wheel in 2003 was followed by its replacement with a modern Big Wheel in 2011, due to a factor of the operational impracticality of the original Wheel that was intrinsic to its traditionally designed passenger cars. Glyn's general position on repainting is that figurative work is important as the

³¹ This fair has now died out, and it is interesting that Folly Farm are now looking to purchase more up to date rides from the travelling circuit.

³² Archived publicity leaflets are in the NFA collection at 178Z6.6

³³ Recent exposure of 18th century handbill collections connected to temporary shows around London has revealed that early agricultural spectacles were a common occurrence, with shows of continually hatching eggs in incubators a popular attraction. Folly Farm's initial venture into the realm of public spectacle with its behind the scenes viewing of milking could be considered as a revival of this.

³⁴ This section is based upon an interview with Glyn Williams conducted 25 July 2016.

public appreciate this more, and he describes the aim to make things look classic but not necessarily old.³⁵

Description

This site report and consideration of Folly Farm is based upon a two-day visit in July 2016. Key interviews were held with the owner Glyn Williams and the fairground manager Andrew Russell, alongside a small number of interviews with visitors to the vintage fairground. It was evident from my visit that the key demographic, almost exclusively singular, was families with small children accompanied either by parents or by parents and grandparents. It was not within the ethics of the project or within the realms of sensible practice to interview either small children or their parents who were busy keeping an eye on their own children in what is clearly a boisterous and excitable environment. The extensive use of the social media site TripAdvisor is encouraged by Folly Farm with their own staff taking time to respond with thanks and answers to various questions and/or complaints, and this openly accessible resource of feedback has also been utilised.

Whilst the vintage fairground is both temporally and spatially situated between the petting farmyard and the exotic zoo, it is also evident that the zones of attractions are experienced independently as a kind of autonomous circuit. Thus, entry to the park is through a funnelled theme park style system whereby visitors obtains wristbands and turn rightwards through a short foyer lined with historical photographs. The foyer has a large gift shop to the left and a coffee shop to the right, before opening out into a courtyard space that serves as both a dispersal and meeting point with picnic benches. Each of the Folly experiences touches this space and the zoo, petting farm, adventure park or vintage fairground can be visited and explored with the completed circuit returning the visitor to the same space. This effectively means that the experience of one zone isn't overly mediated by the experience of another (previous experienced) zone - the space allows a moment of calm and deprogramming in preparation for the next experience.

The entrance to the vintage fairground at Folly Farm forms a slight edge on the far side of this open space, deceptive in that it appears relatively low-lying and unsuggestive of depth, and setting in place an expectation that the building could not contain anything of any height nor contain anything approaching a substantial quantity of fairground objects (figure 5.54). The building also has a prosaic character that draws upon the aesthetic of the modern farm-shed or retail park vernacular, a form that it is rarely associated with excitement. The slight angle of the roof and the large sign that overwhelms the entrance doors builds upon this impression of a small space beyond. This was remarked on by one of the respondents who stated that 'my expectations on seeing the building with its low level was that the fair would be crap', and a couple of further comments on TripAdvisor echoed this observation and feeling. This immediately meant that upon entering the building and seeing its unfolding depth and inclusion of proudly standing tall rides (figure 5.55) you are instilled with a sense of awe and illusion, a key part of the fairground. This entrance is very different to Scarborough, in that at Folly Farm you are plunged straight into the room rather than funnelled through a reception,

³⁵ This motivation is comparable (but with a different method) to Joby Carter's approach which is detailed in the chapter 7 and discussed as a case study in chapter 10.



Figure 5.54 - Outside view of entrance to Folly Farm vintage funfair, 2016, photograph Ian Trowell



Figure 5.55 - Opening interior view of Folly Farm vintage funfair, 2016, photograph Ian Trowell



Figure 5.56 - Generating light and colour at Folly Farm vintage funfair, 2016, photograph Ian Trowell



Figure 5.57 - Floor detail at Folly Farm vintage funfair, 2016, photograph Ian Trowell

gift shop and corridor, creating that instant magic feeling you would get at an indoor amusement building at the seaside.

The layout of Folly Farm responds to the growth of the collection and the extension of the building through an origami-like unfolding and doubling of spaces; as rides are purchased the building has doubled in size through one of its far-lying edges necessitating the occasional rearrangement of objects. The opening room is the first (in the sense of historical time) building and this sets out the spatially generated atmosphere with a girder roof and rectangles of muted natural light pushing through but not to the effect of swamping the room with light. This allows the attractions to revel in their own light, drawing a magical attention to themselves and providing the diffused coloured lights of the fairground as a kind of wayfinding mechanism around the whole environment (figure 5.56).

The colour scheme is very precise and consistent, with a coated floor finished in dark green with building partitions painted in a classic fairground maroon (figure 5.57). Thus, the immediate visual encounter is very strong, with the shock of the extensive space, the powerful and seemingly tactile lighting of the bulbs from the stalls and rides combined with the reflective colour surfaces. There is a clean arrangement of objects; a central Cakewalk, a standing-top juvenile, a round stall, an array of slot machines and push-penny devices, and a line of side-stalls.

As much as the opening space gives a real visual punch, there is an immediate impact on both the ears and the nose. The sound of the funfair is heard before entering the building as powerful speakers project the music being played there into the courtyard space. The following is noted regarding the music: it is 1950s and 1960s classic tracks that are instantly recognisable due to their persisting in popularity through the decades, with tracks like Chubby Checker's 'The Twist' (1960) and the Beach Boys' 'Surfin' USA' (1964). These tracks are piped onto all rides so that a cacophony of competing music is not in evidence, and they are played on loop so that an extended stay in the funfair (such as whole days spent in the name of research) can prove to be a little irritating.³⁶ Whilst the music heard on the outside of the building sounds both a little weak but also unimpeded, it is transformed and attains a different dimension on entering the indoor space through the heavy, soundproofed doors. Firstly it has a rich, reverberating quality due to the cavernous nature of the buildings, and secondly it attains the requisite fairground cacophony as it is combined with a multitude of other sounds such as the blare of the organ in the Gallopers, the bleeping automated 'call-outs' from the arcade machines, and the throbbing and rumbling of fairground machinery that immediately tells the person on entering that there is certainly much more in here than meets the eye. In parallel to the powerful noise is a strong smell, predominantly of sweet candy floss, frying donuts and popcorn. It is interesting to note that the staff had considered installing extractor fans as part of routine procedure in an upgrading of the area of the fairground, but it was felt that the lingering smells generated by the sweet snacks were an essential part of the atmosphere. Whilst it can be argued that a fairground smell is a unique combination of sweets, savouries and diesel oil, the smell here within the context of the enclosed environment (minus

³⁶ Fairground manager Andrew Russell noted that the each ride initially had its own music but the cacophony from this proved too noisy for the staff. Andrew pointed out this as an example of how health and safety comes before other aspects of atmospheric design. From interview conducted 25 July 2016.

diesel and savoury food) combined with the light and sound gave immediate connotations of the fairground or seaside amusement park. As one of the respondents remarked: 'brilliant atmosphere, looked, felt and smelt like an indoor amusement park building in the 1960s... it smelt just like they used to be. The vintage pop and rock'n'roll made it a 12 out of 10 for me'.

It is worth dwelling on this comment for a minute and examining the classic indoor amusement park in terms of structure and emotional attachment. Figures 5.58a-c show typical views of the indoor spaces at New Brighton, Cleethorpes and Blackpool Olympica. There is clearly a connection between these spaces and Folly Farm in terms of the aforementioned delight and surprise in finding thrilling fairground rides in an enclosed space nestled within other built structures. The use of the domed roof is a standard for these spaces and this is slightly altered with the straight and angled roof used at Folly Farm, reflecting current methods for engineering these 'big sheds.'³⁷ There are also key differences between the heavily unified and curated space of Folly Farm set against the chaotic layout of the indoor space which would traditionally accommodate fairground rides that had seen better days on the travelling circuit.



Figures 5.58a-c - Indoor spaces at New Brighton, Cleethorpes and Blackpool, photographs Ian Trowell

As you move between each large room the extent of this fairground quickly dawns on you, and the source of some of louder and harsher noises is resolved (as at the Welland steam rally discussed in the next chapter, the vintage Skid is the noisiest object). The furthest room contains a selection of five large rides and it is here where particular objects within the

³⁷ Pawley (1998) was an early critic to get to grips with the large single-storey building.

environment strongly link back to pre-existing fairground and amusement park spaces. Firstly, there is the Ghost Train, a ride of the classic design with a large footprint, described by Braithwaite (1968: 160) in the following mundane words: 'At discrete intervals, dummy trains running on an energised rail, carrying no more than two passengers, penetrate the darkened booth. A labyrinth of hair-raising spectacles, optical tricks and sudden cloying tactility awaits them'. The traditional fairground Ghost Train, such as the example at Folly Farm, is an absolute wonder. Its frontage mirrors a railway platform as a straight section, with artists such as the Howells at Orton and Spooner providing some of their best work with carefully observed scenes from waiting rooms to paint men in trilby hats, women in utility line suits, stockings and heels, drunken sailors. Whilst the artwork did not depict a particular horror there was a sense of anxiety immediately attached to the imagery. Most children knew that the behind the short frontage and beyond the painted double doors through which each engine unceremoniously banged, was a twisting set of rooms with scary sights, sounds, and tactile encounters (hanging cobwebs, things from the dark touching you). The traditional Ghost Train was an example of a typical fairground spatial illusion, in that you seemed to be moving through a multitude of darkened spaces without end.³⁸ The cars on each train were manufactured with low sides so that riders felt exposed and vulnerable, unable to draw themselves in and avoid contact with hanging cobweb effects. Fred Fowle and Roger Vinney updated the general artwork on the Ghost Train with images of skeleton train drivers taking over steam engines, runaway locomotives chasing train drivers down the track, and backwater stations with passengers and staff held to ransom by various ghouls and demons. Folly Farm seems a most apt place to have a Ghost Train, since the railway line that serves Tenby is almost of the same topology - a single and slightly forsaken track that twists and turns to navigate a series of natural features. It is, however, doubtful whether such an analogy holds relevance in an era when most of the visitors to the park would be holidaying in their cars (in fact, Folly Farm is incredibly difficult to access via public transport). Also, it is interesting to see that the Ghost Train has been heavily neutered, akin to a toothless and clawless menagerie lion, with staff aware that a proper (traditional) Ghost Train presents a fright to most children.³⁹

The other significant fairground ride in this room is the Jets ride, giving the riders a chance to rise up into the roof space of the enclosure with a loud hydraulic hiss of released compressed air. An indoor experience such as this is particularly somatic, the bodily feeling of rising accompanied by the reverberating noise of the ride under your own control, and the encroaching proximity of the roof structure, combines to make a strong thrill and a link back to childhood memories where this type of ride was common (figures 5.59a-c).⁴⁰ A respondent indicated a clear nostalgia here, being 'taken back to afternoons spent in New Brighton'.

³⁸ The modern Ghost Train mirrors the modern multi-storey car park in that it has less depth but more height. Thus the darkened spaces are reduced and the sense of the ride's duration can be made coherent before embarking upon the attraction.

³⁹ The website suggests that Ghost Train is 'enough to spook but not too scare'.

⁴⁰ The Jets had a rider-controlled lever that operated the hydraulic valve allowing the passenger jet plane to rise and descend. This facilitated a mix of different riding speeds as the radius to centre decreased with rising, and also allowed riders to chase the jet plane in front of them (or try to outmanoeuvre the jet plane behind them).



Figures 5.59a-c - Jets at Folly Farm, New Brighton, and Cleethorpes, photographs Ian Trowell

Having examined the overall layout and atmosphere (super-object), the individual rides and attractions (first-order-objects) I will now turn to second-order-objects, the structural pieces and artwork. It is noticeable here that a strictness to authenticity is given over to practicality, suggesting that Folly Farm prioritise the atmospheric possibility of the super-object as against a particular power of accurate and authentic small details. This is evident with the lighting on the rides, such that all bulbs have been replaced by modern LEDs. These include the new mock-old-style lights as well as the very modern appearing LED stud lights fitted flush to the structures which nestle in with plastic light-caps - the bugbear of the meticulous preservationist. The funfair manager explained that it was a simple and practical decision, with old bulbs proving expensive and unreliable. However, there is some balance to be achieved with regard to an authentic effect of light itself, with the flush LEDs producing what was considered to be a cold (and unsuitable) light. The Gallopers utilise a differing selection of modern lights (figure 5.60), a potential affront to a preservationist but also a problem to the park management in that the radially extending strips of LEDs were not producing a light that was conducive to the atmosphere. Newly developed mock-old-style LED lights adorn round stalls (figure 5.61), giving both an authentic atmosphere of lighting as well as an apparent authenticity of bulb itself. The lighting here also illustrates a critical comment made by one of the respondents who felt that the predominance of green and blue bulbs did not accurately reflect a fairground of the 1960s when the lighting would be a mix of orange, yellow and (principally) white. Finally, the range of prizes on offer on the games and stalls are drawn from



Figure 5.60 - Lighting detail on Folly Farm Gallopers, 2016, photograph Ian Trowell



Figure 5.61 - Lighting and prizes on Folly Farm round stall, 2016, photograph Ian Trowell

the modern world of cheap fairground swag (figure 5.61 shows modern plush penguins cleverly themed for the zoo outside).

Moving from lighting and prizes I now turn to the artwork that is utilised on rides and environment. It was interesting that collected pieces of fairground art, alongside fairground art that had been removed from extant rides and replaced, adorned some of the wall space in the cavernous rooms. However, unlike Strumpshaw and Scarborough where the wall space is seen as an important area to showcase aspects of the collection (no matter how much they may be perceived as homogenised remnants) the mounting of art on the walls at Folly Farm is more of an afterthought. The prioritisation of atmosphere (as leading to authentic experience) meant that visitors are not guided to pass by or seek out the wall spaces that were generally positioned behind the rides and attractions.⁴¹ The artwork on the walls is not signposted or complemented with display panels.

Folly Farm has an active policy of maintaining the painted appearance of their rides and has used various painters through the years to recreate the appearance of vintage rides. They adopt both restoration and revival strategies, or what fairground artist Pete Tei calls 'fictitious restoration'.⁴² Examples of their restoration work are shown on the Ark and Waltzer, with the Ark being taken back to its original form (after it had been modernised whilst in fairground use as part of the everyday process of showpeople looking to keep a machine adequately in fashion on a contemporary fairground) and the Waltzer being retrospectively re-imagined to look like a machine from a period that predated its actual manufacture. I discuss both of these machines in detail in chapter 10 as a specific case study looking at different vested interests in authenticity and apparent vintage-ness.

Attempts to restore original artwork are only undertaken under the guidance of practicality and cost effectiveness, as can be seen in figure 5.62 where the original frontage for the Ghost Train is displayed in a rather sad condition mounted orthogonally to the ride with a recreated front. The positioning and displaying of this ride bears an almost exact resemblance to the Ghost Train at Scarborough, and represents a small glitch in the authentic replication of the overall super-object (the fairground itself). In Folly Farm's case this is not helped by an unfinished character of presentation with protruding joists linking the mounted artwork onto the ceiling girders. A Ghost Train on a travelling fairground would occupy a tucked-in position on the side-ground, normally the space of a previous show such as a Bioscope, and it would align its frontage with the interior-enclosing show-line. This would hide its depth (or lack of depth), and contribute to the sense of unease associated with the ride. A Ghost Train within a roofed seaside amusement park would also occupy a site on the perimeter though the track layout would generally be somewhat shorter due to a decrease in available depth so that the ride did not protrude from the line of side stalls (figure 5.63a). Alternatively, a rogue space under a pier structure can be utilised, even if this meant that the ride was slightly disconnected from the main rump of other fairground attractions (figure 5.63b).

Smaller objects are placed around the environment with the aim of creating a more authentic whole akin to an indoor amusement building where all space would be utilised for potential

⁴¹ This would be consistent with the amusement parks pictured in figures 4.58a-c where the operators would see little viability in drawing punters to view static objects on perimeter surfaces.

⁴² Interviews conducted with artist Pete Tei throughout 2015 and 2016.



Figure 5.62 - Ghost of ghost, mounted art at Folly Farm vintage funfair, 2016, photograph Ian Trowell



Figures 5.63a-b – In situ Ghost Trains at Cleethorpes and Skegness, photographs Ian Trowell

profit with vending machines, fruit machines, mechanical or electronic games and coin-activated automatons (figures 5.64a-b). A Muffin the Mule standalone device is positioned alongside Folly Farm's own restored roundabout (figure 5.65), indicative of how children's characters from the past embody a timeless appeal such that anthropomorphised figures or cheery faces have an appeal that does not depend upon recognition of branding and franchising. In this case, characters such as Muffin serve a dual purpose; a nostalgic link for the older family members to their own childhoods, and also a direct here-and-now link to small children.

Finally, an initiative for 2015 was the construction of a series of information boards that replaced a previously existing system of poorly created, curated and maintained information sheets and laminated photographs. This old system reflected an evident tension between retaining some kind of link to the heritage of the fairground rides for those who wished to maintain such a history, and the sheer enjoyment of the rides as part of a wider space



Figures 5.64a-b - Vintage slot machines at Folly Farm vintage funfair, 2016, photographs Ian Trowell



Figure 5.65 - Muffin the Mule at Folly Farm vintage funfair, 2016, photograph Ian Trowell

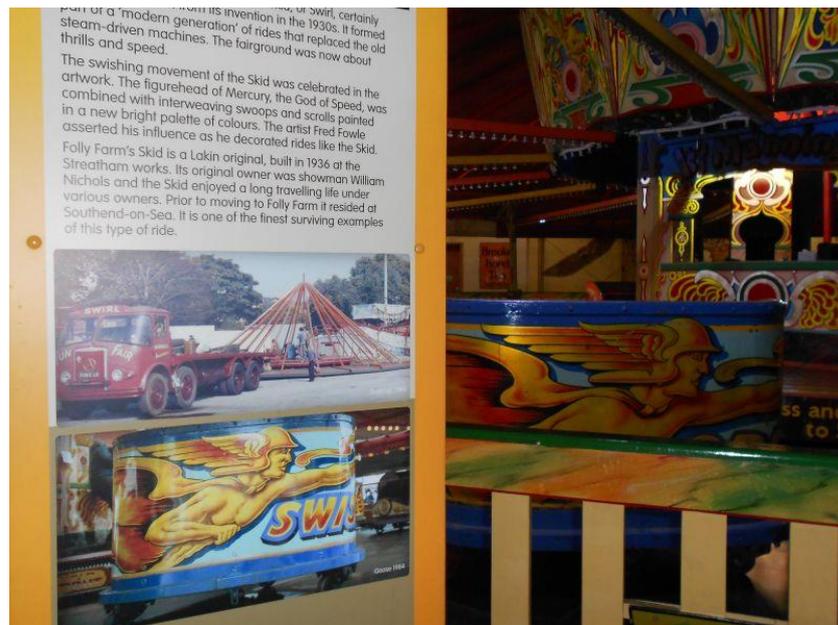


Figure 5.66 - Historical information board at Folly Farm vintage funfair, 2016, photograph Ian Trowell

recreating a vintage feel. Prior to 2015, where it is clear that the purpose of Folly Farm to provide an immersive entertainment space had won out over any concessions to cater for an as yet unrealised trail of heritage-oriented fairground enthusiasts, the displays had withered from a poor start into an ever poorer state, reminiscent of the displays at Strumpshaw. I was involved with the design of the new boards and I insisted upon a consistent system that created a fixed design and layout, text threshold, reading age pitch and contextual pitch. Working with Glyn and Anne Williams we felt that the boards could convey a short and lively history of the generic ride or stall type and include a couple of fun facts. The envisaged scenario would be the parents or grandparents of children reading the information boards whilst the children rode the rides, such that the reader would then be equipped with a fact or two to pass on to the children. It was also felt that each biography had to be accurate and informed to cater for any fairground enthusiasts or more serious historians without heading towards a long list of owners and places associated with each attraction such as appeared on the information boards at the Scarborough. In addition, it was decided to use strong images and in some cases locate historical photographs of the actual ride at Folly Farm. This can be seen with figure 5.66 where the information board illustrates the previous workaday life of the Skid and shows car detail such that the same detail is evident on the ride in front of you. This temporally-separated but exact-same approach wasn't utilised throughout, but in instances it did give some kind of seal of approval to any restoration efforts made by Folly Farm.

Audience and feedback

The vintage fairground at Folly Farm is encountered as a distinct attraction within a wider distribution of attractions such that the experience of the fairground is seemingly not mediated in a guided atmospheric drift. Instead, the fairground is encountered via a neutral space (open, unbranded) that can serve as a respite between the other areas of the park. In certain cases the marketing of Folly Farm prioritising the zoo and farm animals can mask the vintage fairground from visitors who attend with a prime mission to see the zoo, this being evident in some of the feedback on TripAdvisor where people comment on discovering the fairground as an extra to their intended visit to the zoo. However, those visitors I encountered within the fairground space were clearly there with an intention to enjoy the fairground for what it was. The prioritisation of the super-object, the way that the whole worked as a constellation of rides, lights, colours, noises, smells, twisting avenues, created an instant flashback to a 1960s seaside amusement park.

Staff worked a rota between the rides, but unlike Scarborough and Thursford the turnover was rapid with rides operating every ten minutes or so. There were generally at least four rides operating at any time, giving an authentic buzz of a classic seaside amusement park with an associated (but slightly more refined) cacophony of screaming and shouting. The music is a key element in providing a kind of glue to the atmospheric whole, serving as both a nostalgic trigger for the older generations and a twist on the thrill of the 'right-here-right-now' of the fairground as encountered by the younger generation (who were showing no signs of being put off by the music from a past generation). On numerous occasions I witnessed outbreaks of spontaneous dancing instigated by grandparents, parents or children.

Whilst fairgrounds and amusements parks still exist, albeit in gradually evolved forms with modern musical and cultural attachments, they are something that you generally gravitate

away from as you move beyond the teenage years (perhaps to return in later years with your own children and grandchildren). There is a resistance and reverse of this tendency of setting up a self-imposed age delimitation in the field of music (Bennett 2013), but the fairground and amusement park can be a ground claimed by the teenage audience. This is not an exact rule of exclusion, and certain street fairs have a resilience in attracting a transgenerational audience who are in attendance with the purpose of enjoying themselves. What Folly Farm offers is a potent mix of nostalgic cues (sounds, colours) and the whole fairground / amusement park experience itself as if wrenched from the past.

The adult respondents to my questionnaire who had attended without children bore out some of this. A couple in their early 60s spoke about how they had an interest in deliberately coordinated centres of preservation and frequenting the Black Country Living Museum as well as having an active role in a canal and river trust. Their visit to Folly Farm prompted memories of old engines and detailed recollections of old fairgrounds, such that they were able to pick out things absent from the fairground here (tactile objects such as test your strength hammer strikers and air pistols were specifically mentioned). What worked for them within the atmospheric elements of their visit was the smell of candy floss and noisy rattle of each ride that 'drew you towards it'. They both spoke about childhoods spent at the fairground with their own parents and then the excitement of going with their peer group, but at the same time they both stated how going to the fair stopped after the teenage years.

A male in his 50s had taken a day out from his home city Swansea with an intention to visit the zoo, and he was an example of someone who didn't realise that Folly Farm included a vintage fairground. He was clearly entranced by the fairground and it brought strong childhood memories flooding back, with the music playing taking him back to a wider spectrum of teenage experiences in and around the nightclubs of Swansea.

The social media feedback regime of TripAdvisor is keenly encouraged by Folly Farm and this resulted in over 3,000 reviews at the close of the 2016 season. Reviews are largely positive and go into great detail, thus providing a key source of information. The wider experience of the zoo, farm and adventure parks obviously form a large part of the corpus, and subsequently some reviews fail to mention the vintage fairground, however the general tendency is to visit everything as part of the day out and talk about everything on TripAdvisor. Aside from the aforementioned spike in comments and discussion about having to pay extra to go on the rides, the fairground is raised in various contexts that can be queried through word searches.⁴³

Starting with the phrases old-fashioned or vintage, these triggered 108 responses including:

old fashioned funfair where there were so many rides from my youth - the ghost train, waltzer, gallopers, jets etc and all the old fashioned games, mirrors.

The old fashioned fun fair rides would be a high point for me, as I love anything that is a bit older and more interesting to look at than the modern rides that are made today.

The old fashioned indoor funfair will take you back decades, a joy to behold and still thrilling youngsters.

⁴³ These searches were undertaken in September 2016.

we relived our youth and shared it with our daughter with the old fashioned rides and the information everywhere where in both english and welsh.

everything we remembered from our youth and probably our parents youth too.

I was very impressed with the old fashioned funfair - brought back many childhood memories

Dodgems, Carousel, Chairs, Twister, Waltzers and Caterpillar to name a few, proper blasts from the past.

The selections above have common strands of looking back to either youth or thinking about generation gaps, and stress the authenticity and added value of the rides from the past set against their modern counterparts. These comments around the things of the past looking more interesting or being more proper in comparison to the modern fairground may well be stock statements, and not actually suggest that the respondent has closely studied the modern fairground, however there is also a general indication that adulthood brings with it an abstention from the fairground. This is reinforced when using the search term childhood which yielded 30 results such as:

The vintage fairground is excellent. I got to relive my childhood going on rides that I used to love.

the indoor fairground took me back to my childhood our granddaughters and thier dads even grampa enjoyed the rides

There were reminders of a distant childhood with roundabouts and other rides.

the funfair took me back to my childhood

Reminiscent of childhood days going to the local fair.

what can only be described as my childhood dream

lots of rides/games my husband and I remember from our childhood

The phrasing of nostalgia or nostalgic registers 20 times, mainly using the modern shifting of the word to apply to things from the past rather than an actual feeling of yearning for the past. This is understandable as Folly Farm presents a multitude of triggers to the past and also a coherent whole of the past. An example of Folly Farm triggering a yearning for a more generic time of the past is indicated with the quote:

My husband and I felt quite nostalgic in the funfair, riding on waltzers and carousels that we hadn't experienced since our childhood.

General discussion on the fairground yields 336 results (and a further 438 who use the term funfair) so there is relatively large sub-corpus here to unpack (notwithstanding the bulk of discussion complaining about the add-on prices). I will draw out a few observations here that can be triangulated with my own observations and understandings about how Folly Farm's vintage fairground works at a number of levels of both objects and whole. The rides mentioned in the previous quotes relate to their shared property of being from the past and invoking childhood, with the selected comments also critiquing the modern way of things. Mentions of the fairground rides beyond these contexts include the discussion of thrill and danger:

For those who don't know, the fairground features vintage rides from wayback when that have been beautifully restored. If like me you think that might mean they are slow and boring, be prepared to be shocked... these rides are fast and fantastic fun! We absolutely loved them and they beat the modern, health and safety crazy rides at theme parks nowadays hands down!

We also love the fairground, the rickety rides add a sense of danger which is great.

Both of the comments above, while possibly not finding favour with the management of Folly Farm, indicate a yearning for a time ('wayback') before what is assumed to be the over-regulated society of today. This is a common meme of complaint in the current age, but there is a tangent of evidence about how fairground rides of the past were fast and boisterous, requiring some impetus on the passenger to manage their own safety through comportment, composure or simply holding on. The use of the word 'rickety' is instructive; the term relates to structure at the point of no longer being a structure such that it is defined as 'poorly made and about to collapse', but it also has a movement quality, connotative of the contraption, and in this case it takes on an onomatopoeic character that adds to the fairground cacophony. The first of the comments above also refers to restoration and its importance, and this comes up as a topic in other posts:

There are fairground rides that took me back to my childhood and our eldest had a ride on the Cocks and Hens carousel and was thrilled. It was excellent to see that someone has gone to the bother of saving this huge range of fairground rides, these are as important to our cultural heritage as are buildings and paintings

The fairground rides were all vintage restored and it was like a journey back in time

I LOVED the vintage fairground, a couple of the old slot/game machines took me right back to childhood holidays in the late 1970s/early 1980s. It was all immaculate, with real attention to detail.

Finally, there is an emphasis of uniqueness of experience, with the following two responses picking out the Caterpillar and Skid as rides that have vanished from the travelling fairground.

Where else can you get a caterpillar ride.

The Lakin Skid ride is a must for all visitors, my 60 year old Dad had a go sat alongside my 9 year old son, each of them enjoying it so much.

Of course, you can get a ride on a Skid at selected vintage steam rallies but it is considerably less possible to get a ride on these rides in an atmosphere and environment where the noise reverberates in the roof girders and competes with 1950s and 1960s pop such as at Folly Farm.

Conclusion

Of the case studies so far Folly Farm is the example that has the strongest evidence of a focused appeal to recreating fairground heritage, supported through my own observations and the large corpus of feedback data examined. The heritage fairground sits within a wider constellation of attractions and there is a plausible linking theme between the aspects of the park. However, the different attractions within the park are encountered and experienced discretely, and so we can take Folly Farm's heritage fairground as a good example of successfully attaining a heritage experience.

The park, and the Williams family as owners, have a changing relationship to heritage. Certainly the early days of establishing a working collection of key fairground objects saw them appointed as some kind of ambassadors for fairground heritage. Such a bestowal can bring a sense of duty and expectation directed from remote quarters of the fairground enthusiast movement, many of whom would struggle to patronise the collection on a regular basis. Thus, the more rigid framing of the heritage role has softened considerably over time, and the collection is now expanded and articulated as a working whole, a super-object. This means that the space, from encountering via an illusionistic entrance to engaging as a working fairground freed from a seemingly obligatory overloading of floor space and wall space with parts and pieces, functions such that people move around and feel they are in an authentic fairground. In turn, the visitors experiencing this as a fairground become part of the fairground and add to the authenticity.

In prioritising the authentic feeling of the super-object (fairground space) Folly Farm have taken a number of liberties with the first-order-objects such as the rides. A particular move that would raise questions in a wider heritage environment is the decorating of a fairground ride to make it appear older than its actual origins. I present this heritage-crime or necessity conundrum in detail as a key discussion in the concluding chapter 10, where the redecorated ride is framed as an exemplar in how the fairground reveals to the wider dialogue of heritage its characteristic of difficult fun.

Museum case study 4 – Dingles Fairground Heritage Centre

Clinamen

The Churchdown Fairground Extravaganza is a yearly event that helps bridge the holiday period of travelling fairs for the fairground enthusiast community. Over the past three decades a series of social events and model shows have established themselves as part of the fairground back-end run, allowing enthusiasts to get together in the same way that the large October fairs at places such as Hull and Nottingham fulfil a social function for the showland community. The Churchdown event is an addition to this compressed calendar, held in January in a village community centre on the midway point between Gloucester and Cheltenham.

As with many fairground model shows and socials there is a set arrangement of attractions and practices; stalls and stands, cups of tea and breakfast rolls, wall spaces plastered with posters and photographs, presentation of trophies at the end of the event for best model within categories of scale or subject, a constant hubbub of people catching up with friends and talking about their fairground plans for the forthcoming season. Around 70 modellers and niche trade stalls (model supplies, home-made DVDs) occupy every possible space in the main hall, off-shot rooms and connecting corridors, creating a whirring clash of miniaturised fairgrounds complete with lights and music. Exhibitors often show a single model as either complete or as a work in progress, they may include a group of models that hang together with a theme (contemporaneity, regionalism, etc), or they may exhibit a tableau with miniaturised side-stalls, food-joints and crowds. As figures 5.67a-b show with figurines initially seated listening to a model organ play and then extending further to include a figurine of an enthusiast videoing a Waltzer, the tableau may even extend to include a version of the enthusiast, evoking the spirit of Jorge Luis Borges with his backward iterating fictions-within-fictions. The tiny replica camera held by the figurine enthusiast is crafted by the model maker enthusiast as he (or she) incorporates himself (or herself) into the model.

Churchdown reserves a room for a series of talks and slideshows whereby invited speakers present a show of images and accompanying talks on a fairground subject. This may be a report back from a recent trip to a more esoteric fairground, a briefing on recent research, or the communal sharing of some vintage photographs now digitised and offered to the audience to both appreciate and add their own memories or knowledge. For 2017 the key talk is given by historian Stephen Smith. Stephen is a competent and confident speaker (being a recently retired head teacher) and is also a principle fairground historian and writer, holding positions as editor of the *Platform* journal and a committee member for the Fairground Heritage Trust (FHT). It is from this position that he gives his 2017 presentation; one hour spent reporting back on the procurement, transportation and erection of the ex-Shaw Moonrockets to the FHT museum in Devon.

It is through this short diversion of Churchdown, and Stephen's presentation, that I introduce the final case study of the four collections in this chapter. In many ways the FHT is a paradigm shift from the other three spaces studied here. Whilst there is an overlapping and teleological drift to be discerned between each case study, the FHT makes the jump towards becoming an official and legitimised museum. This brings with it a number of new considerations such as collection development and management policies, audience considerations and codes of



Figures 5.67a-b – Model fairground scenes at Churchdown, 2017, photographs Ian Trowell

conduct, an imperative for national significance of the subject matter, a didactic or dialogical arrangement of presentation and engagement and a forward-looking plan of hybridity and longevity. But, there is a lingering vernacular and niche audience that crosses over from the spaces of Thursford or Scarborough Fair collections, that both underpins the pre-history of the FHT in its current form, and clings to its current format, methods and aims. This is evident as Stephen works the small crowd of enthusiasts and visiting showpeople who have drawn themselves away from the frenetic model show to attend his talk. To these enthusiasts the value of ex-Shaw Moonrockets needs no back-story, explanation or context; the ride is a sole

surviving example from a handful of mighty machines that stamped authority on the fairground of the 1930s. It is a huge machine that exemplifies the bravado of engineering, construction and decoration on the fairground as it embraced the modernity of speed and ambition (a rocket to the moon, no less). As Stephen shows slides of the ride leaving its previous owners, travelling to Devon, and unpacking in the museum, he momentarily stalls for effect as he then reveals the ride being built up with the aid of a hi-ab crane. The pause has the desired effect, with an exaggerated chorus of mock groans from the audience. As Stephen clarifies, even though it is almost unanimously clearly known, such devices would not be part of the original build-up of the Moonrockets; instead there would be an immense amount of hard work from a team of tattooed and poorly paid gaff lads who would see the endeavour of the build-up rewarded by the pride of operating the machine for the duration of the fair.

In the same way that the model makers have an unwritten rule that a 'proper' fairground model should be such that it can dis-assemble and be packed on a (model) lorry – to the extent that model shows mimic an actual fairground pull-on such that some exhibitors arrive super-early with their models in this form – the authenticity of the fairground ride within the auspices of the FHT should somehow be honoured to granular details and behind-the-scenes practices. It is within the possible conflicts between a minority audience dictating practices and a desired majority audience and associated national recognition, and a further back-drift towards a vernacular style that prevaricates between these two tendencies, that the story arc of the FHT can be extracted.

Introduction and context

Dingles Fairground Heritage Centre (DFHC) is an amalgamation of two entities; a space that grew from a mixed subject of vernacular exhibition (Dingles Steam Village) and an ambitious initiative that developed into a national collection that quickly became homeless (FHT). The history of DFHC involves the coming together of these two separate strands, both of which are important to the research here. Dingles Steam Village (hereafter Dingles) was established as a distinct concern which expanded to include a small amount of fairground heritage displays, and it is arguable as to how much this would have grown to be a significant fairground collection without the parallel history of the FHT joining the Dingles lineage. However, in 2003, negotiations were successful and shortly after this the first parts of the FHT collection made their way to Devon. This resulted in a syntagmatic shift of the Dingles collection, as the previous arrangement of agricultural, engineering and roadbuilding paraphernalia was displaced.

The FHT also has its own history which forms a crucial part of any research into fairground heritage, with the story of the FHT effectively being the story of trying to create a national heritage out of the difficult substance of the fairground. With this in mind I develop the history as two distinct strands up until the point of their coming together. This then creates a third history starting at the point of their union, and the rapid growth of the DFHC.

History 1 – Dingles

The history of Dingles dovetails with the agricultural and rural engineering that links the previous case studies, with key family members involved in the professions as well as a site acquired that has links to farming. Taking Richard Dingle as a starting point, his early work

involved time as a blacksmith and the opening of a workshop at Venterdon around 1850. With two of his sons joining him the company expanded into the manufacture and maintenance of farm machinery as their engineering and inventive prowess came to the fore. With the arrival of steam machinery the Dingle family moved into contracting and roadbuilding, in the same way as Cushing at Thursford, purchasing a fleet of Garrett steamrollers. It is here where the connections and lingering passions to the powerful machine within the rural environment are established. The business quickly grew to having the largest fleet in the South West with around 100 engines by the late 1930s. By this time the company was based at Stoke Climsland in Cornwall.

Richard Sandercock, a direct descendant of Richard Dingle and the proprietor of Dingles, continued work in civil engineering, gaining a university degree and then establishing a key position within the Department of Transport and the motorway building initiatives. His return to Cornwall saw the purchase of the derelict Milford Farm, which was initially farmed, but then shifted to house Richard's extensive collection of heritage engineering and rural artefacts. With the roadbuilding industry in severe decline, Richard saw the future of the firm in the past. Dingles opened in 1995, and was visited by fairground historian and collector Michael Smith who identified potential to display some of his artefacts, particularly as most of the roadbuilding and steam artefacts were floor-standing, leaving the wall surfaces free for the potential display of fairground art.⁴⁴ Michael came to an agreement with Richard and his fairground collection was added for the 1996 season.⁴⁵ This saw an increase in visitors and favourable feedback, leading to an invitation for Michael to take more space. At the same time wall space was also taken by a large collection of heritage road signs including a boundary sign for every English county.⁴⁶ Michael involved other fairground collectors such as his brother Stephen Smith (see above) and the fairground artist Pete Tei, with the addition of the first working exhibit in 1998 following the purchase of a vintage Halstead toy-set.

The farm was served with a D notice in 2001, during the outbreak of foot and mouth in 2001, and the museum did not open. There were fears that it might not overcome this unexpected setback, but staff prevailed to open in 2002. Shortly after this, negotiations commenced to take custody of the FHT collection.

History 2 – FHT

The history of the FHT is complex and involved, featuring numerous characters and strong intentions alongside the difficulties involved in storing, maintaining and exhibiting a large collection of fairground objects. It is a history of a struggle beset by obstacles and involvements that have a tendency to turn sour, making its full explication somewhat difficult as a sequence of best-remembered and often-forgotten events and arrangements.⁴⁷ The

⁴⁴ From interview with Michael Smith 31 March 2017.

⁴⁵ Covered in *The Fairground Mercury* volume 19 number 1.

⁴⁶ These signs were loaned by collector Stuart Hands, and were dispersed by auction by the Hands family following Stuart's death.

⁴⁷ My history is drawn from interviews conducted March 2017 with founder member Geoff Weedon and current committee member Michael Smith, alongside the recovery of reports from *World's Fair* newspaper. I have also tried to assemble a set of the sporadic and minimally circulated *FHT Newsletter* which went to members and supporters. This newsletter commenced in 1987 and ran to 15 issues to vanish in 1996 at the point where the FHT goes into decline. The newsletter was recommenced in 2003

starting point for the idea of a serious collection and policy emerged in the fairground enthusiast milieu following the publication of Weedon and Ward's *Fairground Art* in 1981. The book became something of a diametric springboard in that its publication firstly proved the depth of history and craft associated with the fairground, but at the same time it also served as beacon for the collectable status of fairground art. Weedon himself was a collector of fairground art, frequenting the increasing number of auctions held by Relic Designs and seeing himself as preserving the art for a possible greater good. What did concern Weedon was the amount of art being sold to fashionable restaurants and overseas collectors, effectively taking it out of the circuit for its best interests, and he felt that *Fairground Art* was being used as a future-oriented catalogue, such that fine examples of surviving fairground art that the authors had researched for inclusion in the book (either in store or in use on travelling fairs) were now being targeted as potential auctions-to-be.

This concern over, and attempt to circumvent, the movement of fairground art into either new semi-public spaces or overseas private spaces is something of a conundrum. The inclusion of fairground art in boutiques and restaurants would be an example of the art spreading into the public realm and asserting its importance as a kind of democratic 'of-the-people and for-the-people' visual culture. It is also a mirror image, but equally assertive, example of fairground art's dynamic of cultural immediacy; fairground art on the fairground constantly changes to reflect fashions in popular culture, and at various points popular culture embraces fairground art and so fairground art becomes the thing it attempts to reflect.⁴⁸ Whilst this migration to boutiques and restaurants could thus be considered as a natural dynamic of the fairground art object, there is the obvious danger that once the object becomes a property of the world of popular culture outside of the fairground it is then subject to the whims of that environment and so quickly and inevitably becomes redundant in that environment. At this point the art object is essentially stranded and useless, and does not cross back into the world of the fairground, mimicking the 'value boundary' proposed by Groys (2014) between the cultural archive and the profane realm.⁴⁹ Understandably, Weedon and the FHT want to stop this happening in the same way that fairground art of old was often burnt or ended up as structural material for shanty-style allotment sheds and fence panels, but there is also an undercurrent of halting the fairground art object in its illustrative dynamic, a judgement of what is best. The museum activist saving the fairground art object from its end-point of being burnt is somewhat different from extracting it from its life-cycle before it passes into another realm of popular culture (even if this passing over could be considered as an irreversible step towards a different end-point). There are both arguments of latent value and arguments of cultural judgement.⁵⁰ This idea of deciding upon a specific point where the art is at its best – whether than means proficiently executed, fatigued or otherwise, culturally astute - can be seen to trouble all of the collections in my study.

to document the transfer of the collection into the custody of Dingles, and these newsletters are available for reference in the NFA.

⁴⁸ Occasionally fairground art depicts the fairground as a kind of popular culture *mise en abyme*.

⁴⁹ Groys would hold the fairground as the profane realm and the artworld as the cultural archive, here there is a reversal with the fairground as the cultural archive and the world of boutiques and restaurants as the profane realm.

⁵⁰ This mirrors the tensions between showpeople and the early preservationists on the steam rally scene over object value, discussed in the next chapter.

Moves to inaugurate a trust came to fruition in early 1986 with the following initial committee; fairground researchers and authors Geoff Weedon and Richard Ward, Joanna Braithwaite (widow of author David who had recently passed away but had been integral in developing the trust), Harry North (then president of the Guild), John Collins (grandson of key showman Pat Collins and then president of British Association of Leisure Parks, Piers and Attractions), Graham Downie (founder of the FAGB), WH McAlpine (prominent businessman and heritage collector), and representation from the architectural firm Carrick Howell Lawrence.⁵¹ After seeking advice from a number of key heritage contacts such as David Wilson at the British Museum, the plan was to set up a charitable trust to allow material to be purchased (via grant applications) and follow on with a separate operating company for the development of a museum.⁵² The newly formed FHT moved quickly to apply for funding from the National Heritage Memorial Fund to purchase the Edwards Gallopers, with matched funding coming from art and music contacts developed by Weedon and Ward in their years researching *Fairground Art*.⁵³ Shortly after this purchase the Hatwell panels were sent to auction and further funds were raised from PRISM and the National Art Collections Fund to secure their safety.⁵⁴ Finally, the key purchases of other stored Edwards machines were made (Dodgems, Brooklands Speedway, Skid), meaning that the FHT now had a sizeable collection and had an urgent need for either storage or display space.⁵⁵

The front cover of *World's Fair* (7 February 1987) announces the new venture and its approval by the charity commissioners, listing the trustees and reporting from a meeting where the FHT had shared a platform with the Guild and mutual understandings and support had been voiced. Some background and pre-history is stated with the role of the late David Braithwaite floating the idea of a museum in the late 1970s after the closure of Battersea amusement park, the recognition of the 1964 White Waltham Steam Fair as an 'awakening' (see chapter 7 for the importance of this event), and further reinforcing of concern around the trend of fairground art being a target for boutiques and restaurants. It is here where the aims of the FHT are carefully laid out:

1. To encourage the study of the British fairground in its every aspect.
2. To assemble a comprehensive archive of photographs, literature and documents.
3. To create a representative collection of historic fairground equipment to conserve and arrange.
4. To establish the National Fairground Museum.

⁵¹ Carrick Howell Lawrence was the architectural company that David Braithwaite worked for and were involved with the trust to provide a free service of architectural professionalism in the necessary task of presenting a feasible housing plan for the collection. They are not listed in the early publicity for the trust but Steve Lawrence would later become a named committee member.

⁵² The building up of the collection and its display are kept separate in potential situations where a museum may prove unprofitable and then revenue is clawed back through seizing the assets of the collection.

⁵³ Key funders were film maker Terry Gilliam and ex-Beatle George Harrison. Weedon's father was Bert Weedon, the influential guitarist.

⁵⁴ Relic Designs auctioned the Hatwell artwork off before the fledgling FHT had secured funding, meaning that Weedon had to bid personally via a New York auction to secure this artwork.

⁵⁵ Robert Edwards and Sons of Swindon are a key show family who had set standards in presentation of machinery and transportation. They had also mothballed their early rides making them an obvious target for the FHT.

5. To commission research documenting British showmen and British fairs.

This can be read as a step program that effectively argues for the importance of the subject, supports this with the proposal of an archive, moves on to tackle the (difficult) issue of collecting significant objects, then proposes the public display of these objects, and finally suggests that (via point 5) a feedback loop is established.

With the acquisition of the Edwards fairground machinery the FHT fast-forwards to point 3 and then finds both a pressing urgency and an unbridgeable chasm to reach point 4.⁵⁶ This problem of storing and/or displaying the objects acquired then defines the history of the FHT in a negative spiral. Initially they were able to utilise the backstage storage facilities (hangar C3) owned by the Science Museum, a repurposed airfield near Swindon purchased in 1979. The facility includes large hangar structures and is used by the Science Museum to store large objects that are not on display at their major museums.⁵⁷ Wroughton offered pre-arranged visiting sessions and dedicated fairground enthusiasts would visit the store and view the Edwards collection, alongside film crews and a possible feature on the Gallopers to be broadcast on the children's television programme *Blue Peter*. As figures 5.68a-b show, the Gallopers were stored initially in dismantled form (1986), and built up the following year.⁵⁸ The storage of the rides at Wroughton gave the objects an uncertain status and quality, midway between the stumbled-upon relics I document at Rundles and the arrival of the object in the display museum.

By 1988 a search for a dedicated museum space was underway, with a site at London Docks investigated and turned down. Newsletter number 4 (July 1988) declares an announcement is about to be made on the proposed site, whilst innovative and continuous publicity and fund-raising continues.⁵⁹ The 30-acre site is revealed as Northampton Riverside Park, tied in with a larger development of retail on a proposed site between the A45 and River Nene, close to the amusement and leisure park Billing Aquadrome. The FHT now enters into various deals with the developers of the site, Gazeley, as the continuation of salvaging rare artefacts continues. Whilst the Gallopers and other Edwards objects remain at Wroughton, various other storage sites close to Northampton are developed and the collection grows into a dispersed form.

⁵⁶ Interestingly, the addressing of point 2 (via point 1 and leading to point 5) would be the basis for the establishment of the NFA in 1994 (cover features in *World's Fair* 18 November 1994 and 25 November 1994). The skipping of step 3 – collecting difficult fairground objects – meant that the physical archive could easily be accommodated in an existing library environment. As I show below, by 1994 the FHT was struggling to fulfil its aims and a supportive focus has waned. For example, the FAGB publication *The Fairground Mercury* did not cover the movements of the FHT in the 1990s but pledged support for the NFA.

⁵⁷ See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Science_Museum_at_Wroughton (accessed 4 June 2017) - objects include hovercrafts and decommissioned nuclear missiles.

⁵⁸ Geoghegan and Hess (2015) provide an innovative bridging between the disciplines of museum studies and cultural geography via Blythe House, the behind the scenes storeroom of the Science Museum (Wroughton is actually a further destination 'down the line' for large objects). Their work focuses on 'object-love' and it can be argued that the remote space of Wroughton which is a space that been divested of the possibility of love, is reinfused with the love via the encroachment of the enthusiasts.

⁵⁹ Charlton Heston, star of the epic 1959 film *Ben Hur*, itself then influencing Fred Fowle to paint a number of artworks on Ark Speedway rides, is reported as helping to publicise fund-raising to purchase the original Fowle *Ben Hur* artwork off Thurston's ride.



Figures 5.68a-b – Ex-Edwards' Gallopers at Wroughton, 1986 and 1987, photographs Paul Angel / copyright NFA

Newsletter number 6 (Spring 1991) indicates a downturn in fortunes, with storm damage occurring in Hangar C3 at Wroughton, and Gazeley reconsidering their plans to develop the Riverside Park site after the political and economic climate shifts (first Gulf War and recession). The museum is said to remain a consideration but this stasis carries through into 1992 and newsletter 7 (Spring 1992) reports nothing new. However, a hastily assembled newsletter 8 (June 1992) reports on a call to action as part of the City Challenge Initiative and a move to a

site in East London. Thus, the Gallopers and other objects were given a first public airing via an open day in 1994 at the Three Mills site in Bromley-by-the-Bow. This was a temporary opportunity as the site was in developmental transition, mixing heritage and what we might call ‘magical heritage’ as large tracts of the land were used as television and film studio sets conjuring up elsewhere places and ‘else-when’ times (past, future and fantasy). The FHT report that the design plans for the Northampton museum could be easily adapted for Three Mills, but there is uncertainty with the possibility of a revised plan for Northampton on the cards. In the end, the FHT state that Three Mills allowed them a potential display space and a workshop and store in preparation for the next stage. As the attractions opened for the day event they were covered in *World’s Fair* newspaper (20 May 1994) and newsletter number 10 (April 1994), with the announcement of new trustees Geoffrey Thompson (Blackpool Pleasure Beach), John Robinson (Science Museum) and John Baldock (Hollycombe Fairground Collection). At this point the FHT were able to appoint their first curator, calling on museum professional Val Bott, and achieved museum accreditation through East Midlands MLA.

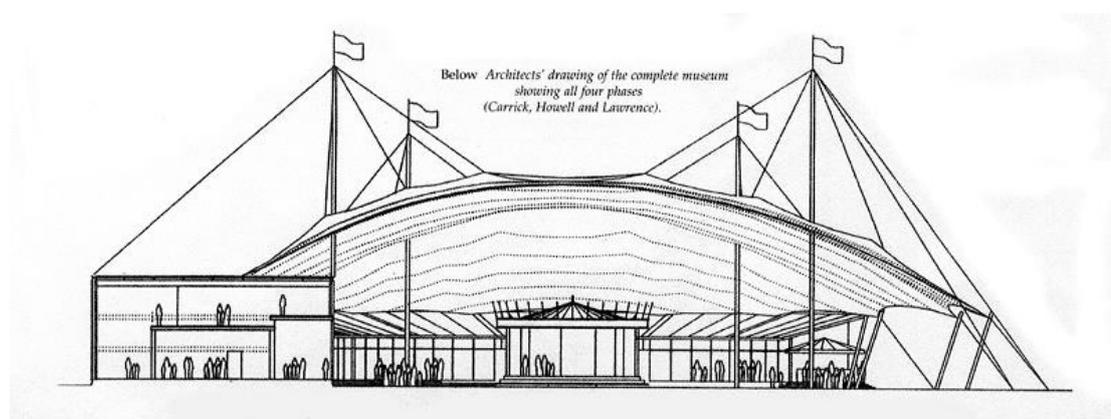


Figure 5.69 – Proposed museum building for FHT / copyright Carrick, Howell, Lawrence

Beyond the day event, Three Mills did not open formally to the public as a fairground museum but was used as a base of operations. Meanwhile, with museum professionals on hand the newsletter took a turn away from anecdotes of fairground history and ‘factory floor’ tales of restoration, and showcased the plans for the proposed museum utilising tented structures and period-specific zones (figure 5.69). New developers Wilson Bowden are now attached to the site, and a ceremonial stone is laid on a cold and windy day in the company of a handful of showmen and civic guests.⁶⁰ Bott, meanwhile, only stayed with the FHT for two years, and newsletter 15 (August 1996) appears to be the final optimistic fling of the FHT for the Riverside Park site project. There is a mixed bag of messages with the news that the on the 18 July the Fairground Museum Company has taken ‘formal possession of the 18,000 square feet exhibition building that forms the first phase of the National Fairground Museum’.⁶¹ The newsletter states that the museum depends upon the planned three-gallery building, though this first building will allow the display of a representative selection of the collection but not the inclusion of a built-up fairground ride. Supporters are urged to exercise patience, such that

⁶⁰ This event makes the cover of *World’s Fair* 23 February 1996, see also <https://www.designweek.co.uk/issues/22-february-1996/work-finally-begins-on-fairground-museum/> (accessed 4 June 2017) which suggests that building work commenced in February 1996.

⁶¹ General reference to the ‘finished’ phase one project is scarce, with the cover of *World’s Fair* 26 July 1996 the only source I have located. This describes a ‘rectangular two-storey building’ along with a proposed regeneration of local jobs and a public opening planned for May 1997.

the proposed 1997 opening of the museum would be at best this single gallery of representative objects and displays.

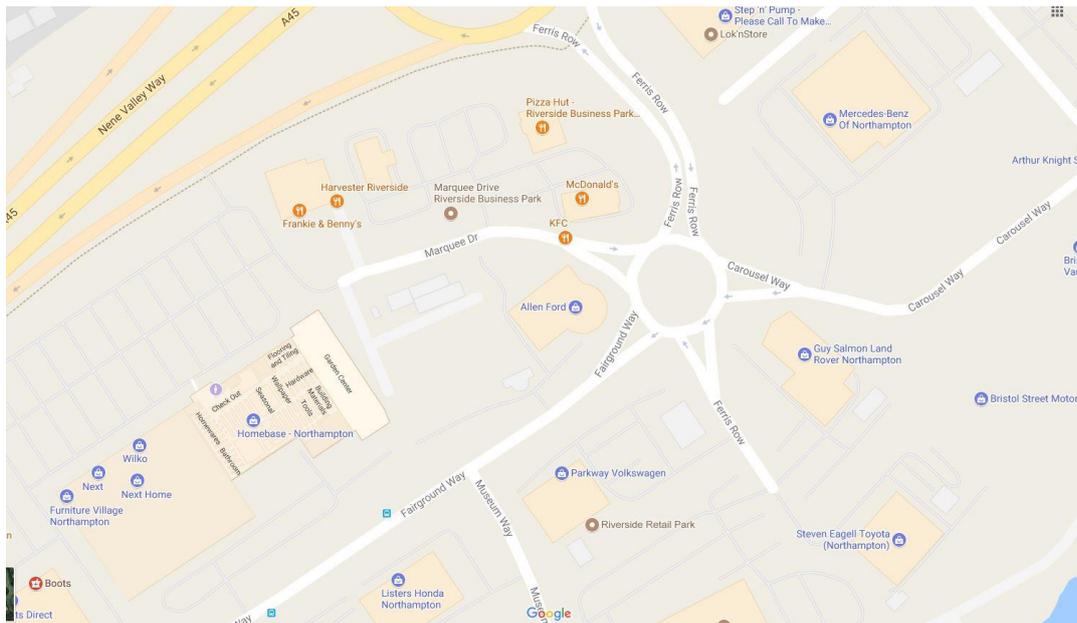


Figure 5.70 – Northampton Riverside Park with street names, Google Maps

The representative gallery did not open. Whilst the FHT enjoyed a successful period of funding from the National Heritage Memorial Fund, the latter's 1993 replacement with the Heritage Lottery Fund would not prove to be fruitful. The completion of the new museum depended upon a successful bid, and this was turned down. Northampton Riverside Park was assigned with roads named Fairground Way, Ferris Row, Carousel Way, Museum Way, Fortune Close and Marquee Drive, but now functions as a retail area. This is an example of hauntology, the ghost of the FHT ambitions is imprinted on the terrain as the presence of a past vision of the future (to celebrate a past further back) that never came to be (figure 5.70).⁶²

A plan B was pursued at Halifax, West Yorkshire, using vacant buildings of the British Railways goods yards tucked into a dramatic valley and recently partly redeveloped with the Eureka! children's museum (established 1992), but costs of stamp duty (not coverable through funding) prohibited this. FHT collections were taken to Sywell Aerodrome only to be followed by the crushing news of the cancellation of the storage budget.

From here the FHT entered a period of extreme uncertainty and factual details become particularly sketchy.⁶³ In 2001 the collection passed into the custody of Roger Austin, a motorway salvage businessman with a large amount of land near Raunds, Northamptonshire. The FHT objects, which were now swelled by the acquisition of the famous Rodeo Switchback ride, made the short trip from Sywell to Raunds, and Austin initially ran a number of open days allowing enthusiasts to view the objects. Whilst Austin was initially seen as a saviour, relationships between the FHT committee and Austin quickly became strained, and a seeming

⁶² Unpacking this a little further... the street names presuppose the existence of the museum so there is a point in time (a past present) when the street names are assigned that imagines the future (the future of the past present) that exists to celebrate the fairground past (the past of the past present).

⁶³ Around 2000 a rescue plan by Tony Marchington was proposed to site the collection at Ambergate (Derbyshire) on a venture that would showcase Marchington's purchase of the steam engine *Flying Scotsman*. For details of Marchington see the Scarborough Fair case study.

deadlock was reached as to the future survival of the collection. Michael Smith and Richard Sandercock, representing Dingles as a new home for the collection, began negotiations in the winter of 2002/2003 but progress was grindingly slow and at times moving backwards. Over the winter of 2005/2006, as Dingles secured a DEFRA farm diversification grant to allow new buildings to be erected for an expansion of the museum (in the hope of capturing the FHT collection), the unexpected and unfortunate death of Austin occurred. This gave a small envelope of time and an associated fraught logistics in April and May 2006 for FHT members to extract the equipment and move it to Lifton, where a new arrangement with Dingles founder Richard Sandercock had been established.

History 3 – Dingles Fairground Heritage Centre

As the 2007 season commenced the expanded space of Dingles became DFHC, and numerous changes were made. The size and distinctive focus of the FHT collection meant that much of the original Dingles exhibits were taken down, though some sentimental aspects remain such as an original plaque from the company and a short array of vintage road signs (figures 5.71a-b) now resembling a Robert Rauschenberg combine structure as the road signs and the fairground art merged in an uncannily harmonious fashion. The large collection of core objects acquired by the FHT were more than enough to fill the allocated spaces, alongside existing fairground collections that had shared space in the original Dingles. In 2009 a rebranding occurred with the switch of logo from traction engine to horse mount (figures 5.72 and 5.73), and a new committee for the FHT was drawn up, utilising the existing staff and skill sets from Dingles. The FHT now has 12 trustees with a solid matrix of skills including engineering, ride management, education, physical conservation, carpentry, electrical engineering, publicity and outreach.

With the twin histories now merged, I turn to an analysis of region. The museum is located in the small village of Lifton, close to the point where Devon borders with Cornwall. The village is not a renowned tourist spot, having few facilities for staying overnight and a central feature of the Ambrosia factory which is famous for producing secondary dairy products such as tinned custard and rice pudding. The touristic areas of Devon tend to be coastal, with smaller towns and villages in the north of the county catering for a holiday based around motoring, and the larger resorts as part of the English Riviera on the south coast catering for an increasingly older audience somewhat stereotyped in the 1970s comedy *Fawlty Towers*. The county of Cornwall is similarly engaged via its coast, a prominent destination for surfers, thrill seekers and party goers. The area is a hybrid between the more bespoke majority of Pembrokeshire (Folly Farm) and the criss-crossed class mix of Scarborough, with large working-class conurbations such as the London, West Midlands and Bristol often heading to the Cornish resort of Newquay for holidays. The inland national parks of Devon consist of Exmoor and Dartmoor, though these are both destinations for serious walkers. Thus, the interior of Devon, including Lifton, needs to offer something to draw tourists away from the coast for a day trip whilst on their holidays. This can be something of a substantial task, since the distance and effort involved in driving to Devon and Cornwall coastal resorts in the first place means that families are often loath to spend their holidays driving back inland for a day out. It is somewhat ironic that the infamous pinch-point of driving to Devon – spending a whole afternoon in a traffic jam close by to Lifton – has been alleviated by the widening and re-routing of the A30, the culmination of a road improvement programme that would have been of prime importance to Dingles the



Figures 5.71a-b – Residual Dingles heritage in FHT museum, 2017, photographs Ian Trowell



Figures 5.72 and 5.73 – Old and new logos for FHT museum



Figure 5.74 – Brown signs for FHT museum, 2017, photograph Ian Trowell

contractors of old. Now the traffic flies past Lifton and the brown signs stating ‘Dingles Heritage Fairground’ at 85mph (figure 5.74), and it is impossible to hijack someone’s attention and get them to make a decision to stop and turn off the bypass to investigate the allure of the sign.⁶⁴

With the principal industry being agriculture, and following the devastating impact of the 2001 foot and mouth outbreak, much of central Devon and Cornwall had to re-tool itself and turn towards tourism. The area is now dense in small museums and parks themed around farming and animals. Principal attractions that compete with DFHC are the Big Sheep (a day out based upon sheep farming) and Milky Way (similar, but with cows), whilst special interest granular sites cater for strange industries such as the Padstow National Lobster Hatchery. There are two family-centred theme parks (Woodlands and Crealy) and several specialist heritage attractions such as the Dartmouth Railway and West Somerset Railway and the Victorian experience and living museum at Morwellham Quay (near Tavistock). Craft industries also provide a kind of loose trail throughout the region with preserved buildings such as Tiverton’s Coldharbour Mill (expanding to include a museum of the woollen industry) working alongside artisanal set-ups that provide hands-on activities and unique purchasing opportunities. This seemingly natural transition between agriculture/craft and tourism fits well with DFHC, and the tradition of fairs and rallies in the area is an additional source to draw from. Devon and Cornwall have numerous key fairs such as Barnstaple Charter, Tavistock Goose, a series of summer regatta fairs on the south coast of the county, and the early season festival and fair at Summercourt,

⁶⁴ You are allowed three words on a brown sign, and the change from Dingles Steam Village to Dingles Fairground Heritage Centre, achieved by simply fastening a new sign over the old, obviously presents a textual dilemma. The current incarnation of Dingles Heritage Fairground, a shortening to three words but a transposition of the last two words is the outcome.

these fairs providing both contemporary fun alongside a sense of tradition for local people and tourists alike. Presentation of these fairs comes from a handful of established show-families such as the DeVeys, Whiteleggs and various branches of the Rowland family, and in recent years a large amount of fairground history publishing has focussed upon famous fairs and families from the area. The rural expanses, favourable weather and green promenades at the coastal resorts have meant that the fairs have a strong sense of occasion and presence, with presentation of equipment and lettering of transport fleets kept to a high standard. Enthusiastic endeavours for fairgrounds and vintage preservation is thus long established, with steam rallies dating back to the birth of this phenomena, and the Great Dorset Steam Fair literally just over the county border.

With this mix of focussed local traditions and regional rootedness, and the counteracting problems of the museum being in a far from ideal location to tempt holidaymakers away from the coastal sites for a day out, the museum has maximised its outreach and appeal to its own region. This helps alleviate the unreliability of another key audience; the hardcore fairground enthusiasts. Even though, as I show below, the museum is in effect an institution that legitimises, celebrates and actively preserves THEIR interest, it is questionable as to how much active patronage this user group can give to the museum. It is remiss to assume that the museum has a readymade audience who will ceaselessly commit to return visits and associated secondary spending. Instead, audience development has included a strand that focusses on the local, with regular patronage from students at Plymouth Art School who spend a day sketching, students from the Bill Douglas Centre at Exeter University who study early theatre and film, and a dedicated work pattern with local primary schools. Marketing also extends to commercial opportunities, and the museum has worked with fashion brands for location shoots (Superdry, Republic and New Look), and advertisers and publishers looking for a novelty and vibrant backdrop (*What Car* magazine). The museum utilises a number of television opportunities, working as 'inset' features within lifestyle programmes such as *Escape to the Country* or as part of a seemingly bottomless appetite for quirky antiques programmes such as *Antiques Roadshow*, *Flog It* and *Salvage Hunters*, the bête noire of the original FHT founders.⁶⁵ The general trend towards the visual vintage associated with the fairground is of course reflected in the interest that these programmes invest in the museum, and for 2017 there is a further extension of this with the Goodwood Revival Festival using the Ghost Train from the collection as a source for a replica that will form the frontage of a themed bar and museum.

The museum has a strong visual presence that has developed through the website and publicity leaflets. As stated above, in 2009 the logo shifted in identity shortly after the museum was renamed to DFHC following the custodial agreement of the FHT collection. As figures 5.72 and 5.73 show, the old logo featured a single colour print of a traction engine with details of the workings picked out through a maroon figure against a white ground. The engine is framed in a narrowly defined oval with wording above and below in a slightly hippy-ish 1960s font switching between figure/ground emphasis. Apart from the obvious switch of depiction from engines to fairgrounds, the new logo is both sleeker and richer, switching to four colours and featuring foreground and background Gallopers mounts (and iconic twisted brass poles). The

⁶⁵ An inset feature is normally around four minutes and helps to break up the main narrative of the show whilst complementing the subject. All information from interview with FHT publicity officer Guy Belshaw (31 March 2017).

singularised name of Dingles is added in a dynamic flow that mimics the up-and-down of the Gallopers, drawing on the fairground art tradition of Fred Fowle in making letters connote the movement of the ride in focus, and thus creating a sense of movement to the image. This creates a further shift in signification between the logos, a movement from seeing (cerebral) to doing (somatic), in that the engines are there to be looked at whilst the Gallopers are there to be experienced and engaged.

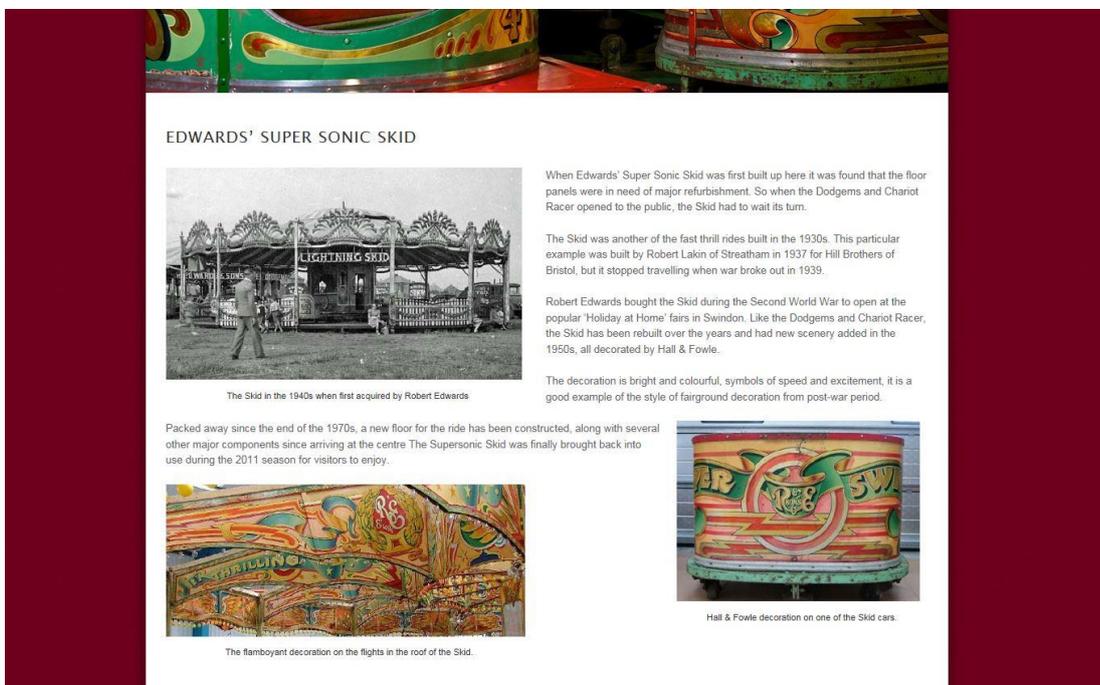
Through Michael Smith's involvement Dingles developed a strategic web presence that strongly supported the fairground aspects of the museum. The website developed in tandem with Michael's own fair-art website (now demounted) up until the point when a new DFHC website was constructed.⁶⁶ This new site absorbed much of the digitised fairground art images that Michael had created and incorporated dense fairground history articles from numerous sources and writers.⁶⁷ The website has evolved and now has a professional design and structure that pivots between different audiences expecting certain contexts. The museum needs to attract visitors who might be less informed but curious about the content, willing to take a chance on something different, or simply a fan of going to the fairground (without being particularly concerned about its heritage). Thus, the website needs to convey the sense of an exciting day out in the same way that the publicity for the fairground at Folly Farm attempts to. This means that images of a vibrant and welcoming space with emphasis on families interacting are prominent on the homepage (figure 5.75a). The colour scheme is a well-chosen blend of fairground maroons with crisp white spaces for text and links. A carousel of landscaped images scrolls in the central area fading to black on the left-hand edge with a small threshold of words picked out in white. Underneath this is a short welcoming/mission statement that declares the holding of the 'National Fairground Collection' and a commitment to 'capture the magic of a bygone age through exhibits, vintage engineering and stunning artwork displays'. A number of box features are glimpsed at the foot of the visible screen and more can be engaged by scrolling down. Rather than attempting a fairground derived font that might struggle to achieve functionality on a monitor screen, the website utilises a small number of clear and consistent fonts.⁶⁸

The DFHC website offers a nested trove of granular facts on fairground history, information that is both authoritative and specific, appealing to fairground enthusiasts and also underpinning the mission statement of the FHT to give both seriousness and longevity to fairground research and history. This information is accessed through the drop down menus for 'learning' and 'collections' which then sub-divide into more specific realms of knowledge. All the items in the collection are included and each has a page that details the nature of the object, its provenance whilst travelling, and its specific problems that it presented to the museum to achieve operation (if indeed it has made it that far). As figure 5.75b shows, the

⁶⁶ The FHT had registered numerous possible domains but never actualised a website prior to being housed at Dingles.

⁶⁷ The now demounted thegalloper.com website was a significant hub of detailed articles from a core of fairground historians. A number of articles from this website have now been incorporated into the current website.

⁶⁸ Fairground lettering thrives on numerous levels; a clever adaptability to compressed and twisting spaces, the relaying of certain dynamic phrases, tactical spellings and stylings of words to connote movement and effect. This seldom translates to the computer screen.



Figures 5.75a-b – FHT homepage and collection item page screen grabs, 2017

layout is clean and functional, utilising a small selection of vintage images and current images to emphasise artwork aspects. This section, along with the 'learning' section, tends to avoid the common type of fairground photograph recorded by the 1950s band of enthusiasts who shunned the wider view of the fairground or an atmospheric crowd composition. These somewhat joyless photographs fix on a taxonomical rigidity that has long been favoured by fairground enthusiasts looking to trace the technical and decorative lifecycle of a ride, making the fairground seem bereft of a social function. From viewing the photographs utilised on the website here, it is clear that a socially-embedded history of the fairground has been emphasised.

Figures 5.76a-b show the publicity leaflet for the season 2017, with 6 panels folding to present a standard trisected A4 sheet. The cover image (extreme left when unfolded as in figure 5.76a) departs from the website style and brings in a mix of fonts including a corner-hugging

ENJOY YOUR VISIT WHATEVER THE WEATHER

OPENING TIMES 2017

- From 11–19 February (Spring Half Term Week) and then 17 March through to 29 October
- Open 10am–5pm. In July and August open until 6pm
- We will be open 7 DAYS A WEEK until 29 October then selected days for Christmas events
- No dogs allowed in the museum except assistance dogs

FREE PARKING ON SITE
FULL DISABLED ACCESS • SHOP • CAFE

Prices held for 2017

ADMISSION PRICES

	Adult	Child	Family 2 adults + up to 4 children	Senior
Saver Ticket includes 10 tokens	£12.60	£10.80	£43.20 includes 40 tokens	£10.80
Standard Entry without tokens	£9.00	£7.00	£28.00	£7.00

Be a Gift Aid visitor
 Gift Aid: Pay once and get free re-entry for up to 12 months if you sign up to our Gift Aid scheme

Special Rates are available for coaches, groups and school parties. You can hire the Fairground Heritage Centre as a venue for your private party, corporate event, photo or film shoot, call 01568 783425 for details.

SAVE 15% - BOOK ONLINE IN ADVANCE
WWW.FAIRGROUND-HERITAGE.ORG.UK

HOW TO FIND US
 Dingles Fairground Heritage Centre is just one mile from the A30 in West Devon, 35 miles west of Exeter, and 7 miles east of Launceston. Watch out for the brown signs on the A30 and minor roads around the area.

LIFTON • DEVON • SAT NAV PL16 0AT
 @DinglesFHC @DinglesFHC

Operated by the Fairground Heritage Trust Registered Charity 293579

DINGLES VINTAGE FAIRGROUND FUN FOR ALL THE FAMILY
 OPEN 7 DAYS A WEEK

FAIRGROUND HERITAGE CENTRE
 Lifton, Devon PL16 0AT / fairground-heritage.org.uk / T 01566 783425

GOOD OLD FASHIONED FAIRGROUND FUN

FUN FAIR

Everything undercover, with over 45,000sqft of indoor displays. Come and ride on our historic working fairground rides, see our stunning fairground art and view our vintage vehicles and living wagons. The Carousel Cafe is open for meals, snacks and drinks.

- Traditional Galloping Horses ride
- England's largest working Dogem ride
- Classic 1940s Ghost Train
- Giant 1930s Motorcycle Speedway Ride
- Moonrocket - the thriller ride of the 30s
- Vintage Children's rides
- Vintage Penny Arcade
- Coconut Shy and other traditional games
- Original Hall of Mirrors
- Pinball Parlour
- Period Showman's Living Wagons
- Stunning and Surreal Fairground Art
- Genuine Fairground Organs
- Vintage Fairground Transport

THE FAIRGROUND HERITAGE TRUST
 The aim of the Fairground Heritage Trust, established 20 years ago, is to preserve Britain's disappearing fairground, its traditional history and surroundings for future generations in the hope of restoring and maintaining it, and ensuring that it remains a valuable asset. As a vital ingredient in the fabric of Britain in this century, the Fairground Heritage Trust believes that the fairground has played an important role in an educational and social aspect, in shaping today's society, possibly more so than other types of public entertainment.

COLLECTING, RESTORING AND DISPLAYING HISTORIC FAIRGROUND ITEMS FOR THE NATION

Ride our Vintage Golden Gallopers...
 Experience our Fairground Organs...
 Incredible living wagons...
 Slots of fun in our vintage arcade...
 Entertaining for the kids...
 Have fun on our Super Dodgems

ROLL UP, ROLL UP, FOR WHAT'S ON 2017

OUT OF THIS WORLD
 Saturday 11 - Sunday 19 February
 Come and ride our new Moonrocket, Space men and Aliens. Fun in the space lab. Face painting.

EASTER CIRCUS EGGS TRAVAGNZA!
 Saturday 8 - Monday 17 April
 Circus Wonder Show, Juggling, Wire walking, Hula Hooping, Balloon modelling, Self Walking and more.

FOLLOW THE YELLOW BRICK ROAD TO DINGLES!
 Saturday 27 May - Sunday 4 June
 Come and meet the Tinman, Scarecrow and Lion, and you might even see Dorothy....

WALL OF DEATH WEEKEND
 Saturday 17 - Sunday 18 June
 The Ken Fox Hell Riders with their Wall of Death - a weekend of thrills and excitement. Open until 8pm Saturday, music by Delta 88.

SUMMER FUN WEEK
 Saturday 19 - Monday 26 August
 Come and join in the party - theme to be announced.

SPINE TINGLES AT DINGLES
 Saturday 21 - Sunday 29 October
 Circus skills, living statues and live Ghosts in the Ghost Train.

CHRISTMAS CRAFT MARKET
 Saturdays/Sundays 9/10 & 16/17 December. Our popular craft and gift market will be held over two weekends. Visit Santa in his Grotto.

WINTER WONDERLAND
 Monday 18 - Friday 22 & Wednesday 27 - Saturday 30 December
 Festive Fun for all the family.

Figures 5.76a-b – FHT publicity brochure, 2017

fairground scrollwork with an ochre Dingles script in signwritten capitals. An illuminated panel (old incandescent bulbs) frames a strapline of 'vintage fairground fun for all the family' such that each word serves a purpose; denoting the past, the fairground, the engagement of the fairground, and the involvement of the family. A montage of fairground objects criss-cross and intersect the words. The unfolding of the leaflet reveals the reverse side (figure 5.76b) and this is a consistent triptych derived from the website with clean fonts only slightly deviating with an

inconspicuous 'fun fair' scroll in blue and gold. Photographs, though small, depict the object with joyous engagement where possible (either acknowledging the camera or immersed in the object). Here the attractions are set out with little recourse to collection policies and promises, until you focus in detail into the middle panel where a serious statement of intent from the FHT is spelled out, with a more readable and simplified statement of 'collecting, restoring and displaying historic fairground items for the nation'. It is here where the mission statements and collecting policies are introduced, and the next section will focus in detail of how these might be understood and interpreted.

Historical fairground context

The enthusiast milieu may (rightly) see the FHT as being there for them and their interests, but the museum needs to extend its reach if it is to be viable. As shown above, new audiences are sought and modes of engagement for areas such as education, art history and practice, and retro-flavoured commercialism are pursued. These audiences trust the museum to make the right decisions, and repay these decisions with their support and patronage. If the museum gets it wrong, the support quickly wavers.

However, the enthusiast milieu feels that the collecting policy of the museum must embody their own interests, even if that is not the case – they feel that policies and decisions are shared or somehow 'common sense'. The context for collecting and curatorial approach to the objects is clearly an important part of the FHT, having evolved through a process of collective-based heritage-focused intent rather than an individual pursuit such as at Thursford or Scarborough. In addition, the attempted engagement of authorised good practice is evident as the FHT navigates its existence and viability through official channels of grants and accreditation. It is also important to note that the FHT was the only collection in the fairground heritage movement that utilised museum / non-fairground enthusiast staff (Val Bott – albeit only briefly, and the current manager of DFHC Nick Sturgess).

There is also valuable fairground expertise amongst the current FHT trustees, enabling them to identify key objects that come to light about possible purchase or entering into an endangered status (scrapping, exporting, rebuilding) such that an approach to acquire can be formulated within this perplexing market. The objects acquired so far (detailed above in terms of provenance and below in terms of their display in the museum) are all significant examples within a loose criterion set – early, unspoilt, technologically significant or decorated in a particularly strong manner. The Edwards acquisitions tick these boxes, but a future-oriented approach is more challenging. Firstly, there is a general agreement amongst the heritage-focused fairground enthusiast milieu that the Edwards objects are of considerable worth and importance, however this same milieu tends to expect the FHT to acquire everything else from the requisite past (another Ark, another Skid).⁶⁹ Secondly, and equally problematic, the accelerated rate of renewal and redundancy of fairground objects means that rides quickly drop off the circuits of use and the FHT sees a role in collecting such objects that might be classified as modern (or at least not vintage). As is common to much of modernist society, the gap between the past and the present in terms of passed-over cultural objects and themes is increasingly narrowing, creating modern-vintage hybrids. This can often cause some

⁶⁹ Evidenced from years of monitoring the message forums for fairground fans.

discontent amongst the heritage-focused enthusiast milieu, and I take up this issue as a specific case in chapter 10.

Collecting policies and codes of practice are set out in three key domains: the collection development policy (CDP), a detailed entrance sign, and a node of the website.

The FHT's CDP is an evolving document that was re-drawn in 2008 as the museum relaunched, and rewritten in 2015 to reflect the more competitive funding environment. The objectives are stated as 'to promote the study of the fairground in its every aspect, including its institutions, its social history, the history of British Showmen, the development of fairground amusements, mechanical rides, transport and popular entertainments and the various art forms related to the public'. This broadly tallies with the initial objective set out at the formation of the FHT, granularising rather than simply stating the outset terrain of subject interest. This is then followed by a concise statement of purpose for the museum 'to establish DFHC as a remarkable and fascinating place to visit - offering fun, enjoyment and learning to a broad range of audiences'. Again, this builds considerably on the previous objective, adding impact and engagement rather than simply stating an intention to establish a museum.

The CDP then outlines its history and lists its major collections, before setting out an acquisitions policy. Priority will be given to the 'acquisition of material that has a clear use within the collection for interpretative display and experiences as well as use to assist learning and research activities'. There is then a more granular set of policies, and I reproduce the first grouping concerning 'major fairground rides'. There is a bulleted list that is 'or-ed' rather than 'and-ed':

- fill major gaps in the collection, including types of ride, makers and users not already represented or
- are of significant heritage importance, or
- are complete, mostly original and do not require major conservation.

Whilst this can be read as not foreclosing opportunities for purchase rather than stating we want everything, a not ruling out opposed to a simple ruling in, it does present problems. It opens a potentially vast collecting remit, duplicating types of rides already acquired by allowing other makes of the same ride, significant heritage examples, or complete, original and intact examples. As a statement it provides no respite from expectations to acquire pretty much anything. The CDP then follows this with policies for rationalisation and disposal, acknowledging that newly acquired objects under the criteria set out above will essentially usurp each other. It states that 'where there is duplication of items, such duplicates may be considered for disposal if they are not adding any significant heritage value to the collection and are unlikely to be considered for display or use in the future'. Disposal and rationalisation are undoubtedly muddy areas that cause friction within audiences who see that they have a vested interest in things, and that the FHT has some kind of fiduciary role in the heritage of the fairground.

A public-facing statement of intent is on the large sign encountered on the zig-zag descent into the first room of the museum (figure 5.77). Incorporated into the blue sky (thinking) of an evocative and dynamic 1950s overview of Nottingham Goose Fair, the wording states the provenance of the FHT, the impetus to save rides ('a danger that the old rides, shows, painted

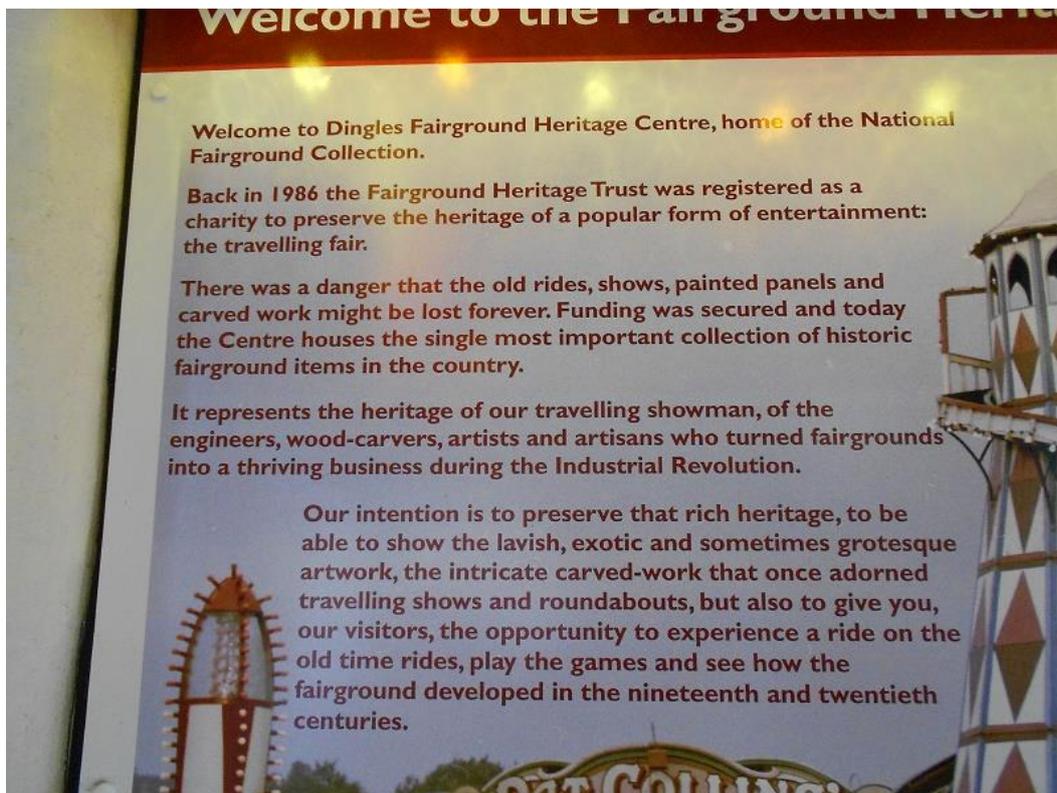


Figure 5.77 – FHT statement of intent, 2017, photograph Ian Trowell

panels and carved work might be lost forever’) and the wider intentions to preserve, to exhibit and to experience.

Finally, the website provides more public-facing policy:

The aim of the Fairground Heritage Trust is to preserve historic fairground equipment, imagery and memorabilia for future generations, in the hope of fostering understanding of, and support for, a genuinely national institution. As a vital ingredient in the genesis of leisure in this country, the Fairground Heritage Trust believes that fairground has played just as important a role as any other type of popular entertainment in shaping today’s society.

Site visit

The site visit to the museum took place in March 2017 as the season commenced. The occasion also doubled as the agm for the Fairground Society and a celebration for the opening of the newly acquired Moonrockets. Whilst there was a handful of visitors drawn from the general public, the principal audience over the day was fairground enthusiasts attending the meeting and clearly enjoying the spectacle of seeing the historically significant and structurally overwhelming Moonrockets in working operation.

The approach to the museum is as a typical Devon backwater, a number of turns down increasingly minor roads until a long and undulating driveway to the farm is reached. As figure 5.78 shows, the site is part of lush farmland that principally serves grazing stock. This contrasts to the arable landscapes of Eastern England examined in other case studies, and there is a notable slackening of technical agricultural implementation. Whereas the drive in to Thursford offered constellations of farming machinery, the landscape here appears clean and uncluttered. A landscaped car park is soon reached though the buildings that house the

museum are not visible, set down in a slight dip and obscured by a line of trees. A sign directs visitors to the main buildings, glimpsed as traditional stone structure. The sign (figure 5.79) is perfunctory and matches the website in colour and design.

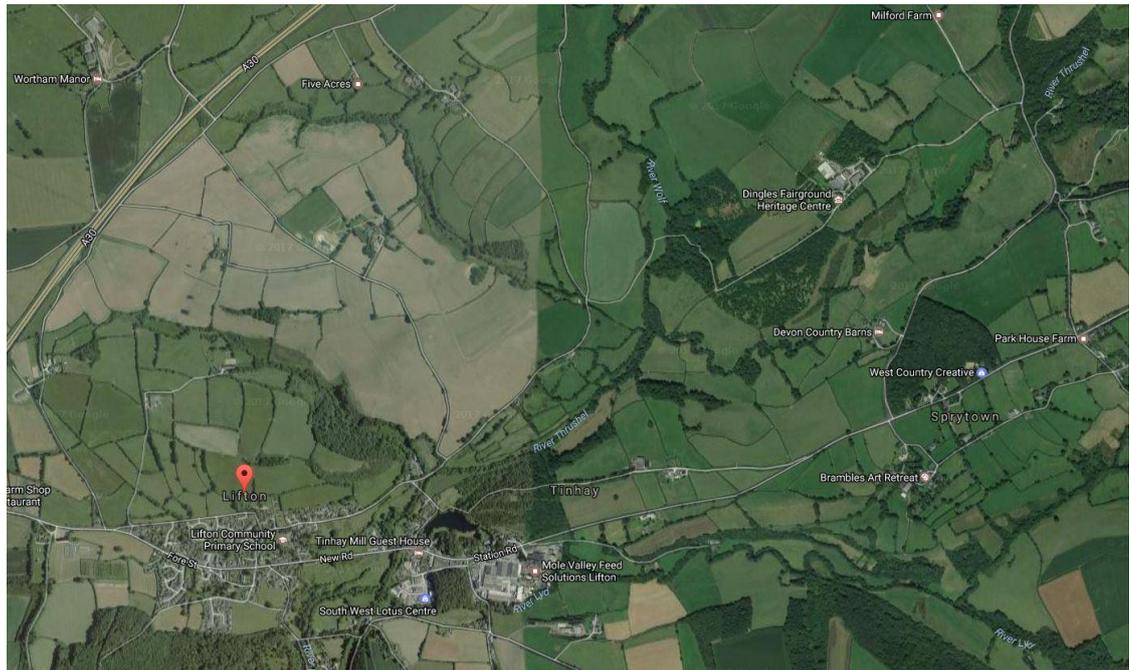


Figure 5.78 – Location of FHT museum, Google Maps



Figure 5.79 – Approach signage to FHT museum, 2017, photograph Ian Trowell

The entrance building is reached and there is no indication of the size and scope of the museum. The building passes for a standard farmhouse (figure 5.80) which shields the first of the large sheds immediately behind but set into a dip. Similarly, the large new building opened in 2006 to house the FHT collection is not fully revealed, seen only as a large and industrial

roof top over the brow of the immediate hill (figure 5.81). There is a constant throb and rumble to be heard as you approach the farm, and whilst this could in an everyday Devon situation be the permanent sound of an army of milking machines, the foreknowledge of coming to a fairground allows this sound to take on a new meaning.



Figure 5.80 – Entrance to FHT museum as typical farmhouse, 2017, photograph Ian Trowell



Figure 5.81 – Visible roof structure of new FHT building, 2017, photograph Ian Trowell

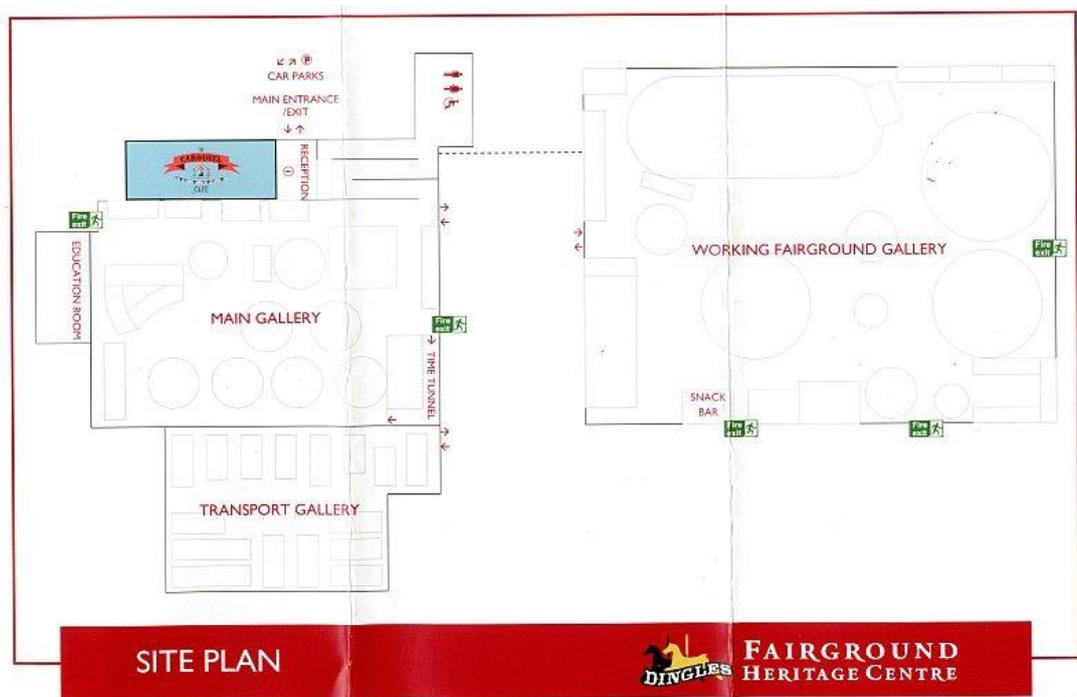


Figure 5.82 – FHT museum site plan from visitor guide, 2017



Figure 5.83 – FHT museum café, 2017, photograph Ian Trowell

The site plan (figure 5.82) is given to visitors for a basic level of navigation, showing the spatial arrangement of the three exhibition areas plus toilets, café and a set of fire exits. There is no granular indication of how each gallery is set out, beyond discerning information from the titles; main gallery, transport gallery and working fairground gallery. It is left for visitors to explore, much as it is on a real fairground. Before entering the galleries there is an option of visiting the café (figure 5.83) which retains a farmhouse interior whilst cleverly utilising

fairground elements such as carnival bunting and a number of original fairground art gag cards which would adorn the pillars of rides in the 1950s declaiming typical and provocative fairground catchphrases.



Figure 5.84 – Zig zag descent from entrance to FHT main gallery, 2017, photograph Ian Trowell



Figure 5.85 – 'Grotto' of pinball tables, 2017, photograph Ian Trowell

The main gallery is reached by a zig-zag arrangement that provides accessibility into the substantial descent of the floor. This thoroughfare (figure 5.84) – evidently practical to allow access for all – had a strange connotation for me linking to the deliberately convoluted walkways of the amusement park that would play with the patience of the younger visitor whereby the expanse of the park or a particular ride is seen but the way there is hindered. In this case, the booty of the museum is seen but the visitor is then delayed in gratifying their stimulated intentions.⁷⁰ Each turn of the zig-zag on the far side opens to a display of reproduction posters and there is a distinct evidence of using this wall space in a more judicious fashion than associated with other places visited where wall space was filled with whatever curators could get their hands on. Opposite these displays on the turn of the zig-zag to the near side visitors are given access to a hidden grotto of pinball tables (figure 5.85).

Whilst the working fairground gallery represents the largest and most dynamic space, the visitor enters the main gallery first and I start my report here. This gallery is the space of the original Dingles museum and has evolved organically from a mixed heritage collection including fairground artefacts through to a dedicated fairground collection. This evolution has allowed the displays to partially de-clutter and achieve a natural focus. There is a mix here of transposed fairground first-order-objects that have a distinctive shape and space transplanted from the fairground into the museum – round stalls, a living wagon, tractors, an arcade side stall – and a selection of primarily aesthetic second-order-objects that form geometric patterns amidst the larger objects (figure 5.86). As the density of objects increases there is the breathless twisting labyrinth of the functioning fairground consisting of round stalls with repeating patterns of art and design (figure 5.87). It was with some irony that the recent report towards museum accreditation for the site mentioned that it is easy to become disoriented, and the provision of marked access routes on the floor might be considered!

Two-dimensional (or minimally curved) fairground art is arranged on the bare wall spaces, and this is joined by other forms of signage such as lighting patterns. The fairground art is not sequenced or themed, and resembles a historical salon art arrangement. Period, format, media, artist and associated first-order-object are mixed together and this provides a dizzying visual spectacle (figures 5.88a-b) combining airbrush and brush-painted styles spanning many decades. Whilst the art maximises its presence, the wall spaces are kept free from intermediate ephemera and posters that evoke the *horror vacui* seen in my earlier case studies. Three-dimensional mounts (second-order-objects) are grouped into a dedicated display that includes the object, a background image of the ride it is associated with, and a foreground information panel. As figures 5.89a-b show, these displays attempt to carry through a fairground whole between background, object and foreground, utilising fairground style fonts and recreating structural intermediate parts such as the geometric patterning of the Gallopers platforms. This is a big step up from the vernacular style of artefact displays in other case studies, and is closer to the museum professionalism at the King's Lynn exhibition.

The main gallery is completed with two education work spaces – an interior round stall containing sketching and writing tables (figure 5.90) and a side room functioning as a standard

⁷⁰ The geometry of the zig-zag is also similar to the famous (but now removed) Virginia Reel at Blackpool Pleasure Beach.



Figure 5.86 – Structured art space in FHT main gallery, 2017, photograph Ian Trowell



Figure 5.87 – Round stalls creating illusionistic labyrinth, 2017, photograph Ian Trowell

classroom – and a ‘time tunnel’ consisting of an enclosed corner section with visual panels arranged in a historical time line.

The transport gallery adjoins the main gallery, but is only accessible through an intermediate open space that flows directly between the main gallery and working fairground gallery. This area (figure 5.91) is a strange space, an interstice between the ‘othering’ inflicted by the museum spaces. This othering occurs at all built sites in the case studies in this chapter, principally activated by an enclosed agricultural metal structure that is revealed (on entry through a narrow opening) to contain another world of fairground structures and spaces. The interstice here does not feel like a momentary deconditioning back into an industrialised rural environment; the countryside is not glimpsed or sensed, and the sheer projecting entrance wall of the new building opposite, growing from a further sunken position, dominates your scope of vision and gives the impression of a sheet metal ravine. There are a smattering of picnic tables and – strangely – a selection of fibre-glass *Godspell* handrails cable-tied onto to already temporary-looking barriers.



Figures 5.88a-b – Wall-mounted artwork in FHT main gallery, 2017, photographs Ian Trowell



Figures 5.89a-b – FHT holistic displays, 2017, photographs Ian Trowell

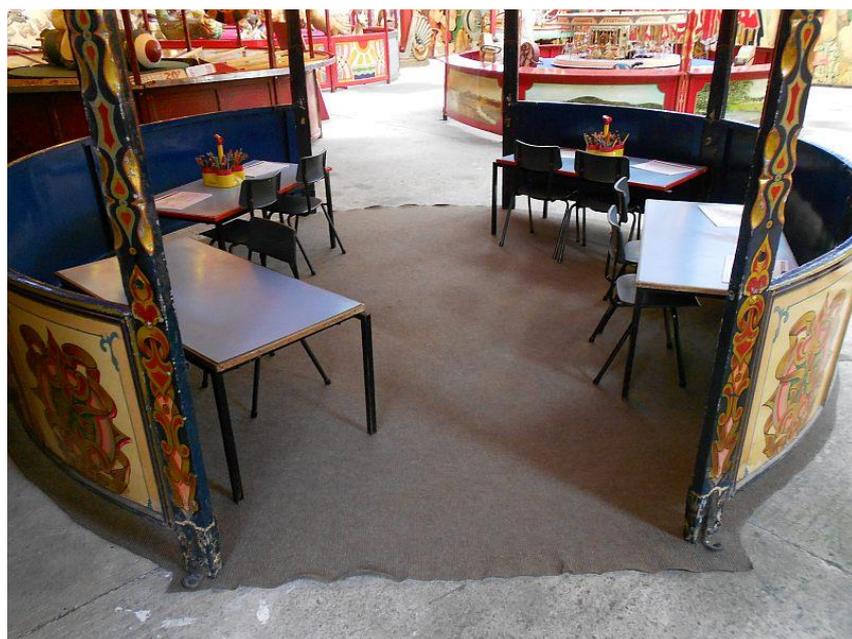


Figure 5.90 – Round stall as education activity space, 2017, photograph Ian Trowell



Figure 5.91 – Interstice between FHT galleries, 2017, photograph Ian Trowell

Without the map to hand it is easy to be drawn into the large building, and my first few circuits around the site were in this manner. After studying the map I realised that the transport gallery sat below this interstice, involving a doubling back once leaving the main gallery.⁷¹ This neglected gallery proves interesting; it is an area that retains the structure and workaday dilapidation of the farmyard (green moss on stone walls, puddles on floor) but contains various transport and living wagon objects. These are viewed from a restricted area formed by the walking spaces of the previous farm usage, with a barrier formed by feeding troughs augmented with plastic chains, and the exhibits parked forlornly in the area reserved for livestock (figure 5.92). For the fairground enthusiasts assembled on my visit this was clearly a popular area, and the subject of transport forms a dominant niche in the general hobby. Trying to see beyond the objects and appreciating their context is more challenging; there is a possible reading of a privileged look ‘behind the scenes’ of the museum proper, and there is also a momentary transportation to another other. In this case the museum space turns into a lost fairground that has been quietly languishing out of site and knowledge, much in the way as the Rundles experience.

The working fairground gallery is a key part of the museum, and (as the title suggests) is the area where the fairground is attempted to be recreated as the super-object. In comparison with the previous case studies, the museum resembles the longstanding thought and effort in place at Folly Farm rather than the ad-hoc space of Scarborough. As with Folly Farm, the feeling is of an enclosed seaside amusement park that is packed with fairground rides normally attributed to the travelling circuit. There is a slight sense of discrepancy here as a number of

⁷¹ One fairground enthusiast I interviewed had visited the site on two occasions but did not know of this transport gallery.



Figure 5.92 – FHT transport gallery viewing gangway, 2017, photograph Ian Trowell



Figure 5.93 – FHT working gallery and overwhelming dominance of machinery, 2017, photograph Ian Trowell

the principal machines are of a high calibre of prestige and presence (the Edwards rides, the Moonrockets) and would not be demoted to a seaside space, though this is only a minor observation and I would suggest that the majority of visitors would not detect such a notion. In

addition, the knowledgeable enthusiasts are unanimous in the celebration of the fact that items such as the Edwards machines have survived in any way at all, and the realistic chance of them continuing to grace village greens is next to nothing. As one fairground enthusiast remarked in interview, it was ‘a spectacle you wouldn’t have seen’. Certainly, the prowess of the large machines – their size, arrangement and decoration – provides a knockout factor when you enter the building (figure 5.93), elaborating further on the sensation recorded at Folly Farm of the building itself containing fairground rides.⁷² There is also a detail worth recording here that isn’t directly noticed unless the sites are considered in comparison; the Ghost Train is positioned correctly without creating a superfluous and non-utilisable space. As figure 5.94 shows, it is aligned such that its projecting nature is set to create a funnel into the room, enhancing the immediate experience of entering the space.



Figure 5.94 – FHT Ghost Train in strategic position (entry flow to right), 2017, photograph Ian Trowell

An attempt to dispel the reality of a large shed is undertaken in numerous ways, with the most noticeable being the partial masking out of the single span roof structure with an array of geometrical and brightly coloured parachute silks (figures 5.95a-b). This attempt to negate the interiority of the building at its most drastic level – the annulment of the ceiling – differs from the space at Folly Farm, suggesting that the museum does not want to trade upon the nostalgic recreation of the real space of a seaside amusement park. The equally unnatural vibrancy of the silks attracts the eye whilst not distracting from the interiority, instead it enforces the enclosure as a kind of dream space.⁷³ The floor is a uniform concrete pour in

⁷² At Folly Farm there was the unexpected nature of the fairground rides caused by the predominance of other functions to the larger site (zoo, playground, etc).

⁷³ It would be interesting to see the effect of sky blue and cloud white silks.



Figures 5.95a-b – Parachute silks on FHT ceiling, 2017, photographs Ian Trowell

natural colour with concealed ducting for cables. I was informed that a green concrete was



Figure 5.96 – FHT floor detail, 2017, photograph Ian Trowell

considered, but deemed too expensive (the dye is mixed before pour rather than applied to surface), however some authenticity is serendipitously added with oil spills as part of the occasional changing over of attraction (figure 5.96). I discuss the concept of a bordered fairground and its attempt at recreation in chapter 10, and draw heavily from the visit, so I will not expand upon this here.

There is a strong sound combining music, noise and (on a busy and participative day) the sound of the crowd, amended by a whirring background cacophony of hooters, buzzers and whistles emitting from the Ghost Train. Each ride has its own music and authentic vintage speakers project music throughout each ride and into the wider space (figure 5.97), though there is much disagreement amongst operators as to the period sound that should be played.⁷⁴ This has been a focus of visitor feedback, and a subsequent indication of a strong preference for 1980s music, showing the ability of music (and possibly the fair) to slip from a specific time anchor and simply be a part of everyone’s past. As well as selecting music, the operators perform in their roles and use the opportunity to spiel on the microphone using phrases that both augment the ride in motion (‘more speed’) and mimic the frantic encouragement to

⁷⁴ Interview with Michael Smith 31 March 2017.



Figure 5.97 – Speaker on Ark Speedway, 2017, photograph Ian Trowell



Figure 5.98 – Interior auditorium and reflective space of Dodgems, 2017, photograph Ian Trowell

step up and ride ('next one, next one, jump on').⁷⁵ As on a travelling fairground there are areas where the music or the specific noise associated with a ride becomes enclosed and amplified. Dingles have the Edwards Dodgems which form a shimmering space of their own with a highly chromed and polished floor, acting as an intensifying auditorium (figure 5.98).⁷⁶



Whilst I have identified a tension between

Figures 5.99a-b – Positioning and detail of FHT signage, 2017, photographs Ian Trowell

educational space and authentic entertainment space, there is abundant and consistent signage associated with each attraction which brings the visitor firmly down in the museum space. Each sign includes an image of the attraction itself in the museum; at Folly Farm this was felt to be a redundant image, however it is used here for instant identification and orientation (figures 5.99a-b). Following this identification image there is a considerable history of the ride itself, initially focussing on the type of ride it is and then adding a biography of the actual artefact. This latter chain of owner operators and structural changes is the information that is cherished by fairground enthusiasts, though in some cases it can make a sign text-heavy.⁷⁷ Beyond the smart and consistent identity of signage there are two features that impress the seriousness of the museum space against any presupposed notions of the decadence of a collector (such as in Scarborough); these are the inclusion of an accession number and the addition of QR codes that link to further pages of online information.

Common to other significant operators of vintage equipment, lighting is modernised to LED technology for practicality and cost. In addition, energy conservation is taken into consideration as a part of good museum practice. Rather than blanketly using the distinctly modern post-1980s cabochon lighting, the museum now goes for (initially time-consuming) hand-dipped LEDs which allows the effect of mass lighting on rides such as the Moonrockets to

⁷⁵ See my forthcoming work on the fairground voice. Stock fairground phrases that are deliberately employed to convey the sense of urgency that facilitates the flow of punters (and exchange of money) are not pragmatically required in the museum, but give the impression of an actual fairground. Visitors to the museum need to purchase tokens to exchange for rides and games, though a deal option is available whereby a slight premium is paid on entry fee in exchange for 10 tokens.

⁷⁶ The Dodgems are cleverly positioned as sideground, only accessible from the one long side. The signage and lights from the opposite long side are cleverly utilised to cover the wall space that would be visible from the interior of the track. Interview with Guy Belshaw 31 March 2017.

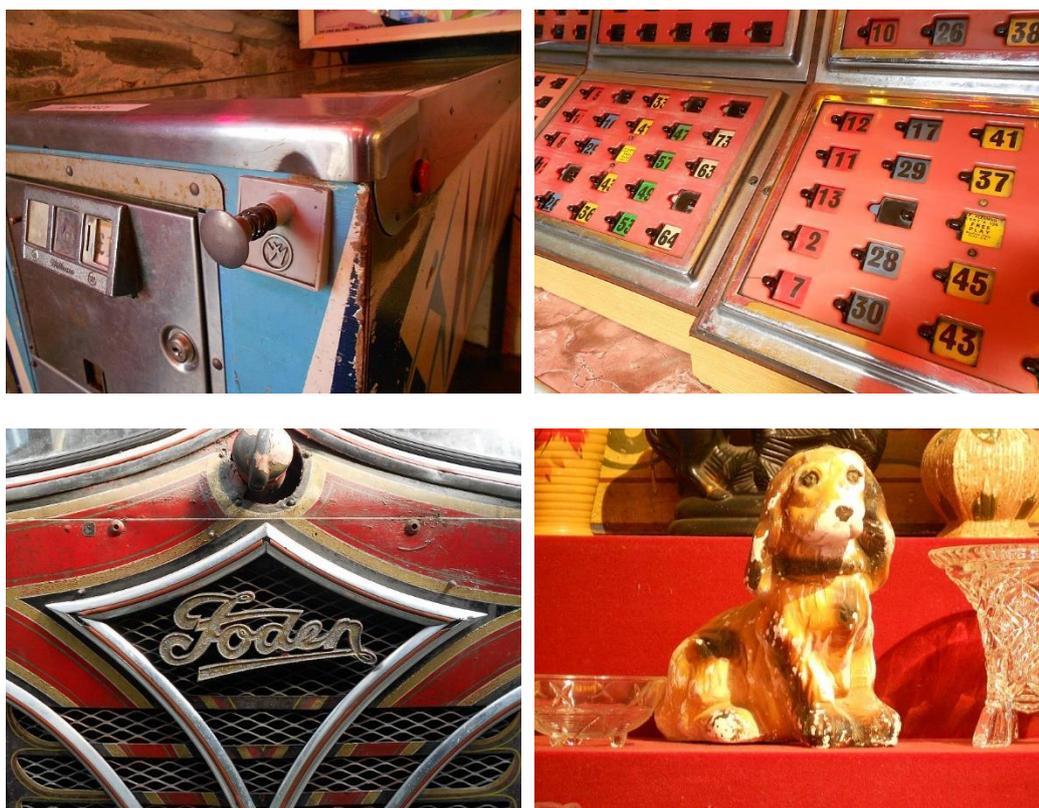
⁷⁷ At present, the inclusion of many Edwards rides means that each machine has a limited biography of 'one careful owner', however this is not guaranteed for future acquisitions.



Figures 5.100a-b – Re-authenticating bulb lighting, 2017, photographs Ian Trowell

be authentically replicated (figures 5.100a-b). These consist of incandescent glass casing in standard white which are hand dipped with lacquer such that the object of the light appears genuine even if the quality of light given out is slightly different. The fact that no-one noticed this sleight of hand at the opening of the Moonrockets suggests that, in the first instance, the authenticity of the appearance of the object overrules the authenticity of the effect.

Finally, attention is constantly drawn to discrete tactile surfaces with an associated patina of age (figures 5.101a-d). Plastic and metal to be gripped, pulled and slid evokes strong memories, a 'sense of nostalgia before space invaders' was how one respondent put it.



Figures 5.101a-d – Tactile surfaces of reminiscence, 2017, photographs Ian Trowell

Audience and feedback

The FHT maintains a strong level of support amongst the fairground enthusiast community, though it is acknowledged that as a location the museum is not particularly accessible. There can at times be a disjunction between those who value the museum's policies and collecting but seldom attend it, and those who are more ambivalent to such policies but are more likely to attend through to living in the area or visiting as holidaymakers. This wider, and more important, audience of tourist visitors leave opinion on TripAdvisor and as part of a more detailed online survey conducted by the museum since summer 2016.

It is evident from responses that the first-order-objects are known and appreciated, featuring as named things with regular reference to the Dodgems and Ghost Train. There is less reference to second-order-objects (of the fairground) presented as either first-order-objects in the museum (wall-mounted art) or as part of the rides. Two examples include:

Able to study carving and painting close up

The beautiful painted signs and carousel horse - gorgeous! The rides came a close second

The super-object is praised on many responses, simply stated as 'all of it', 'the atmosphere' or 'exuberance' in one example. There are mentions of atmospheric elements – particularly music and specifically 'the smell of a proper gen set running'. At the same time, atmospheric elements figure in what could be improved with a suggestion to include 'side-stalls selling fairground treats, popcorn, toffee apples, candy floss, smells to enhance the experience'.

There are statements that examine (and praise) the efforts of the FHT and what is perceived to be going on behind the scenes:

The passion you show in keeping this together

General tidiness of the site. The care shown in and condition of the exhibits

The overall layout of the site was well prepared

The sense of a real past encountered and engaged also crops up with regularity, echoing the responses from Folly Farm:

Wandering and seeing rides from our past

Nostalgic look back at the fairgrounds of our childhood

Taken back to childhood. Laughed all the time

it took us back to our courting days

Really enjoyed nostalgia of the rides

Brought back memories

Going down memory lane

Relaxed, friendly atmosphere - nostalgia - being a child again - brilliant

The nostalgia of a time gone by

Reliving childhood

There is also indication of an educational appreciation, whether that is facts of the fairground rides brought to life or an insight into the life of showpeople:

The rides and history. Also learned about my mothers family, Charles Heal

the story boards detailing caravans, lorries and rides history

enjoyed the information boards. Learnt a lot

Intriguing insights and fantastic displays.

Explanation/information

A critical mode of considering the present is evident on certain responses, a nebulous indication of the anti-modern (which I expand upon in chapter 7 as part of a strategic action):

Seeing the grandchildren laugh and off their phones

Revisiting my childhood and showing my grandkids that you can have fun without the internet

In terms of other improvements suggested, aside from mentions of wasp control around the foyer and cafe, there is an unequivocal wish for the inclusion of a Waltzer, indicating how a specific ride can gain a nostalgic niche within a popular cultural context.

Conclusion

This lengthy case study has necessarily plotted the tricky origins of the Fairground Heritage Trust and its convergence with a smaller established collection (Dingles). The FHT is an important story as it shows how committed enthusiasts come together with their own differences, to call upon other professionals with different differences. The notion of a national collection and the responsibility of professional management are introduced, and by digging into archive materials and seeking interviews with past protagonists I have tried to establish an accurate history as possible of this complex and partially hidden heritage initiative. This has moved from dramatic and fleetingly secretive spaces such as authorised heritage storage hangars in Wiltshire through to a 'ghost' heritage complex that never came to be.

Almost as an exemplar of difficult fun, this attempt to create official fairground heritage ran aground between the building that was never occupied and a number of dislocated storage spaces holding parts (and accruing rents) of a dispersed collection secured through loans and agreements. Its potential salvation has been in a move towards a grey-museum space in Devon, where it took new roots and then carefully re-established its attributes of official status and desired accreditation. It is a process that is still ongoing.

Gathered and expanding in deepest Devon, the collection acknowledges that it has to temper its contextualisation and articulation between a tourist approach and a necessary heritage underpinning. It now splits its spaces to allow this to happen, the key new space drawing from the successful super-object of Folly Farm (a real working fairground recreated to be engaged), whilst a more didactic heritage experience is offered in the first building with static displays and information boards. Extensive space is an affordance for creating a variety of spatial experiments, similar to the National Railway Museum at York that can showcase engines in uninterrupted real life settings alongside separate heritage enclaves (storage areas, educational classrooms, archives, heavily guided singular exhibits).

Museums comparison and conclusion

This chapter has examined four significant housed collections in different regions. In this investigation several convergent features are apparent alongside several nuances that embed themselves with divergent effects. Whilst I reconsider the housed collection in the concluding chapter against the other methods of presenting fairground heritage, it is necessary to summarise the findings of this chapter and to add some feedback that covers the overarching concept of the fairground museum.

I introduced the idea of a grey-museum, and it is interesting to see that all of the collections except Folly Farm use the word museum in their various publicity outputs. Table 5.1 (over) summarises key findings, indicating the eventual convergences to an agricultural connection, their housing in a 'big shed', and their situating in a tourist environment. Differences occur through varying founder biographies attached to the inception and growth of the collection, with these biographies influencing the stringent or specious attitude to authenticity, the flow between smaller objects and the super-object, and the housing of the fairground collection within a wider narrative environment.

The summarising assessment of impact is based upon my own impressions and an analysis of the feedback associated with each collection. Whilst I have gathered feedback for each collection, including some thoughts from fairground enthusiasts, I include here two assessments on fairground museums in general from email conversation with two longstanding fairground enthusiasts. Firstly, Neil responds:

Regarding your next questions, I have been to all the below except for Folly Farm. I'd love to go there but, like Dingles it's a bit far away. I have obviously been to Dingles a lot though and think they do a good job of attracting the public and present fairground heritage in a positive way. Their only problem is location which means a lot of people who would like to go are unable to. Nevertheless better there than packed away....

Scarborough and Thursford have quite a lot in common although Scarborough perhaps has more open fairground rides. The downside with Scarborough is it isn't always open which is a shame. Thursford have got it spot on and provide a great day out with everything following in sequence, so you get organ concerts, rides etc one after the other. Of course their Christmas event is hugely popular although I have never been. Their display of Thurston engines is excellent along with the rest.

I believe there is a place for all of these, each being slightly different in their approach but all presenting fairground in a positive light and providing an insight into it's history and part in our heritage. If, as in the case of Folly Farm and Thursford you provide other entertainments to get people there then fine

Secondly, Mike adds the following thoughts:

These four locations I see as being fairground museums; that have bits of rides and other memorabilia in addition to working rides, so they are working museums. I think they appeal to all age groups, not just us enthusiasts. I remember the fairground exhibition in Sheffield some years back and I took my young niece and she was utterly fascinated by the old slot machines, and in particular using them. For me they are the sort of place I would go to if I was in the area – I don't think I'd make a specific visit just to go to them.

Aspect	Thursford	Scarborough	Folly Farm	Dingles/FHT
Denoted as museum	Mixed	Mixed	None	Central
Locality (function)	Tourist	Tourist	Tourist	Originally non-tourist, now semi-tourist
Locality (type)	Farmland	Seaside	Farmland close to seaside	Originally exurban/edgelands, now farmland
Farming links	Strong past and present	Past as tangent, present in certain objects	Strong past, new direction in present with animal crossover	Originally none, now part of back-narrative
Building (for collection)	Large shed with outer disguise	Large shed, undisguised	Large shed, outer as partial illusion	Planned bespoke buildings, now large shed
Biographical narrative	Strong (George Cushing as boy)	Strong (Graham Atkinson as serious collector)	Moderate (Glynn Williams as farmer/founder)	Originally none, now partially Dingle family but under contest
Narrative deviation	Strong deviation to winter wonderland	Part deviations to copy Thursford and celebrate 'cult of personality'	Wider assemblage to include zoo, play areas and petting farm	None
Super-object vs smaller objects	Scripted and mediated attempt to create whole based upon sequence of objects	No super-object emerging	Strong super-object recalling interior amusement space	Main gallery attempts a travelling fairground super-object
Authenticity	Overwhelming illusion and effect in presentation allows authenticity to be fluid	Little authenticity adhered to or recreated	Authenticity to aura of time (super-object) but not actual objects	Objects adhere to authenticity at all levels
Impact	Magical awe and wonder	Prowess of collector, confusing	A 'real' space and aura	Education and authenticity
Operation	Sequenced and scripted	Sporadic and unceremonial	Busy and simultaneous	Partly simultaneous augmented by lively presentation

Table 5.1 – Comparison of four museums

I think they do a vital job in acting as a working museum, and in presenting rides from the past that no longer travel but are still fully functional and give a damn good ride. They are good for maintaining the rides, mechanically, appearance wise (paint & light), but they do not capture the sounds and smells, and certainly cannot capture or present the atmosphere or urgency that you get at a busy fair.

There are rides being made to be old, and I think this isn't right. I can understand why the owners would do it, to add to the line-up of the place, but if we wanted to be pedantic, then they should be left out. I'm not sure how the general public react to this aspect.

I think the wall mounting or such of memorabilia is inevitable, as sometimes the whole ride or attraction no longer exists. I think if the purpose of the part is obvious or can be explained then this is useful, but sometimes they just add to the overall impact. I always wanted one of the gag boards from the Moon Rocket to hang on my stairs – the one that says 'Pass to top of gangway for next ride'.

The housed collection, framed here as the grey-museum, is a commonplace way to gather and present themed heritage. In all cases we see an attempt to bring the collection to life, whether this is first-order-objects assembled as a real fairground space, or an attempt to mix in second-order-objects in the form of dislocated artefacts such as mounts and pieces of fairground decoration. This bringing to life of the collection, to effectively create something greater than the sum of parts such that it moves towards feeling like a real fairground, is a heritage challenge that goes beyond the scope and remit of much of our authorised heritage in museum environments.

In attempting to take this step the heritage fairground as housed collection has to play with rules of heritage practice and move towards methods drawn from the theme park, a challenging balance to navigate that I explore in detail in chapter 10. At the same time as these heritage practices are tested to the limit with fabricated fairground rides and back-dated decorations, three of the four museums studied develop themes and contexts that differ from heritage yet try to co-exist with it. Lingering themes include an unshakable connection to agriculture and personal narratives that begin to overwhelm the collection.

Some of these themes carry through into the next chapter, where I look at the steam rally. The agricultural crossover is clearly evident, but we also encounter the heritage fairground singularised in a wider and often all-encompassing rally space and bombardment of heritage from all areas and eras of life.

Chapter 6 – Steam Rallies

The steam rally is the main method in which the community of active preservationists come together and present their efforts to the public. It is a format that emerged in the 1950s and closely followed the instances of collecting and preserving. In 2016 there were approximately 1300 rally type events where vintage vehicles and demonstrations of vintage crafts were brought together.¹ These events are vast and complex occurrences involving an array of performative aspects and spectatorship. The community of preservationists who exhibit their vintage vehicles, machinery and fairground equipment are at times their own audience, in that they view the work of other preservationists and they also view (and take pleasure from) a public viewing their efforts. I previously introduced the concept of the active preservationist who attends the rally scene (Graham Atkinson and his Scarborough Fair Collection as a kind of ‘winter quarters’ for his wider steam rally activities), and referred to the counter-commercial problems of the rally scene with Glyn Williams of Folly Farm recalling his purchase of the Chairoplanes from a disillusioned preservationist who had exhibited them without taking any money. This chapter focuses on the steam rally and examines several concerns: the complex wider context of the rally that the visitor must pass through to reach the fairground, the splitting apart of the fairground whole, the fairground object and the detail, and the various contradicting systems of rationale for preservation.

The chapter commences with a history of the steam rally movement and examines its position with the provision of contemporary fairgrounds, with particular regard to the reaction from the showland community. This draws upon various key written works and resources, and an indication of the complexity of these written resources and archival materials is set out as an instructive precaution. I then use interview material from steam preservationist and rally activist Jack Schofield as a guide through the chapter. The main part of the chapter is based around two site visits to significant rallies in which I use observations, photographs and short sequences of interview to create a full understanding of practices and objects. The site visits are combined as a single text which moves between each rally to pick out specific aspects of performance and presentation. The influence of an agricultural crossover is emphasised in continuity with the proposals set out in the previous two chapters.

Literature and societies overview

The specialist interest in vintage preservation - covering road, rail, air and sea vehicles with an emphasis on heavy industry (road building, haulage, bulk transportation), military and agriculture - generates a larger user base than specific fairground preservation. On occasion the vintage preservation publications run features on the historic fairground, but there is a general awareness that fairground enthusiasm and its potential manifestation in fairground heritage and active preservation has its own niche media of societies and membership publications. There is crossover in the audiences, with many fairground enthusiasts taking an interest in wider historic transport issues, whilst many fairground vintage traction engines

¹ Details from telephone conversation (9 November 2016) with staff of *Old Glory* and their events guide at <http://www.mortonseventsguide.co.uk/events-pro/steam-rail/> (accessed 5 May 2017).

would have also had a previous life as road-rollers and farm vehicles making their existence of concern to a wider audience beyond fairground specialists. Currently there are two significant vintage publications running in the UK, each appearing as a glossy monthly magazine in High Street newsagents. Both publications, *Vintage Spirit* and *Old Glory*, also have active websites (figures 6.1a-b). A further wealth of ephemeral and minor publications is generated by local and district traction engine societies who produce newsletters on infrequent schedules during their periods of existence. On top of this, each rally will produce a detailed programme that covers a guide to participating engines and exhibits alongside short historical articles, as well as generating more ephemeral material such as posters, car window stickers, handouts and flyers.² Finally, there is a historical slew of self-published or small press works detailing histories of particular traction engine types or life stories of ex-drivers, paralleling the similar iceberg of resources that can be found around the subject of steam and diesel train histories once you enter into a relevant domain such as a specialist bookshop.³ Tracing, consulting and analysing the content of these resources is beyond the scope and context of this thesis, with much of the material highly specific to the wider engine preservation scene and structured around anecdotal myth and testimony.

Jack Schofield

Preservationist and vintage operator Jack Schofield provides a guide through this chapter, with an interview conducted on Jack's premises on 18 August 2016 providing a continuing source of reference as the work progresses. Jack's workshop (a re-used water treatment plant) resembles the dense spaces and arrangement systems seen at Rundles in chapter 4, with systems in place for storing bulk sub-objects (figures 6.2a-f) and fairground parts laid in undergrowth.

Jack's background and basis in the heritage movement and rally scene has a deep history, giving a measure of justification to the authority I attach to Jack's voice. Steptoe (1998: 85-95) provides the best insight into Jack's history in the movement, setting out the key points as follows: a background in electrical contracting and the operation of a parts and spares shop; a mid-life crisis at age 41 and a decision to adopt a travelling life; the purchase of a vintage caravan and old Scammell tractor in 1971 to enable him to attend rallies; the borrowing of a juvenile roundabout followed by the purchase of a similar item in the mid-1970s to enable Jack to start trying to earn a living at these rallies; the key purchase of the Ashley Gallopers in 1979 and its associated restoration to travel as a 'big machine' from 1983 onwards. From here Jack progressed to a full-time travelling schedule, attending around 26 weekend rallies every year and grabbing time back at his premises in the midweek days when not too far from base. Jack represents a new demographic in the rally movement, travelling full-time rather than 'playing at it' on occasional weekends. Unless such a person has an alternative source of income that doesn't involve time and dedication, the full-time rally operator has to be strategic and business-like, bringing them closer to the contested identity of the showperson.

² The NFA has detailed collections of this material, with granular listing based upon formats and events. See <http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/nfca/collections/byformatindex> (accessed 9 November 2016).

³ As with railway resources, the rally scene is progressing through moving image formats.

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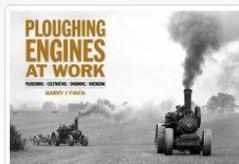
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Figures 6.1a-b – Vintage Spirit and Old Glory magazine website homepage, 9 November 2016



Figures 6.2a-f – Jack Schofield’s workshops and premises, photographs Ian Trowell

Jack can be contrasted to an operator such as Ralph Richardson who must mix a full-time job (in engineering) with restoring and presenting rides. Ralph's story is more haphazard and stop-start, pivoting around the attempted restoration of a Skid purchased in 2002 and eventually sold on to be completed in 2011. Though Ralph has restored and operated other rides such as juveniles, the long-term project of restoring a large machine such as the Skid tells a cautionary tale, with secure space for the project being both essential and expensive. On top of this, expectations are 'put on you from people who don't understand', as news of your project leaks out into the wider world of restoration enthusiasm. For Ralph, now the operator of a large ride in the form of an Octopus, his bottom line is 'to get back to the yard with a pound in my pocket, not losing any money', as he takes the machine out around five times a year.

History and context of the movement

The origins of vintage vehicle collecting and preservation are difficult to pinpoint, with farmers effectively preserving vehicles by simply continuing to use them. This tradition of tinkering and drawing out use beyond reasonable measures of expected lifetimes blurs the line between active use and heritage object. The move from collecting or preserving active heritage vehicles, to displaying them in a shared and open space (outside of the owner-operator barn-turned-into-museum) is generally linked to 1950. Steptoe (2002: 43) gathers up much of this mythology and search for origins and states the first traction engine race took place at Appleford (Oxfordshire) in 1950 under the direction of Arthur Napper, whereby engines were shown as entertainment as much as for being appreciated for still existing as objects beyond their time.⁴ Here the importance of the race concept can be understood, since this added an element of spectacle and comedy. A film of the event in 1953 has recently been preserved by Media Archive for Central England (MACE), and an accompanying blog entry with the film producers throws some light onto this.⁵ They state that:

At the time, preserving vintage traction engines was widely seen as very eccentric behaviour, but as we saw it as saving valuable historic relics we had more sympathy with it. If they were kept in working order and steamed occasionally, so much the better, but holding a race for machines which were never intended to travel fast, even by standards of their day - no, we could not take that seriously.

The quote suggests that the film makers and the preservationists had similar intentions to respect the heritage of the objects, but at the same time knew that this would be confined to a limited interest eccentricity. Thus, a showing of the engines would not break beyond these limitations, in as much as a film of the showing of the engines would not generate an audience. The film makers go on to acknowledge that the tone had to be comic, but it was then limited

⁴ Raphael Samuel pays a minimal amount of lip service to the steam rally (Samuel 1994: 248-9) using it mainly to fuel his entrenched argument against Hewison and Wright in the heritage debate of the 1980s. He initially uses the rally as an example of the 'Braudelian notion of conjecture' regarding creating ideological contexts, and then quickly documents its origins with the Arthur Napper story relayed here. Typically, Samuel is amused by the tendency of preservationists to form schisms.

⁵ See <https://macearchive.wordpress.com/2011/06/13/ready-steady-go-a-1953-appleford-steam-traction-engine-race-film-goes-full-circle/> (accessed 9 November 2016). This suggests that the first rally was held in 1952. The event made the cover of *The World's Fair* (6 June 1953) and was covered the previous year (14 June 1952, page 15) where it is suggested it is the third such event, though I have found no reports prior to 1952.

by being about a single joke - hence only a short film seemed common sense. They provide a unique glimpse into the social nuances of this formative event:

We met in the pouring rain at the rally ground on a farm at Appleford (just north of Didcot) with two cameras and 200 feet of film. Despite the weather, there was a good crowd and about 20 engines. We saw about four more arrive and get stuck in the mud at the entrance until other engines winched them out. There was a brass band (who played in a tent all day), a refreshment tent, and even two bookmakers.

The early rallies were informed by a similar 'accident and mishap culture' according to Jack Schofield, being part of their attempt to generate a wider appeal. Additional events in this vein included old kit car competitions, ladies steering races and attractions like the Wall of Death adding to the hunger for spectating on daredevil stunts.

The National Traction Engine Trust was established in 1954 as a key moment for the coordinating the seriousness of restoring and protecting these objects, and long running rallies commenced at Andover (1953), Kegworth (1954), Pickering (1962), Harewood House, Carrington and Bramham Park (1964), Castle Howard and Masham (1967), Great Dorset Steam Fair (1969), Cromford (1971) and Malpas (1972).⁶

Within this format the Great Dorset Steam Fair (GDSF) has grown to be the biggest event, running for a week in August/September. The website documents its origins motivated by organiser Michael Oliver's love of the Somerset and Dorset Joint Railway and his making of a film of the line before its closure in 1966.⁷ Ted Hines of Shaftesbury, the owner of a small museum with seven fair organs and the Burrell engine *Quo Vadis*, suggested showing the film at a local club, but Michael went further and held a gathering alongside the museum. This led to a larger gathering in 1969 at Stourpaine, and an eventual move to a new site 1985, with a final move to Tarrant Hinton 1988 and the occupation of a 600-acre site.

Whilst the GDSF sits at the pinnacle of the estimated 1300 annual steam events, the other end of the scale includes local steam-ups taking place in pub car parks and small fields. Within this spectrum, somewhere in the middle, are the bulk of weekend rallies that attempt to draw members of the public and operate such that the costs of putting on the show can be covered, and attendees can potentially make their own costs back. Steptoe (2002: 45) notes the expansion and inclusion of 'other subjects of preservation, such as commercial vehicles, vintage farm tractors and stationary engines', as the modern rally format starts to take shape. He further suggests that the modern day larger rally has a mix of exhibitors with differing reasons:

Many of the people presenting these rides nowadays are doing it as a hobby rather than as a business. Keen preservationists and operators, perhaps just aiming to cover their costs, as well as long established travelling showmen and their families seeking to earn a living, form the complex and sometimes politically contrary mix who provide the offerings available to the public, to the punters. (Steptoe 1998: 9)

⁶ These dates are calculated from examining programmes in the NFA collection.

⁷ See <http://www.gdsf.co.uk/index.php/visitor-information/history-of-the-show> (accessed 9 November 2016).

A respondent (rally-goer, male, 60s) summarises these changes and suggests that as the rally grows, the audience changes, and then the rally further changes to recoup increasing costs:

In the old days, around 1969, it was more a purist crowd interested in what was there, they were either genuinely curious or knowledgeable. It's now commercialised, more like a Sunday market, anything to make a few quid. The larger the event gets the more costs need to be recouped. Things that make money – the catering and beer tents – take priority, the variety takes away from the purpose. It's a new audience, a general day out, somewhere to take the kids.

The introduction of vintage fairgrounds into these rallies comes through a mix of intentions: to show and celebrate the fairground object as a restored piece of heritage with the same rationale as showing the traction engine, and to operate the fairground object as a wider attraction with added value such as might be gained from racing engines or having 'ladies steering'. With this possibility of a paying public wishing to sample fairground rides comes the inclusion of Guild showpeople operators (as indicated in Steptoe's quote above). There is the emergence of a tension here that I unpick below, but first I track the history of the inclusion of vintage fairground rides and consider who the audience might be.

The key role of John Carter in bringing a fairground to these rallies is discussed in the next chapter, with the fairground on the rally format being adopted by John who then attempts to create the vintage fairground as the attraction-in-itself (before separating off and creating a travelling vintage fairground). The other major player in developing the fairground presence at the rally, and taking this on to present the standalone vintage fairground, is Harry Wigfield. He developed a series of themed steam fairs in both Stratford-upon-Avon and Warwick between 1964 and 1977, where vintage fairground rides would be powered by traction engines. Quoted in Middleton (2005: 12), he outlines the difficulties in making such an event both popular and commercially viable over an extended duration:

The Edwardian Steam fairs were getting less successful, and I think that was because if you've seen something once, you don't want to see it ten times. What I was doing was presenting virtually the last of the steam driven rides, the Harry Lee's, Dorman's, Screeton's and ourselves - and we got complaints in *The World's Fair* asking why we can't have something different. The reason they couldn't have something different was because there weren't the number of old rides left ... You could not invent something that was packed away, or burnt years ago.

There is a key emphasis on seeing within Harry's words, suggesting that an attraction is there to be seen and, once seen, it diminishes in interest. This gives an insight into Harry's passions, putting the act of presenting the object to be shared as something surviving above the drive to make a commercial profit from that object. Jack Schofield occupies a similar grey area, looking to continue being able to run his preservation efforts by making enough money from the events he attends. The quality of his life is defined by being able to have a life on the road and to take pride in his efforts at preservation. As stated earlier, Jack took the plunge in 1983 to travel and present a major machine - the ex-Ashley Gallopers - and he recalls that the 1980s were a good time for him and the Gallopers. His recollections of the 1960s fairgrounds were such that teenagers had started to claim this territory, and operating vintage rides in the 1980s meant that he had an audience of frustrated adults who could make up for lost time by enjoying the vintage fairground. The steam rally audience is neatly dissected by Jack, such that enthusiasts can be 'a complete waste of time, just asking to see what number it is', and the general public are split between the aforementioned older people making up for lost time and

a very young audience transformed by the magic of the Gallopers. The teenage market for vintage fairground rides is non-existent, such that 'up to 12 I have them, when they are 13 I have lost them'. He also speaks decisively about his early forays into heritage railway events where he would set up his Gallopers and 'starve' (take no money). His view is that as well as the enthusiasts being particular (such that a heritage railway enthusiast would not necessarily have any interest in a vintage fairground ride), the general public are also particular: put simply, 'they are not in the mind-set for anything else, and seldom get out of the train'.

Tensions with showpeople

Of the initial key books that document the fairground, only Duncan Dallas discusses the role of the steam rally. This is down to the fact that he gives voice to the showpeople, and traces a tangent of discontent and tension between themselves and the preservationists setting up the rally scene. Dallas discusses the steam rally phenomenon; the book being published at a time when the rally format had been established 20 years and the involvement of preserved vintage fairground machinery was starting to gain significance and an independence with the Victorian and Edwardian fairs presented by Harry Wigfield. He makes some cutting and lucid comments, but you feel he picks at a scratch and opens a gaping wound, and then leaves it to fester. He describes the steam rally event itself in a generic fashion as:

Held outside the auspices of the Guild, and at first in fields in the country, or on the outskirts of towns, they were presumably attractive because the whole family could drive out to the fair, spend a couple of hours looking round, and have a day in the country as well... Rallies are usually held on Sundays, and can hardly be said to provide any harsh competition to the established business, although, being bereft of gaff lads, teenagers and strip shows, they make increasing inroads on the family trade. (Dallas 1971: 131)

Whilst this statement places the steam rally outside of the urban fairground spatially in terms of geographic location and temporally in terms of hours of operation, Dallas suggests that the key difference is the elimination of the rough aura of the fairground that is contributed to by gaff lads, teenagers and attractions such as strip shows that draw in and fascinate an unruly crowd. This backs up Schofield's suggestion that his key audiences when he started out were the adults disenchanted and excluded by the fairground and young families.⁸ As Guild showpeople began to make inroads into the rallies a two-way tension arises:

The steam enthusiasts accuse the showmen of muscling in on their territory, without contributing to the business of organisation, and of being interested only in profit and not in any way in the steams engines or organs. The showmen, on the other hand, feel that they are the professionals at the game. They are disparaging about the efforts of amateurs, who only regard as week-end sport what to a showman is a whole year's living. Someone who can afford a thousand pounds on a steam engine as a hobby should not come between the showman and his honest penny. (Dallas 1971: 132)

This tension is then exacerbated by the audience at the steam rally who are not in attendance to spend money, such that showpeople are beset with 'constant requests from enthusiasts with tape-recorders to play requests on their steam organs' (Dallas 1971: 132). Whilst the issue of recording an organ symphony on the fairground creates a potential tension between the

⁸ It also finds resonance with Joby Carter's understanding of their steam fair discussed in the next chapter.

enthusiast and the vintage operator (recall the 'No Taping' sign at Thursford photographed in the previous chapter), the showperson is stuck between two poles as they want a slice of the spending audience at the rally, but is frustrated by the non-spending audience, who could be argued as the primary audience at the inauguration of these events. The wider argument around professionalism that Dallas hints at is equally complex and resistant to resolution. Whilst I will revisit and disentangle this idea at length in the next chapter as it applies directly to Carters and a contest over the ownership of identity, there is also a key argument about the fairground object shifting in use from its working day life on the fairground to its new working life as a heritage object. Of course, it cannot be a heritage object without a previous life on the fairground, and correspondingly it cannot have a life on the fairground without suffering the entropic effects of being worn down, broken and made culturally redundant within the syntax of the modern fairground, and so open itself up for a new life as a heritage object.

This simple passing across a divide between being a culturally contemporary working object owned by a showperson and serving an audience of teenagers, and being a heritage object owned by a preservationist and serving a new audience at a steam rally, could be seen as a smooth transition, but the fact that taking money from the object unites both practices causes the problem. As Dallas continues:

Showmen are understandably jealous of the profits made on the sale of steam engines. They originally bought and operated the traction engines. They cleaned them, stoked and watered them, repaired them and drove them for 40 years. Usually they were only too glad to get rid of the slow, cumbersome, dirty engines when they had the money to buy a diesel engine... Had they managed to hold on to their engines for another ten years, they would have been able to cash in on the bonanza. (Dallas 1971: 132)

Reading the above, Dallas initially frames it as simple bad timing that might dictate any business that trades in commodities that have a shifting and non-linear value, and his prefix of 'understandably' brings him down on the side of the showperson, whose life he is essentially exploring in his book. The engine is destined to be sold since it has served a purpose, and the careful attention paid to them by showpeople was part of the business of operating fairs - the engine had to both keep working as a form of transport and look good as an advertisement for the show. This love and care applied to keep the engine running is not given as an investment for the future beyond the next journey to the next fairground. This shift back towards value after a fall into the category of rubbish follows the ideas developed by Michael Thompson and his attempts to document the economics of objects moving out of use (transient) into the covert category of rubbish and opening themselves up to the possible return as durable objects as social and cultural pressures dictate (Thompson 1979: 12).

In the next paragraph Dallas starts to drill down into the objects of the fairground beyond the clapped-out traction engine destined for the scrapyards but curiously collected by the preservationist:

The showman is essentially a practical man. He judges transport and rides by their usefulness and drawing-power. Nostalgia for Victoriana is lost on him, and he is far removed from the circles in which it is carefully nurtured. He resents being nudged out of his rightful windfall by people who have nothing to do with the business, and who in any case don't need the money. Moreover, the nostalgia for the steam fairs seems like officiating at his own funeral. While he was trying hard to get rid of the old-fashioned, dated rides and to keep abreast of taste and introduce novelty, which

has always been the showman's stock-in-trade, he would have made more money by keeping all the old machinery oiled and polished and waiting for a buyer. (Dallas 1971: 133)

Whilst introducing objects and the concept of nostalgia, with the suggestion that it can be 'carefully nurtured', Dallas here is simply restating the misfortune of bad timing under the wider mechanism of the showperson's life force of introducing novelty. This again moves towards the bifurcation of tradition; between what a showperson does as part of their job (providing a fair that has a central tenet of thrill and novelty) and what a showperson uses or provides in terms of objects that serve the purpose of providing the (novel) fairground. The consideration that the objects on the fairground (beyond transport that is worn out and inefficient) can reside in a happy heterochronicity is not considered. What steers the conversation for showpeople, relayed through Dallas, is the flow of money.

Moving forward nearly half a century from Dallas' study and considerations of the showperson's plight and 'officiation at his own funeral', many of the modern steam rallies have now fully adjusted to the inclusion of modern fairground equipment presented by Guild showpeople. This is not to everyone's favour, as a respondent rally and fairground fan remarked 'I don't like to see modern "big hitters" at a steam event'.⁹ The GDSF includes a large fairground of white knuckle rides, whilst Jack Schofield describes the modern equipment at Pickering Steam Rally that serves a specific community of teenage gypsy travellers, and Llandudno Victorian Weekend which floods the town with an uneven mix of vintage equipment and modern-day equipment. As two of the figures in 6.3a-d show, unless we are working within a steampunk universe whereby Victorians grasped a variety of advanced technologies, the uppermost images in the montage contrast strongly with the bottom images of vintage equipment. The vintage tenants must fight it out for custom with the modern rides, however the Victorian splendour of the North Wales resort means that the festival thrives and a certain quota of visitors will patronise the vintage fairground equipment. In this regard, the town itself with its strong heritage architectural identity functions as a temporary host super-object, a kind of addendum to the totality of the fairground whereby the boundaries of the fairground dissolve into the fabric of the buildings.

Site report

Two principal steam rallies are visited and utilised for this research - Lincolnshire Steam and Vintage Rally (henceforth referred to as Lincoln) in August 2015 and Welland Steam and Country Rally (henceforth referred to as Welland) in July 2016.¹⁰ Historically Welland sets its roots back to 1964, placing its inception within the heyday of British steam rallies, whilst Lincoln advertises itself as dating back to 1986 even though a lineage of rallies exists for Lincoln going back to 1961 with the North Hykeham Traction Engine Rally.¹¹ Both rallies

⁹ A 'big hitter' is the generic name for a large, modern thrill ride.

¹⁰ Welland occupies a 100-acre site, Lincoln an 80-acre site. Neither approach the size of GDSF (currently covering 600 acres). I felt that the sheer scale of GDSF and its push to be offering something different each year - to set itself apart in terms of both improving year on year and being more than the other rallies - would not be conducive to the specific research I am conducting looking at the steam rally format and its relationship to the heritage fairground.

¹¹ Provenance and lineage is tricky with these rallies, with extended lineage sometimes being claimed through the link of an organisational society (when sites change) or the link of an approximate site



Figures 6.3a-d - Modern and vintage Victoriana at Llandudno, photographs Ian Trowell

contain a significant fairground consisting of vintage rides and attractions presented by non-guild preservationist members. The visit to Lincoln was to primarily observe arrangements and behaviours to gain an understanding of how a rally is structured and engaged, whilst the visit to Welland was to observe at a much more detailed level and undertake a selection of semi-

(when organisation changes). Rifts at society and organisational level do occur, and 2015 saw an acrimonious dispute at organisational level for the Pickering Steam Rally which effectively created two events both claiming the title rights.

structured interviews regarding the fairground presentation at this rally. In both cases extensive photographic documentation is recorded on both the rally and the fairground, and this is used to narrate my observations here.

In terms of a written report, my approach is to describe in detail the wider aspects of the rally starting from layout and organisation through to object categories and practices. This is based upon detailed observation supported by photographic evidence. Two key audiences at the rally can be considered as the general rally-goers with either an active interest in all things preservation or a niche interest in a specific aspect, and interested members of the public looking for a day out.¹² These two audiences are united in the fact that they will seek to experience the whole rally, and so in turn the fairground at the rally is encountered as part of the rally itself, and so with this in mind it is important to understand how a possible 'rally mind-set' is generated and how this might influence experience and expectations of the fairground. The report concludes with the comments from various interviewees who are from the community of fairground fans and consider themselves as frequent visitors to, or deliberate absentees from, steam rallies.

As indicated, the fairground is not the main attraction or the purpose of the steam rally; it is folded into the general structure of the rally and experienced as a rally attraction in line with other attractions such as engines on display, engines in use and constellations of machines, materials and actors performing the past (such as a display of threshing would involve vintage threshing machinery and a hand cart, the material of straw, and a number of skilled and appropriately costumed people re-enacting the historical practice of threshing). A steam rally is a complex arrangement of objects, practices and audience engagement and the fairground is nested within, seen and experienced as part of the complexity. It cannot be singularised and examined in isolation, hence this report on the two rallies builds from a position of entering the site and understanding how it is laid out from the parking of the car to the unfolding fields and arenas of specific events. It is interesting that both Lincoln and Welland are arranged such that the fairgrounds are positioned furthest away from the entrance, making punters walk through and experience the whole event before arriving at the fairground. Thus, on entering the fairground, members of the public had experienced a multi-sensory bombardment of histories presented as either standing (and working) exhibits or full-scale re-enactments. These histories draw from a mix of decades that had either been lived through (classic cars from the 1970s), too distant to live through (a road building display using materials, technology, methods and costumes from the turn of the century), or lived through as part of a mediated sensation (a recreation of the Second World War home guard which may be experienced through the 1970s television series *Dad's Army*).¹³

Lincoln and Welland share similar characteristics and can be considered as mature rallies that offer the full range of experiences and abide by roughly the same set of rules regarding what is

¹² As stated previously, the family group looking for a day out is increasingly the defining audience. Hence a move towards advertising through social media rather than simply placing notices in specialist magazines.

¹³ Televisual nostalgia is common at rallies, with vehicles from iconic nostalgic programmes such as *Only Fools and Horses* or *Starsky and Hutch*. A doubling of past-ness occurs with vehicles from programmes such as *Heartbeat* which is itself situated in the past. People viewing these artefacts thus experience nostalgia for both the 1960s and nostalgia for the 1990s when the programme was a staple Sunday night feature on television.

deemed by their organisers to be unsuitable for inclusion. For instance all vehicles are of veteran, vintage or classic classification, with no modern classics, whilst farm machinery tends to extend toward modern era as part of celebrating the link between rallies and agriculture. The leaflet for Welland (figures 6.4a-b) sums up the event as promising a 'day of nostalgia, sights, sounds, colour and movement for every member of the family as you take a trip down memory lane to the days when steam power reigned supreme on the roads, farm and fairground', with an 'emphasis very much on working exhibits... traction engines are seen doing the jobs for which they were built in the years up until the Second World War'.

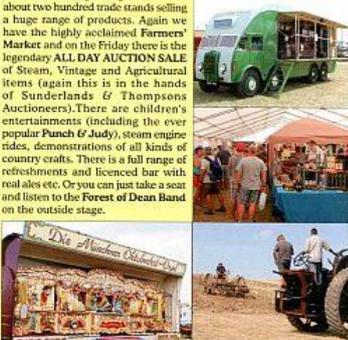
The setting of both rallies is very similar, with Lincoln to the north of the city on the outside edge of the ring road occupying the County Showground, whilst Welland occupies a series of fields close to the Malverns. Both sites feel clearly rural and agricultural in terms of the ground you were walking on and the vicinity itself - worked fields, farm buildings, trimmed hedgerows, a lack of signs of life outside of the regimes of farming. Welland sits between Malvern Wells and Upton-upon-Severn which are both tourist centres that have amenities and structure that define an identity away from farming (but still rural), whilst Lincoln tends to be quickly engaged as a vista of intense and uninviting farming once you move away from the city itself and its tourist attractions such as the cathedral and castle. Lincolnshire is characterised by incredible flatness subsequently meaning that this site is less engaging in terms of a backdrop or panorama that engaged and focused the imagination. Meanwhile, the Welland site is enhanced (for those who chose to cast their eyes above and beyond the intensity of attractions on display) by the prominence of the Malvern Hills and its landmark Worcestershire Beacon (see figure 6.5), as well as slight undulation in the site itself allowing the extensive fields tasked with holding the various dwellings and transportation to rise up and proclaim the overall size of the event. A comic moment was encountered in the midst of the Welland site visit with the presence of the Forest of Dean brass band performing a mix of classic period compositions and the occasional modern piece, a quirky trend that was pioneered by artist Jeremy Deller with his 1997 *Acid Brass* project, in which he arranged for the Williams Fairey Brass Band to play a series of acid house and Detroit techno classic tracks.¹⁴ At Welland the Forest of Dean band performed the iconic Iron Maiden song 'Run to the Hills' which connoted a multi-layering of potential readings: the Malvern Hills overlooking the site; the proximity of the West Midlands with its rich associations of rock and heavy metal music; and the name *Iron Maiden* as a classic traction engine.

To cope with the arrival of large crowds and movement at mixed speeds and possible interests, there is an organisational imperative that creates a huge array of flows, enclosures and barriers. Each event requires large, delineated areas between public, exhibitor and administrative communities, and this adds to the sheer size of both rallies, even though some of these areas might not be accessible to, or engaged by, the public. For every large exhibit such as an engine there may be any (or all) of the following required: a low-loader to tow the engine which then needs parking; a caravan, motorhome or tent to house the exhibitors which is sited in a dedicated field; a separate car park for the exhibitors' own mode of transport. Whilst the public are not inclined to wander around the fields of tents and caravans, they will often engage with the low-loaders and articulated lorries that have brought the engines to the rally - even though these vehicles are clearly not vintage, indicating at times the overriding

¹⁴ See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acid_Brass (accessed 5 May 2017).

Trade Stands & Much More

For those seeking a bargain there are about two hundred trade stands selling a huge range of products. Again we have the highly acclaimed **Farmers' Market** and on the Friday there is the legendary **ALL DAY AUCTION SALE** of Steam, Vintage and Agricultural items (again this is in the hands of **Sunderlands & Thompsons Auctioneers**). There are children's entertainments (including the ever popular **Punch & Judy**), steam engine rides, demonstrations of all kinds of country crafts. There is a full range of refreshments and licenced bar with real ales etc. Or you can just take a seat and listen to the **Forest of Dean Band** on the outside stage.



Make a Weekend of the Rally

Why not make a whole weekend of the Welland Rally? Welland village and the local towns of Upton-upon-Severn, Malvern and Ledbury offer many hotels and B&Bs. If you are a caravanner or camper, the Rally has an excellent campsite adjoining the Rally Field, but you must book in advance. (See below for details). For those staying the weekend there will be the usual first class entertainment in the bar and on the outside stage, followed by the annual spectacular **Fireworks Display** on the Saturday evening.

Campsite Booking

For those wishing to spend a whole weekend at Welland Steam and Country Rally, there is an excellent campsite available adjacent to the Rally field with all facilities (including a shop) laid on.

PLEASE NOTE: As space is at a premium, camping is pre-booked only. **FOR PRICES & BOOKING FORM** contact:

Mr G. South, 3 Bavan Cottages, Twyning, Tewkesbury, Gloucestershire GL20 6DW. Tel: (01684) 274050

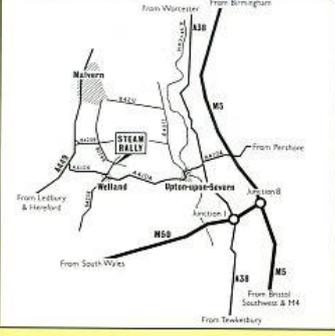


Photographs in this brochure were taken at the 2014 Rally by Graham Probert.

How to get to Welland Rally

The Steam and Country Rally is held at Woodside Farm, Welland, in the beautiful Worcestershire countryside, mid-way between Upton-upon-Severn and Malvern. There is easy access to the nearby motorway network.

For Satnav: **WR13 6NG**



2016 Daily Admission Prices

Adult: £12.00, Children & OAPs: £10.00
 Children under 11 years old: FREE. Parking: FREE.

ATM facility available on site
 Gates open 9.30 a.m. daily. Gates close 7.00 p.m.
 Dogs are welcome, but in the interests of safety, must be on leads at all times.

Enquiries

General Enquiries and Advance Tickets via our website: www.wellandsteamrally.co.uk
 Public Camping (pre-booked only) Tel: (01684) 274050
 Friday Auction Sale: (01432) 278888 / 356161
www.st-herford.co.uk

The Welland Steam Rally is organised on a voluntary basis by the **Ross-on-Wye Steam Engine Society Ltd.**, and is a **National Traction Engine Trust** Authorised event.



www.wellandsteamrally.co.uk

Ross-on-Wye Steam Engine Society
52nd Annual Rally 2016

WELLAND

STEAM & COUNTRY RALLY

July 29th, 30th & 31st

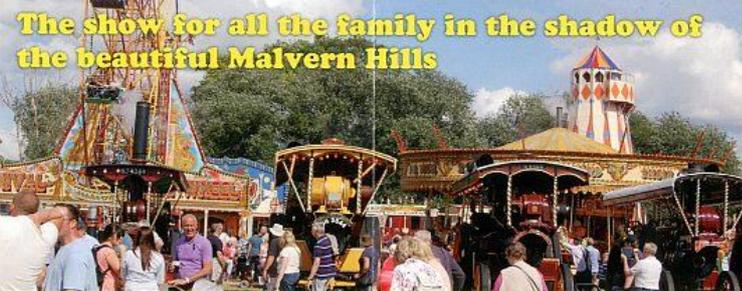
A GREAT FAMILY DAY OUT IN THE SHADOW OF THE BEAUTIFUL MALVERN HILLS



ADVANCE TICKETS NOW AVAILABLE - SEE WEBSITE FOR DETAILS

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The show for all the family in the shadow of the beautiful Malvern Hills



All the Fun of the Old Time Fairground

It has been said that the old time fairground at Welland is the best in the country featuring, as it does, a fine selection of traditional amusements such as Galloping Horses, Big Wheel, Dodgems, Hurricane Jets, Slid, Ghost Train etc. Plus children's piles, rifle range and side stalls, all accompanied by traditional fairground organ music. During the weekend over 20 of the Showmans Engines will be generating electricity to power and light the fair - a wonderful sight after dark on the Friday and Saturday evenings. For 2016 we welcome back, in its own travelling theatre, the fabulous Van Baaren Show with Magic and Mystery for all the family. Also, thrill to the amazing aerial gymnastics of the amazing **Emma Puddy**. Don't forget to check out the colourful **Potty Parrots** in their own display tent.

Arena Events

During each day of the Rally (weather permitting) there is a full programme of arena events including parades of exhibits, and such things as the children's tug of war against a steam engine and the ever popular military tank demonstration etc.

52 Years of Rallies

Having been established for 52 years, it can justifiably be said that the Ross-on-Wye Steam Engine Society annual Steam and Country rally at Welland is one of the finest of its kind in the country.

The Rally promises a day of nostalgia, sights, sounds, colour and movement for every member of the family as you take a trip down memory lane to the days when steam power reigned supreme on the roads, farm and fairground. Apart from over 60 steam engines there is a wealth of other attractions to hold the interest of everyone for the whole day on the beautiful 100 acre site which is wholly owned by the Ross-on-Wye Steam Engine Society.

See Steam Engines at work

At Welland Rally the emphasis is very much on working exhibits. Apart from the usual parades and displays, traction engines are seen doing the jobs for which they were built in the years up until the Second World War. The extensive working field has demonstrations of ploughing, harvesting and threshing corn, wood sawing, stone crushing, roadmaking and rolling. In the old time fairground electricity is generated by the spectacular showman's engines. The working area includes a length of railway line with a full sized steam powered crane which handles the timber for the wood sawing demonstrations.

The Great Welland Railway

Laid down four years ago, the Great Welland Railway comprises a substantial length of standard gauge railway track which each year plays host to a full sized steam locomotive.

Early Motor Vehicles

In support of the Steam Engines, and forming a major part of the show, Welland Rally has one of the largest and finest displays of Vintage and Classic Motor Cars, Motorcycles, Trucks, Buses and Historic Military Vehicles. Adjacent to the Car Section is **Woodside Garage** - a re-creation of a pre-WWII garage complete with petrol pump, period vehicles, signs, breakdown truck etc.

Tractors & Stationary Engines

As befits an event held in the heart of a farming community, Welland Rally always presents an excellent display of early tractors, stationary engines and farming machinery. Always popular is the working section where some of the tractors can be seen ploughing and cultivating the ground.

Models and Crafts

In contrast to the full sized exhibits, the model tent displays exquisite examples of the model maker's skill. The larger scale model Steam Engines have their own paddock on the Rally Field, also their own parade in the main arena. The large craft marquee gives a chance to see craftsmen and women at work and the opportunity to buy examples of their products. Making a welcome return for 2016 is the working display of radio controlled model trucks and earth moving machinery.

Tractor Pulling

One of the most popular events at The Rally is Tractor Pulling, which takes place throughout the weekend in its own arena with a grandstand for viewing. Tractors come from all over the country to compete. Also a few of the traction engines take part. Particularly spectacular, for those staying the weekend, is the late night floodlit tractor pull on the Friday and Saturday evenings.






Figure 6.4a-b - Welland Steam & Country Rally publicity leaflet, 2016



Figure 6.5 - public car park at Welland with hills as backdrop, 2016, photograph Ian Trowell



Figure 6.6 - Abandoned vehicle in public car park, Welland, 2016, photograph Ian Trowell

attraction of heavy vehicles per se. Ample space is also required for parking of visitor vehicles, and this creates a need for unidirectional traffic flows and marked off areas with associated security infrastructure. Thus, the core of the rally itself is often enshrined within a wider circle of closed off areas or large car parks. Instances occur where exhibits are abandoned in the wrong area (figure 6.6 shows a digging vehicle partially deconstructed and abandoned in the general public car park), and on some occasions the mode of transport of the visitors parked in the general car park might also form an object of interest (a classic car or motorcycle for example).

The core of the rally is carefully split into dedicated areas for exhibiting specific types of things, demonstrating certain types of things in action, recreating certain themed activities, large tented areas for food, crafts, model-making, with separate areas for the fairground and trade stands. There is normally a central show ground or ring where a precisely arranged timetable of events will occur such as parading of engines, displays of dogs or birds of prey, stunt-shows or specialist equipment in operation.

The concept of arrangement and classification, with aspects of granular sub-dividing, is an important feature of these rallies and of the wider rally system in general. The strict arrangement by typology functions on two levels - it allows exhibitors to display and compare their restoration and preservation projects alongside fellow activists working on similar (identical) projects, and it allows the public a kind of sense-making system for viewing (particularly for those members of the public making notes). Figure 6.7 illustrates tractors arranged at Lincoln in terms of manufacturer, model and colour coding, whilst figure 6.8 offers a close-up view showing the micro-arrangements of David Brown tractors in ascending model numbers. The tractors are arranged in a tight grid allowing visitors to move freely between exhibits in directions seemingly motivated by makes, models and colours. Wilson (2002: 18) records 243 tractors during her visit to Lincoln and the principal reason for display could be considered twofold; a sense of pride at being able to gather such a substantial number and a method of being able to appreciate the efforts of the preservation movement in pinning down an attempt at completeness (and perhaps a way for those with intimate knowledge of identifying gaps?).

By contrast, the tractors at Welland are arranged in distinct avenues with a wide 'street' between facing rows of models and makes but a narrow space between each tractor (figure 6.9), making navigation a walk along the main street and a glance up a sequence of side streets with the option to stroll up the avenue to view tractors and less of an impetus to circle round each exhibit.

The tractors at both rallies are displayed without exhibitors on hand either standing by their vehicle or having it running. The code of conduct is that exhibits are not to be touched or clambered upon, mirroring the museum, though driven principally by issues of safety rather than aesthetic distancing. Larger traction engines are displayed with exhibitors and their family/staff in situ with the engine running since this presents more of a spectacle. The exhibition of these engines working is important to the fabric of the rally - this is what the public want to see and this is what the preservationists want to achieve. The process of feeding coal into the boiler, generating steam, with flywheels and belts spinning wildly and noisily, is the essence of these vehicles - even when they are effectively generating power for no immediate purpose. Whereas a farm tractor just 'ticking over' would not present anything



Figure 6.7 - Red tractors at Lincoln, 2015, photograph Ian Trowell



Figure 6.8 - Detail of classification of tractors, Lincoln, 2015, photograph Ian Trowell



Figure 6.9 - Avenue of tractors at Welland, 2016, photograph Ian Trowell

of a spectacle or the solving of a need to know, a traction engine works for the cause of both epistemology - proving that it is restored to working condition - and enlightenment - to show the uninformed how one of these vintage and complex machines actually work. Though this is not strictly a prioritisation of display over wasted energy (since the energy generates evidence and knowledge) such spectacles of entropy occur to various degrees throughout the rallies. Within this demonstration of machinery, noise and power there is also a key emphasis on both the dirt of the coal and the cleanliness of the engine, though in reality this is a kind of dialectical tension. The stoking and operating of a traction engine is a dirty business, and owners and staff involved have a set uniform of navy blue boiler suits with a filthy, blackened face coming almost as a badge of honour and gauge of authenticity - any evidence of the dirty nature of the machinery is proof of the 'real thing', and as such is displayed as part of the spectacle. At the same time as dirt is emphasised there is a pride in keeping the surfaces of the engine, particularly ornate and polished aspects, in pristine condition. This would contradict the real working life of an engine; however, such adherence to actual working conditions - the essential heartbeat to these rallies - is overruled here. Figure 6.10 shows the ritual of applying Brasso to the chrome and brass, whilst figure 6.11 shows finished work on a wheel such that manufacturer detail is keenly picked out and the reflection of the photographer can be made out in the centre of the wheel.

The grouping of smaller and stationary engines occurred in set pens at Lincoln and owners mingled with their machines creating a hybrid environment with camping chairs and mobility scooters seamlessly merging with various engines (figure 6.12). This presented something of a comical element as these machines give off the impression of bizarre contraptions such as have been made invisible or eliminated from modern life. There is strong and consistent



Figure 6.10 - Applying Brasso, Welland, 2016, photograph Ian Trowell



Figure 6.11 - Polished detail mirroring photographer, Welland, 2016, photograph Ian Trowell



Figure 6.12 - Stationary engines with stationary people, Lincoln, 2015, photograph Ian Trowell



Figure 6.13 - Pumping water (source and destination the same), Lincoln, 2015, photograph Ian Trowell

evidence of gendered activity here, with men clearly hoping to be seen as being the owners of the engines and making themselves available for answering questions. Meanwhile women engage themselves with puzzle books, reading and knitting whilst the sun was out. There are occasional demonstrations of the engines working, with a common theme being a show of water being pumped (figure 6.13). This can be considered as part of the entropic tendency highlighted above, with water drawn from a source and pumped back into the same source in the name of evidence of working. The entropic interpretation is further invited as water eventually starts to dissipate from the system through excited spillage.

Demonstrations of things in action are popular, and whilst this was not always as purposeless as pumping water from the same source and destination or steaming up a traction engine but not moving, each rally created space for activities. They can be broadly split between activities that involve action on external things that change the nature of the thing acted upon, and activities that have various effects on the ground. Taking the first category, I illustrate this with the activities of steam-powered sawing at Lincoln (figure 6.14) and threshing (figure 6.15) at Welland. It can be argued that neither of these demonstrations are wasteful activities beyond the aforementioned principles of evidence and enlightenment. The threshed straw would be used around Welland as animal fodder, and the cut trees can be used as stakes by the farming community around Lincoln. Furthermore, the steam-powered saw advertised the services of the owner 'Willi-cut-it' with a Nottingham area telephone code using the current system (and not a made up vintage telephone number). The saw operator is shown wearing period costume and this is also part of the display and re-enactment culture, a practice that Samuel (1994: 180) describes as the 'oldest of the mimetic arts, and a perennial favourite in children's make believe'. With the threshers excepted, the attention to detail of dress is strong at Welland, and it is noticeable when the diegetic shroud is punctuated with slight lapses such as the site of a smart-phone or vaping-pen glimpsed amidst the starched farmyard shirts and dungarees.

The second category of demonstrated activity, work done upon the ground, is closer to the wasteful activity previously mentioned. Whilst the work done by the machines is performed on some aspect of the ground, the work done to the ground itself is only for demonstration purposes and serves no use beyond the duration of the rally. The nature of the work varies from the simple mowing of delineated areas of grass at Lincoln (figure 6.16) to a whole host of activities at Welland including the laying of a road, the building of a wall, ploughing fields, and the setting down of a railway (figure 6.17). This construction of a road (to nowhere) is particularly impressive and carried out on a massive scale, drawing a constant stream of onlookers. Meanwhile, the small railway is undertaken by a group of preservationists and re-enactors who are totally engrossed in the activity and its rootedness in the past. They are not performing but wrapped up in the task at hand whilst being transported back to the early 1900s. Here the attention to detail is precise, with the crew brewing up tea in the old-fashioned way (figure 6.18) and using the surveying tools as they were at the time (figure 6.19).



Figure 6.14 - Steam-powered log sawing, Lincoln, 2015, photograph Ian Trowell



Figure 6.15 - Threshing, Welland, 2016, photograph Ian Trowell



Figure 6.16 - Crowds gather to watch the grass mowing, Lincoln, 2015, photograph Ian Trowell



Figure 6.17 - Road building, Welland, 2016, photograph Ian Trowell



Figure 6.18 - Caught in the moment - brewing tea circa 1900, Welland, 2016, photograph Ian Trowell



Figure 6.19 - Railway engineering, Welland, 2016, photograph Ian Trowell

In the same way that a community of model-makers and miniaturists shadow the fairground, there is also a miniaturised strand in the rally. At Welland this resembles a surreal scene from a Borges short story or the plot device of Paul Auster's *Music of Chance*, as an entire tent is devoted to a model of a road building operation based around a huge pile of dirt (taken from the field of road digging) with a network of paths and tunnels being smoothed and moved by an army of remote control vehicles including excavators, dump trucks, bulldozers and service vehicles from police and security (figure 6.20). The models are of a modern type so not isomorphic to the period road building going on outside of the tent, however the apparent futility of the operation, beyond a kind of ecstatic celebration of doing and demonstrating, ran in parallel with the turn-of-the-century building of the (real) Welland (false) road on the outside.

Miniaturisation, as documented by Stewart (1993), holds a fascination, and the theme is continued with miniature trains present at both rallies (figure 6.21), allowing children to interact with the exhibits. Finally, surplus, unclassified and random objects fall out at the bottom end of the presentation and classification systems, with sprawling areas of 'auto-jumble' and uncertain spare parts laid out on tarpaulin sheets in the trade areas (figures 6.22a-e).

The account so far, and the accompanying photographs, has laid out the principal attractions on offer at the rally in terms of their classification and grouping, nuances of context, performances and presentation. I will now turn briefly to the crowds of visitors to the rally and mark out certain practices and demographic groupings that I have noted through prolonged observations of certain areas of the rally. The audience at a rally is predominantly a mix between families with younger children and older men either single or in pairs / small groups. Neither unaccompanied teenage groups nor groups of females are part of the crowd, and this demographic has an impact on the fairground (below). Families move through the rally and mix between the static exhibits and more general offerings such as the craft tents, food tents and market stalls. These areas tend to offer something for young and old, not least food and drinks plus small, affordable toys and trinkets, keeping a balance of happiness across all ages within the group as the day progresses.

I have already indicated a gendered distinction with regard to the process of restoring and showing (this is not an exact division but certainly a significant feature), and there is also a gendered distinction in how the crowd engages with the exhibits. The precise and up-close observing of engines (and their working details) is an activity carried out by most visitors to the rallies - male and female, young and old - but this activity is normally limited to an inquisitive view and then moving on to a different part of the rally. However, there is a practice of closely observing all engines and this is carried out by male visitors to the rally, extending to taking photographs with cameras (as opposed to selfies with mobile phones) and making detailed notes (figures 6.23 and 6.24). These activities are undertaken by males on their own, in pairings, or split off momentarily from a family group, and might be considered as synonymous to the trainspotter activity of fairground enthusiasts outlined previously. The viewing of recreated activities such as mowing or road building is undertaken by all groups as is shown earlier. Two further photographs illustrate this mixed group viewing with figure 6.25 showing a large group viewing a lumbering military tank on the move at Welland, and figure 6.26 showing an ensemble of adults and children listening to an organ play whilst in the foreground there



Figure 6.20 - Radio-controlled road building diorama, Welland, 2016, photograph Ian Trowell



Figure 6.21 - Miniature railway, Lincoln, 2015, photograph Ian Trowell



Figures 6.22a-e - Auto-jumble, Lincoln, 2015, photographs Ian Trowell



Figure 6.23 - Males photographing engines, Welland, 2016, photograph Ian Trowell



Figure 6.24 - Males making and comparing notes on engines, Welland, 2016, photograph Ian Trowell



Figure 6.25 - Mixed crowd watching tank, Welland, 2016, photograph Ian Trowell



Figure 6.26 - Mixed crowd watching / listening to organ, Lincoln, 2015, photograph Ian Trowell

appears to be a male adult conversing with the owner of an engine whilst a female (presumably his partner) waits patiently with a possible twinge of disinterest and boredom.

The fairground

Figures 6.27 and 6.28 show the transition between the main rally attractions and the fairground at Welland. Preserved and restored fairground engines are set out in a line facing the incoming public who have moved through the rally. The front facing aspect of the line is kept clear of obstructions, with owners and operators occasionally situated alongside an engine. This presents a seamless transition from the rally itself, the visual spectacle of preserved engines in steam. These engines are not idly wasting energy though, they are generating power for the fairground, and so an infrastructure of chaotic objects is formed behind the engines and effectively becomes part of the fairground itself; its first site of encounter.

The noise and smell of the contemporary fairground is also transferred to the rally in different combinations. The rally itself is dominated by the cacophonous heavy noise of industry performed to maximum effect with saws, engines, stone-breaking, etc, whilst the smell of burning oil, coal and diesel fumes mingles with the increased variety of food stuffs on offer. As you approach the fairground the polysensory atmosphere transitions to a vintage fairground environment, with a predominance of coal-fired engines leading the symphonies of sound and smell.

The ground of the steam rally fairground also takes on a specific character. The idealised surface is of a parched grass and straw, a crossing over from the agricultural to the fairground, since the steam rally fairground attempts to recreate a small fair visiting a rural community. The fuelling operations require coal for heat and water for steam if the engines are to function as working fairground engines performing the task at hand to power the ride, and this has an impact on the surface. At Welland there is mix between the authentic old and the less authentic new. Coal is delivered around the whole site via various small tractors and trailers (modern type) but the tactile and emotive qualities of the coal itself, its persistence as rough lumps and its residue as black dust, meant that once the coal was in the open it immediately felt part of the authentic past. Lumps are dropped on the ground (figure 6.29), stained areas through the dust of heavy delivery are evident, as are burnt patches. In contrast, water is delivered in a modern manner, a junction of rubber pipes sitting in front of the engine line, but it never attains the emotive qualities of coal (figure 6.30).

With my previous observations of the rally crowd demographic set out above, the fairground (nestled at the back of both Lincoln and Welland rallies) is approached by two significantly different groups with different intentions for use and expectations of authenticity - the enthusiast and the family with children. The steam rally enthusiast approaches the fairground as an extension of enjoying the authenticity, recordability and working nature of the exhibits that they have meticulously worked through as part of their time at the rally. For the enthusiast who wishes to revel in the actualities of a preserved or restored past the fairground must adhere to certain standards of authenticity regarding the things on display, the finer details of their restoration and presentation, and the contextualisation in regard to atmosphere through music. In contrast, the family approaches the fairground as a mix of both the continuing spectacle of vintage authenticity, rarity and working power, and an opportunity



Figure 6.27 - Front view of engines facing public entering fair, Welland, 2016, photograph Ian Trowell



Figure 6.28 - Rear view of engines at fairground, Welland, 2016, photograph Ian Trowell



Figure 6.29 - Stray coal lump, Welland, 2016, photograph Ian Trowell

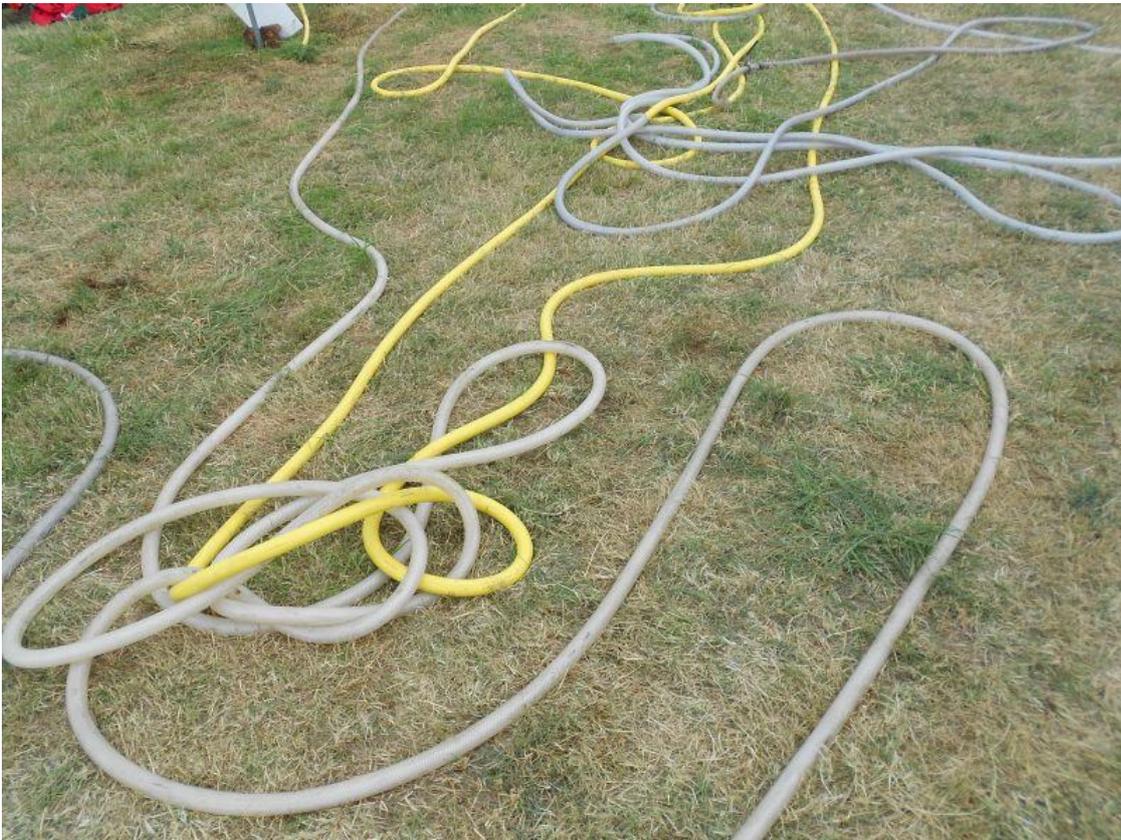


Figure 6.30 - Modern water piping, Welland, 2016, photograph Ian Trowell

to offer the children a break from the processes of looking which are replaced with the act of engaging in something that is approximately familiar - the fun of the fairground.

There is also a third consumer of the fairground; the exhibitor. A conversation with Lawrence Harper exemplified the exhibitor as a consumer of his own product and spectacle, through proudness of work and attention to detail, mirroring the engine owners and re-enactors throughout the wider rally. Lawrence lovingly talked over the detail of his restored juvenile ride (the carved pigs in seen in figure 6.31b were part of this), detailing its history of ownership as a working ride with Guild show-family the Wroots of South Yorkshire, pointing out small manufacturer plates fastened on to each of the toy mounts and the carver's signature (Anderson of Bristol) on the pigs' bodies.

I would argue that the outer wall of the fairground, pioneered at GDSF and presented as a regimented line of working engines, appeals to the needs and expectations of both groups at the rally, though does not present a replica of a fairground whole – the super-object. The finely-tuned content within the fairground itself is viewed, engaged and appreciated differently by the two groups. The enthusiast expects a continuation of vintage authenticity (rides, stalls and shows from a past era), pristine presentation (all equipment preserved or restored to excellent standards), and correct attention to detail and context (lighting, music played, etc). The mode of engaging the fairground is also a continuation of the wider rally activities: looking closely at details, watching things and systems in operation, making notes and securing photographs.

The response from a rally and fairground enthusiast highlighted some of these tensions between audience expectations, particularly around music:

Music should be at a reasonable level and in keeping with the type of event it is. The biggest offender with sound and noise tends to be over loud pa systems which drown everything else out and excessively loud music if there is a 'modern' fair. A fairground with traditional rides, such as arks and, well you know the ones, add greatly to the atmosphere if the music is sensible, ie in keeping such as rock and roll etc but should not be so loud it counteracts the organs on others.

The family, particularly the children, require what might be considered as an oppositional doubling of tradition. The fairground needs to be appreciated as traditional in the sense that it is somehow plucked from the past, but at the same time it needs to be in the tradition of what a fairground actually is in that it offers thrills and spills, noise and smells, fun and excitement.¹⁵ A modern fairground achieves this 'tradition' in part by constant renewal of attractions and contextualisation, but a traditional (historical) fairground must achieve a balance between what is from the fairground past but contains the spirit of excitement in the here and now. This refers to my earlier discussion on tensions between the rally scene and Guild showpeople, as well as Jack Schofield's discussion on audiences and the inclusion of ultra-modern fairgrounds at GDSF and Llandudno Victorian Weekend.

The super-object of the fairground presents an interesting study at the steam rally. The ground is set out midway between a traditional fairground and an exhibition space. Whilst the harsh replicating of the gridded structure of the tractors is not applied, suggesting that authenticity

¹⁵ I develop this point of the divergence and strangeness of traditional with Carters Steam Fair in the next chapter.

of engagement commingles with an exhibitionary imperative, there is a certain shift of authenticity. The line of working engines that precedes the fairground sets this off, and the fairground interior can often be a disconnected affair, with each object placed partly in the service of exhibition such that an all-round view can be ensued, rather than an integrated and labyrinthine fairground circuit. A 'proper' fairground of the past (or present) will accept a certain hierarchy of importance, with stalls and juvenile rides fitted in to create an effective super-object. At the steam rally every object is exhibited by an individual, and so some parity of importance is aspired to.

In speaking to members of the fairground enthusiast community, not all considered the steam rally as part of their scope of interest. One response simply suggested that the fairground is a 'minor consideration' within the larger rally, whilst a more considered response stated that:

My experience is that the fairground side of it is an add on, either to illustrate and expand on the steam side of things or to provide a bit of entertainment for the kids. I don't really think of it being a reason to go for the vast majority of the punters, who are interested in the transport/steam/mechanics of the attractions rather than the fairground. My interest is the fairground itself as a whole unit, the layout, the attractions of all types and how they all fit together to create an assault on the senses, and then just as quickly disappear. Whilst not specifically a transport fan, I can appreciate the vehicles in their advertising function, but that is all. I find that the rally scene just doesn't give me the 'fix' that I need as the fairground side is too limited in size and attractions, and whilst there may be other bits spread around the site, such as artwork or other memorabilia for sale, it's spread out and the bits in between just don't do it for me and I become a bit bored.

There is also the issue of directly experienced history (or autobiographic salience) against a deep history of origins, technologies and defunct modes of doing and appearing. This is a key point that defines heritage engagement as it vacillates between nostalgia and historical curiosity, and something that I return to in the conclusion. The steam rally stretches into a distant past that pre-dates much of the experience of the audience, with one respondent bluntly stating: 'steam rallies don't interest me all that much unless there are a few rides there, the traction engines being way before my time and as such are only of passing interest'.

The fairgrounds on rallies in this study did not link back to a pre-war era such as presented with the road building examples and mock garage at Welland, and neither did they attempt to extend the diegetic realm into costumes and practices. Instead they presented equipment and key facets of presentation (artwork, lighting, music) that harked back to a recent past of the fairground that, whilst context-less to the children, struck a chord with the parents and grandparents. For example, the rides at Welland included a set of Jets which would have dwindled from the fairground in the mid-1980s, a Twist which, whilst still a current ride in a much-modernised guise, was decorated in a bright 1960s style, and the Skid which also declined in popularity through the 1980s. This latter ride, a tough and noisy piece of machinery (part of the reason for its eventual decline), was creating a great atmosphere by playing pop records from the late 1970s with an operator using the microphone to pronounced effect. The overall sound of the fairground is more equivocal with the absence of thunderous bass from dance music - in its place is a mix of pop music from the 1960s and 1970s, clanging bells on the juvenile rides, old-fashioned hooters to indicate the start and end of a ride, the organ in the Gallopers, the clattering of the Skid and the hiss of the hydraulic release in the Jets, and chorus of microphone spiel.



Figures 6.31a-e - Fairground details, Lincoln and Welland, 2015/2016, photographs Ian Trowell

The diffuse and disjointed nature of the periodicity of the fairground (and its associated music periods) further detracted away from a possible coherence of the super-object. Unlike, for example, Carters Steam Fair in the next chapter, the fairground at the rally is not tightly time-bound. The first-order-objects are united in being old and well-restored, but they are not synchronised and so function as a contemporary fair that would contain a slippage of modern(ish) rides and styles of decoration. The fairground at the rally has the same scope of slippage but is placed back in time. It thus functions with a bare commercial drive first and foremost, rather than structuring commercial potential within a strategy of transporting the visitor back into a well-rehearsed and seamlessly-presented past (such as with the re-enactments).

The enforcement of authenticity within the finer detail, for those who sought it for some kind of justification of experience, depends upon who is in charge of organising the fairground. At Welland this is down to Andrew Sanham, referred to jokingly as a member of the 'lightbulb police' in the vintage fairground community.¹⁶ Figures 6.31a-e show details of the fairground at the two rallies and here we can see the emphasis on original light bulbs, carved work and painting style in the bright, 1950s tradition.

Conclusion

This chapter shows both the current extent and rich history of the steam rally – a reading of the diachronic and synchronic – and addresses a glaring absence of serious attention from the academic community on this activity. To 'get at' the fairground within the steam rally has meant that an understanding of the steam rally itself is needed, and this stems from both the lack of available material examining and analysing the steam rally (an epistemological chasm) and the fact that the physical fairground is situated at the furthest reach of the steam rally (drawing from, and contributing to, a mix of spatial practice, situational aesthetics and heritage theory). The work in this chapter is thus tentative in setting out a ground zero for exploring the steam rally in all potential differing capacities of discourse. I have steadfastly sought out a history drawn from subjective and anecdotal sources, balancing between an impetus to exhibit and a means to entertain (as heritage or increasingly beyond), and this is balanced with testimony from contemporary voices within the steam rally movement with regard to the fairground sector of the wider event.

The steam rally space is complex in its combining of a topological and topographical, with defined zones (discrete topologies) creating an overall topography of the steam rally site. Movement through zones sees shifts in time and object or activity context. The whole, in terms of approach, interiority of space and interiority of affect through themes, is bound up in a combination of the rural picturesque and the agricultural. Heritage within the steam rally is multiple and manifold: there is representation from all eras (engaged as both 'real' history and remediated history of historically situated television programmes), there are both objects and activities (the latter also drawing on objects), and these objects and activities are encountered as preservation, conservation and revival (recreated objects and re-enacted activities).

¹⁶ One respondent recognised the practicality of the situation, suggesting 'lighting has to be what it is, some things have to move with the times. While good old fashioned 110v bulbs give a lovely warm feel to traditional rides it is not always practical these days'.

Even as the steam rally is unpacked singularly in a heritage discourse, it is evident that the whole event would contribute towards a standalone thesis. This is a work for another day. On reflection, the analysis of the heritage fairground within the heritage excess of the steam rally is overwhelmed and distorted. It is difficult to assess how the fairground performs as successful heritage of its own volition, for the simple reason that the visitor to the steam rally attends with the purpose of experiencing a whole, such that each singularised event is part of a wider programme of attractions and events. Visitors circulate to appreciate the whole.

The exhibitor at the steam rally also forms an audience as such, sharing the social capital of a community, comparing their efforts to those of their co-exhibitors, and experiencing the glow of satisfaction of the general public looking upon, and engaging, their own heritage efforts. The fairground operator falls into this categorisation, and this is evident from the testimony gathered. Also introduced is the first sense of a tension between showpeople and the self-identifying community of preservationists and restorers who turn their attention to objects and practices of showpeople. This is plotted through the historical work of Duncan Dallas, and I add my own analysis that draws upon Thompson's rubbish theory to give a more robust underpinning to Dallas' work. This is a problem for the fairground heritage movement, an identifiable facet of difficult fun. Whilst this problem is not universally transferable to the wider heritage movement, it is important to raise it here in its own right. This tension is extended further in the next chapter as I study Carters Steam Fair.

Chapter 7 - Travelling Heritage and Carters Steam Fair

Carters Steam Fair has a history going back to the 1970s with various key moments instigated by the proprietor John Carter. John's background extends across all aspects of the preservation and vintage scenes to include organising events, publishing, acquiring and curating key fairground objects, and the eventual pioneering of a model of travelling a vintage fairground along the lines of a traditional fairground that comes and goes week-to-week occupying spaces in towns and villages. This chapter is a study and discussion of Carters based upon visits, interviews and an examination of historical and current publicity materials. The chapter is introduced through two initial theoretical considerations that resonate further throughout the work. Firstly, the process of representing history is examined through the extensive body of documentation, promotion and discussion that is generated by, and surrounds, the Carter family. To achieve this, I work through the metaphorical lens of film and motion and draw on the famous work of Deleuze whereby he introduces the philosophising of film as a cipher for the wider practice of philosophy in general. The process of historicification, or historiography, with regard to efforts in the fairground preservation and heritage scenes could of course be applied in many of the other case studies covered in the previous chapters, however Carters have both a relatively rich vein of material and also a complex background of shifting intentions and actions, making a study of how they present their history an interesting case.¹ Secondly, and more importantly to the thesis as a whole, I will unpack and problematise the notion of the traditional to propose divergent strands that encompass both historical method and historical objects (or products of those methods). Already in the first few sentences of this paragraph I have referred to Carters operating along the lines of a travelling fairground and defined this as traditional in the operative sense of the word, however there is clearly another sense of traditional in the object-oriented sense of the word. This complex debate is carried through the chapter and peaks with a discussion of the Gallopers, which in turn provides a lift-off point to a wider discussion in chapter 10 where I draw together my overall observations alongside theories of authenticity, heritage and nostalgia.

John Carter passed away in 2000 and the business is now continued under the direction of his son, Joby Carter. It is a slick operation that operates with a high degree of professionalism and attention to marketing, identity and visual presentation. Over the years it has evolved to navigate between formats of the preservation scene and the traditional travelling fairground, slightly changing its orientation at points along the way and documented by various publications that assert it as a particular thing at a particular time. This snapshotting and strategic positioning of the Carters operation provides a source to go back and document a possible movement, but care needs to be taken as it impossible to capture bits between the *frames* of the film that also tell the story. This can be considered as the movement image struggling to become the time image as developed in the work of philosopher Gilles Deleuze, whereby he uses film to ask questions of philosophy. Here we see what Marrati (2008: 10) calls 'instantaneous and immobile snapshots of the becoming of reality' such that the possibility of the consideration of an in-between is nullified, 'the passage from one pose to another holds no

¹ Chapter 5 and the discussions of the historicification of George Cushing and Graham Atkinson are possible parallels to my work here on the Carters.

interest in itself'. These immobilities, drawing on Zeno's paradox of stilling an arrow in flight, cannot produce a movement by spatializing time; Deleuze (1989: 155) searches for the 'before and after in a becoming of the images', and it is here - behind the images - that the understanding of how Carter's fair evolved can best be appreciated and contribute towards this fairground heritage debate.

The history of Carters is thus not a case of relaying a set of straightforward dates, events and statements of fact to lead to a 'this is where we are now' scenario. The twists and turns need to be understood in greater detail as a series of forces and affects, since they cast light onto the broader narrative structure that runs throughout this thesis. Whilst the current Carters brand and experience is detailed extensively with a series of site visits, interviews and audience observations, its history is given more consideration as it illuminates the hopes and limitations of other strands of preserving and presenting vintage fairground equipment.

Carters, like Folly Farm, is a working business that needs to satisfy a market that cannot be conjured and curated at the whim, and in the control, of the wishful and righteous lover and respecter of vintage fairground equipment. It is also a business that is often defined in terms of opposition, in two senses of the word. Firstly, it constructs a product and markets an experience that is, in part, defined by what it isn't - for example a boisterous environment dominated by threatening teenagers. Secondly, it navigates opposition towards its own existence from various quarters such as Guild showpeople. I develop these important ideas below.

The drive to be commercially viable leads to an operating method that sits between divergent notions of tradition and the traditional. As Joby asserts, all fairgrounds are traditional in that they maintain a distinctive practice of coming and going, occupying and repurposing space, and by adopting this pattern of presenting their product, Carters call upon this tradition. It is a tradition of presentation that other vintage manifestations such as the steam rally or the static collection do not follow. However, the perpetual modernisation of the content of the contemporary travelling fairground is also part of that tradition, and it is here that Carters diverge and plug into the practice of presenting what is considered as traditional equipment that aligns them with preservationists and collection curators. This difficulty of extracting past practices and material objects bundled up as some kind of tradition from a wider encompassing tradition of the travelling fairground itself sits at the heart of the Carters operation. It is not simply picked apart and demarcated as if the word tradition is either polysemic or contronymic. Joby states this dilemma without equivocation: 'We aren't traditional - a fair is - what are we? - People scratching about with vintage pieces. My dad broke the mould'.²

As a travelling fairground Carters upholds one tradition (to travel) and also negates a common facet of that tradition (to present the new or to present it in a new way).³ At the same time by placing itself at a point in the past of that tradition (in terms of wrenching out objects, decorations, context) it enters a new practice of curating and presenting the traditional. If this presentation of the traditional constitutes a new practice (a new tradition even) such as

² Interview with Joby Carter 9 August 2016.

³ Presenting things in a new way does actually occur, such as the evolution of the marketing figure discussed later, even if the new way is actually a new 'old' way.

discussed across my thesis here, then Carters have to apply their own rules with regard to practicality to keep their show on the road and resembling a contemporary fairground (and so in effect negate the traditional). The operation has to break rules of tradition whilst trumpeting the rules of tradition that it upholds. As with any product that delivers a certain amount of authenticity in terms of what you experience (thrills, spills, sounds, colours, smells) and in terms of what inspires feelings of the virtuous (the assumption that what goes on behind the scenes to deliver the experience is somehow executed in an authentic manner), there is a balance to be struck with little room for sentimentality.

History of histories

History becomes enfolded with Carters. The here and now of Carters - its ethos, output and product - depends upon historical credibility, and this is achieved in the first instance through longevity in presenting history. Each year marked becomes a milestone that buttresses the essence of the product, a tactic used in most heritage brands. Each year in the business adds to the credibility of the business, whilst at the same time the historical facts can be fine-tuned.

Recorded historical markers of Carters occur at various time points with the publication of numerous booklets, though I would like to start with the most recent; that is the enhanced website.⁴ As the obvious entry point for an interested member of the public (who might have first experienced the fair) looking to seek information on the business, the website can be reflected upon as both the most recent instantiation of their history as well as an indicator of how they market themselves in the here and now as purveyors of history. For 2016 they declare a 40th season, and this acts as a kind of imprimatur for historical provision and management.

Taking this here and now as the historical marker first, the website reveals an immediate sense of design plugging in to the fairground style that Joby Carter has adapted as his own skill. He was apprenticed to the fairground artist Stan Wilkinson and emerged as a competent, knowledgeable and innovative showland painter. As well as allowing Carters to maintain a strict control of their own visual identity - in terms of developing and application - this has cascaded into two extended aspects of the business. Firstly, they run signwriting courses advertised throughout the website (and throughout the fairground), and secondly, they have branched out into merchandise such as tee-shirts and gifts that sell through bold and singularised aspects of the fairground art that adorns their rides and transport. This clean and bright design reverberates throughout their fairground equipment (figures 7.1a-h) and, as Joby stated in interview, a current sector of their audience is part of the fashionable design crowd.

The website also indicates where their funfair is now, at this very moment - whether that is on site and open for business or between places either pulling-down, in transit, or building-up. As well as informing customers where they can find the fairground, this plaintive and penetrating glimpse into the life of the fairground serves a greater purpose of authenticating the full-time nature of the Carters presentation. A visitor to the website is invited to imagine the loads moving across roads between locations, or staff hammering pegs into fresh earth. The

⁴ <http://www.carterssteamfair.co.uk/index.html> (accessed 14 August 2016).



Figures 7.1a-h - Artwork detail on Carters Fair, 2016, photographs Ian Trowell

calendar of events is back-dated to the start of the season (a short pull from their winter quarters to open at Reading in March) and extended to the end of the season (a final event at Reading in October). This hints at the mutable nature of the word traditional as used by Carters, becoming a floating signifier to refer to both classic (and distantly gone) fairground equipment and presentation, as well as the continued tradition of travelling a full-time fairground, being mobile at all times, and - like a traditional travelling showperson - starting and finishing the season (understandably) close to home.⁵

The website carefully details (and celebrates) all attractions, side-stalls, vehicles, wagons and food outlets. Each object is given its own page in the house style that reflects Joby's own lettering – careful kerning, blocking dimensionality, floating double-drop shadows, curling scrolls, sans-serif letters and numbers. Detailed histories of each ride can be viewed, though these sit nicely behind more sparsely presented galleries, meaning that the site does not immediately overwhelm you with trainspotter facts. However, the provenance of each ride is clearly set out for those who wish to investigate it further.

The website also includes various statements that serve as claims for authenticity and originality, guidance for what to expect from the fairground offering, mixed with slogans that situate a kind of mind-set for a possible fan of the vintage world and the old way of doing things:

Carters Steam Fair is now not only the premier vintage travelling funfair, but it is also the custodian of a great deal of beautiful rides that would otherwise have been lost, and a highly skilled restoration company helping other people to save items of Britain's heritage⁶

Carters Steam Fair is a unique attraction – it is an authentic travelling funfair entirely consisting of rare vintage equipment. We live in vintage showman's wagons and caravans, and the whole fair is moved from place to place with a highly-decorated fleet of vintage lorries. It is now believed to be the largest vintage travelling funfair in the world, and travels every week of the season, from Easter to Bonfire Night each year.⁷

An antidote to the modern world.⁸

The three statements above emphasise a triple importance of Carters: in salvaging our disposable history of amusements, in the fact that Carters functions as a real travelling fairground and not just a presentation of rides from a (possibly) once real travelling fairground, and finally in that the whole experience can be situated as an 'antidote' to (post) modernity.

This latter statement of the antidote is a powerful allegory, invoking infection, disease or plague as inherent to the modern world. The concept of the antidote has a strong cultural currency in the modern age, with a plethora of films and television series depicting a society

⁵ It could be argued that it also takes away slightly from the fairground magic, in that the traditional fairground may arrive without warning overnight, and is often not known where it comes from (or where it will go next) - just that it will always be going (and coming from) somewhere. Furthermore, the 'about' section of the website breaks the diegetic seal and talks about how a fair in a place comes to be, in terms of council planning, insurance, public amenities provision. See Walker (2015a) for further considerations on this.

⁶ <http://www.carterssteamfair.co.uk/about.html> (accessed 4 November 2016).

⁷ <http://www.carterssteamfair.co.uk/about.html> (accessed 4 November 2016).

⁸ <http://www.carterssteamfair.co.uk/rides.html> (accessed 4 November 2016).

divided by the infected (and the deranged) and the uninfected, with the possibility of an antidote fluctuating as part of the playing out of dramatic tension. The zombie narrative is the apotheosis of this genre, an allegory that Thacker (2011: 115) links to a thinly veiled attack on 'the working class, the mob, and the masses' as a threat to society, however the notion of modern life in itself as a kind of disease of officialdom, banality and (voluntary) servitude also figures strongly in films such as David Fincher's *Fight Club* (1999). It is unclear whether Carters, as a fairground experience, provides the antidote to the modern world, or whether the unique vintage character of the experience provided by Carters is an antidote to a wider modernity that includes the modern fairground, such that slipping in to an older way of doing things (in general) is a form of resistance and salvation. This action taken against the modern world can be understood through Certeau (1984) and his notion of strategy as the machinations of the dominant with vested interests, and the tactic as the minoritarian articulating a sense of refusal, hindrance and resistance. Carters suggest that participation in their fairground alleviates the drudge of the modern, thereby shifting the staging of the vintage from simply an aesthetic addendum to the modern palette, to a refusenik position that is critical of the modern.

The final point of interest that I wish to raise from the website concerns the social media streams that are embedded and encouraged from the homepage. Whilst this practice is the common way of working for many service providers and entertainment nodes, it is worth noting that photographic interaction is encouraged with a plea to contribute evocative, stunning and technically astute views of the fairground depicting motion (long exposures), light (night shots) and vintage vibrancy (foreground-background contrast compositions) – cleverly allowing Carters to maintain a tight control of their visual identity.⁹

Returning to the historicisation process of Carters through distinct snapshots in time, the key figure of 40 years of operation (celebrated in 2016) is confirmed on the website with a suggestion that Carters Steam Fair began operation in 1977 with the purchase of the Gallopers that still form the centrepiece of the fair to date. The attraction of the Gallopers, and thus the importance of the moment of their purchase into the Carters fold, is crucial. As Steptoe (1994: 23) remarks regarding the significance of such a ride:

A set of Gallopers in operation at a fair forms a central attraction and is frequently used as the location for a formal opening ceremony or a Sunday service of worship. The covering canvas coming off the Gallopers is a signal for the opening time of the fair.

This key purchase of the Gallopers - recorded as a transaction in 1976 in this and other books - forms a reference point in numerous other markers of the Carters history, not least in 1995 with Paul Braithwaite's dedicated publication on the ride itself. In this work, a preface by John Carter sets out how the Gallopers were a fate-changing talisman, such that he recalls:

It is perhaps worth recording here my reasons for purchasing these Gallopers. Between 1970 and 1980 I promoted preservation steam events, car shows, air shows and collectors bazaars in the Thames Valley aided by my wife Anna. Gallopers at the time were scarce, perhaps 15 sets travelling nationally, as we always required traditional amusements it seemed logical to purchase our own machine. I had no intention at the time to build a complete travelling funfair, however the considerable cost of the Gallopers' restoration coupled with taxation increase which crippled the

⁹ This extends the photographic engagement with the fairground I detail in Trowell (2017a).

promotions business combined to convert my family and I into travelling showmen
(Braithwaite 1995: 3)

It is the less accessible facts like the above that start to illustrate the more complex becoming of Carters - the time image against the movement image - even though the current history on the website suggests a more obviously sequenced progression of teleological points. For example, the website states that the purchase of the Gallopers brought about a gradual change from attending steam rallies to striking out with their own events, though it is not made clear when or why a demarcation occurs between the context of these events as self-organised steam rallies and as self-organised fairgrounds. However, a transition did occur and this is explained in a little more detail in print by Anna Carter who recalls that arranging vintage equipment to appear at rallies had an inherent uncertainty and John began to favour travelling to 'English parks and village greens' (Carter and Steptoe 2002: 4). One of the key events in the history of Carters is the establishing of the fairground at Pinkney's Green near Maidenhead in 1982, a location that exemplifies the aspects of British rural life and tradition that fascinated John (figure 7.2). In this image I have captured the glimpse from the fairground onto the cricket ground as a kind of reverse shot of the timeless view of the traditional English pastimes within the bucolic, a synesthetic vision defined by Keiller (2013: 26) with 'the famous view through the gap in the trees that surround the Duke of Norfolk's cricket ground at Arundel Castle... its connotations are in this location pinpointed by the feudal sounds of leather on willow and so on'.¹⁰



Figure 7.2 - Pinkney's Green as quintessentially British, photograph Ian Trowell

¹⁰ One of the earliest full-page publicity articles on Carters in *World's Fair* newspaper (31 May 1985) is based upon their presentation at Pinkney's Green and a cricket match in progress is referred to.

The early lives of both John and Anna are important to consider here. The current website references a passion for collecting vintage items such as 78rpm records and slot machines, alongside a love of vintage vehicles, whilst the webpage dedicated to the artistic side of Carters mentions that both attended different art schools and contributed to the painting and visual identity of Carters fair. Anna's work is particularly prevalent on the fairground with all the incredible scenic and figurative work on rides such as the Gallopers and Steam Yachts, plus numerous portrait details on the round stalls (figure 7.3), and her background and passion for art is detailed in Steptoe (1994: 61). John's background is a little more colourful than the current website reveals, and both Steptoe (1998: 96) and Carter and Steptoe (2002: 1) flesh out some of the background and sequence of events. Firstly, his enthusiasm for stock car racing played an important part in his sense of design and invention, and played a part in the curtailing of his studies at Slade School of Art. His passion for promoting shows and innovating new concepts such as military vehicle rallies and record bazaars sequenced with his publication of what can be described as an early fanzine entitled *Three on the Floor*, which ran between 1972 and 1977 producing a total of 27 issues. This remarkable publication gives the clearest insight into the complex and shifting background influences that plot the Steam Fair in becoming, the frantic and passionate output of the monomaniacal John Carter indicating a seismic belief in the appeal of his passions.



Figure 7.3 - Anna Carter's scenic painting on Gallopers, photograph Ian Trowell

His fairground epiphany was attending Sir John Smith's seminal 1964 event at Shottesbrooke Park in Berkshire; the Great Steam Fair. Smith was a wealthy Conservative MP with an interest in architectural, industrial and maritime conservation, going on to found the Landmark Trust in 1965, and arranging what is said to be the first steam fair on his estate in August 1964. This shifted the balance of the steam rally, such that at a rally a fair supported the many attractions of preservation, whilst at the Great Steam Fair the organising principle was the fair itself with

engines and organs in support of the fair in a recreated practical capacity. This was the first event that put fairground preservation separate from a wider mix of preservation, a statement of the seriousness of the fairground as a vintage concern, termed by Steptoe (1994: 11) a 'milestone event'. In 1974 John put together a celebratory event for the tenth anniversary of Shottesbrooke, organising a large fair at Blackbushe in the north-east corner of Hampshire. In attendance were a mix of Guild rides and preserved rides including Percy Cole's Gondolas (the only surviving set, now at Thursford), Jimmy Williams' Rodeo Switchback (again, a single survivor and now at Dingles), two sets of Gallopers, two originally decorated Arks, Tommy Green's Caterpillar, Bishton's Cakewalk, Wall's Big Wheel, two sets of Chairplanes and the Wall of Death - supported by numerous engines and organs. Whilst these events and activities prior to 1977 might not be considered in the present time as constituting the inauguration of Carters, it is important that they are not forgotten as they plot a shifting sequence of intentions, design influences and hybrid crossovers to other popular cultural activities that re-emerge in the current manifestation of Carters. The emergence of the steam fair *ex nihilo* in 1977, with the magical appearance of the Gallopers, is a romantic image but clearly not an accurate picture. It is John Carter's activities prior to purchasing the Gallopers in 1977 that led to him making that very purchase. Importantly, it positions the early work of John and Anna Carter in the midst of the established specialist audience of collectors and preservationists.

In moving away from attending rallies with their own equipment to presenting a permanently travelling vintage fairground by building up a series of grounds (such as Pinkney's Green in 1982) John and Anna Carter increased the tension between the Guild and non-Guild factions that Dallas describes in the preceding chapter. Not only did the Guild showperson think that someone else was making money out of their old relics, the ante was now upped as the Carters began to operate regular weekend fairgrounds that inevitably encroached on the vicinity of Guild events.¹¹ Restored rides were not just presented as relics that afforded the opportunity for enthusiasts to gather, make notes and take photographs; they were arranged into an experiential context that drew upon the full atmospherics of a fairground from the past. Thus, a Carters Steam Fair event would have a dual function of satisfying the enthusiasts and - more importantly - providing a fairground thrill for the everyday punter who might be tempted to go a modern fairground, alongside satisfying a curiosity for the nostalgic and authentic (a gradual trend that has risen towards our current fascination with hipsterdom). As the onus of presenting a permanently travelling fairground grew to a full-time occupation of visibility (always being on the road as opposed to a full-time occupation spent with long periods in the yard working on preservation), Carters Steam Fair was suddenly understood as a public insight into a true travelling life. This further angered many Guild showpeople who felt that the mantle of travelling showperson was something uniquely bestowed upon their own, enclosed community, a community that was struggling to assert its own positive identity. Not only had Carters taken this identity without being born into it, they had turned it into a

¹¹ Carters keep a yearlong diary of attended events (past, present and forthcoming) as a dedicated page on their website. This page is not archived year-on-year, however for 2016 the season commenced in March with a presentation at Reading and then gravitated towards and around London before a series of fairs in the capital between May and July. A longer stay at Bath in August saw a break from London, before a tour of Hampshire and back into Berkshire to close in November. Of the 27 fairs presented only two were associated with music festivals, and one as a dedicated children's fair - no steam rally type events were attended by the fair as a whole (though odd pieces of equipment did break away to attend occasional rallies such as Welland discussed in chapter 6). Thus the majority of fairs presented were based upon a standard tober of dedicated attractions forming an event-in-itself.

romanticised - but importantly positive - attribute.¹² If the steam rally is a dispute about the ownership of objects, here we have a shift to the ownership of identity.

In the mid-1990s a group of enthusiasts set up a Carters Steam Fair Fan Club, producing seven issues of an A4 printed fanzine, indicating the standing that John and Anna Carter had amongst this community. Features on the work of the family were included in the journals for both the FAGB and FS alongside a number of articles in *World's Fair* newspaper.¹³ In the same way that Carters evolved from attending rallies to building a run of fairs, there was an overlapping gradual shift of focus to the family audience, sidestepping their preservationist fellow travellers, as I will describe in the conclusion to this chapter. However, it is first necessary to describe the fairground itself through site visits.

Site visit

This report is based around two site visits to Carters. The first visit was in May 2016 to one of their weekend events at the Geraldine Mary Harmsworth Park in the shadow of the Imperial War Museum in South London. This fairground forms the first point of call in a string of events in the capital throughout May, June and July. The second visit was in August 2016 to their week-long stay in Bath's Victoria Park, this event forming a break between the earlier cluster of shows in London and a homeward-bound circuitous route through Hampshire and Berkshire to close the season.

As is typical for Carters, following many years of arduous work acquiring and developing grounds that sympathise with their ethos and image of recalling the village green fair or the traditional arrival of an encampment of wagons on a green space, both of these venues resonated with a feeling of either timelessness or a sense of the past in terms of the presentation of a fairground. Whilst London has a shifting history of presenting many fairs, with Guild operators such as the Irvin family moving between locations and never straying far from the city, the predominant London fairs occur at more distanced and larger spaces spread in an orbital fashion, such as Wanstead Flats, Hampstead Heath, Blackheath, Hounslow and Richmond. In these locations the fairground is both sited a little further from the city and is

¹² This is an evolving, complex and delicate set of tensions and identities that cannot easily be backed up with presentable evidence. Hostility towards Carters from Guild showpeople festered through comments passed on to the fairground enthusiast community who generally had an interest in both the Guild activities and the efforts of the Carters. Things came to a head with the commissioning of the six episode series *Fairground Attractions* in 2011 (see <http://www.channel5.com/show/fairground-attractions> (accessed 4 November 2016)) which took the format of a fly-on-the-wall documentary series following three fairground families - the Carters being one of them. This provoked a flurry of insults traded over social media from showpeople claiming that the Carters had no rights by virtue of lineage to be considered as showpeople and featured in the documentary. The common insult that gathered momentum was joskin, which interestingly refers to someone from an agricultural background in the vein of a bumpkin, creating a further nuance of the links between agriculture and the fairground.

¹³ See *World's Fair* 31 May 1985 (page 18), 4 September 1987 (page 7), 14 May 1999 (page 12) and 27 February 2004 (page 6) for examples. The newspaper is traditionally split into ordered sections with reports and news from Guild fairs presented first, a middle section of advertisements, and a back section split into circus, magic and preservation. The first article in 1985 sees them in the back section of the newspaper under 'Preservation News', however in recent years they have migrated to the front section of the newspaper. The article from 1987 is interesting in that it reports on a radio phone-in featuring John Carter arguing for the value and necessary support of travelling fairs, an early indication of how the Carters gradually became a prominent node in speaking of and for the showperson lifestyle.

also presented within a wider buffer zone of park space separating the fairground from the urban epidermis. The vicinity of the park utilised by Carters, with its tighter limitations of space, felt more prestigious and enmeshed within the city itself, as well as the sombre grandeur and museological environment of the Imperial War Museum.

In contrast, the location used at Bath sees several Guild presentations such as an Easter fair. However, Carters made the situating of their event harmonise with the Georgian splendour of landmark places such as the Royal Crescent and Circus that formed a perimeter to the park itself. In addition, the warm summer weather meant that the grass was particularly verdant and the surround of mature chestnut trees presents a strong cast of green that amplifies the maroon and custard colour scheme of the transport that forms the outer barrier to the fairground. At both grounds the Carters set out a tight layout that creates a permanent illusion of busy ground, even if the crowds are actually thin. The Bath presentation is limited to early closing hours and so automatically oriented itself towards a family environment, though the presence of a sprawling hipster community in the city - with a slew of artisanal bread shops and ferociously priced coffee shops populating the approach from the city centre to the park - indicated a further untapped potential.

Carters link to the hipster community is exemplified through the attention they receive from various bloggers and online journals. For example, the fashionable blog Spitalfields Life shows the connection between the current hipster scene and the life and image of Carters. Whilst I develop this connection below when I talk about audiences I want to quote here from the blog about how the author sees Carters set out and what that means:

Resembling your dream of what a fairground should be – immaculately cared for, dripping with light bulbs and garnished with flamboyant lettering, and every surface shining with neat paintwork in the dominant colours of butter and oxblood. The rides were arranged around the enormous merry-go-round which is the proud centrepiece, while splendid vintage lorries in tip top condition stood between the gleaming attractions and, at the fringes of the encampment.¹⁴

This short paragraph embodies the hipster urge for authenticity, craft and evidence of labour, with key phrases such as the use of 'butter' and 'oxblood' to describe the colour scheme connoting a bodily and tactile association. The sense of encampment that is evocatively conjured is evident at both London and Bath though the differing spatial configurations of each location meant a different arrangement. Survey respondents praised the operation and layout:

You get enveloped, lost now in the modern fair with the loss of the side-shows. You enter an imaginary world. Carters get it right.

I think they've pretty much got it right in terms of painting, light, sound and so on and they generally set the ground out pretty well.

The transport is part of that image as it forms an enclosure around the ground and offers an advertising facility. They operate as a whole package, not just vintage rides offered in a bland environment.

Carters have developed a strong vintage identity and apply it with meticulous consistency to their fleet. Lorries and box trucks are lettered and numbered in a consistent style and colour

¹⁴ See <http://spitalfieldslife.com/2013/08/22/anna-carter-carters-steam-farm/> (accessed 18 August 2016).

scheme, reflecting a show tradition of old. The modern travelling fairground evolves on all fronts, and transportation has shifted from trains of box trucks towed by a tractor (figure 7.4) to singular articulated loads (figure 7.5). An articulated load is a development of the hybridity of the fairground ride itself, described by Starsmore (1975: 95) as 'something which does not readily fall into any one category: art, construction, transport, all three enter into the equation'. What Starsmore misses here is the further category of advertisement in that a fairground ride in the form of transport would contain an advertisement for itself and the operator. The rapid modernisation of fairground rides has meant that a key dichotomy has prevailed between transport and construction in the name of practical transformability under the dynamic of thrill; a modern fairground ride needs to be able to offer a thrill which can fold into a single articulated load. It can be argued that such a folded structure contains art (in terms of an architectural or aesthetic tendency of metallic structural surface, technological tubes and pistons and masses of light caps) and is thus also an advertisement for itself - because it is still unmistakably a fairground device ready to unfold. However, when we backtrack in history and look at the tradition of the train of box trucks alongside the modern equivalent of an articulated load with a cab lettered out in a modern style indicating the family's name we see significant differences. An articulated Orbiter or Sizzler Twist, observed between fairgrounds, can potentially (with some enthusiast knowledge) be solved as to what type of ride it is (figure 7.5), but a sequence of box trucks may contain anything. The showpeople of the past would thus letter each box truck with a series of messages indicating their name, the contents within, and in some cases a brief message of excitement indicating arrival ('Here comes Edwards') or departure ('Cheerio' or 'See you again') (figure 7.4). For the showpeople of old, and for the Carters of today, such vehicles for transporting rides would then double as an enticement into the fairground itself, a kind of preliminary outer layer of the labyrinth formed by the fairground.¹⁵

At the London site the limitation of space meant that the vehicles were positioned in a staggered arrangement such that the approach to the park from all avenues offered opening views of vehicles positioned in isolation or small groups with advertising artwork in direct sightlines (figure 7.6). Picnic spaces set out in the park had to be negotiated (figure 7.7) but the vehicles presented a totalising environment of sumptuous advertisements. In contrast, at Bath, the unimpeded spacious area meant that a clear enclosure could be indicated with an outer layer facing the public on all angles of approach (figure 7.8). The box trucks form a perfect line of flow and it was evident that a golden rule was to keep this area unobstructed and uncluttered from other vehicular or infrastructural obstacles (visiting suppliers, bins, bags of swag prizes, etc). Interestingly, Joby describes this positioning of the slogan painted box trucks as a form of typesetting, linking it to his own skills in signwriting such that the laying out of the fair 'was a form of lettering, thinking about similarity, spacing and appearance' (figure 7.9).

As illustrated in figures 7.1a-h, the visual identity within the fair is strong - bright, vintage and consistent. The positioning of the rides and stalls, within the outer layer of transport, is also understandably important to Joby who is well versed in the traditional and illusionistic layout of a fairground using round rides and stalls to create a labyrinth effect. He terms this the

¹⁵ There is a charming 'chronoclash' on Carters Fair such that the vintage box trucks are lettered out with the website for the organisation.



Figure 7.4 - Road train with owner name and attraction, Amersham 1994, photograph copyright Dave Homer



Figure 7.5 - Typical articulated load with no visible text clue to attraction, photograph Ian Trowell



Figure 7.6 - Approach to Geraldine Mary Harmsworth Park, May 2016, photograph Ian Trowell



Figure 7.7 - Fair outer at Geraldine Mary Harmsworth Park, May 2016, photograph Ian Trowell



Figure 7.8 - Approach to Bath Victoria Park, August 2016, photograph Ian Trowell



Figure 7.9 - 'Typesetting' at Bath Victoria Park, August 2016, photograph Ian Trowell



Figure 7.10 - Sound system on Ark, photograph Ian Trowell



Figure 7.11 - Sweet food outlet, photograph Ian Trowell

'negative space of the rides' again indicating his background in painting and design. Other atmospheric elements are in evidence regarding sound and smell. Music on the fairground is rooted in 1950s rock'n'roll, with certain rides sharing a soundsystem and utilising period speakers (figure 7.10). Joby keeps a regime of more popular 'foot-stomping' music in operation similar to the precise soundtracks played at Folly Farm in regards to things being upbeat (if not perhaps so instantly recognisable). This 1950s musical vibe is intersected with the organ in the Gallopers and the loud steam engines that power rides such as the Steam Yachts, alongside sounds of the crowd screaming in enjoyment and the spiel and patter on the microphones from the operators. It is a traditional and vibrant mix of fairground sounds, particularly evident on the approach to the fairground in London. As one of the interview respondents remarked at Bath, it was 'noise everywhere... your earholes assaulted'.¹⁶ Smell is equally redolent, a mix of vintage décor food stalls offering sweet and savoury (figure 7.11) combined with the strong smell of the fuel powering the steam rides. Thus, while a modern fair is losing that combinatorial factor of diesel fuel and engine noise due to cleaner and more silent generators, the heart of Carters Steam Fair has this sound and smell of steam powered energy. Again, as remarked by one of the respondents: 'the steam, the oil, the hot machinery'.

Contexts and considerations

Detail towards historical fairground authenticity occurs at various points and I will now go over some of these, though I will talk about the specifics of fairground artwork later in this chapter as this is an integral part of the Carters operation. As well as maintaining rules on the music, Joby has a rule regarding light bulbs such that no plastic caps or flush style LEDs are allowed, however the newly launched 'old looking' LED lightbulbs are now accommodated on some attractions. Modern aspects are also apparent where the common sense of commercial imperative prevails, such as with contemporary prizes on the stalls and the use of a streamlined token system to facilitate a cashless operation on the attractions. At the same time Joby is more than aware of how people are easily fooled, and talks of the modern Gallopers built by manufacturers such as Matthews and Rundles that are thoroughly modern but are branded (and appreciated) as Victorian. This reference to the Gallopers as a kind of test-case of authenticity and mode of fooling is taken up at some length in chapter 10, but there is a wider issue of the tradition of fooling within the fairground.

At key places and moments Carters can go further with their authenticity and its overt expression, and their Gallopers presents such an opportunity. The website proclaims both the importance and authenticity of this ride, emphasising the mounts being carved from wood (actually the mounts are a mix of traditional wooden and predominantly replacement fibre-glass) and so taking the granular approach to deeper authenticity.¹⁷ Another action of authenticity is the use of coal to generate steam power for the Gallopers and Steam Yachts, clearly separating the ride away from the modern electrically driven rides. As I show in chapter 6, there is a polysensory and performative aspect to such actions, the shovelling of coal and the generation of steam working at a greater level than just a marker of more authentic than simply appearing. Coal, and the steam it generates, creates evocative smells, tastes and sounds, authenticated with the tactile marks of labour and effort (soot, sweat, dirt). This is

¹⁶ From interviews recorded on site 9 August 2016.

¹⁷ See <http://www.carterssteamfair.co.uk/rides/galloper.html> (accessed 6 November 2016).

clearly tactical, as tactical as the use of old looking LED lightbulbs - to emphasise your unique offering of the 'real thing' and to ensure that the small gestures of modernisation are not scrutinised or counterproductive to the key audiences. However, the illusionistic tradition and nature of the fairground per se, sits above all of this to some degree. Joby's assertion that people are fooled by the electrically driven Gallopers could be folded back into the notion that the fairground is a time and space where we suspend our disbelief and open ourselves up to an intersubjective fooling, or as Walker (2015a: 356), drawing on Althusser, suggests: 'a productive misrecognition'. On the fairground, our being fooled contributes to the authentic experience of the whole, these illusionistic practices pervade the physical site, objects and modes of articulation, as a nested and interlinked set of affects and practices.

Audiences

Joby describes his principle audiences as families, older people with a willingness to temporarily adopt the mind-set of a child and 'let go', enthusiasts who might commit to one ride, a burger and an ice-cream (and so not necessary a profitable target audience), and the newly emerging hipster crowd who will spend money on rides such as the Dodgems where they can perform, or co-curate, in the provision of their own authentic experience. This is echoed in a response from a fairground enthusiast asked to consider Carters:

Carters offer a recreated, idealistic, recreation of a fantasy fairground that everyone has in their minds as having existed in the early 1960's. They provide a perfect recreation of something that was never that perfect in the first place, but appealing to all ages and in a safe almost 'Disney-theme park' way.

The family audience was a key demographic on my site visits, though as stated, the presentation at Bath did not extend beyond early evening and so precluded certain potential audiences. Joby suggests the rationale for the family audience is a non-threatening crowd that is not awash with teenagers, such that young parents can bring their children and not feel unwelcome or unsettled. As figure 7.12 shows, the crowd is a mix of families and younger children who are given the freedom to wander around unaccompanied without fear of threat from a potentially boisterous crowd of teenagers who might constitute the crowd of a contemporary fairground. In turn, parents tend to spend their time filming their children experiencing the rides, as shown in figure 7.13 with the crowd gathered around the Octopus laden with small rucksacks.

The 1950s music is a bit of an anomaly here in that a young parent (say in their 20s or 30s) would not have been brought up listening to such music, and so the fairground is experienced as something of a historical curiosity that has not been directly lived through. There is a degree of airbrushing or sanitisation here such that the 1950s music played on the rides would have drawn a boisterous crowd of the first modern incarnation of the teenager, bringing with them the threatening practices of the modern teenager at the modern fairground clustered in groups of hooded figures listening to donk, garage and rave music.¹⁸

¹⁸ As I suggest in the next chapter, this absent threat of the 1950s teenagers with cheap flick-knives and brylcreemed quiffs is the same absence of domestic violence, bleak poverty, alcoholism and intolerance that you don't see in the recreated townscapes of the living museum.



Figure 7.12 - Audience view at Bath, photograph Ian Trowell



Figure 7.13 - Parents filming children on Octopus ride, photograph Ian Trowell



Figure 7.14 - Austin car ride detail, photograph Ian Trowell

On the ground at Bath I noticed a few elderly visitors slowly patrolling the ground, inspecting machinery at an overall and then microscopic level of operation and decoration. These people did not strike me as fairground enthusiasts, more so people with a genuine interest in history and a willingness to revisit their own past. A male in his late 60s had travelled 15 miles to visit the fairground and declared a fleeting interest in attending occasional steam rallies. He had already spent an hour on the ground and seemed enraptured in nostalgia, pointing out the Austin juvenile ride (figure 7.14), the cars being an example of an artefact that has vanished from the fairground to be replaced by modern toy-sets themed around Disney. This brought out strong memories and he pointed towards the ride and its child passengers to state 'it takes me back to 1954, when I was eight years old, that boy's age. Happy memories'. For him the attractions that offered a more direct grasp of nostalgia were the Steam Yachts with their noisy and pungent operation, and the vintage ice-cream van, supporting the idea of sounds, smells and tastes as being key nostalgic drivers. A couple in their 50s had travelled 17 miles to attend, both declaring an interest in vehicle rallies and confessing a passion for old Land Rovers. Neither of them pursued vintage fairgrounds to the extent of visiting museums, but the male respondent mentioned that he had attended a Carters Steam Fair as early as 1979 at Bracknell and was overjoyed to be back.¹⁹ I earlier quoted his evocative phrasing of the sense of smell and sound of the fairground, and he was also impressed with the consistent whole of the fairground with regard to it depicting a certain age, through authentic colours and objects. A final couple in their late 60s were interviewed, having travelled from Bristol to specifically see the presentation. Neither of them attended other fairground heritage events or

¹⁹ This echoes the idea put forward in Niemeyer (2014) regarding remediated nostalgia creating a subsequent nostalgic urge for the past action of remediation.

collections, though they were aware of the Fairground Heritage Trust collection in Devon. Their principal activity on the visit was securing photographs, so in many ways they had adopted the persona of the fairground enthusiast for their visit.

The other key audience demographic drew from the hipster subculture, but I will preface a discussion of this community with a discussion of artwork since this formed part of the attraction to that specific community.

Fairground artwork and the consumption of authenticity

Anna Carter is quoted at length in the introduction to the booklet that tells the story of the Ark purchased by Carters in advance of the 2006 season. As with many of Carters rides the story of the purchase, the back-history, and the ensuing renovation is recorded with the authorial help of an enthusiast/historian. Scrivens and Smith (2006c) provides a detailed history of the Ark, with Anna Carter's introduction frank and revealing:

Back in the mid-seventies John and I became proud owners of an original Halstead Juvenile. The ride was hand turned with a full set of carved wooden horses. The overall paint had matured over the past decades to beautiful yellow ochre. We thought it was marvellous and couldn't wait to present it on one of our outdoor show promotions. In those days we invited showmen to provide the fairground amusements. Imagine the rude awakening when faced with the competition from the latest, brightly painted juvenile rides, our pride and joy stood empty all weekend whilst children flocked to ride the latest attractions. This was an important lesson in the creation of Carters Steam Fair. When my son Joby was entrusted with Teddy Andrews' carefully preserved Jungle Ark, I was reminded of this episode. The options were either to preserve the ride with its antique appearance or restore it to its former glory, complete with bright, vibrant colours to render it commercially viable. Fully appreciating the importance of this historic ride we boldly decided on the latter.

This quote gives insight into a few key areas; the pre-history of the operations prior to the year zero of 1977, the identification of children as a key audience, and the practice of restoration above preservation. Whilst it would be possible to attain a generic brightness of appearance that would appeal to children through using modern material and iconography, it is evident that this quest for the attention of the child's eye is incorporated back into a strategy of vintage authenticity. Hence the process of restoring the Ark took on 'something of the feel of archaeology' (Scrivens and Smith 2006c: 30) as layers of paint were removed revealing the numerous repaints that the ride had undergone in its ownership with the Andrews family. The ride is thus presented, in the words of a fairground painter involved in the traditional style, as 'factory fresh - perfect for the audience and intention of keeping it on the road'.²⁰

The debate as to the significance and importance of patina, the mark of usage through time as opposed to simply being from the past, and its fracturing across distinct audiences, is key here. Balthazar (2016: 455) and Guins (2014: 246) document the fascination with patina within a collector-specific audience, an invitation to 'foster and acute awareness of materiality' (Fallan 2013: 78). Chapman (2005: 131) pushes further, suggesting that patina 'writes narrative into both the semiotic make-up and aggregate semantic of material experiences'. Carters Ark was considered as a 'lost Ark', drawing on the coinage of the initial film in the famous sequence based upon Indiana Jones, the adventurous archaeologist portrayed by Harrison Ford. Its

²⁰ Interview with Pete Tei 9 October 2016.

meaning here refers to its status with the Tonbridge-based Andrews family, who purchased the Ark in 1938 in what can be described as original condition.²¹ The Andrews family embodied a spirit of the unchanging romantic stasis that seems to inflict itself upon certain showpeople from the South East of England, and travelled the Ark in a seemingly unaltered style of decoration using a fleet of vintage vehicles that had simply been looked after and entered into an extended period of service (rather than being a deliberate strategy of celebrating the old). The Ark travelled until 1983, by which time it was somewhat anachronistic by virtue of its decoration and by virtue of the fact that Arks were disappearing from the fairground. As Scrivens and Smith (2006c: 23) state: ‘the existence of the ride was known to most fairground enthusiasts, and there was some dread that it may one day be sold and converted to a Waltzer, or modernised in some fashion’. The possibility of keeping the Ark as it was, with the evidence of half a century of use lovingly trapped beneath multiple layers of coats of protective (but distinctively discolouring) varnish. As explained and justified by Anna Carter, this decision was not taken, and the ride was restored to its original brightness (figures 7.1a-b and figure 7.15). Whilst this cannot be categorised as ‘modernised in some fashion’, it is clearly a decision that draws away from the preservation of the complete story of the object, its passage through time as a functional, pleasure-giving device.²² It was discovered, through the careful removal of varnish and then paint, that the ride had undergone several repaints during its existence, always following the same basic pattern set out from new and manufactured by Orton and Spooner. When the final layer of paint was reached the brightness of the original colours applied in 1934 was revealed, and these were replicated in the restoration.



Figure 7.15 - Ark interior detail, photograph Ian Trowell

²¹ It was new to William Thurston jnr in December 1934 (see Scrivens and Smith 2006c: 9).

²² There is actually a small amount of modernisation documented in Scrivens and Smith (2006c) such as the use of aluminium faced plywood on the bottom shutters - a further ‘fooling’ of the public and a truth and untruth of materials as discussed with the Gallopers.

Now travelling for over a decade with the Carters, Joby felt his decision with the Ark had been justified. He outlined the process and its rationale succinctly: 'Search for knowledge of originality when possible, we have enough examples of old relics in museums. We present in factory condition, for example our Gallopers are made grander than they possibly were, it's the jewel in our crown, our self-indulgence'. The distinction between the museum object and the commercial and active heritage object is clearly made, such that a heritage fairground ride cannot satisfy both conditions. Here a paying audience of families looking to find a version of the past can satisfy their interests:

They recreate that ideal family atmosphere that is missing in a lot of fairgrounds these days, and maintain that heady mix of colourful artwork, lights, smells and sound that is typically 'fairground' and offers a superb assault on the senses. The public can relax and enjoy themselves. I do enjoy Carter's fairs and rides, they are a different style to the usual travelling fair and as such have a different feel. They work at it, and get the results, and surely that's what it's all about.²³

Different expectations of authenticity and different audiences for colour and its brightness complicate an assessment of Carters. Whilst the majority of my site visit drew attention to the super-object, we are quickly drawn into a dialogue of the first-order-object and the second-order-object. Joby's discussion of painted aspects and mechanical parts fooling people straddle both object-about-objects and objects-within-objects in respect of my classification scheme introduced in chapter 2. The final audience, the hipster crowd, make this confusion more complex. The hipster culture is a growing phenomenon that (as at the time of writing) shows no sign of relenting. 2016 saw the setting out of a more critical assessment of this scene, considering its prevarication between subculture, counter-culture and consumer-culture, and accusations that it is the first culture without a sense of verve, fight or spirit - it is simply driven by consuming the right things to transmit certain connotations.²⁴ The hipster consumer expects a mix of authenticity, backstory, craft and physical labour to be embodied in the product (a coffee, an item of clothing, a glass of beer) and these attributes can easily be worked into - or at least connoted by - the fairground. Carters celebration of their artistic skills and its rooting in a past allows many products and services to sit alongside the fairground. Initially the super-object of the fairground is a highly connotative hipster realm with a visual identity that leaves no gaps within the fabric of a cherished sense of past design, craftsmanship, deep narrative and quirkiness. As Joby remarks: 'we are a family of artists and the fair is our canvas, the decoration is self-indulgent and ego-driven'. There is also a sense of commercial acumen around the visual identity and iconographic elements, with figures such as the current poster girl (figure 7.16) evolving year-on-year to reflect changing tastes in retro and burlesque, an example of how (like the contemporary travelling fairground) the product offers something new (even if in this case it is a new example of old). Joby's signwriting courses satisfy a market for hands-on craft skills (figure 7.17), the attraction drawing from the notion of the hand-done in what Joby describes as 'a world of computer perfection where everything is too clinical'.

²³ Fairground enthusiast response to survey on Carters.

²⁴ See the 2016 BBC documentary Peter York's Hipster Handbook <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b081v950> (accessed 9 November 2016).



Figure 7.16 - Visual identity for 2016 season, photograph Ian Trowell

SIGNWRITING COURSES

Each winter Joby Carter runs signwriting courses at our yard near Maidenhead in Berkshire. They are massively popular, and great for both the beginner and more experienced hands. Check out our [signwriting courses](#) for information.

 <p style="font-size: small; margin: 0;">LEARN TO SIGNWRITE WITH JOBY CARTER 5-DAY INTENSIVE COURSE BOOKING NOW 28 NOVEMBER - 2 DECEMBER 2016</p> <p style="font-size: x-small; margin: 0;">5-Day Intensive Signwriting Course with Joby Carter, 28 November - 2 December 2016</p> <p style="font-size: x-small; margin: 0;">These fantastic courses cover all the basics of traditional signwriting, from layout and design, to shading, lining and brushwork, and you have your own painted sign (and new-found skills) to take home with you at the end of the week.</p> <p style="font-size: x-small; margin: 0;">Click here for details</p> <p style="font-size: x-small; margin: 0;">£570 inc VAT</p> <p style="margin: 0;">BUY NOW</p>	 <p style="font-size: small; margin: 0;">LEARN TO SIGNWRITE WITH JOBY CARTER 5-DAY INTENSIVE COURSE BOOKING NOW 30 JANUARY - 3 FEBRUARY 2017</p> <p style="font-size: x-small; margin: 0;">5-Day Intensive Signwriting Course with Joby Carter, 30 January - 3 February 2017</p> <p style="font-size: x-small; margin: 0;">These fantastic courses cover all the basics of traditional signwriting, from layout and design, to shading, lining and brushwork, and you have your own painted sign (and new-found skills) to take home with you at the end of the week.</p> <p style="font-size: x-small; margin: 0;">Click here for details</p> <p style="font-size: x-small; margin: 0;">£570 inc VAT</p> <p style="margin: 0;">BUY NOW</p>
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Figure 7.17 - Screen grab from Carters website offering signwriting courses, Winter 2016

Conclusion

From the evidence gathered through observation, research and interview, Carters Steam Fair are proving successful in terms of presenting the heritage fairground. This can be measured in commercial success in terms of visitors on the ground, a pro-active awareness of new diverse audiences (hipster crowd), commercial acumen and branding links, and strong feedback in terms of feelings of authenticity (first-order-objects, aesthetic second-order-objects and sub-objects such as coal and steam) and authenticity of feeling (the super-object of the fairground and its coming-to-be, approach, anticipation, etc). To achieve this Carters have had to work hard and have created a complex whole by carefully nurturing their own image as a back-dated story and an extended and assertive presence in the here-and-now (through visually branded goods and authentic signwriting courses). This could be summarised as a control of image (Carters itself as entity) and a control of imagery (the Carters experience).

In achieving this status the family have had to navigate certain tensions and make key decisions. Whereas the steam rally movement instigates a tension with showpeople over the rightful custody and due returns related to fairground objects, Carters have to also navigate a heightened tension of identity. This is made complex through the family's initial awareness of a dual tradition at work: that of objects and that of the practice of providing a travelling fair that comes and goes. This new tension aside, the momentary separation of traditional heritage objects and the traditional practices associated with those objects has resonance within the wider heritage movement. The travelling fairground here provides a strong example of such a potential dichotomy and its implications. The solution for Carters was to draw on the tradition of the travelling fairground, but there is an awareness that with the tradition of the travelling fairground there is then an expectation of refreshed objects within the context of the fairground. Carters have to navigate this by presenting new old things or creating a new spin on old things. They achieve this admirably, and it is this feat that could be studied by aspects of the wider heritage movement under the pressures of creating returning visitors.

In this chapter I briefly touch upon Deleuze's work on the cinema as a framework to help analyse how Carters have managed their own history and back-story. Deleuze's work on the cinema is complex both in its direct explication (the books as a discussion of certain directors and films) and also its use 'outside' of the text. Stated simply, we can say that Deleuze uses the cinema to explore philosophy, but a more subtle process would see the cinema as a kind of black-box in a systems process. Deleuze inputs philosophy of old (Zeno's paradoxes, Bergsonian conjectures) into cinema with a means to output a new philosophy of time, movement, being and thinking. My initial work in this chapter is positioned inside the black-box, to show how selected frames of Carters history allude to movement but diminish time. I am not calling out Carters for dissimulation (acting other) or dissemblance (acting neither), but illustrating a wider facet of showmanship that would potentially raise concern in the greater heritage movement. The smothering and softening of history reappears in the next chapter on the living museum movement. At first this is something of a poisoned chalice and is used as front-line weaponry in the heritage debates that centred around the living museums, but my approach is to decommission this weapon and then let it re-emerge as a new consideration when the fairground space within the living museum is investigated.

Finally, in this chapter I open a discussion about Carters and their tactic of situating their fairground as an antidote to modern life. This is also a theme that resonates with the heritage debate, and I expand on it further in the following chapter.

Chapter 8 – Living Museums

This chapter examines the preserved fairground in the larger environment of the living museum, focusing on Beamish in County Durham, and the Black Country Living Museum (BCLM) in the West Midlands. The structure and aim of this chapter is slightly different from previous site reports and I introduce my reasons for this and subsequent intentions below.

The definition of a living museum is fluid and the recent focus on living museums as a kind of exemplar in the heritage debate has meant that this fluidity is stretched in different directions and made to perform various discursive functions. For the purposes of my work, I am considering a living museum as a large environment that replicates a more coherent environment from the past characterised by modes of living, working and leisure. Importantly, the living museum represents the 'everyday life of ordinary people rather than the cultural concerns of an intellectual elite' (Williams-Davies 2009: 115). The living museum, an outdoors space, consists of preserved in situ or translocated buildings, reconstructions, and an associated but heavily compressed network of community and business links (industries, shops, public houses, tram, bus and rail systems). There is a feeling of miniaturisation in the form of a diorama, in that a community is represented and self-contained in a navigable and comprehensible space and structure. Benson (2001: 248) senses this with his visit to BCLM and suggests 'a certain abandonment of spatial and chronological awareness'. Of course, nothing is miniaturised, but the feeling of compression and readability soothes the visitor and enhances the overall experience above and beyond singular instances. As the visitor guide maps from both sites (figures 8.1a-b) show, there is an emphasis on circumambulation and compressed readability that belies a 'real' place of working-class living and industry. This works as both contrary and complementary to spatial theorists such as Lynch (1960) who asserts the imageability of the figured city through a system of grids in which a whole can be appreciated but navigation is confined to granular portions of working, living and travelling spaces. The layout of the living museum is compacted as a kind of kingdom, freed from necessary grid structures and approached as a kind of cell shape. A different analogy to miniaturisation might be the expressive and juxtaposed taxidermy displays by William Bullock in which aspects of nature seldom witnessed are all seen together in a frozen moment (a kingfisher catches a minnow, an adder and a stoat embark upon a fight, a mother bird alights on her nest revealing six bright blue eggs).

Gailey (1999) offers a careful and comprehensive genealogy to the living museum, and suggests that a post-1960s proliferation occurred. This would encompass Beamish (1970) and BCLM (1978), as well as Blists Hill (1973) which forms part of the ten museums within Ironbridge, Shropshire. These three principal living museums all contain a fairground that fits seamlessly into the environment.¹

¹ Johnson and Thomas (1990: 130) provide a useful overview table of dates of establishment and means of funding for UK open-air museums.

The fairground in the living museum needs to be considered separately to the preserved fairgrounds so far discussed and developed as a critical enquiry. The fairground fits within the overriding context of the compressed navigable and comprehensible; in some ways it is like Carters, a travelling entity, but it is fixed, in stasis, such that every day is the same day, time has stalled and your visit coincides with the fair being there.² The fairground is part of the overall structure and so must conform to a wider aesthetic and fit in to form part of a circuit of experience. It is not a principal attraction of the site (such as at Scarborough or Dingles), nor is it a specific standalone 'side' attraction (such as at Folly Farm). This has been somewhat problematic as all three fairgrounds in the museums were initially run as separate concerns by showpeople, though in recent years Beamish and Blists Hill have taken over direct control of the fairground with BCLM staying under the control of the Jones family. Seen as part of a heritage whole, the fairground may thus be experienced simply for its existence and inclusion in the museum, though ideally it is intended to enhance the visit with a somatic experience and in turn generate income in the way that a 'real' fairground situated in an everyday location would. This glimpses a diversification in the concept of 'living' within the definition: the museum represents a living space which is there to be seen (and so the fair is seen as part of the seeing of how we once lived), at the same time the visitor is able to go beyond seeing and its vicarious projection, and instead 'live' the life by doing the things. As a rule, living museums have distinct things that can be observed and 'stepped into' that might be part of the everyday (a tour of a slum house, a dentist or doctor surgery, a town hall) and then aspects that might have involved a purchase or transaction (a fairground ride, a pint of beer in the pub, a cake or loaf of bread). The museum recreates these second examples, known as secondary spends, as products and services both in the past and in the present, such that a visitor can spend present-day money to buy heritage products and services in a heritage environment (you can experience the fair but only imagine having your teeth pulled out). There are moments here where the diegetic hold slips due to the incompatibility of the past and present, with customers able to pay for services via contact-less methods or through a modern electronic till hidden behind a vintage façade.

Whilst this embodied aspect of the fairground within the museum environment makes for a slightly different case study and approach on a practical-theoretical level, there is also another important distinction in that the living museum has attracted most critical attention and frequently sits within the cross-hairs of those writers within the heritage debate who wish to critique the heritage movement and its current surge to prominence and proliferation. As Cross and Walton (2005: 206) remark, Beamish became 'the focal point of tensions between history and nostalgia, between the museum and the theme park'. I now outline the origins of this debate, and move to present the living museum as a hyperbolic tangent to this debate. An explication of this intensified discussion of the living museum allows me to draw out the implications for my wider study of the vintage fairground.

² I am referring here to the time of the rhythm of the fair through the travelling season: arriving-operating-leaving-between, such that the fair just happens to be in Beamish. The diurnal cycle repeats each day as the fair opens for business and winds down. The positioning of the fair in chronological time is vague, a point I return to in chapter 10.

Living museums in debate

The heritage debate stems from various short publications around new museum spaces, specifically West (1985), and coagulates in a series of publications played out between prominent historians, geographers and cultural critics. Patrick Wright published *Living in an Old Country* in 1985, quickly joined by left-wing cultural historian Robert Hewison's 1987 publication *The Heritage Industry*, gathering a damning personal attack on what he saw as a new manufacturing industry usurping the industry it portrays as heritage and stepping up from a critical to an inflammatory approach. Hewison (1987: 10) suggests that an accurate (class sensitive) portrayal of history is never presented and instead nostalgia is elevated to 'fever point'. David Lowenthal's *The Past is a Foreign Country* (1985) also added to the mix, trying to offer a wider (philosophical) view of the appreciation of history and the flow of time. Though not immediately following Hewison and Wright's dismissals of the British heritage trend that grew under Margaret Thatcher's government, Raphael Samuel, the champion of 'history from below', gathered together a series of powerful essays defending heritage as a mix of celebrations, everyday activism and engagement, and a potential forward-looking stance that drew from a cherished past. Samuel's *Theatres of Memory* was published in 1994 (with a posthumous second volume in 1999), and included numerous rebukes to what he labelled the 'heritage baiters'. By this point the debate is diametrically polarised and entrenched, making the opportunity for more fine-tuned critique (or even some kind of dialectical synthesis) virtually impossible. Thus, Merriman (1989: 158) pointing out that Hewison (and others) do not present evidence to back up claims of why people engage heritage, with Merriman's own research suggesting that heritage is engaged from a positive feeling of the present rather than an assumed discontent, falls upon deaf ears.³ It is not so much a case of not letting facts get in the way of a good argument, more a case of not letting evidence get in the way of a performative noise.⁴

Lumley (2005: 15) emphasises the persisting and stifling legacy of this debate, suggesting it has 'influenced how heritage has been defined and perceived over the past two decades'. He assesses this with reference to the strong political connotations that marked out the original debate, referring to the emotive language generated such as the 'national necropolis' and 'museum society' that poses heritage as an indicator of and metaphor for the English condition.⁵ Elsewhere, in retrospect, Hoelscher (2006: 200) describes heritage, as seen through these protagonists, as a 'freighted concept', whilst Candlin (2012: 28) suggests that they have 'a correlative impact upon the parameters of museum studies', in effect setting out what can be considered as a museum in stricter terms, stymying her own study of micromuseums.

³ Moore (1997: 11) also touches on this.

⁴ Gentry (2015: 562) tries to take a reflective look back at Samuel's work after a period of 20 years of dust settling on the initial publication, and concludes that Samuel's work is 'sprawling, ambitious, unfinished with wavering definitions and scope of heritage. Published when history and heritage separated, heritage seen as bad history'.

⁵ Lumley also draws on Lowenthal's conceptualisation of heritage tending towards the 'ineffable... normally evoked with sublyrical vagueness' (Lowenthal 1985: 36) as a counterpoint to the politicised squabble amongst the other protagonists.

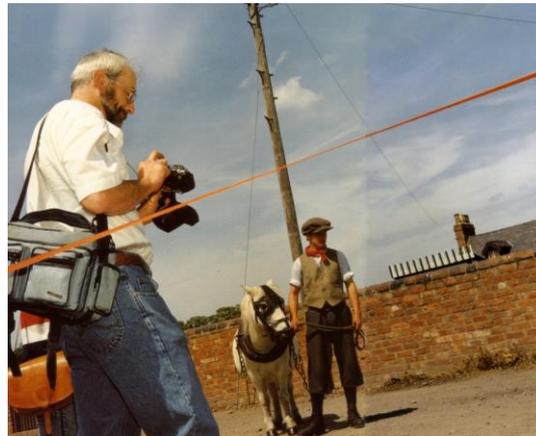
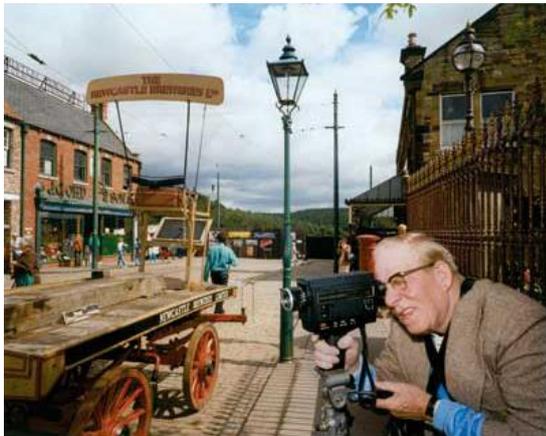
As a constructed, seamless and perfect whole, the living museum draws a direct parallel to the theme park, and ironically to the domain of the showperson. Consequently, discussion on the living museum tends to present itself as both a continuation and a telescoping of the heritage debate. Whilst I will present, and critique, some of this literature below, it is worth noting that the theme park itself draws an essentialist and cynical response from academics in many fields that touch upon cultural and spatial disciplines. Both Klein's *The Vatican to Vegas* (2004) and Sorkin's 1992 collection *Variations on a Theme Park* are good examples where aspects of planned space and modern life are presented as illusionistic and controlling, conceits that are assumed to be bad for independent freedom and decision making, whilst Rojek (1993: 2) initially classes constructed heritage sites such as Beamish as 'collections of displaced curios ... phantasmagorias of the past'. This targeting of the theme park as a cipher for criticising the contemporary surge in heritage provision draws rebuke from Samuel, who suggests that the theme park is the latest demon and occupies 'the symbolic space of those earlier folk-devils of the literary imagination, jukeboxes and transistor radios, or – the particular object of Richard Hoggart's spleen in *The Uses of Literacy* (1957) – candy-floss and milk-bars' (Samuel 1994: 268). A more nuanced and thorough counter-consideration is developed by Scott Lukas who writes on theme parks and themed aspects of everyday life, with his recent work moving towards a position that questions a dogmatic and unthinking criticism and analogical negativity. He rightly suggests that theme parks and themed spaces are often 'highly gregarious sites of popular culture' (Lukas 2007: 184).

This simple phenomenological reversal of theme park equals bad to theme park equals good, therefore living museum (as theme park) now equals good, does not get us all the way out of the argumentative morass of the heritage debate. However, it is worth pausing for a moment to look at an example of the positive literature on the living museum which potentially spans across to Lukas' position. Williams-Davies specifically refers to a 'showman-style' mentality as one of the poles in the interpretation of the living museum, but concludes that:

Essentially open-air museums are about emotion; experience; empathy; narrative and memory. Critics accuse open-air museums of appealing to nostalgia. This is undoubtedly the case, but the view of the founding fathers was that nostalgia was a legitimate hook to use to draw people towards the higher things. (Williams-Davies 2009: 118)

The visit to the living museum as 'highly gregarious' or drawing on a mix of emotion and empathy in the service of nostalgia might be a pleasurable experience to the public, but to the heritage critic it is a denial of history and so a short-circuiting of potential awakening and radicalisation. The living museum, replaying the working-class life of past eras, does not portray the importance, suffering and (potential) power of the dominated, it is instead a themed excursion, in the form of an immersive environment or ride, that relegates everything to a mediated spectacle. That a living museum might potentially connote 'no fun' is obviously problematic to an included fairground.

Throughout this thesis I have used photography to document spaces and to singularise or compose certain practices, slight arrangements and instances. In parallel, I am going to start a review of the living museum debate with Paul Reas' photographic project *Flogging a Dead Horse: Heritage, Culture and its Role in Post-Industrial Britain* (1993) (figures 8.2a-c), indicating the delivery of a critical position. Reas uses a saturated C print to give a hyperreal effect that enhances the bold colour he seeks out, contradicting our acceptance of the past as dirty and



Figures 8.2a-c - Flogging a dead horse: heritage, culture and its role in post-industrial Britain by Paul Reas / copyright Paul Reas

monochromatic. He tends to skew the frame and shoot from a below or above the normal portrait position, inviting a modernistic interpretation that crosses over to the present era of the participative snapshot economy whilst creating unusually large expanses of upper legs, crotches and bottoms. Clearly Reas does not document the living museum itself attempting to represent the past, he documents the practices of those visitors from the modern age and fixes on their gaudy and logo-studded clothing that plays into his desire for saturated colour. More so, the people he captures are deeply engaged in theatrical renditions of making the living museum a spectacle – in effect they do the job for Reas and he cleverly gets two (closely

connected) concepts for the price of one.⁶ The accompanying text by Stuart Cosgrove consists of pithy and sarcastic soundbites such as ‘the colourful cholera of Newcastle’, ‘hyper-history of satisfying surfaces’ and ‘a processed history rather than a history of social process’.⁷ Ironically, these chiasmic witticisms reduce critique down to a packaged spectacle that Cosgrove accuses the living museums of originally constructing.⁸

A more articulate critique of the living museum is given in Walsh (1992), though this comes down heavy on Beamish.⁹ Walsh identifies the ‘heritage boom’ (94) and draws a site-specific parallel to Disney as ‘devoid of conflict and anti-social behaviour, and existing within a calming rural landscape’ (97). This siting of Beamish in a rural enclave within the pock-marked and industrial North East causes a problem to numerous critics, though Walsh focuses upon fact that the elements of each Beamish townscape come from numerous North East destinations and that Beamish – as a reality in the past – never existed.¹⁰ Walsh then turns to the actual disorientation of the space as a museum regime overlaid upon a slice of the (imagined) everyday from the past. In much the same way that Robert Smithson deconstructed the signage at the Hayden Planetarium, Walsh notes the overlay between old signs (for the purpose of heritage) and new signs (for the purpose of demarcation, administration, flow), with examples of ‘no admittance’ falling in both camps. Old road signs with wrong directions and mileage are fussily critiqued with an aim to present Beamish as ‘located in a mythological map of the mind ... a form of hyperspace’ (104).

Walsh also appears critical of the convenient reliance upon nostalgia invoked through objects and quotes generic comments such as ‘that’s just like the iron we used to have’ and ‘that living room looks exactly the same as Grandma’s’, paralleling some of the comments I observed at Scarborough.¹¹ Whilst this connection through objects and nostalgia can be interpreted in a positive way (for example McIntosh and Prentice (1999) detail the specific nostalgia-evoking objects in BCLM),¹² Walsh feels that such an overabundance of objects and signs has a danger from passed down memories and a tendency to ‘misrepresent historical depth with historical surface’ (99).

⁶ Candlin (2012: 31) suggests that Reas is motivated by ‘effect rather than interest, curiosity, or empathy’.

⁷ The book is unpaginated so page references cannot be given.

⁸ Samuel (1994: 263-4) predictably sets *Flogging a Dead Horse* in his sights, describing it as ‘anti-heritage’s coming-of-age, a kind of *pot-pourri* of its clichés’. His critical comparison to Wegee and Diane Arbus, with northern ordinary people as ‘grotesques rather than midgets and freaks’, is worth emphasising, and Samuel provides a further useful iconographical deconstruction of the photographs – ‘stratagems to make its images repellent’ - to sit alongside my own work here. I also need to note that I included photographs of people taking photographs in chapter 6, but these were composed with epistemological intent rather than for dramatic effect.

⁹ Cross and Walton (2005: 216) bring Walsh to task with various errors on his assertion of Beamish having private funding and accuse him of denying Beamish a ‘vision of agency’.

¹⁰ The current museum booklet makes no attempt to hide this fact, listing provenance of all buildings.

¹¹ Walsh doesn’t actually pin his comments to any ethnographic system of observing Beamish and they may be just generic examples to make a point.

¹² ‘Tin baths, clothes mangles, furniture, the open fires, ornaments, old-fashioned sweets and certain tools and industrial equipment’ (McIntosh and Prentice 1999: 603), suggesting that the seemingly haphazard displays at Scarborough were the perfect combination. Candlin (2016: 125) suggests that the provoking of memories through everyday objects amidst the micromuseums under study provides a ‘point of orientation within the packed displays’.

Bennett (1995) builds upon, and intensifies, Walsh's work. Writing on a trajectory of exhibitory cultures and institutions, he initially brings in the living museum as a potentially positive venture:

A flurry of new museum initiatives – folk museums, open-air museums, living history farms – orientated towards the collection, preservation and display of artefacts relating to the daily lives, customs and traditions of non-elite social strata. (Bennett 1995: 109)

As with Walsh, and in the style of Smithson, Bennett becomes a punter at Beamish and deconstructs his experience, setting the tone with identifying the voiceover from the introductory slideshow as speaking in a 'Home Counties BBC voice' that connotes a (class) dominant relationship. This sets out what Bennett identifies as a 'pattern to the exclusions which suggests that the museum embodies, indeed is committed to, an institutionalised mode of amnesia' (111-2). Thus, there is (to him, at that time) an absence of trade unionism, women's suffrage, feminism and class politics in general. He brings this point to bear with a summary of the Co-operative shop as consisting of:

Old pricing systems, serving technologies (bacon slicers) and advertisements (Frys). No mention is made of the history of the co-operative movement, its aims and principles, or its relations to other socialist organisations. (Bennett 1995: 112)

Once again, surface overwhelms depth, and portrayal is subsumed by sentimentalisation, such that your visit is 'a bit like spending a day as an extra in an episode of *When the Boat Comes In*' (118). Bennett concludes with a rather condescending suggestion that 'an afternoon at Beamish can be most instructive provided that it is looked to less as providing a lesson in industrial or regional history and more as a crash course in the myths of history' (127). Not only does Bennett deny the possibility of a gregarious counter-experience, he also assumes that the public are incapable of developing a counter-reading either along the lines of his own leftist framework or another framework he does not consider. In the same way that Reas' photographs perform to structure a very particular reading of the public in Beamish, Bennett also asserts a restrictive capacity on the visitor to do anything other than fall for bourgeois propaganda.¹³

As a contradistinction to the critical reading, Hall (2006) revisits Beamish and is in turn critical of Bennett's reading, taking to task both the 1995 work and Bennett's newer development of the Foucauldian exhibitionary complex. Hall moves from the exhibitionary to the experience economy, starting with the privileging of the individual and their ability to be who they want to be within the 'experiential complex' (81). He suggests that Bennett's visitor characterisation is:

Too easy, suggesting a simple false consciousness that is incongruent with the active participation of the museum's visitors in ceremonies of heritage and the energetic reinvention of century-old sports, crafts and pastimes (Hall 2006: 82)

He concludes that 'heritage is not history, and doesn't pretend to be', and this links across to contributions to the debate from outside the heritage discipline, from discourses such as

¹³ Bennett and others draw on West (1985) as an original 'year zero' critical work that tours a living museum with an aim to 'knock a hole in the benign image of museum practice' and 'examine the museum for its biases and absences'.

tourism studies.¹⁴ In this regard, McIntosh and Prentice (1999: 591) happily use the term 'period theme parks' to describe living museums, suggesting with Hall that the consumer has a key role in the production of their experience through imagination, emotion and insightfulness (607). A similar view is echoed by Ramshaw (2010: 48) who suggests that audiences translate and not gaze. Sorenson also suggests that this linkage between theme parks and heritage can be read in a positive sense, with the visitor having:

An urgent wish to achieve an immediate confrontation within a moment of time, a re-entry into a vanished circumstance when, for a brief moment, the in-the-round, 'real', physical, audible and smellable realities of a distant 'then' become a present and convincing 'now'. (Sorensen 1989: 61)

This more nuanced and complex rendering of the visitor, responding to objects and themed settings, clears the way for my own site visits and a focusing on the heritage fairground as a carefully constructed facet within this experiential complex.

Site visits

Aside from a brief reference in Johnson and Thomas (1990: 2), the fairground is strangely absent in all critical and analytical literature on the principal living museums of Beamish, BCLM and Blists Hill, so my study here of the fairground emerges within the wider environment of the site. By presenting the above overview and critical commentary of the heritage debate focusing on the living museum I have indicated the complexity of this whole, and the subsequent report of my site visits dwells briefly upon impressions and observations gained of the site as a potential super-object that exceeds the fairground. This approach varies from my analysis of the steam rally and my justification for the detailed report of the wider super-object of the steam rally (objects, arrangements, re-enactments) is that this is a more complex space of differing heritage time zones and functions. The living museum as a complex whole is more homogenous, with the fairground simply an equivocal aspect of that whole; as I stated in the opening of this chapter, the fairground may function simply as a piece of scenery to allow the whole to function as an effective illusion.

To gain authenticity, the living museum must be built upon a 'real' site which involves at the outset a working-class and (post) industrial region and then possibly an actual (ex) functional tract of land within that region. Both BCLM and Beamish are positioned in working-class industrial areas that have a different function to the seaside locations of the museums studied in chapter 5, the rural idyll of the rally, or the village green 'Englishness' of Carters. There is some difference in the settings for BCLM and Beamish so my report opens with two parallel strands before merging into a single strand to cover the interior content. I also draw on Moore (1997: 138), who develops a matrix system of classification with an x-axis denoting power of real objects and a y-axis denoting power of real place, and places Beamish with maximum collection strength (x-axis) and 'local/regional context' place strength (y-axis).¹⁵ Moore goes on to suggest that Beamish has a 'double power of the real' (141) and that this allows the museum to rise above the criticism that I discussed above. Moore's argument and choice of

¹⁴ Candlin (2012: 35) adds caution by suggesting that Hall positions Beamish as sentimental. This presumably acts as a kind of a priori to any diverse readability of Beamish.

¹⁵ The grid only contains Beamish and Old Sturbridge (United States) as example living museums, bringing in a variety of other types of heritage attractions.

Beamish as an exemplar of the living museum, however, is tenuous and fallible, with his suggesting that ‘the buildings are no longer in their original place, but by the placing of the buildings together, a sense of real place is again reconstructed’ leading him in to inevitable critical engagement such as identified by Walsh above. This needs some careful unpacking so as not to subsume all living museums in the slight critical blind spot that Beamish can be said to occupy.

Firstly, I deal with BCLM as what we might call doubly authentic due to its situating on a 26-acre site in Dudley developed from a working area of railway goods yards, a small coal pit and lime kilns. The date of opening seems to vary in articles and web resources between 1975 and some time in the 1980s.¹⁶ The region of the Black Country consists of areas of once heavy industry and an associated poverty of both population and environment as this industry goes into rapid decline. The journey to the BCLM on the local railway line between Birmingham and Wolverhampton offers an unsettling version of the industrial picturesque as it trails the Birmingham Canal. On alighting at Tipton station, a typically spartan and functional commuter station offering Perspex shelter and plastic seating,¹⁷ the museum is a short walk up the High Street and you cross over various junctions of the Dudley canals, one of which passes through the museum and forms an in-situ attraction. Whilst canal boat holidays are a popular pastime with the middle class, with regions like Birmingham famous for their intricate network of waterways, it is a case of a world of passing through in a particular mode. The external world beyond the towpath is generally disengaged as canals pass through blighted townscapes and rubbish-strewn council estates. There is a topological dichotomy – an inside and an outside – between the romantic enclave of being on the boat on the water and the external view from the town or the estate looking on to the narrow canal with a crust of scum and debris.¹⁸ As Kaufmann (2006: 54) records, the radical theorist Guy Debord was drawn to moving water and boats as a reminder of time passing, and we can extend this here to a static position on the canal bank as spending time watching time pass (chronos) and to actually being on the boat and moving with time, in the moment (kairos).

Walking through Tipton from the railway station to the BCLM does not give the feeling of a tourist destination, it is suitably post-industrial with cheap pubs, greasy cafes and signs of the down-at-heel shops offering services like vaping paraphernalia and pay-day loans, the stark vernacular of the downtrodden. The museum is reached after a short walk along an arterial road, the site enclosed by a large modern brick wall. Opposite to the museum is a housing project – Butler’s Crescent – which is reclaiming heritage buildings from the industrial landscape for new housing projects.¹⁹ In this regard the working-class nature of the site of the

¹⁶ Benson (2001: 244) suggests 1975, Johnson and Thomas (1992: 130) suggests 1979, whilst the website history page <http://www.bclm.co.uk/about/the-museums-story/1.htm> (accessed 5 May 2017) seems to obscure an actual date of opening and states they have been open 34 years (though fails to date this statement which was clearly written some years ago).

¹⁷ Such unwelcoming transport architecture will form the raw material of future living museums, though nostalgia may well serve to re-render the aesthetic in the same way that the leather seats of the old Daimler buses in BCLM brings such joy to the visitors.

¹⁸ The photo-realist paintings of David Rayson are fantastic examples, particularly his lugubrious paintings of the canal near Wednesfield.

¹⁹ See <http://www.butlerscrescent.co.uk/about/> (accessed 5 May 2017) and note the very selective text selling the region of Dudley.

BCLM is genuine on all levels, even to Gramscian academics like Tony Bennett should they chose to use public transport on their critical excursions to the museum.

In what at first appears to be a parallel double authenticity, Beamish occupies a substantial 300-acre site in the grounds of Beamish Hall, near to the town of Stanley in County Durham. However, whilst this is clearly an important region for industrial development with a strong working-class history, the utilisation of Beamish Hall and its history as an aristocratic seat (with rich merchants later involved) has proven good ammunition for academics such as Walsh critiquing the theme park nature of Beamish.²⁰ County Durham can be considered as a striated terrain of markedly different social class functions; an overwhelming working-class terrain of mines, factories and housing estates with enclaves of wealth, privilege and power. As I show above, Moore mistakes the apparent working class whole of the region to suggest that Beamish is a site that smoothly resonates with the region such that working-class vernacular brought in from nearby towns makes a smooth transition and achieves its 'double power of the real'. Moving further from the notion of the striated terrain, and evoking another Deleuzian concept, Beamish can be considered as a socio-geographical topological fold, an outside within the inside.²¹ It is thus also possible to go further, and to conceptualise Beamish using the site and non-site ideas of Robert Smithson; there are overlapping irruptions of elsewhere as buildings are translocated to make a whole that was an opposite something else before the buildings arrived (as opposed to BCLM which was built to represent an idea of what it formerly was).

My journey to Beamish took place on a bright autumn day in 2016, involving a train ride into Newcastle-upon-Tyne followed by a local bus trip to the site which lies about 10 miles south-west of Gateshead. The region sits in the teeth of sharp winds which add a character when seen from the bus in the bright sunshine.²² Small villages form the region with huddled terraces etched by the wind. In addition, tourism has focused on this previously ignored region with the installation of Anthony Gormley's *Angel of the North* (1998) which overlooks the A1 and A167 junction close to Birtley. The journey outwards between the statue and Beamish is characterised by a more romanticised working-class vernacular such as well-kept allotments and frequent functionally-built care homes. As Beamish is approached the brown road signs with a coal-wagon emblem start to proliferate.

Whilst there are nuanced differences between the working-class approach of both sites, and the authentic nature (or otherwise) of the site itself, on arrival at the perimeter there is a definite parity of appearance and experience. From this point on my report works through both sites in parallel using general observations. The visitor is greeted with an initial industrial structure as Duchampian readymade, serving as a monolith in the same way as the steam engines at Thursford. BCLM has a large engine structure mounted outside the entrance (figure 8.3a) whilst Beamish has a double effect with a mounted coal wagon (figure 8.3b) and a drive-under the monumental steam hammer 'Tiny Tim' (figure 8.4a) which bears an aesthetic and

²⁰ See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beamish_Hall (accessed 5 May 2017) for a history of the hall. Beamish Museum opened briefly in the hall but then focused on the grounds as it moved towards its open-air ambitions.

²¹ See Sebregondi (2014) for a worked example of an urban fold.

²² The wind across Beamish itself is ferocious – all staff I spoke to commented on this.



Figures 8.3a-b – Entrance readymades at BCLM and Beamish, photographs Ian Trowell

topological pairing with the aforementioned Angel of the North (figure 8.4b).²³ These entrance-situated monoliths serve an important function in the themed space to be encountered, as identified by Klein (2004: 12) who discusses the threshold of the scripted space: ‘Of course, to get started, the traveller must pass through an ornamented entrance. That was the ritual of scripted environments’.



Figures 8.4a-b – Comparing Tiny Tim and Angel of the North, photographs Wikipedia / public domain images

Both sites consist of small village or industrial structures corresponding to time zones from the past, and this deliberation in what period to represent, or whether it is possible to represent different periods in a single museum, has formed much debate and continues to inform future planning of both museums. The period-specific sub-sites are linked by various transport options that network and circle the entire site, though the visitor experiences anachronistic interludes as a certain period mode of transport passes through a different time period. Such anachronistic slippages are not problematic, but evidences of the modern are avoided. For example, at the time of my visit to Beamish the preparations were in place for Christmas (figure 8.5), and the ‘everyday being the same day’ effect was evident with an artificial dusting

²³ Gormley links the work to industry through site (built upon the destroyed remains of a redundant pit) and through statement (‘the angel resists our post-industrial amnesia’), without calling upon a potential connection to Walter Benjamin’s fascination with Klee’s *Angelus Novus*. See <http://www.anthonygormley.com> (accessed 5 May 2017).

of snow applied, however the erection of Christmas tree with a modern hi-ab (figure 8.6) was a clear breach in illusion. On photographing the procedure, a staff member in World War One costume hurriedly cycled up to me and profusely apologised for the use of modern equipment.²⁴

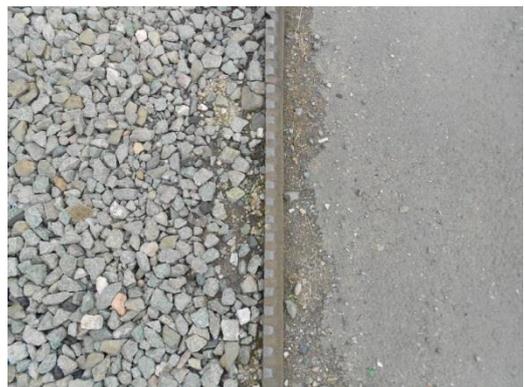


Figure 8.5 – Fake snow at Beamish, photograph Ian Trowell

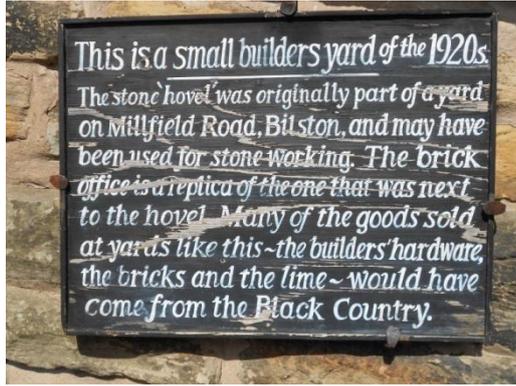


Figure 8.6 – Hi-ab at Beamish, photograph Ian Trowell

²⁴ The hi-ab horror is also discussed chapter 5.



Figures 8.7a-h – ground surfaces, photographs Ian Trowell



Figures 8.8a-h – vertical surfaces, photographs Ian Trowell

The emphasis on surface is strong, though I do not wish to use this as a justification of the hyperreal critique applied in my earlier review of the heritage debate. Strong and redolent surfaces from the past form an important part of authenticity in the service of stimulating recollection and affect, they are central to the experience of the living museum. This comes across on ground surfaces (figures 8.7a-h) and vertical surfaces (figures 8.8a-h). The use of bricks as a background in early photography, particularly the philanthropic awareness-raising photography of the Victorian era, strongly connoted the life in the slums as much as the fabric of the factory or workhouse, as shown in figures 8.9a-b.



Figures 8.9a-b – John Thomson ‘The Crawlers’ c1877 and Thomas Annan ‘Old Closes and Streets of Glasgow’ 1868
source National library of Scotland / public domain images

On top of these surfaces emotive objects are placed everywhere such that the heritage sign has a popular appeal in both the arrangement of the sign itself and the product it evokes (figures 8.10a-f). Whereas Bennett previously dismissed the signs as evidence of surface overriding meaning, other writers are more prepared to accept the lingering power that these signs and packaging of products exert over us, for example Elsner and Cardinal (1994: 38) signal their importance when interviewing collector Robert Opie and talk about the ‘archaeology of the everyday around us’. The rescued and revived product sign, weathered and sculpted with a degree of patina, works as a kind of reverse step to the embedded signifier-signified-sign structure proposed by Roland Barthes, who suggests the words themselves and their presentation require meaning (*langue*), and then the use of the meaningful words creates a specific context (*parole*). With the heritage sign BOTH the graphic arrangement of letters into meaningful words and the product associated with that word provoke nostalgia in a twin assault (enhanced by the patina and rust). The final surface I consider are the heaps of coal that are prevalent throughout the living museum, previously seen strewn across the steam rally field, in the living museum coal becomes an object-as-surface that links the domestic space to the work space and plays upon our nostalgia for a time when coal and its associated necessitation of cleaning routines were a major part of our lives (figures 8.11a-d).



Figures 7-10a-f – heritage product signage, photographs Ian Trowell



Figures 8.11a-d – heaped coal, photographs Ian Trowell

The fairgrounds

Both sites have a dedicated space for their fairground which sits in or around the reconstructed dwellings and amenities, recalling a visit from a travelling fairground that would have to utilise any available space. The intended reality of the wider environment has a clear effect here, with Beamish giving the feel of a country fair set in a meadow (figure 8.12a) whilst the BCLM is a genuine fairground shoe-horned into a small space within the urban nexus (figure 8.12b). Both sites have a potash base, a tactile covering that would be impractical in the interior spaces examined in chapter 5, however this does provide a vivid link back to the travelling fairgrounds of old that would seek out a living on rough patches of ground in and around the town centre, often utilising temporary spaces between the demolition of a building and the construction of something new. The grubby realism of the BCLM fairground extends further with puddles evident on my visit giving the feeling of a ground that has been hurriedly levelled for the hosting of a fairground – there is evidence of emergency measures taken against large puddles and ad-hoc blocking to keep attraction on an even footing (figures 8.13a-b).

There is a worked and possibly tired feel to the fairground at the BCLM, with side-stalls evoking a provenance of heavy engagement and battling against the elements. Targets for the throwing stall consist of battered golden syrup cans, a detail that provides a subtle but powerful link back to the fairground of the past, combining a deeper set passion for old household provisions and their specific packaging (see Ashley 2006: 18 for a typical eulogy to the golden syrup can). Similarly, the coconut shy is set out with old-fashioned targets, dirty tarpaulin sheets and chromed coconut holders (figures 8.14a-b). Further attention to detail at BCLM is applied through local resonance, the toy bus on the juvenile ride having a destination of Dudley, whilst the front scene of the Ark Speedway (painted by a local artist) has a BSA motorbike clearly in view (figures 8.15a-b). During my visit the whole site was sparsely populated with visitors, and the fairground felt like a genuine fairground during a lull in business, as opposed to something that demanded a constant level of vibrant engagement such as the interior space at Folly Farm. There is a monotonous cranking refrain from the cams and gears of the Cakewalk which operates continuously and forms an industrial mechanical curiosity in its own right, only going silent when the fairground closes. The absence of any other sound (no music, raised voices, generators) gives a strange authenticity that I didn't feel at any other sites. This is ironic in some regards, as the fairground exists to make a living for the Jones family who operate the concessions, and there is a tension between being a genuine fairground that (at times) fades into the authenticity of the scenery, and a fairground that is a real attraction as part of a wider visitor space. This is a Brechtian tension; the fairground can be viewed as something behind the scenes (or the 'fourth wall') and seen as simply idling away or busy, or the fourth wall can be transgressed as the observer becomes part of the acting and scenery and is then both engaged with the heritage attraction and also forming part of the heritage attraction for other visitors to observe. In her study of the participative imperative in the film *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*, Dika (2003: 105) suggests that the fourth wall is not broken but extended to include those in the audience who chose to participate and so be viewed by those who are reluctant to participate.



Figures 8.12a-b – settings for Beamish and BCLM fairgrounds, photographs Ian Trowell



Figures 8.13a-b – uneven and puddled ground at BCLM fairground, photographs Ian Trowell



Figures 8.14a-b – Throwing games at BCLM fairground, photographs Ian Trowell



Figures 8.15a-b – Local knowledge detail at BCLM fairground, photographs Ian Trowell

Ned Williams offers a reverse reading of the fairground at the BCLM as part of the scenery, arguing instead that it is perceived as a possible 'modern' adjunct in that the idea to situate a fair does not chime with the past:

Sometimes visitors fail to appreciate the historical interest of the fair within the museum - almost treating it as if it was just an 'amusement corner' rather than realising that the fairground is as much a part of Black Country life as rolling mills, trams and pit banks ... the fair probably needs a little more "interpretation" to visitors to earn the appreciation it deserves. (Williams 1994: 50)

This consideration of the fairground as something to experience as part of a more holistic totality of authentic heritage has further implications regarding the Jones family as split between people making a living looking for the elusive secondary spend and people putting themselves on display. There is a certain irony in this latter category, as Victorian fairground shows included a vibrant current of colonial ethnographic exhibitions involving exotic savages made to perform a number of stereotypical routines such as fierce tribal dances and taboo eating rituals (live rodents as part of 'Zulu caffre').²⁵ In effect, the Jones family are exhibiting themselves as showpeople from the past, hoping that the authenticity of their act draws on a secondary spend and so places them as showpeople of the present.

The BCLM fairground is the only heritage fairground or event in this study that does not contain a set of Gallopers, a fairground ride that I have already identified as steeped in nostalgic triggers. If the Gallopers can be considered as reflecting rural desires, then their absence and replacement with a Motorcycle Speedway (as at the BCLM) lends some authenticity to an actual 1930s fairground set out to eek a living on a realistic patch of urban *terrain vague*. The site of the fairground at Beamish is the opposite, set out away from the rebuilt town in a meadow, in many ways falling in to the privileged site the 'real' Beamish held before its conversion to a living museum. In consideration with this, Beamish's fairground is essentially based around a vintage set of Gallopers flanked by stalls and games. As figures 8.16a-b show, the site conveys a sense of the rural travelling fairground.

The Gallopers at Beamish are an important acquisition. Purchased in 2009 as the museum set out to remove a previous franchise involving a local show family George Newsome operating Gallopers and Chairoplanes, they are now a figurehead part of the museum. The machine itself is an important 1893 set of Gallopers built for Beach family and it remained in a single family until its sale to Beamish.²⁶ With this in mind the museum is maximising the historical impact of this machine and have produced a 'fairground manual for demonstrators', allowing staff to gain knowledge of the ride and fall in to appropriate character when presenting the ride (see figure 8.17).²⁷ During my observation of the ride a staff member commenced telling various

²⁵ The tradition of ethnographic shows is also central to early exposition history, see Geppert (2010: 47) for vivid examples.

²⁶ Scrivens et al (2013) documents the history of all surviving Gallopers sets with Newsome's Gallopers featured on page 155 and the ex-Beach and current Beamish Gallopers on page 3.

²⁷ The manual is not for public use, and was kindly given to me by education officer Simon Woolley as part of my visit to the site in November 2016. It consists of a general history of famous fairs, fairground rides, associated technologies of transport and living, a detailed history of the working and evolution of the Gallopers ride, and a detailed history of the actual Beach's Gallopers. Much of the information was taken from the NFA website's historical resources.



Figures 8.16a-b – Gallopers and Swings at Beamish fairground, photographs Ian Trowell



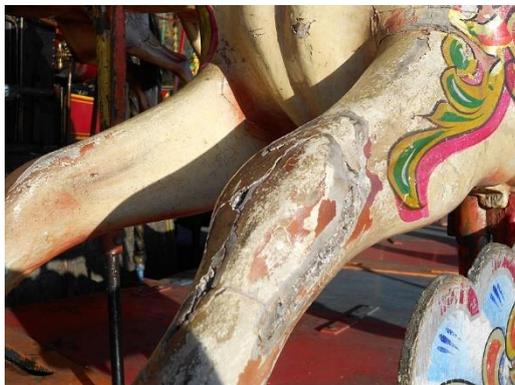
Figure 8.17 – In character at Beamish, photograph Ian Trowell

tales common to the fairground, such as talking about the hessian hoods that each horse has so as not to be disturbed when in transit.

The ride is slowly being restored to its original condition and mechanical specification, being brought back to steam and having the organ repaired such that when operated at full volume it reverberates across the entire site. The Gallopers have quickly become a showpiece for the museum, and feature in various campaigns such as advertising on local buses (see figure 8.18). Authenticity is thus paramount, and figures 8.19a-d show details of this being brought to the fore, with examples of an exposed and polished centre engine with visible Savages nameplate, the constant ritual of cleaning the brass work, the patina of the painted wood in the main construction of the horse mounts, and added detail with authentic horsehair tails. The final two images show examples where authenticity comes unstuck, with figure 8.20 showing modern light caps in the main structure of the ride (authenticity missed) and figure 8.21 showing the construction of packing crates as visible props stencilled with the Beach family name (fake authenticity). This latter object slips into the dreaded square of 'no real things' in Moore's matrix of heritage power, sharing space with the reimagined Tutankhamun's Tomb at Luxor.



Figure 8.18 – Gallopers on bus advertising for Beamish, photograph Ian Trowell



Figures 8.19a-d – Gallopers detail at Beamish, photographs Ian Trowell



Figure 8.20 – Modern light caps on Gallopers at Beamish, photograph Ian Trowell



Figure 8.21 – Props on Gallopers at Beamish, photograph Ian Trowell

Audience and feedback

Feedback from TripAdvisor is prolific for both BCLM and Beamish, with over 3,000 records for the former and over 5,000 for the latter.²⁸ As can be expected, the reviews focus upon the whole experience and tend to draw out significant affects; frequent references are made to the taste and smell of food and real ale served within the museums (with 'beef dripping' having a high ranking in the tag cloud), and the onset of period television dramas also features highly (the BBC drama *Peaky Blinders* is used as part of the advertising for the BCLM). Here we see a parallel with the steam rally exhibiting vehicles from period dramas such as *Heartbeat*, as nostalgia as once experienced and remediated nostalgia as experienced as a more recent direct action of watching television starts to overlap. The BCLM has 60 references to fairground and 113 references to funfair, though these references are predominantly in passing, as the reviewer attempts to sum up the entirety of their day in the form of a list. There are two interesting comments relating to the tired nature of the fairground, and both reviewers ponder whether this is actually part of the scenery, invoking the dilemma that I have drawn out earlier in this chapter:

The ground is very rough, authentically so? and my eldest skidded and fell and has some nasty grazes on his arms and legs

The fair ground is tired but then it is as it used to be in the olden days

There are two critical observations about staff, though here we do not know whether the reviewer feels that the authenticity of the whole is broken, or whether the lugubrious nature of the staff is part of an authentic 1930s fairground that struggles for business on a piece of rough ground:

although the people at the fair ground neither looked the part nor acted it, they all looked bored

except at the fair, the staff there did not look happy at being in work

References to the historical nature of the fairground objects are minimal, suggesting that there is not a public that comes here to specifically seek out, appreciate or interpret such restorations:

There is also a fun fair with original pieces from several decades ago, all restored and fully functional

Finally, there is a single reference to the evocative sound of the fairground, written by a reviewer who surveys the whole scene on entering the museum:

You enter into the outdoor museum and have a view of victorian landscape, tram lines, allotments, coal mines, horses & a distant sound of a fun fair.

Feedback for the fairground at Beamish is more hidden, with the 30 references to fairground and 46 references to funfair all making general comments that do not go beyond simple acknowledgment of the fairground. This possibly reflects upon the larger range of attractions at Beamish and the relatively smaller size of the fairground and its annexing out in a field, however a more granular search strategy reveals 98 references to Carousel and 13 references

²⁸ Trip Advisor sites accessed 10 April 2017 with 3,359 reviews for BCLM and 5,024 reviews for Beamish.

to Gallopers. This predominant use of the non-English terminology is intriguing, though might reflect the promotional wording used by Beamish.²⁹ There is a united theme of praising the steam-driven nature of the Gallopers (Carousel), and several direct references to personal nostalgia such as:

I had a ride on a galloper, which brought back memories of my childhood as did the lovely ice cream

Elsewhere there are comments about the effectiveness of the presentation, with visitors commenting on the performance of the staff and the fabric of the ride:

My personal favourite the steam powered gallopers. What makes this experience stand out are the staff - all in the appropriate period costume, happy, helpful and very knowledgeable and enthusiastic about the exhibits and lifestyle being represented.

All the workers are dressed in authentic costume and work using Victorian methods. Fascinating for young adults and children; you can see it as it was and experience the era.

The old horses having seen better days.

Clearly the whole 'package' is cherished, with the small details making up the wider experience, and here there is an expectation on the staff being happy. This happiness can be read as both outside the diegetic framework (staff happy to be re-enacting heritage) and within the diegetic framework (staff re-enacting happy fair operators). This expectation of diegetic happiness flows from the classic nature of the Gallopers and the rural setting within Beamish, contrasting to the more industrial setting and choice of equipment at BCLM.

Conclusion

Though the fairground is only a single part in the larger complex of the living museum, this chapter is justified on the following principal reasons: firstly, that the fairground has been overlooked in previous studies of the living museum; secondly, that an important debate on heritage has been played out on the terrain of the living museum (and arguably made the living museum something akin to a toxic wasteland for critical heritage engagement); thirdly, that the engagement of the fairground within the concerted heritage whole of the living museum offers useful insights into how the public engage and interpret the living museum (and so allows debate to move beyond the sclerotic constraints and conclusions of the aforementioned heritage debate).

In this chapter I offer new ways of reading the living museum through spatial analysis (miniaturisation, flow and movement, readability) bringing in work from other disciplines. The use of space interacts with the staging of time, and time is encountered synchronously in multiple ways as time passes in the here and now as the visit unfolds and time (past) is

²⁹ Carousel is an American term and was never used on British fairgrounds, though it has crept into use. Regionalisation of terminology used to be common, and Gallopers were known as Jumpers in the north of England and Scotland. Though returning an initially encouraging 46 results for Beamish, most these relate to complaints about queue jumping. The other ride at Beamish is a small set of swing boats, and these tend to retain their colloquial nomenclature as 'shuggies' in the north-west, north-east and Scotland. It is not known where this term derives from.

'entered into' through the various zones set out in the living museum. I consider the fairground with a further folding in of time, in that the fairground is not only from a time past but is also at a (repeating) point of its own time as the rhythm of the fairground. This complex overlay of space and different times forms a further discussion in chapter 10.

In sketching out the key works and positions of the protagonists in the heritage debate I identify how this debate quickly descends into polarised positions where the living museum is used to buttress a particular point of view. This is not helpful, and a corollary of this is to introduce a very one-sided discussion about the theme park, which I also redress in this chapter. I further argue that the body of heritage critique literature develops an argument that assumes people have an inability to adopt critical readings, or mixed readings, of their heritage encounters in the living museum. Using the work of a photographic project I expose such an argument, and offer an alternative viewpoint.

The use (and abuse) of site, particularly with Beamish, has been another key political tool in the heritage debate, with accusations of muddled and masked origin stories of how the space and objects came to be, reminiscent of Carters carefully presented back-story in the previous chapter. I revisit this argument, taking a wider view through my own phenomenological experience of approach to the site through the situatedness within the region, finally zooming in to the site itself to offer the ideas of Deleuzian folds and the sites and non-sites of artist Robert Smithson. Within the living museum, much of the heritage debate suggests the aesthetically battered signage of old products are an example of cheap and obvious devices to operationalise nostalgia, and I offer a more evolved consideration using highly connotative historical photography of surfaces and ideas from semiotics.

The fairground in the living museum is part of a family of attractions that are encouraged to be engaged with rather than simply encountered and observed. This creates an initial dissonance as there is a historical tradition of fairgrounds being a kind of 'fun supplement' to separate events, and so the fairground in the living museum can be read as both part of the past (which is then engaged as if in the past) or part of the present (engaged as present day fun). Feedback from visitors underpins this dissonance with confusion over roles portrayed and performed by staff, and diegetic slippage between performing in the past or in the now. This encapsulates the difficult fun of the fairground as heritage.

Chapter 9 – Margate Dreamland

This chapter looks at the ongoing efforts to create a heritage amusement park in the footprint and structural shell of the original Margate Dreamland. There is a certain amount of tension in the inclusion of this chapter. On the one hand, Margate Dreamland was (and is planned to be) a real and fixed space (amusement park) within a real place (seaside town of Margate) and this is both a different type of fairground space to the travelling fairs covered in the thesis and is also reconstructed in its actual place/space, and on the other hand, Margate Dreamland is a high-profile project that is associated with heritage fairground rides and attractions. The high-profile scope of the project and its subsequent failure bring together important ideas on heritage, fun and authenticity that will inform the conclusion to this thesis. Furthermore, by carefully explicating the difference in Dreamland's space I can strengthen an understanding of the fairground space.

Though complex, this tension around the inclusion of Dreamland in the thesis needs to be approached through the super-object of the whole space and the first-order-objects of the things that fill the space. It is important to note that an amusement park type space is evoked on numerous occasions in the thesis, most notably at Folly Farm. This is a complex connotation that I return to in the conclusion when I look at 'real spaces', but the main difference between Folly Farm and Margate Dreamland is that Folly Farm exists as an imagined fixed space (based upon a multiple of evoked real spaces such as New Brighton Palace, Cleethorpes Wonderland) which is further concealed under an enclosed shell, whilst Margate Dreamland is an actual real space that existed (and is being rebuilt) as a large outdoor amusement park space. This functioning of places such as Folly Farm on the super-object level (a seemingly real indoor amusement park rather than a travelling fairground) has a mapping through to first-order-object level; that is, the fairground machines in situ. This mapping of first-order-objects between the travelling fairground and the static seaside amusement park is not isomorphic, but has a roughly approximate dynamic. An amusement park space will include larger attractions that are more 'rooted' into the concrete, and these will accrue mythic status amongst visitors (holiday-makers and day-trippers). The clearest example is the Scenic Railway at Dreamland, a structure that has attained listed status and is at the heart of the battle to restore Dreamland as both a viable economic concern and a serious heritage 'monument'. The remainder of the equipment in amusement parks will normally consist of travelling fairground rides that are often taken out of travelling life, making the crossover between the fairground and amusement park space more conceivable.¹

The engagement of the seaside as a place (and the amusement park as a space) has prompted debate, and there is a tendency (as with some writing on the fairground) to equate the seaside with a Bakhtinian excess of carnival and slippage into depravity. Webb (2005) challenges

¹ More prestigious parks will buy new travelling-type fairground rides, whilst other parks will pick off rides that are too tired or out of fashion to travel. Amusement parks such as Morecambe Winter Gardens (now closed) acquired names such as 'graveyard of machines'. The idea that a fairground ride can have a prolonged after-life in a seaside park is a myth based upon the apparent sedentary nature of the location. In reality, the exposure to saline-winds on the coast quickly strips a ride of its paintwork and eventually causes the ride to be scrapped.

Bennett (1995) with his analysis of Blackpool, arguing that the seaside crowd can be more ordered, policed and controlled than initially assumed by the researcher looking for evidence of anomic affront and affray. More recent work has turned to analyse the amusement park space through a varied lens with Wood (2017) editing a key collection (that I draw on below) and Kane (2013) offering a detailed argument that the amusement park functions as an excessive engagement of modernity under the guise of a mechanical and technological sublime.

I argue (Trowell 2017b: 69) that the seaside (and its amusement park) is engaged with a specific mindset of a day off, or a day away, suggesting that its possible Bakhtinian elements are carried out as a controlled experiment that falls between Webb's denial and Bennett's assertion of the subversive:

The visit to the seaside does not attempt to eradicate traces of everyday life; in some regards the reverse is true whereby it instead acknowledges that the drudgery of the everyday is always there and can at best be put to one side. It plays upon the encroaching return to normality with jokes and marketing phrases urging you to savour the moment and 'kiss-me-quick'. The tangible structure of what turns the seaside space into a place (for the day-tripper) is only appreciated in brief passing, and it is the nature of this brief passing that in turn creates the strangeness of the character of the seaside place.

This is a crucial factor when considering Dreamland. It differs from a heritage space that rekindles a travelling fairground on two levels; firstly, it is dealing with a real space, and secondly, that real space is a seaside amusement park space that is engaged differently to a travelling fairground.² This can be seen as an underlying theme in Lindsay Anderson's classic short film *O Dreamland* (1953), an anxious and ambiguous montage of moments from the park as it is descended upon by the bank holiday crowd. Anderson sources diegetic sounds but transposes and loops them to create a dystopic aura that starkly exposes and dismantles the idea of stepping away for a day of fun. Whilst interwoven shots dwell upon the 'kiss-me-quick' nature of engagement, an extended section at the start of the film lingers on crowds watching a gruesome animatronic show of historic torture overdubbed with the relentless sound of the tape-recorded frenzy of the laughing clown. As the film gathers momentum another sound is looped in, the endless mantra of the bingo-caller, a human-voice-machine reading a string of numbers that mark off the transitory nature of both the film and the actual day of the visit.

Margate and Dreamland as interlinked volatile concepts

Margate is an archetypal seaside resort that amplifies concerns, fears and wavering fortunes of the British seaside and its engagement by a principally working-class audience. As Aitch comments in his 2013 historical overview at the point of the regeneration of the resort,³ Margate suffered in the 1980s as people started to take advantage of cheaper package holidays to warmer Mediterranean resorts, with the left behind seaside places becoming 'dole-on-sea' haunts encouraging 'slumlords' to convert guest-houses into multiple occupation

² Chapman and Light (2017: 185) illustrate an example where the cultures of engagement overlap, as Southport's amusement park struggles to overcome being referred to as 'the fair' due to constant unruly behaviour.

³ See <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/this-britain/welcome-to-margate-cultural-commentator-iaian-aitch-reflects-on-his-hometowns-regeneration-8779092.html> (accessed 4 June 2017).

dwelling for people on welfare benefits. This dovetailed with an incoming move of London overspill working class who were looking to live the dream of having everyday a holiday, such that Aitch wryly observes that Margate was always 'more south-London-on-sea than Southwold'.⁴ This creates a spiral of decline, as the falling attractiveness of the place discourages tourism, leading to events that further entrench the blighted character of the place. The influx of London working class was followed by a large influx of refugees, with Margate being a town close to the sea-crossing ports and a (then) decaying infrastructure of large guest-houses given over to poorly maintained rented housing. From an amusement park point of view, this demographic shift nullified commercial viability and created an exodus of operators leaving either unoccupied spaces or dwindling attractions in uncared for environments.⁵

An opposite movement was instigated as Margate grew as an art-space, inspired by the rise of Tracey Emin who pioneered a successful art career that constantly harked back to her traumatic upbringing and brutal experiences entrenched in the decaying structure of Margate during the 1980s. Her neo-conceptualist assault on the artworld inevitably drew curiosity back to Margate, and the building of the Turner Contemporary Art Gallery in 2011, with its high-end architectural value assured by Sir David Chipperfield, meant that the resort suddenly attained arty and hipster credence.⁶ In addition, Margate's 1960s past as a subcultural explosive hub, whereby strategic seaside spots were chosen to enact pitched battles between subcultural tribes (as documented in Cohen's 1987 work *Folk Devils & Moral Panics*), meant that Margate kept some cultural coinage as the revivalist mode of subcultural engagement (alongside the subcultural concept as a curiosity in itself) flourished in the new millennium.⁷ This heady mixture of cutting-edge art and subcultural frisson drew in a new crowd from London, as the resort acquired a nickname of Shoreditch-on-sea.

It is within this complex and somewhat unique mix of pasts, presents and futures that the revival of Dreamland was proposed. Importantly, as figures 9.1 and 9.2 show, the fairground theme, subcultural theme, and the fashion for retro,⁸ all combined into a homogenous mix, making the understanding and mapping of the revival of Dreamland within Margate as a 'pure' strand a challenging task. However, a line of ascent, descent and proposed re-emergence of Dreamland can be mapped as a starting point.

⁴ Recent fears have been the rise of the local dialect – Estuary English – displacing Received Pronunciation as the official English dialect.

⁵ Wood (2017: 12) offers a list of seaside amusement parks that 'vanished' in the 1980s.

⁶ The gallery would become part of the Tate Plus network shortly after its opening. Seaside art initiatives nearby include the 2005 restored De La Warr Pavilion and the Folkestone Triennial (Whybrow 2016).

⁷ Aitch, a subcultural activist and researcher, curated a themed exhibition at the Turner Contemporary as part of a 2011 residency in Margate.

⁸ Guffey (2006) works on the concept of retro and acknowledges that slippage of meaning occurs between retro, vintage, heritage and nostalgic as adjectives used with cultural goods or experiences. Retro is set out as being the classic and iconic status of old-fashioned and attached predominantly with a period style of immediate post-war (9). Importantly, it is distinguished from nostalgic exile and longing by its ability to 'temper these associations with a heavy dose of cynicism or detachment', having an 'ironic stance' (20). The retro defined via ephemeral qualifiers of irony and detachment thus forms part of the tenuous hipster economy.



Figure 9.1 – Mod scooters in bank holiday rally, Margate, 2017, photograph Ian Trowell



Figure 9.2 – Retro shop with fairground objects, Margate, 2017, photograph Ian Trowell

Evans (2003) outlines and celebrates the ascent of Dreamland into a burgeoning and modern amusement park, documenting the coming and going of large attractions up until 1995 and the final year of ownership under the Bembom Brothers (who had taken over running of the park in 1981), and then sketching out the start of the decline under the ownership of Jimmy Godden. The viability of the park then became split between the owners of the land, the leaseholder of the park and certain tenants, as a presence of fairground attractions remained between 2003-6. After this point there is a complex sequence of changing owners, threats of redevelopment and compulsory purchases, with an activist strand of interested outsiders forming as Save Dreamland in 2003 (campaign centred) and upgrading to Trust status in 2007. At this point a heritage park is proposed, with a plan to buy (rescue) various key seaside amusement rides (larger structures and novelties rather than travelling fairground-type rides) and operate these in the real space of Dreamland as it becomes an amusement park with a kind of theme that telescopes itself into the past. A key point in the development and discussion was the Grade II public listing of the Scenic Railway in 2002 and its upgrading to II* (even though it suffered a fire in 2008), an action that coincided with English Heritage (now Historic England) turning attention to amusement parks and fairground rides.⁹ An active campaign and successful application for Lottery funding allowed the proposal to move forward, and in 2014 a new operator was sought with the Dreamland Trust stepping back after it was agreed that a not-for-profit model was impossible (Laister 2017: 224). A new company, Sands Heritage, stepped forward, and the park was opened on 19 July 2015.

Wayne Hemingway and his sons, as part of Hemingway Design, were in charge of fitting out a context and quasi-theme over the top of the pure heritage, and also provided numerous interviews in advance of the official opening. *The Guardian* ran a feature (10 June 2015)¹⁰ describing Margate as ‘Kent coast’s kiss-me-quick mecca of “pleasure without measure” and holiday destination for generations of London’s EastEnders’. Here, the monolithic and somatic quality of the Scenic Railway is played up:

“I can guarantee it will be pretty hairy,” promises Dreamland’s director, Eddie Kemsley, who has been poring over film footage from the 40s and 50s to try and match the railway’s original breakneck speed. “It will be as rickety as the old one, complete with the nerve-inducing ‘clack, clack, clack’ as the train goes uphill before the drop.” In a theatrical move, visitors will enter the park through the wooden struts of the rollercoaster, which stands like a great wall of scaffolding, to be immersed in the sounds of the rickety runaway train and its accompanying screams.

Other aspects of the park are emphasised as a kind of past-stylistic melange that reveals and celebrates its own stratigraphy. The appropriately named architect Ray Hole is said to be working with the ceiling structure as the article continues:

the experience will at least be redeemed by the presence of the bruised and battered buildings, stripped back to reveal their multiple layers of history. Under the direction of architect Ray Hole, dingy suspended ceilings have been swept away to expose beautiful structures that have been covered up for years. A bold, tapering concrete

⁹ The results and intentions of this fairground-turn are yet to be fully explicated, with material more tentatively setting out a possible terrain of critique and necessity. A guidance booklet in the Introductions to Heritage Assets was produced in 2015, and a re-run and commentary of the booklet is given in Brodie and Bowlder (2017). The initial collapse of the first Dreamland revival in 2016 is not covered in any of this work, and I return to the documents in more detail in the concluding chapter.

¹⁰ See <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/architecture-design-blog/2015/jun/10/margate-dreamland-seaside-fairground-reopening> (accessed 4 June 2017).

frame has been uncovered in the post-second world war entrance hall, while the tin panelling of the 1920s barrel-vaulted Garden Cafe has been revealed, characterfully pock-marked with torn holes where a more recent structure used to poke through. Originally a recycled airship hangar from the first world war – which could seat 3,500 people – the grand space will be reborn as a roller-disco rink, another tradition that goes back to the earliest days of the site.

The article concludes with a link to Emin and the new branding of the resort under art and hipsterdom:

It has seen Tracey Emin's gritty teenage stomping ground transform into something of an artists' enclave: flat whites and vintage furniture stores charging £500 for mid-century Danish chairs now sit alongside the Poundlands and betting shops. "It's great how we have these urban pioneers," says Hemingway. "They've done Shoreditch, now they're doing Margate. In 10 years they might go and do Blackpool."

The *Independent* ran a similar feature (12 June 2015)¹¹ that drew on the subcultural angle announcing a 'Counter Culture Caterpillar to whizz you past giant portraits of pop stars', though Hemingway indicates the first back-tracking away from the Save Dreamland intent.¹² He clearly doesn't want the project, or his involvement, to be singularised and associated with heritage:

"This isn't a pure heritage project," Wayne explains. "Vintage is about a timeless aesthetic – that's what the British seaside is about – we're doing something that's timeless about Britain. But we're bringing it up to date."

We never get to really understand what is meant by the awkward quote above, and it suggests that Hemingway fears that a seaside park that exists as a heritage presentation of itself is not viable as a contemporary part of the seaside experience. Before any detailed assessment can be made of the place or the statements emerging from it, the park is in serious trouble, limping to the end of the 2015 season with administration called in the following year.¹³ The park remained open through 2016 whilst in administration,¹⁴ and the *Independent* gave an autopsy of the torrid first year of opening (11 August 2016)¹⁵ catching Hemingway on his way out and suggesting that lack of funds held back a true potential. The article suggests that *something* might be possible, a kind of mismatched need and resource lurking under the surface of branding and concepts:

With the right vision, 21st-century Dreamland has the potential to become something far more exciting than a clichéd nostalgia-fest or an ironic snigger at a "fish and chips" culture of the past ... In hindsight, it may be that the "retro by numbers" remodel of Dreamland was a mismatch for this reinvented British seaside town. Falling between two stools, Dreamland in its current incarnation cannot compete with the genuine thrills and spills of theme parks such as Chessington or Alton Towers (how many 10-year-olds are interested in the engineering intricacies of a wooden rollercoaster?) But it holds limited appeal for the visitors who make the trip to Margate for the more cerebral pursuits of the Turner Contemporary or the town's bewitching Shell Grotto.

¹¹ See <http://www.independent.co.uk/travel/uk/inside-margates-restored-dreamland-with-wayne-hemingway-the-coast-is-britains-jewel-in-the-crown-10315385.html> (accessed 4 June 2017).

¹² McGrath (2017: 231) identifies the strategic dropping of the word heritage to be in 2013.

¹³ See <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-kent-36408268> (accessed 4 June 2017).

¹⁴ See <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-kent-36976634> (accessed 4 June 2017).

¹⁵ See <http://www.independent.co.uk/travel/a-wake-up-call-for-margates-broken-dreamland-a7183106.html> (accessed 4 June 2017).

A more scything critique is given in *The Times* (3 June 2016, page 6) with Richard Morrison offering little constructive or analytical to take forward. The article verges on gloating by suggesting that the ‘rebirth always seemed idealistic’, before moving on to outright damning by stating ‘the theory that people are nostalgic for ancient dodgems and helter-skelters is hopelessly misconceived’. Clearly an attention-maximising opinion given a prominent airing, and not an empirically researched proposal that quickly and securely closes off my outset research question, we can draw something from this by suggesting that the restored fairground is not for all, and that class demographics may have an influence. Morrison doesn’t hold back by demanding we ‘clear the cliffs of crud ... banish the burgers-and-slot-machines ethos ... far from rescuing Dreamland, Margate should demolish it. Even in its supposed 1950s heyday it was a tacky embarrassment’.

Discussion on Dreamland’s rapid decline has been equally harsh and polarised within the fairground and amusement park enthusiast movements. There is a desire to unravel the layers of complicity and complexity as the leases and ownerships move around, trying to find single moments when blame can be apportioned. Discussion and debate then descends into bullish opinions as superior knowledge (‘in the know’) is claimed, weaponised and defended.¹⁶ The writer Roger Mills attempted to bring some of this debate into print with a short article in *The Fairground Mercury* (Volume 39(3), 2016), though personal opinion seeped out and the ‘simple’ facts presented were refuted in the next issue with a response by Nick Laister.¹⁷ Mills suggested that projects (such as Dreamland) based on pure sentiment and ‘preservation pure and simple’ are not bound to work, warning against ‘a certain arrogance and complacency amongst many involved who too often think just because they are sincere things will work out’.

Year Zero part two

There is a feeling amongst some of the journalist articles quoted above that the Dreamland project might have some purpose and viability, but it is clearly difficult to pin this down or, more importantly, to understand how it is so easy to get it wrong. This might not be the *Difficult Fun* of the thesis, but it is a different kind of difficult fun. The *Independent* article (11 August 2016) offers a glimpse of needing something, and a resident tries to pin this down:

“Dreamland used to be cool,” a former Margate resident tells me, describing how he spent much of his teenage years in the 1970s hanging out there with his mates on their motorbikes and chasing girls. “It was the place to be. But it was a bit dangerous, a bit sketchy. That’s not the image they want now. If it’s going to survive, it has to become cool again, whatever that means today.”

The article ends with a typical journalistic wrap-up slogan, but here the words hit home:

A theme park of a theme park serves nothing and no one. For Dreamland to thrive and survive, it needs to be looking to the future, not the past.

This encapsulates the problems of a highly-specific functional real space representing a past version of itself whilst still trying to be a contemporary real space. There is a tension of

¹⁶ It is not the fact known but the knowing of the fact (first) that becomes important. See chapter 2 for behaviour of epistemophilia and restricted codes within the enthusiast community.

¹⁷ Mills was active in the middle stages of the FHT (chapter 5) around the time when that project spiralled into decline.

authenticity here underneath the surface, with authenticity of place seen as essential as a general category and described as an 'objective ontological quality' (Light 2002: 205) and as 'an empirical framework to distinguish "real" from "fake"' (Blundell Jones 1991), but here at Dreamland something seems to be going wrong. Similarly, the recreated and preserved objects attract criticism in the environment, rather than presenting what Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (2014: 166) recognises as 'a mode of cultural production that gives the endangered or outmoded a second life as an exhibition of itself'.

Wood's edited collection of texts on the amusement park opens with a warning of ontological insecurity, when he asks what is the heritage under consideration at Dreamland, 'the tangible ride, the intangible experience of riding, the context of the ride in a landscape, or something else?' (Wood 2017: 15). This thesis shifts emphasis slightly but tackles a similar question; however, the case study of Dreamland adds an unacknowledged level of complexity. The edited collection is published at a painfully inconvenient time, with the book resulting from a 2011 conference that saw the amusement park rub shoulders with archaeology and the Save Dreamland movement in an ascendancy. As the book gathered pace, a trio of chapters form what might have been a triumphant crescendo to the project, plotting the moves towards 'Delivering the Dream' (as Laister entitles his chapter). There is a strange future anterior feeling to the writing, redolent of the ghost signs and street names of the FHT's never-to-be-realised project at Northampton. McGrath's contribution to the book is a compressed work that ambitiously flits through heritage theory, design and architecture, nostalgia and memory, the philosophy of authenticity and fake, all written from an embedded position of involvement. As a result there are sections of the chapter that come across as wishful advertising jargon premised by the word 'may'. For example, the opening paragraph suggests that 'the construction of this new Dreamland may become a place where the past informs the present and the present electrifies and accentuates the past' (McGrath 2017: 228), offering a chiasmic catchphrase with an inserted clause of non-guarantee that is normally either hidden from advertising or inserted into micro-text that no-one reads. There are times when McGrath gets close to the problem, initially identifying seaside resorts as 'places in flux, with attractions shifting between seasons to draw visitors back' (McGrath 2017: 231) and then expressing through a pair of conundrum statements the dilemma of the new Dreamland:

The new Dreamland will be a unique visitor attraction embracing an amusement park heritage and perpetuating a tradition of continual change in response to visitor demand.

The operators of the park will need to retain this emphasis on heritage significance and avoid any slippage back to a precarious and typical seaside attraction which leans too heavily on contemporary portable and standardised funfair attractions that can be found anywhere. (McGrath 2017: 241)

This sets out the problem of trying to present a moving heritage that somehow makes sense, by presenting a set of static heritage objects that do not exemplify the ephemeral nature of fairground equipment. My argument is that McGrath comes across a very real problem, but fails to realise that the nature of the site (a seaside amusement park) bears down heavily here. As I argue above, the seaside is experienced in a particular way (a planned day off with a set of expectations and actions) and an enforced attraction based upon the heritage of seaside visits past is not necessarily going to go down well if it forces itself into the time and space of the seaside experience. This is in contrast to the quest for the real space ('power of the real') for

the living museum such as the semi-derelict industrial area around the Black Country Living Museum (see previous chapter), where visitors do not seek out a real and contemporary day of depression, hard labour and poverty, but simply its re-presentation in an authentic space.¹⁸ The real space of the seaside is still active as a set of practices and content, and a project such as Dreamland needs to acknowledge that visitors spending time in Margate have a need to fulfil expectations of a (modernised) seaside practice.

The second revival of Margate, commencing in May 2017, sees the solution to this through an emphasis on art, popular culture and subcultures, themes that have currency amongst the hipster community as it approximates to authenticating the heritage and lineage of the hipster image itself. In the way that authorised heritage (castles, workhouses, village community spaces) allows a link back to the past and so creates a continuity of meaning within life, so does subcultural heritage allow for a continuity of style culture and fashion following, the esprit de corps of the hipster movement. As an added bonus, the hipster image mixes and matches a fluid palette of past subcultures and so a revived subcultural element can be both of-the-present and for-the-present. In this way, Dreamland becomes an artistic space and the fairground machines become a cipher for subcultural rituals.

Both the *Independent* and *Guardian* produced supportive articles for the May 2017 relaunch, trying to identify aspects of change.¹⁹ New CEO Steven Mitchell describes many changes such as the removal of an entry fee and replacement with a pay-per-attraction system, a focus on live events such as prestigious gigs and music festivals, and a change in the fairground objects. Whilst this latter category is of interest to the thesis, it is the other changes that have most likely had an instant effect; not least the removal of a pay barrier that necessitates a commitment and imposes a threshold of inside and outside.²⁰ The tone of the *Independent* intimates that viable revival is selective, possibly reflecting the contemporary needs of the hipster market and fashions such as street food. Thus, a switch in food is evident with a fleet of converted Citroen H vans serving craft pizzas, justified in the words of the journalist as catering for 'picky urban visitors who want all the fun of the fairground but none of the crappy food and drink that too often accompany dodgems and candyfloss'. Here we see a demarcation between the authentic past and a sanitised and performative contemporary world of retro pick and mix.²¹

¹⁸ Some of the recorded feedback around whether the fairground staff were actually grumpy or re-enacting a grumpiness impresses this point.

¹⁹ See <http://www.independent.co.uk/travel/uk/dreamland-margate-reopens-2017-amusement-park-seaside-dodgems-helter-skelter-a7755696.html> and <https://www.theguardian.com/travel/2017/may/17/dreamland-margate-reopens-again-after-25m-revamp> (both accessed 4 June 2017).

²⁰ The park re-opened for the bank holiday weekend 27 May 2017. I visited on the bank holiday Monday and my observations and photographs are from this visit. The resort was busy as the weather was fine and a mods and rockers rally was taking place – not a spontaneous clash but an orchestrated parade with coned-off contraflow lines and hi-vis officials. It is impossible to say at this early time whether the new formulation of Dreamland has got it right, and whether one aspect contributes to that more than the others.

²¹ The Citroen vans also emphasise Guffey's definition of retro as something from the stylish past against nostalgia and a personally meaningful past.



Figure 9.3 – Dreamland stage, 2017, photograph Ian Trowell



Figure 9.4 – Multi-use structures for strolling or viewing event, 2017, photograph Ian Trowell

The new 15,000 capacity music venue is also a major change, with a summer line-up of events that sees the park closing and turned over to a festival space using a large stage and grassed area (figure 9.3) and a maze of wooden walkway structures leading to bars and viewing platforms (figure 9.4).²² Certain events are free, whilst other high-profile events - such as the re-booting of the Gorillaz concept - ensures that Margate and Dreamland attracts a celebrity audience and high volume of social media tweets and images.²³

Mitchell also highlights a change in the fairground equipment, more so to underline the removal of the 1980s and 1990s rides that filled in at last minute in the original relaunch. The current crop of rides includes restored machines but also modern rides (such as the Mad Mouse Coaster and Giant Wheel). There is an unqualified quote to 'return Dreamland to the heights of its historic glory (and) emphasize its heritage qualities', with only the Waltzer picked out as a specific project. The restored rides shown in figures 9.5a-d (work carried out by David Littleboy using the painter Katie Morgan), have a bright pop art feel reminiscent of Carter's 'factory fresh' approach to presentation.

Other items, what I class as second-order-objects (merging into sub-objects) appear to have been sold off,²⁴ with some of the 'bits and pieces' welded together to make Rauschenberg style combines and mounted throughout the park (figure 9.6). This switch to fashionable visual culture unites with the subcultural angle where the new signage to the rides is concerned. In the original revived Dreamland the signage was of a more standardised type that referred to the fairground object (McGrath 2017: 243), however, for the relaunch this has been abandoned and a bold new approach has been taken. As figures 9.7a-d show, the new signage has a fashionable design using Lichtenstein BenDay dots finish, and an emphasis that shifts *away* from the object. There is an interpretive shift and a double hermeneutic as the script of each sign relays a subcultural ecumenism which effectively renders the fairground ride to a cipher towards constructing a subcultural self in the observer. The Dodgems are sold as a cool seat lineage for 'punks, soul boys and art rockers' (all current hipster elements), through to 'nineties ravers and insta fans of the cutting-edge artists we stage here today'. This completes a circle that advertises the wider aspect of the new Dreamland as a happening music space, and then completes a feedback loop by referring to the 'insta kids' which legitimises the practice of advertising the space and product. The inclusion of some actual history (the previous owner George Scarrott) comes across as simply an opportunity to get a pun for 'Park Life' in.²⁵ The Helter Skelter script offers some erudite fairground history but quickly reverts to pop culture to reference some fashionably obscure trivia.²⁶ The script for the Waltzer operates between the history of the ride, a history of the present, and a running joke of sexual innuendo. The language here is a 'street-style' reminiscent of punk lyrics that related to fans by speaking 'to them, of them and like them' (Trowell 2017c: 28).

²² The program for 2017 includes currently fashionable music from all decades; a punk festival (late 1970s), Trojan Sound System and Toots and the Maytals (1970s reggae), various contemporary indie bands, 1990s dance music acts, 2000s big-beat acts.

²³ Email correspondence with local writer Iain Aitch (4 July 2017).

²⁴ See <https://www.bidspotter.co.uk/en-gb/auction-catalogues/timed/sia-group-auctions/catalogue-id-ibsia10160> (accessed 4 June 2017).

²⁵ The famous hit by Britpop band Blur.

²⁶ Charles Manson is a cult leader and serial killer who toyed with hippy pop culture, releasing a cover version of the Beatles' Helter Skelter, further inspiring a number of British punk and post-punk experimentalists who became attracted to the dark frisson of Manson.



Figures 9.5a-d – Factory fresh restoration at Dreamland, 2017, photographs Ian Trowell



Figure 9.6 – Sub-objects combined to new category object, 2017, photograph Ian Trowell

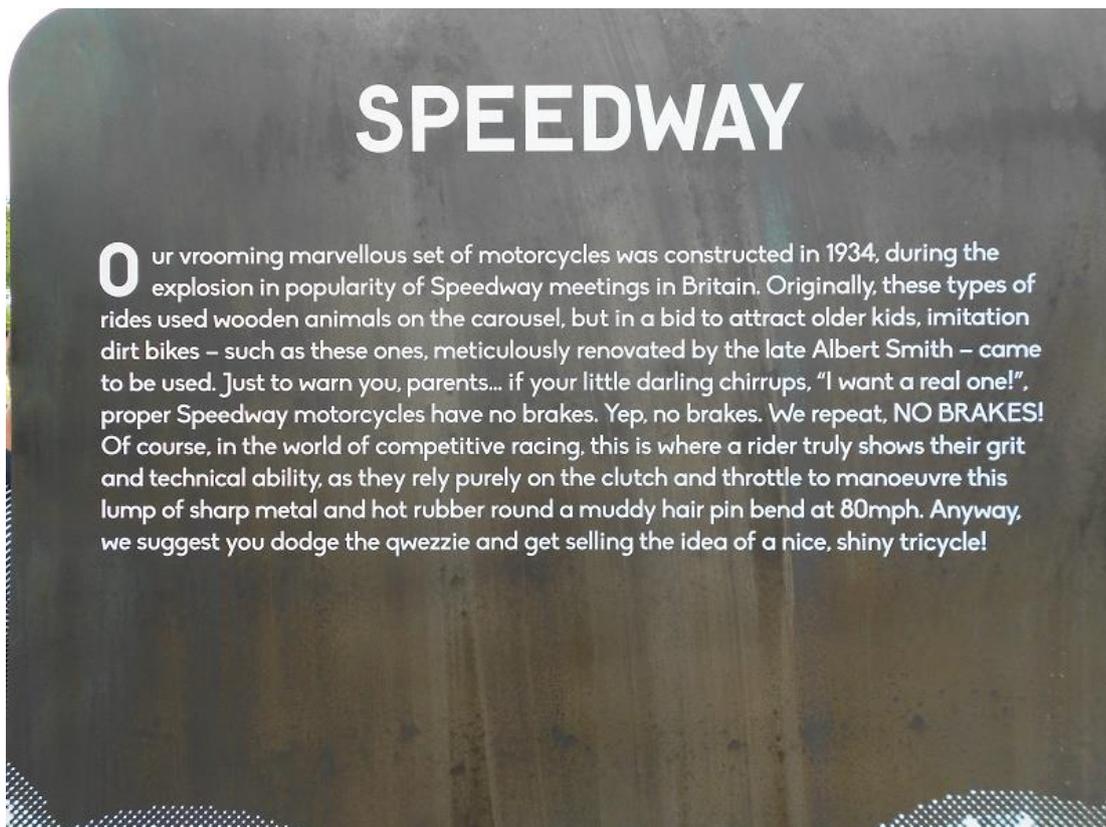
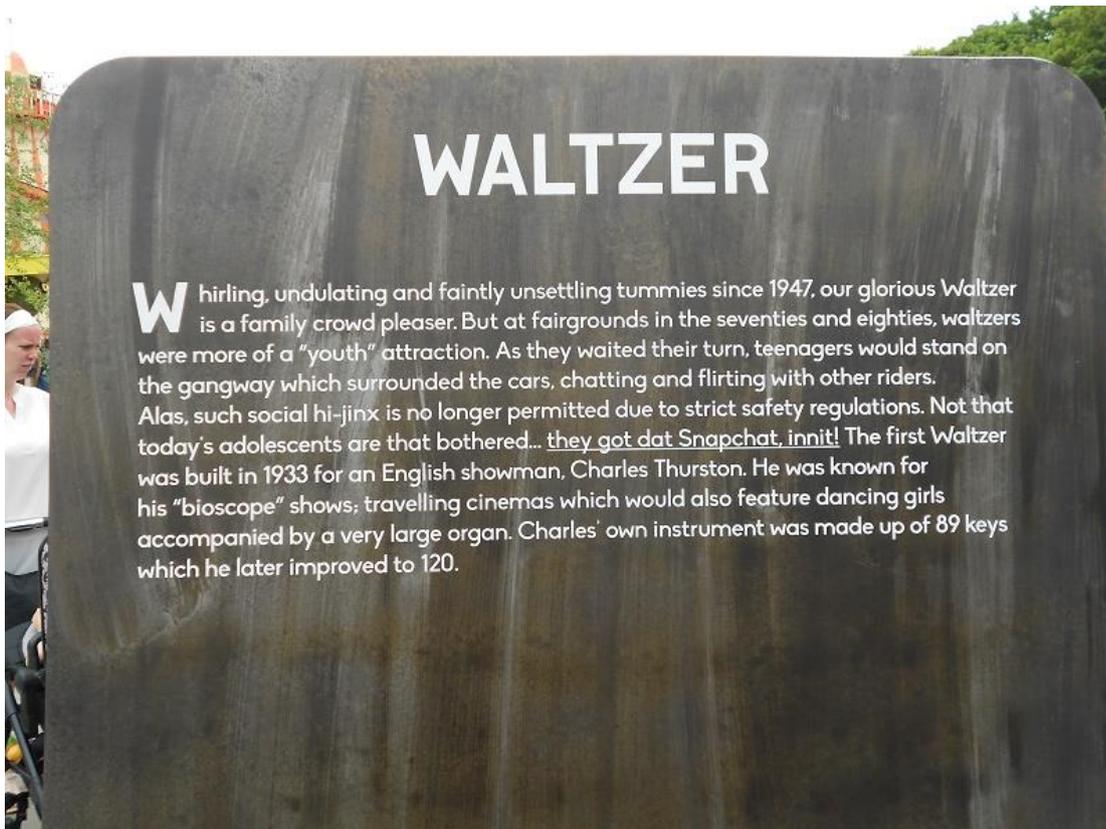
DODGEMS

Our dodgems are the cool kids of Dreamland. Since they swerved into the park during the seventies, this gang of fast living tough nuts have always attracted the hippest visitors with a distinct musical heritage. From the punks, soul boys and art rockers back then, through to the nineties' ravers on a post party trip and Insta fans of the cutting edge artists we stage here today... they have all gone bumper to bumper on our famous track, one of the largest in the UK. The twenty four snazzy vintage cars we use were bought from the late George Scarrott, a fourth generation proprietor of his family's travelling entertainment business and an icon of "park life", who consistently campaigned to the government on behalf of fairground people.

HELTER SKELTER

She's a slippery one, alright, but our Helter stands firm at Dreamland, having been one of our consistently loved rides since the park first opened in 1920. But for anyone concerned that their coconut hair seat is almost a century old and likely to be threadbare, today's Helter construction (and her accessories) are brand new. Amusement geeks will also be interested to know that the irresistible allure of a plastic slide 'n' itchy mat combo has been pulling in punters since 1905, when the first set up was erected at Hull Fair and officially named Helter Skelter. It also became the name of a Beatles track which has been covered by Aerosmith, Siouxsie and The Banshees, Oasis, U2, Motley Crue and erm...Charles Manson.

Figures 9.7a-b – Ride signage (Dodgems and Helter Skelter) at Dreamland, 2017, photographs Ian Trowell



Figures 9.7c-d – Ride signage (Waltzer and Speedway) at Dreamland, 2017, photographs Ian Trowell

Whether retro-subcultural fashions either continue to draw old music fans (figure 9.8) or remain a currency within the hipster framework of patchwork symbolism will dictate how long this branding and orientation of Dreamland will persist. The fairground rides can be interpreted through other (current) cultural frames such as pop art or steampunk technology, and possibly new modes to come. My feeling is that the park realises it needs to offer something in the 'now' of the seaside experience, rather than offer a heritage reading of itself in the authentic (same) place. This is subtly but crucially different to (say) Folly Farm, which exists as a heritage tourist experience close by to a resort, but separate enough to be part of directed and purposeful visit (within the timeframe of a longer vacation) that is accompanied by a tempered set of expectations. Thus, Dreamland will emphasise the events and fashionable art/hipster nature of the space, with the fairground taking a supporting role in this greater cause.



Figure 9.8 – Old bikers relive youthful days via the Dodgems, Margate, 2017, photograph Ian Trowell

Conclusion

Dreamland offers a real-life example of difficult fun, attempts at creating heritage from fairgrounds and amusement parks. Almost as if performing to script, things quickly get messy and go wrong, as different audiences and intentions clash with separate initiatives to make the whole commercially viable. With public funds being used up, the press hover and produce a glut of optimistic publicity (stage-managed by the Dreamland organisers) and then proffer numerous articles wallowing in the decline. Fairground first-order-objects (predominantly rides) are purchased, provoke disagreement, and then languish. Fairground second-order-objects and sub-objects break apart and recombine in different ways for different audiences

than originally anticipated (the hipster crowd) and leak into quasi-heritage sites such as fashionable retro antique shops.

This factor of a press and public glare does not help in terms of synthesising critical lessons to be learnt in navigating the difficult heritage of the fairground, but it would be foolish to rule such an exposure out when anticipating future projects (particularly those that draw on public funding). I argue in this chapter that there are other circumstances that need careful unpacking that make Dreamland a specific case. This concerns the historical background of both space and place of Margate, the seaside in general, and the spatial components such as amusement parks that make up the seaside. As the dormant seaside place is recreated as a heritage version of itself, there are seemingly expectations for it to function both in the past and in the present, a revival of the fabric and affects of the past operating within a revival of the 'pulse' of the seaside experience. Whereas the past and present also collide in the living museum, discussed in the previous chapter, there is a key difference here. At Beamish, once through the gates of the enclosure, the past is foregrounded, whilst at Margate the present is foregrounded. The revived Dreamland is subsumed into the wider revived Margate, and its focus at the time of my visit, during its second attempt at being commercially successful, seems to be a resonance with the present in terms of hipster culture and an ecumenical merging of music and fashion subcultures from years gone by.

Chapter 10 - Conclusion

In their provocative and speculative paper 'Museums and Theme Parks: Worlds in Collision?', MacDonald and Alford (1995) step aside from the embittered and entrenched posturing of the heritage debate and suggest that the previously defined opposites of the museum and theme park are increasingly blurring into a spectrum through the exertion of mutual influences, such that 'theme parks and museums share the mission of being purveyors of information about cultural heritage' (132). Whilst this initially might seem to suggest that they are writing on the side of the museum and are trying to consider the theme park as inevitable invader, their work subtly shifts to examine the nature of the theme park material on its own terms, questioning some of the foundations of the museum. Channelled through the theme park, heritage encounters difficult concepts such as popular culture as source and agent of acculturation, intangibility, nostalgia as a driver, interactivity and spectacular modes of engagement. Focussing on authenticity as a foundational aspect of the museum and heritage movement, defined as 'collections of original objects which stand as the ultimate objective arbiter of historical truth' (144), they offer an image of a translocated original inn at Blists Hill (Ironbridge) and the Rovers Return (*Coronation Street*) which exists as an original façade at the Granada Studios visitor experience. In the open-ended case study, the reader is left to wrestle with which is the most authentic, inviting judgements as to what actually counts beyond the authenticity of the artefact itself; what we might call an authenticity of authenticity. The *Coronation Street* artefact is authentic and in place, but we are invited to let our prejudices surface and doubt the historical importance of the television experience. But surely, watching television is part of our significant and shaping past (whether or not, for now, we call it history), and we share a drive to both seek out examples of the actual' past (an old pub at Blists Hill) and the past of watching television (as mentioned in chapter 6 with the television branded vehicles at the steam rally). The authors set up concerns and nagging doubts, as official museum spaces (such as the living museum) attempt to celebrate the life of the working class, messy elements and motivations enter into the mix, creating tensions and exclusions between the realms of the museum and theme park.

MacDonald and Alford render heritage as messy and complex, with rules and definitions in flux, and neologisms such as 'edutainment' and 'infotainment' moving in to common parlance. In situating this thesis, and the fairground as heritage, as 'difficult fun', my work grasps and engages the messy and disorienting spectrum, captured in the chiasmic flow of fairground becoming heritage and heritage becoming fairground. Chapter 3 and the visual intermezzo set out the complexity and heteroglossia of the fairground, as both synchrony and diachrony, with the fairground object (proposed as a nested set of categories in chapter 2) and the fairground subject (seen as encountering the fairground amidst the popular culture of the time and then becoming estranged from the fairground as it claims a constantly renewing teenage market). Following a carefully directed furrow in chapter 4, aligning agriculture, the fairground and a vernacular tendency to preserve and display, I have charted five domains of previously unexamined fairground heritage: the housed, static collection (or grey-museum), the steam rally, the travelling vintage fairground, the living museum that tentatively includes a fairground, and a reanimated amusement park in Margate. My research methods have been to

observe, to gather data from protagonists, vested interest audiences and general visitors, to create rich photographic evidence, to utilise promotional resources and to draw upon my own experiences and knowledge.

A variety of methodological tools have been utilised, including an analysis of nested spatial considerations (region, site, buildings, interior arrangements), spatial practices and situational aesthetics (how we relate to objects on display, how we interact with others), intermittent serendipitous linkage between the vernacular display and realm of high art, textual analysis and semiotic deconstruction on promotional resources (brand logos, mission statements, publicity brochures and website pages) and enquiries into notions of floating authenticity with regard to discrete audiences. This relates to the unexamined domains of fairground heritage, a rich vein of resources and observations that fits firmly within the concerns and doubts prompted by MacDonald and Alford, and responds to my intentions outlined in chapter 2 to draw on the work of Augé and his proximate and endotic methods. The ground explored here, of a twilight zone between the museum and theme park, but also something distinctive in its own right, necessitates such a complex and compound methodology that stands outside previous methods of heritage assessment. It was tempting to structure the work towards a reflection of the 'authentic heritage discourse' (AHD) labelled by Smith (2007: 5) and discussed in chapter 2. However, rich descriptions and seemingly haphazard attribution of agency to objects seldom produces a neat set of bulleted action points that can be inserted into a museum policy document. Smith's recognition of AHD was made with the aim to realise and surpass the concept, though what lies beyond is acknowledged (and embraced) as unruly and complex, eschewing both rootedness and fixedness. The thesis here, in the flow of creating heritage from the fairground, is not looking for a boiled-down simplicity but a better understanding of complexity and intangibility, difficulty not made simple but more lucid and transparent. This impacts upon the opposite flow, the incorporation of the fairground (as actual object or mode of interaction, engagement and interpretation) into the authorised museum and heritage space. Through this admittance of a 'dangerous supplement', set rules and traditions will be challenged, and the heritage environment needs to be prepared and equipped to consider the nature and implications of such challenges.

Recapping my research into the five domains of fairground heritage, a mix of focal points is evident: the different audiences within and between the domains; the identification and role of activists in setting up the heritage; the dynamic tension between authenticity and illusion (not least the idea of the authentic fairground object as a purveyor of illusion); the flux between what I call the super-object (recreated whole), first-order-objects (whole things), second-order-objects (significant parts) and sub-objects (granular parts that only gain significance with specific audiences); and the situating of fairground heritage within or alongside an expanded assemblage or array (a gathering of other heritages, a different attraction such as a zoo, or a subcultural connotation such as an appeal to the hipster crowd). Chapter 5, on static housed collections, saw both diversity as collections grew from different intentions to incorporate different elements, and convergence as collections all found a common root in agricultural crossover and structural housing (the 'big shed'). These collections are situated in tourist zones, and so responded (at diverse levels) to this challenge. Chapter 6 studied the steam rally, plotting a detailed history of this under-researched phenomenon and critical blind spot, finding a wider assemblage of bundled pasts with the fairground often playing a minor role. Here I identify a continuation of the preservationist (and enthusiast

audience) embodying what Harrison (2013: 107) calls heritage 'co-created by its consumers', each exhibitor taking strength from the efforts of their fellow exhibitors and taking pleasure from the public gazing upon their own efforts. The fairground museum and steam rally exemplify such a practice, my work here adding a rich layer to an area of research that has only recently been proposed by authors such as Geoghegan (2009) and her study of enthusiasts in the arena of industrial archaeology:

From preserved railways to Victorian pumping stations, people have long been fascinated by the history of technology and engineering; manifesting their enthusiasm through their nostalgic longings and emotional attachment to its enduring material culture.

The steam rally comprises of audiences of granular specialisms that, which whilst on the surface appear similar, dwell intensely in their own zones of interest. A wider public engages the steam rally and moulds the event into a more fluent conceptual whole that sees multiple pasts performed from different modes of living (rural and urban, rich and poor, industry and leisure, war and the everyday) alongside nostalgia from a parallel televised world and copious arrangements of car-boot jumble and Sunday-market goods. In the manner that Walden (1997) intensely studies the spaces, structures, audiences and practices of the late Victorian exhibition space, the wider steam rally remains open to further research. Chapter 7 studied Carters Steam Fair, a carefully targeted recreation of a structured whole that cleverly extends to new audiences such as the hipster community (revealed through textual analysis) and a wider appreciation of the hand-crafted in art and design. In studying Carters I identified an important bifurcation in the notion of tradition, between objects and practices, that equates to the strands of tangible and intangible in the current discourse, and how this is further complexified through the notion of illusion as consumed object (I return to this below as an example study). The living museum, studied in chapter 8, is taken a key site in the heritage debate that leads into the thesis. Though the plethora of literature that uses the living museum as a cipher for this debate fails to include the fairground, I bring it to the fore in order to shift the debate from a diametrically split terrain. The fairground in the living museum, for now, seems adrift and between modes of interpretation, (this is expanded upon below). Finally, chapter 9 briefly examined the complex and pertinent case of Margate Dreamland, seeing a calamitous trail of events as the intangible heritage of the seaside is forced to reanimate in its own active space, much like building an exhibition of a volcano inside Mount Etna. I am apprehensive to draw too much conclusive evidence from this example as it is both highly volatile and under intense media scrutiny, such that a 'natural flow' of heritage discourse and engagement is both predetermined and stymied in unhelpful ways. However, there is also good reason for including it, as it shows complex fairground heritage in action in a wider assemblage of objects, affects and memories.

By drawing on focussed examples from the detailed research of this thesis, or specific concepts that can be contrasted across different case studies, my intention now is to set out a series of issues that offer clear insight into the complexity of fairground heritage in terms of the assemblage of audiences, objects, practices, spaces and authenticities. These examples indicate a necessary approach to heritage as much as delineating a set of good practices, a focussed beam inside a crevice that appears upon an illusory perfect surface. It is here where the fairground both informs and challenges our understanding of heritage and 'correct practice', that my arguments and methods draw their strengths. This is developed through the

five themes of building, time and memory, vernacular flow, illusion and futurity, with the slippery concept of nostalgia interweaving between and amongst all the examples.

Building - real spaces / different spaces / official spaces

Whilst the living museum and steam rally situate a fairground within a wider space of temporal and spatial displacement, an outermost border to suspend disbelief, and Carters Steam Fair presents a fairground from the past in the real space, it is the grey-museum covered in chapter 5 that offers most insight into how the fairground and heritage currently inform each other. Of the four housed collections, my analysis revealed several spatial transformations all completed under a similar 'big shed' structure. The external appearance is noted in the feedback as looking bland and commonplace, whilst different internal transformations are recorded as being a unique magical space (Thursford), a less inspiring collection of things in simple storage (Scarborough), a seaside amusement space (Folly Farm) and a travelling fairground (Dingles).

Objects placed into a museum are dislocated from their function, undergoing a kind of nullification stated by Crew and Sims (2014: 159) such that:

the mendacity of objects is all too familiar to makers of collections and exhibitions: once removed from the continuity of everyday uses in time and space and made exquisite on display, stabilised and conserved, objects are transformed in the meanings that they may be said to carry

If the fairground museum is going to utilise its objects in a capacity of engagement to evoke the real, then the connotations and power of the building both outside and inside need careful consideration. It is here where the fairground museum can inform the wider heritage environment about how a building and its interiority is in a difficult battle to recreate the authentic experience and maintain the power of its objects. In addition, it is important to acknowledge and legislate for what is effectively unachievable, with the fairground being an example (flagged in chapter 2) in that it temporarily repurposes objects from the local environment – an affect that is not possible to rebuild in the museum.

As figure 10.1 shows, the seaside amusement park structure is an evocative and mystical building that holds in an exuberant medley of smells, tastes, noises, sounds and experiences. Candlin (2016: 154) discusses how several of her examples of micromuseums exist away from the distinctive transitioning architecture of the official museum (see below) and instead form embedded buildings opening into separate worlds, a 'momentary feeling of having shifted in place'. This is a facet of the heterotopic, but the enclosed seaside amusement park operates at another register, the contents are half expected (fairground rides) but the feeling of shifting in place comes from the apparent impossibility of what is encountered: another world whose density of polysensory excess suggests a vastness beyond the space it is enclosed within. The discussion and analysis of Folly Farm shows this seaside heterotopia as a real space that evokes a lasting fondness, and a space that Folly Farm manages to achieve. There is a double reading of the heterotopic; the space itself within the here and now of Folly Farm is not expected, and the real space that is conjured is itself a heterotopic space from times past.

Whilst Folly Farm can recreate a real space of the enclosed amusement park, Dingles attempts something more difficult by recreating a travelling fairground in a similar enclosed building. The borders of the amusement park (and thus Folly Farm) are sealed and covered with



Figure 10.1 – Redcar amusement park, 1986, photograph Ian Trowell

attractions that deflect attention away from the surface, whilst the borders of the fairground are more complex and open to serendipitous encounter. Hence, Dingles cannot easily create an isomorphic relationship with its borders in the way that Folly Farm can. In Dingles, as an illusion of a travelling fairground, the 'natural' borders of the fairground are called upon in much the same way that Carters prioritise a careful spatial balance. These border points are problematic in the interior space that tries to mimic something else, and simply plastering them with displays and artefacts has an opposite effect by drawing attention to them. The traditional travelling fairground has a set arrangement of things that are included – the rides, stalls and peripheral objects like vending machines – with an associated network of thoroughfares that permit both movement and a sense of getting lost in the seemingly unbounded space. In this fairground, the immediate boundary is reached as the fairgoer emerges from the central labyrinth, and they are met with side attractions (stalls, arcades and



Figures 10.2a-d – Border details at Dingles, 2017, photographs Ian Trowell

certain side-ground rides such as the Ghost Train or Miami Trip) that face inward and are present for their delight. On the traditional fairground, aside from dedicated entry points, there are gaps in the border that reveal a further domain which is often sensed as an outer border. This domain contains caravans and vehicles, and is not generally for public use. The interstitial routes between the interior and exterior - through the inward facing border - may be blocked by cables, sacks of food and prizes, or large dogs on steel chains. In some instances, indeed as seen at Carters fair in Bath, the vehicles and caravans may be drafted in from the inaccessible area beyond the border and become part of the inner border, part of a wider and intricately controlled process of allowing a scripted glimpse back-stage. Clearly at a museum such as Dingles it is not possible to create the border beyond the border (and its associated paraphernalia such as fearsome looking dogs), though an attempt to create a coherent and continuous border is made. This includes the use of vehicles and a living wagon, though (understandably) here the vehicles can be inspected without the fear of a dog bite and the living wagon can be entered. This breaking of the 'magic' of the fair is also undertaken by Carters (administrative secrets revealed), though in Dingles there is more of a tension between entertainment (through a strong effect and illusion) and education (breaking the illusion and transgressing the border). Figures 10.2a-d show where the borders at Dingles are both effective and break down, revealing spaces of impromptu storage, sections of metal wall between signage and curtain, and an open door that summons up a Magritte-style surrealist space.

Of the four grey-museums examined in chapter 5, Dingles is the one that aspires most diligently to be classed as a 'proper' museum, and is also the one that tries to recreate a real space of a travelling fairground. Thus, if the real space of a travelling fairground stretches the

possibility of architectural enclosure (for example, at the opposite pole to the National Railway Museum which occupies the real space of a railway structure), then an alternative is the real

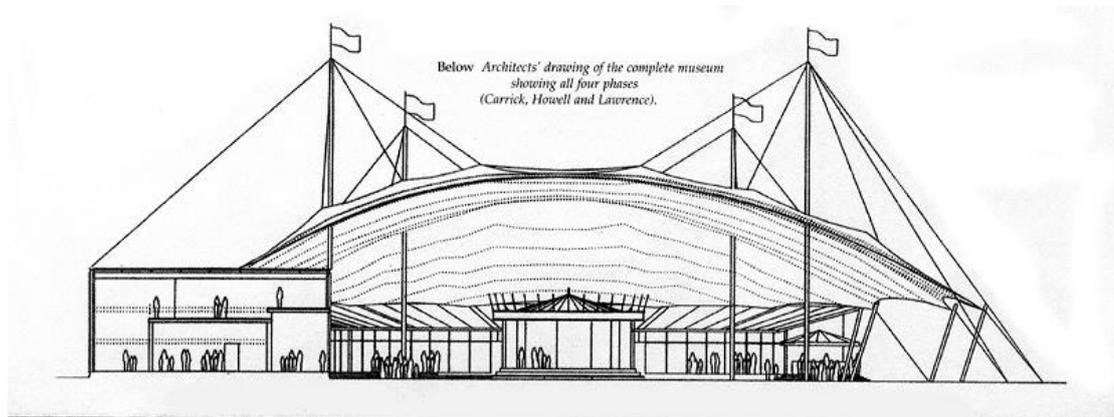


Figure 10.3– Proposed museum building for FHT / copyright Carrick, Howell, Lawrence

space of a museum with its authoritative denotations. Traditionally this is a defined space of power, as Hooper-Greenhill (1988: 225) suggests, 'a museum building may sometimes be one that relates architecturally to the law courts, the police station, and other repressive agents of social control'. Furthermore, it carries through a didactic aspect into the interior, proposed by Joselit (2013: 74) as an 'architectural promenade'. As we have already seen, Dingles offers a disorienting interior that resembles the real space of the fairground, so on both the outside and inside there is a challenge to the museological norm. Whilst the eventual Dingles became the generic big shed of chapter 5, there exists the proposed building of the museum in Northampton (figure 10.3), seemingly an attempt to merge the power of the real museum with the possibility of the real space of the fairground. Whilst the critical dialogue around the architecture of museums has reached a new level of intensity and reach following the design of the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao (Frank Gehry, completed 1997), it is clear that the proposed fairground museum embodies a critical consideration as it bridges the gap between a formal expression of museum power and authority and an effort to encompass something of a fairground theme. As stated above, the fairground in general is not housed, and the clustering of fairground rides at the seaside developed a big shed vernacular that drew upon a heterotopic effect. For the proposed FHT building a big top structure dominates, drawing from the circus world and a close cousin to the travelling fairground (a structure that would partly inform the design of the Millennium Dome). The FHT proposed structure balances the powerful statement of the generic museum and avoids the 'found' big shed vernacular that informs the grey-museums that I survey, whilst still offering a 'to-be-found' effect that involves a fairground arranged inside a building that mimics a circus tent.

Time and memory - non-fixed temporalities, the fairground object and nostalgia

Rojek (1993: 163), examining the theme park partitioned into zones such as 'Merrie England' and other clichéd European locations, suggests a tendency to 'annihilate temporal and spatial borders'. It is, in my experience, unhelpful to transpose such a reading onto the living museum; there is a more intricate play of forces at work that requires a more nuanced unpacking. The living museum and the historical object in situ have a complex relationship to time and space as these concepts are stretched and disarticulated in the heritage experience. The living museum, with Beamish as a perfect example, exists on/in a set space (disregarding for now the arguments about the authenticity of this space) in which numerous fixed time zones are created. This can be stated as time being spatialized, offering a pseudo-diachrony that involves physically moving from region to region of synchronic aggregation. An object type that extends to multiple junctures in the past is thus represented at numerous points in the journey, and its experience is defragmented by units of duration (disengage-move-engage) between each encounter of the 'same'. The opposite effect occurs at a fixed heritage site such as a functional building like an old factory or battle site. Here the site is engaged in a single glance and elongated moment, and the visitor is prompted (through guidance notes, audio prompts, signage) to evoke different times, and it is possible to flicker between different temporal readings in effectively a single instant. In this case, space is temporalized.

The fairground super-object in the living museum sits on the fringes of the dedicated time zones, betwixt and between; it is encountered and engaged as both time spatialized and space temporalized. This interstitial spacing of the fairground produces a temporal indeterminacy, fluidity and heteronomous subjectivity, in turn pushing the fairground (an important part of the living museum whole) outside of the critical purview of the heritage debaters encircling the living museum. Whilst I show below in separate case studies the temporal relationship between the fairground first-order-object and both vernacular flow and an urgency to illusion, it is evident that the fairground does not adhere to a clean and straightforward temporal dissection. First-order-objects stretch between the decades in both their existence as distinct things (a type of ride) and their cultural rebranding, creating a granularized polychronic assemblage. Furthermore, their cultural anamnesis and appreciation through memory and nostalgia (as against say Lowenthal's wider remit of historical importance for sense of identity, security, etc), means that a consensual intersubjectivity is seldom attainable. This then breaks down even further at an audience-specific level, with an enthusiast respondent making a strongly affirmative comment about a piece of artwork at the FHT collection that he knew was part of the actual fairs of his youth. It is impossible to discern whether the artwork itself signalled the memory, or the knowledge of the provenance of the artwork combined with the knowledge of the lessee of the fair from his youth cemented the favourable reaction.

Nostalgia, according to Smith and Campbell (2017), is troublesome to authorised heritage discourse, polarising to the reactionary or the progressive, with little in terms of mechanism to navigate between the two. If, as MacDonald and Alford acknowledge, nostalgia increasingly plays a part in the seeking out of our past, then the fairground object can take centre stage as an object that spans numerous time zones and can work as either a nostalgic prompt or destination. As indicated in chapter 3, engagement with the fairground corresponds to a key stage of adolescence. There is a weighting in favour for 'going back' to these periods, what we

might call a diachronic disunity that forms peaks and troughs of our past. Baudrillard (1996: 80) sums this up as: 'a way of escaping from everyday life, and no escape is more radical than escape in time, none so thoroughgoing as escape into one's own childhood'. Similarly, Davis (1979: 56) states that it is 'adolescence that affords nostalgia its most sumptuous banquets', and Highmore (2011: 164) speaks from personal experience to recount his teen years as 'formative times ... that have left their creases and traces in the finite plasticity of my apperceptions and sensorial dispositions'. This adds another layer of complexity onto the relationship between the fairground and the heritage process, onto the process of temporally fixing the fairground object. The next two sections draw on this further, indicating how the fairground object in its 'natural environment' exploits its capacity to evade temporal fixity, making its heritagisation even more challenging.

Vernacular flow – stopping and reversing time

Vernacular art ebbs and flows, dictated and shaped by cultural forms and trends that embody the ephemeral. The painted surface or sculpted shape of the authentic vernacular object becomes manifold and diachronic, each stop-motion its own authenticity. Merrill (2015) works in a similar world, questioning the ability to create heritage from graffiti, a parallel with fairground art that is public-facing and embodies bold designs that are plugged into the fleeting statements of the time, painted over and painted over, in shows of both urgency and complex bravado.

A parallel also exists with the restoration of steam engines, a major part of British heritage practice. In his study of the *Flying Scotsman* engine, McLean (2016) adopts what I call (in chapter 2) the cultural object biography approach, plotting the actual changes of the engine and how it interweaves a relationship with the wider social and cultural psyche through film and advertisement appearances. As a physical object, the engine undergoes a succession of parts replaced, liveries updates, fleet number re-assigned, making it an authentic conundrum:

Such have been the changes that in her lifetime *Flying Scotsman* has had three different classes (A1, A10 and A3), three different styles of dome and chimney, four different liveries, six numbers (1472, 4472, 502, 103, E103 and 60103), nine different tenders and fifteen different boilers

This creates an obvious spectrum of possibilities of restoration, cascading down to a diverse range of critical audiences such as described across my findings in fairground heritage:

The conflict of preserving an object that was designed to be operated is one that has troubled museum curators for many years. This was due largely to the problem of conveying the significance of an item when the context of its very existence had changed completely. Questions of practicality, cost, maintenance and, ultimately, authenticity were, and are, key factors also.

Keeping loosely with the steam train theme, Guy Belshaw commented on the Ghost Train at Dingles, when I asked him about how such an object that tantalisingly contains a stratigraphy of past layers of fairground artwork can be considered:

There's ten layers of varnish, we could take it back. If it was still in use on the fairground it would be airbrushed with Freddie Kruger, but it's been stopped in time. It's a mix of styles and ages, a typical fairground ride: Richard Carter did the pay-box in the late 1970s, early Paul Wright figurative work on the doors from the 1980s, and classic Billy Hall 1960s figures on back

The conflict between the intangible and the authentic, and the subsequent challenge to heritage, is emphasised by Skounti (2009: 78), who proposes the dynamism of the intangible to be 'at odds with a notion of authenticity conceived as rootedness, faithfulness or fixedness'. The fairground object as heritage also invites different readings from different audiences, as the vernacular flow is halted or even reversed. This dilemma was introduced in chapter 5, in the discussion of the FHT and their founding impetus to bring the changing tendency of a particular artwork to heel. The Ark and Waltzer at Folly Farm are also good examples of this complexity and potential controversy, and I return to them now in more detail.

Fairground artist Vicky Postlethwaite was commissioned to paint a new front on the Ark, taking the ride back to its original Orton and Spooner factory decoration with a faithful replica work. Figure 10.4a shows the ride in the early 1970s sporting its original front painted by A.S. Howell showcasing his trademark scene of an explosion of modern and dynamic transport (for the time) emerging from an exaggerated perspectival vanishing point.¹ Circa 1975 the ride was repainted by Andrew Easton, the in-house artist at Maxwells of Musselburgh, with something of a tongue-in-cheek makeover that mimicked Howell's work but added (then) modern icons of speed including a racing car, racing motorcycle, Concorde and a jumbo jet, as shown on figure 10.4b. Postlethwaite's finished work is seen in figure 10.4c, where the original Howell scene has been carefully recreated. One can only assume that the showman-owner of 1975 (the Crow family) felt that the Concorde assemblage had a concordant effect with the punters on the fairground, however the ride has since carried with it something of a stigma amongst the purist element of the fairground enthusiast community. Though never explicitly stated, the most probable reason for raising concern was that the ride retained its incredibly ornate and deep rounding board structure and large oval three-bay front with sculpted upper boards. Thus, to be updated as an artwork presented a chronological clash and an associated tension - in effect if it was to be decorated with Concorde-era iconography it would have been better suited cut down with a more modern and less fussy structure. For example, the purchase of the ride by Folly Farm in 1998 provoked an editorial response by Graham Downie in *The Fairground Mercury*² stating 'perhaps its new owner may be moved to restore the original décor so tragically overpainted by Maxwells in the mid-1970s', hinting here that restoration is a good thing. This does then beg the question as to what constitutes the 'right' restoration (and who gets to determine this 'right') for a ride that would have seen multiple overpaints through the years. What Folly Farm actually did with the Ark was to preserve the overpainted front and create a new front with the original artwork applied fresh, allowing Concorde to survive, so to speak, as the aeroplane itself took on an anti-exemplar character of various grounded modernist discourses following its spectacular real-life crash in 2000.

An example of revivalism (or fictitious restoration) is provided by Folly Farm's Waltzer ride, which, in its 'real life' guises, has always been without decoration from its time of manufacture as a very late Maxwell model built in 1972 for an amusement park at Great Yarmouth with a particularly plaintive appearance and fibre-glass materiality suited to the exposure of a seaside location.³ After passing through a couple of owners it arrived at Folly Farm in 2008 and was

¹ See Howell (2003: 51) and Weedon and Ward (1981: 188) for further images of this particular ride.

² See *The Fairground Mercury* volume 20 number 4 (March 1998) page 2.

³ See

<http://cdm15847.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/search/collection/p15847coll3/searchterm/w56/order/nosort> (accessed 4 November 2016) for a visual history of this ride.



Figure 10.4a - Original décor on the Ark prior to repainting / copyright Pete Tei



Figure 10.4b - 1975 modernisation on the Ark by Andrew Easton, photograph Ian Trowell



Figure 10.4c - Restoration by Postlethwaite, photograph Ian Trowell

rebuilt and repainted as a 1950s rock'n'roll Waltzer - effectively taking it to both a decoration it never had and a time before its actual manufacturing (see figures 10.5a-b). Similarly, their Twist ride was a 1980s US import to the British fairground and travelled in the then-style of exposed chrome; it has subsequently been retro-themed at Folly Farm after purchase in 2004 and is now painted in the style of an original 1960s Twist. Both the Waltzer and Twist here are themed as versions of the ride that predate the actual manufacture of the physical object, a forced anachronism that is enabled through the slippery nature of the fairground ride and its floating authenticity, bifurcating between the object as object and the object as the sum of its decoration. Confronted by the Folly Farm 1950s Waltzer, the average punter from a family seeking either a vintage experience for the younger ones or a trip back in time for the older ones is none the wiser. However, this issue of disingenuity in the service of a wider themed experience of an approximated-authenticity and past-ness does not sit comfortably with everyone. 'Memory Lane' is not a precise Euclidean destination to be found on a sat-nav or Google maps; it is mutable in both time and space. A fairground enthusiast is likely to find this fictitious restoration against any ethics of the authentic object approaching the museum or preserved environment, but the fairground ride is like a snake that sheds skin and a chameleon that changes skin. The carefully contrived figurative artwork of jiving couples seen on Postlethwaite's re-rendering of the Waltzer fits with the pop music that blares throughout the roofed space of Folly Farm, and this takes priority. Fairgrounds reflects cultural imperatives, and if the cultural imperative is a specific sense of heritage then the artwork falls into line. Seen in this way, the Twist and Waltzer at Folly Farm are both fairground rides that have never stopped being active fairground rides (they simply get re-skinned to reflect the cultural zeitgeist of heritage) and are also fairground rides that *appear* to have been taken from the past and preserved for the pleasure of Folly Farm visitors. Even for more purist heritage purposes, a fairground ride and its decoration are highly mutable and adaptable, making a 'correct' decision of either halting, returning to something in its own past, or returning the authentic object to something even older, a difficult process, something that the fairground ride shares with the steam engine *Flying Scotsman*.



Figure 10.5a - Folly Farm Waltzer as new at Great Yarmouth, 1984, photograph Ian Trowell



Figure 10.5b - Retro-painted Waltzer, 2016, photograph Ian Trowell

Illusion - being fooled by the Gallopers

If a key facet of fairground art is to change and reflect, then its essence is illusion, to suspend disbelief and create a magical fantasy world, either hiding the mechanical reality of the ride or summoning the reality of another world and experience. Furthermore, as shown above, illusion can equally be called upon to create a shimmer of heritage. Preserving and curating the heritage of illusions involves the illusion itself, and the illusory reach can often encompass the heritage object as it purports to stand proud and authentic as somehow back in time. Introduced in chapter 9, Historic England's guidance paper on amusement parks and fairground rides champions the urgency and importance of addressing and acting upon the changing environment of the fairground. Page 17 of the booklet talks of the heritage importance of Gallopers and lists numerous examples including 'a set dating from 1919 at Blackpool Pleasure Beach as well as one at Bournemouth', with the latter example being pictured in operation on the seafront. This ride is actually a 1994 set, part of the renewed phase of building Gallopers as their enduring popularity headed upwards following a decline in the 1960s and 1970s. The fairground is about fooling, and here the pinnacle of heritage authority has been hoodwinked.⁴ The issue of a tradition of illusion and attempts to continue a tradition were drawn out in chapter 7 as I identified a prickly bifurcation between heritage object and tradition. I now return to this work to consider the Gallopers as an example of illusion.

Joby Carter commented about people being fooled by modern Gallopers built by manufacturers such as Matthews and Rundles, inviting a task of drilling down into second-order-objects (in this case parts of the ride) and even sub-objects (the metal and paint) regarding authenticity and affect. The Gallopers have a strong resonance in both the vintage and contemporary fairground, acting as a kind of imprimatur, featuring in several of my case studies. In addition, Gallopers often form a key aspect of the modern fairgrounds, particularly big events and charter fairs, allowing the fairground to carry a reliable image of its own sense of history alongside its embrace of modernity in the pursuit of thrill.⁵

The joy and nostalgia evoked in the public through the immediate vintage apparentness of the Gallopers (which does still utilise a Victorian invention and mode of motion) overwhelms a need to scrutinise for hidden details of fakery. There is a balance of forces at work with what signifies authenticity and what can be 'got away with' in the pursuit of convenience and economy (avoiding expensive items like original lightbulbs). Certainly, the mechanism and the associated motion as a kinetic whole are essential, and the modern-day Gallopers keep this tradition with the crank action motion that draws the mounts up and down in oppositional sequences with regard to contiguity of mounts.⁶ The rods and spindles are exposed within the roof structure and one cannot help but glance up and admire the mechanism as the structure

⁴ That is, presuming we are talking about the tangible object and not the intangible knowledge of the tradition to build. The re-engagement of building Gallopers could be classed under the same process of Japanese Shinto temple building, where the structure is taken down and rebuilt systematically to allow the ability to know and do to prevail against the simple object itself.

⁵ The Showmen's Guild logo is based upon a circular woodcut style image of a fairground with a Gallopers in the centre, whilst other regional Guild emblems such as the Scottish section are based upon a Gallopers mount with a twisted brass pole.

⁶ Braithwaite (1988: 116-122) provides the best technical breakdown of the construction and motion of the Gallopers.

revolves. As the ride commences the eyes of the young and old automatically drift upwards and are hypnotised by the motions in play. The traditional enabling of the overall motion - the primary motion of the spinning of the frame that allows the secondary motion of the offset cranks to rotate and so create a cyclical upward pull on the brass poles holding the mounts - is more concealed within the centre structure of the ride. Traditionally this would have been powered by steam and a centre engine at the core of the structure. There is a nesting of illusions and simulations here; the ride sets out to recreate the motion of horses and typical for many fairground devices the powering and structuring for movement is concealed within painted and mirrored panels. However, the Gallopers breaks with tradition and exposes and celebrates its secondary mechanism through the cranks and rods, often utilising a circle of angled mirrors to reflect and amplify the hypnotic machinery and celebrate the victorious breakthrough of the ride's invention. Thus, the Gallopers carries forward two essential experiences - the pleasurable simulation of riding upon a horse and the wonder of what is now an old-fashioned structure of rhythmic and rotating metal machinery resembling industrial and agricultural devices from the 19th century. If, as Joby remarks, people are fooled by the modern Gallopers, it is a fooling that is masked by the authenticity of the important secondary motion that is carried through in modern production of these rides, thus creating a microcosm of the situation whereby the operative traditional overwhelms the object-oriented traditional. The visibility and authenticity of this secondary motion and the overarching appearance in the service of recognition of past-ness is what counts.

This further factor, the importance of appearance, sits outside the two regimes of primary and secondary motion but has equal value and is equally open to abuse (or fooling) but in a different capacity. The modern Gallopers thus maintain an apparent linkage to the past with the mounts on the ride - consisting of the unnatural stature of the horse with all four legs extended outwards, the strained facial expressions, the smooth carved nature of the mount, the application of bright paint, the assigning of a name to each mount, and the addition of horsehair manes and tails. It is also here, as well as in the bowels of the primary movement mechanism, that people can be 'fooled', with the use of modern materials such as fibre-glass to create the mounts and artificial fibres to create the horsehair. Thus, authenticity granularises into smaller margins; the design, shape and decoration of the horse retains historic relevance, and this can override the fine details of materiality - again seeing a more immediately apparent tradition overrule a less obvious tradition. There are increasingly marginal audiences of knowledge, and the challenge is finding the right balance of economy and practicality against the potential tipping points of perceived crimes of 'truth to materiality'. This truth to materiality, considered simply as the material being honest about its materiality, is difficult to police, since the 'truth to materials' of wooden mounts can be replicated with fibre-glass, such that the truth to materials of the fibre-glass is its ability to be both truthful to itself and untruthful to other materials by replicating their own truths. As fairground historian Kevin Scrivens suggests:

To be honest it is quite difficult to tell the difference between wooden and fibre-glass mounts. On the latter the carving is not as sharp, sharp indents on the originals are smoothed out with putty or some removable filler before the mould is made to make it easier to remove the mould and make sure the fibre-glass will come out of the

mould. From a distance I don't think anyone could really tell, but fibre-glass doesn't seem to weather quite as well, then again it doesn't rot either.⁷

An architectural truth to materials carries through into the modern fairground ride with the general proliferation of metal checker plate on thrill rides, connoting a contemporary and future-facing surface that associates the ride with an expected maximisation of speed and dexterity, but the introduction of such a material in the Gallopers would more than likely create a tipping point of believable authenticity. Historian Stephen Smith sees a divergence in the modern Gallopers. Firstly, Rundles machines work to fool the rider in a softer manner:

Rundles machines are much more 'authentic' as they use castings from Savage patterns, although to the 'expert' they would notice that the gears are nylon and the carvings are all fibre-glass. Similarly, the pieces that would have been constructed from timber and box-section steel, to a member of the public these would pass far more easily as the original product.⁸

However, Smith continues, Matthews machines make fewer concessions to hiding their modern structure:

Matthews machines have top frames that look as if they were built for Lifting Paratroopers or something as they are a mass of steel framing, nothing like the traditional wooden swifts and steel tilt rods.

The comparison of the top frame that Smith highlights can be seen in figures 10.6a-b, the lower set having a clinical and modern mechanism for simulating the galloping action, whilst the upper set retains the eccentric rods. Modernism works its way into the old set with LED lighting, whilst a key part of tradition is retained in the modern set with the twisted brass poles as the signature of the ride. The floors of both machines are interesting, as figures 10.7a-b show. Here the modern fibre-glass floor tries for a skeuomorphic effect by mimicking the painting style of the wooden floor. The illusion is permeated into second-order-objects and sub-objects, making its heritage consideration a challenging and contested undertaking.

Whilst I considered the fairground ride along with the *Flying Scotsman* in the previous section as a potential product of its parts and decoration in dispute, there is a wider opening to illusion here and an exploitation of floating authenticity to a tipping point beyond the object, a Baudrillardian simulacra. The Cakewalk at Scarborough is a case in point, built from disparate parts of something else, akin to constructing a steam engine from parts of a wagon and signal box. Obviously, this transgresses policy and good practice of the museum, putting the Scarborough Cakewalk more in the ballpark of the fabricated theme park object or Luxor Casino's King Tutankhamun's Tomb.

⁷ Email conversation conducted 7 November 2016.

⁸ Email conversation conducted 6 November 2016.



Figure 10.6a – Authentic Gallopers top section, 2016, photograph Ian Trowell



Figure 10.6b – Modern Gallopers top section, 2016, photograph Ian Trowell



Figure 10.7a – Authentic Gallopers floor, 2016, photograph Ian Trowell



Figures 10.7b – Modern Gallopers floor, 2016, photograph Ian Trowell

Futurity – objects in the mirror are closer than they appear

The present, in the very moment of its occurrence, seeks to view itself as already history, already past. In a sense, it turns back on itself in order to anticipate how it will be regarded when it is completely past, as though it wanted to “foresee” the past, to turn itself into a past before it has even fully emerged as present. (Hartog 2015: 114)

In the breaking down of my research question in chapter 1, I indicated the need to consider the fairground in the present as the heritage of the future (Q2 in my schema of research), encapsulated by McClellan (2003: 2), who states ‘museums serve a notional future public as much as real visitors in the present’. However, this cannot be set out as a proposal for the purpose of a thesis since its correctness, or otherwise, cannot be ascertained in the present. It is prescriptive and so open to a future anachronism at the level of meaningfulness; we know (or think we know) the objects and socio-cultural forces and affects that inform our contemporary fairground experience, but we cannot make a judgement on what will both disappear and retain any accrued meaningfulness.⁹ Instead, it is necessary to develop an understanding of the dynamic of the fairground in terms of its scope, shape and velocity, and to match this to a study of audiences. I have indicated the change on the fairground, particularly in chapter 3 where I described it as a pulse. The forward-thinking nature of my case studies is less revealing, though Glyn at Folly Farm was already looking to acknowledge the narrowing gap between contemporary and vintage, and Dingles (through the FHT) were scouting the near edges of the current fairground scene for important ride types that were about to vanish. Both were looking to source a Miami Trip for their collection.

Historic England’s brief introduction to amusement park and fairground heritage strategy (discussed above) suggests on its first page that all fairground rides can be at risk due to changing visitor tastes, and my earlier discussion on the FHT raised the issue of the accelerated rate of renewal on the contemporary fairground and a recognised need to capture objects of potential significance, a need that may clash with the heritage-focused enthusiast milieu. For the fairground enthusiasts and experts who see the FHT as being responsible for ‘their interest’, history exists either as a static slice or with a distinct cut-off point.

The Miami Trip ride is a good example of a fairground machine caught in the modern moment and modernising dynamic. It debuted in 1990 and changed the fairground as much as anything else in the past, thus earning itself significance in the evolution of the fairground.¹⁰ The ride signalled a new wave of fairground art based upon airbrush techniques and a singular and explosive narrative drawn from rave culture and science fiction (figures 10.8a-f). Consequently,

⁹ A wrong judgement about the future constitutes a parachronism, a mild anachronism; though science fiction writers often presume certain concepts, brands and media to be prevalent in the future (fax technology in *Back to the Future*). Fairground art discussed in the previous section, creating a fictitious work depicting the past, can include prochronism, or harder anachronism, in which objects or cultural reference points are inserted into a 1950s scene which would not have been invented until years later (the appearance of rockers wearing Motorhead tee-shirts in the 1979 film *Quadrophenia*, depicting events in 1964, is a common example).

¹⁰ Owen Ralph in his lecture at the NFA (November 2014) suggested that the Miami Trip is now part of the ‘core four’, rides that are seen as integral to every fairground and so part of every key showperson’s stock. The other three are Dodgems, Waltzer and Twist.



Figures 10.8a-f – Miami Trip images, photographs Ian Trowell

and negatively, it is associated with the demise of brush art and the tradition of repeating patterns with a distinctive fairground art imprint. It is also often classed as a bit of non-ride, with its motion being a simple sweep-rotating bench. For the showman it is a winner, since it is both manoeuvrable and able to be positioned on the side-ground, and for the general public of punters it is a cultural connection and highly social ride. It has arguable importance in the fairground evolutionary tree, but this importance is not widely appreciated in the older milieu of enthusiasts.¹¹ At the same time the ride evolves in itself, earliest examples are now all but scrapped as mark II (etc) machines are built, and it may even quickly drop out of favour on the contemporary fairground at some point and become a modern-vintage hybrid. However, exposure to change or extinction does not necessarily demand a heritage consideration, and

¹¹ There was some concern when Folly Farm discussed purchasing a Miami Trip, and a number of survey respondents in my research expressed horror that such a ride might need to be considered now as a heritage piece for the future.

the accelerated rate of change on the fairground means it remains a considerable time before it is reclaimed by a new generation in the museum who see it as their nostalgia and as having autobiographic salience.

As I discussed using the testimony in chapter 3, whilst we are not necessarily nostalgic for all things gone, we are often nostalgic for a time when we were a certain age (or ages) such that independence, opportunities and choices seemed at our disposal. We then tend to seek solace in things from that age. This is what I call the then-self, a heritage-seeking construct that is premised not so much on revisiting a time as interested observer, but instead seeking the prompts and scenery to re-experience our own past by going back and re-living it. Consequently, accelerated cultural change means that objects pertinent to the then-self of one person may exist in a narrowing time-frame of the past that is incompatible with another person who may be close in age. With the fairground this is becoming particularly pressing. The fairground was fun and the heritage fairground recreates that fun as rekindled fun. Whilst there is a seriousness and didactic aspect to the displays and objects of the FHT collection, there is also an immersive and somatic aspect that hooks into nostalgic impulses. This is clearly reflected in the analysis of feedback I presented in chapter 5 across all the collections surveyed, and the evidence of the findings of the then-self is stated on many feedback responses.

The narrowing window of being able to salvage something about to vanish is set alongside an extending gap to when the cultural object opens up to a wider audience to appreciate it as a historic and nostalgic object; essentially extending a period of indeterminacy as the object is plucked from the category rubbish but is not able to revalorise itself.¹² The speed of cultural renewal accelerates and becomes out of sync with the passage of time itself; we have more things for shorter periods. Depleted cultural objects, practices, sayings, and sounds build up and burst out of the time constraints that seem to house their original periods of usage. This is an issue that the FHT and other fairground grey-museums must navigate, as the general audience who look to find a jump-lead connection to their then-selves as teenage punters on the fairground will seek out what is meaningful for them.

It also chimes with a key issue in the wider heritage environment regarding what Harrison (2013: 166) classes as a 'crisis of accumulation of the past in the present'. Harrison further suggests that this serves to:

undermine the role of heritage in the production of collective memory, overwhelming societies with disparate traces of heterogenous pasts and distracting us from the active process of forming collective memories in the present.

Harrison's work on heritage is thought-provoking and critical, though it often reverberates with the 1980s heritage debate that he identifies as being overly discursive.¹³ He quickly identified heritage as 'an abundance ... ubiquitous ... omnipresent cultural phenomenon ... all pervasive piling up of past' (3), and argues not so much for a discursive shift but a shift in discursivity – a move away from being rooted in an authoritative, overbearing stricture. In hinting at a 'dominant salvage paradigm' (167), we might be tempted to abandon the chase of

¹² It would also be possible to recall here the Perspex 'Adshel' transport shelter encountered on the way to BCLM in chapter 8.

¹³ Smith (2006: 35) suggests the 'heritage industry critique shares all too much discursive space with the AHD'.

objects piling up, but this clearly would not be a solution to the fairground heritage problem. These first-order-objects, large and demanding of time, space and resources, form the basis of fairground heritage for all of the user communities.

At the same time, this 'nostalgia industry' (Edensor 2005: 27) allows for desires to run riot and be at the behest of innovators working at the interface of heritage and entertainment, such as seen at the various attempts to resurrect Margate Dreamland. Boyer (1994: 303) suggests a 'longing for a past that had never existed or had ceased to exist, a desire to return to an imaginary place from which one felt estranged', whilst Appadurai (1996: 77) sets this out in a forthright fashion:

Such nostalgia does not principally involve the evocation of a sentiment to which consumers who really have lost something can respond. Rather, these forms of mass advertising teach consumers to miss things they have never lost. That is, they create experiences of duration, passage, and loss that rewrite the lived histories of individuals, families, ethnic groups and classes. In thus creating experiences of losses that never took place, these advertisements create what might be called "imagined nostalgia", nostalgia for things that never were.

In this regard, nostalgia has shifted from being a feeling (an urge to return to a past as home) to being an attribute of something from the past, to finally being the thing from the past itself. It becomes a commercial object, a mutable commodity, necessitating new ways of engaging and undermining previous theory such as the key work by Fred Davis which suggests that 'nostalgia must be an experienced past' (Davis 1979: 8). Appadurai's warning is stark, and the potentially exploitative world of hyper-stimulated desire for faked lived pasts could be assigned to the realm of the theme park, or used in a deterministic critique of the living museum. The search for nostalgia under this fashionable frenzy pulls in the fairground object with its strong fields of affect and its ability to take on a shifting set of illusory capacities. Here the fictitious revival strategies of Folly Farm come up against the challenging idea of pinning down the authentic and important historical moment as attempted by the FHT, with both institutions looking at an overlapping potential visitor base.

Building up, pulling down, other destinations

The five themes above allow a dialogue to extend between the fairground and heritage, each one a pinch-point drawn from the extensive case studies. The enquiry that is addressed highlights the complex process of moving between the intangible aspects of the fairground ('real' intangibles such as affects and practices, and 'hidden' intangibles such as illusion and floating authenticity manifested in seemingly fixed objects¹⁴) and the heritage environment. This dialogue with heritage, the informing and challenging as raised in the principal research question, equips us with a technique to identify the complexities and dangers in assuming that popular culture easily translates into heritage. Moore (1997: 97) acknowledges such a challenge, focusing on types such as the collectors, activists and tinkerers that populate the fairground heritage scene in my own study, and stating that 'museums are going to have to radically alter their attitude towards collectors, if representing popular culture becomes an important part of their mission'.

Key aspects such as heterogeneous subjectivities in granular audiences, the importance of space, building and atmosphere, the management of nostalgia, and the interweaving of a wider assemblage of popular culture constructs and practices can be applied to other areas such as attempts to create heritage out of popular music and sport. Museums and heritage are starting to acknowledge this challenge, with recent work looking to assess how music heritage pervades fan culture, vernacular (but highly unstable) digital outposts, non-accredited museums and experiences, and official museums and archives. Leonard and Knifton (2015: 108) set out the context:

Popular music as a museum topic creates complex relationships between museums and their visitors, with myth, memory, audience self-recognition, identity, the role of expertise, and the inclusion of community perspectives.

The fairground as a polysensory and vibrant aspect of popular culture has obvious parallels, not least engulfing popular music as part of its experiential overview. In addition, the fairground throws up its own singularities of obfuscation and polymorphousness in terms of embracing illusion and vernacular flow, and the vectors travelled in exploring these conundrums can be insightful in wider cultural heritage practices. I now set out some further possible uses of the thesis, and develop some parallel frameworks where the empirical research undertaken here can have further use.

Critical heritage discourse

Rodney Harrison's important work *Heritage: Critical Approaches*, in which assemblage theory is introduced into heritage, is a provocative proposal to seek a way forward for critical heritage. I have drawn from his use of assemblage, introduced within his propositional structuring aspect of the work in chapter 2, to support my own modelling of both the fairground as a complex structure and the heritage process of the fairground as a manifestation of difficult fun. The five themes explored in this chapter, drawn from selective single moments across the case studies, also emphasise Harrison's call for an assemblage approach to take into account objects, affects, practices, spaces and audiences exerting

¹⁴ Smith (2007: 274) advises caution around a set definition of intangible relating to aspects beyond a fixed object.

influence in a push-and-pull dynamic. I now draw together a more unified tangent from my case studies that is informed by Harrison's more experimental setting out of understanding the possibilities of heritage. Here he argues for heritage to evoke a materiality, a connectivity and ultimately a dialogical assemblage (Harrison 2013: 4).

The fairground is fun, overwhelmingly illusionistic and an assemblage of fluid objects that has a scope that extends on a pair of axes: breaking down and re-assembling as a conceptual topological entity between the whole, parts and sub-parts, and monopolising different spaces and cultural enclaves that are perceived in different ways, by different people, at different times. Differentiating between encounter, engagement and experience is a hopeless task, as borders and boundaries shift, and the rules of what counts as experience shifts outwards to include anticipation and memory through traces of presence (marks on the grass, broken light caps, bright and insipid food remnants and packaging).

Heritage, in turn, is often a more controlled process of instructive immersion, particularly when considered as heritage that includes a degree of autobiographic salience (as with the fairground). It is encountered as a distinctive thing, it is engaged as you are (perhaps) invited to push, prod, poke, partake and understand, and it is occasionally experienced as you are taken in and taken back to the life and time of the heritage in question. The heritage fairground could be framed in this structured and sequenced method, allowing the objects (as whole or parts) firstly to be encountered, then to be engaged (if they are working exhibits), and finally to be experienced as you are taken back to the fairground of your childhood. However, such structured ordering is made fraught as the heritage-isation of the fairground effortlessly and unavoidably merges with the fairground-isation of heritage. The heritage fairground draws upon the object of its heritage, the fairground itself, in that the present experience of the past (the heritage fairground as heritage encounter) utilises the fairground of the past (the object of heritage) as the revived assemblage of the real fairground. Here we 'encounter' illusion and the cusp of disbelief of the fairground, and encounter is overwhelmed by engagement and experience in an instantaneous dedifferentiation.

As shown in the case studies, there are occasions where the encountering of the heritage draws on immediate illusion such as the deliberately underwhelming entrance into the fairground at Folly Farm. As you walk through the entrance and the illusion of the space is revealed, encounter sublimates to experience, here using sublimation in the chemical sense as jumping across a state (liquidity) and moving from gas to solid. This produces an iterative movement towards both another time and another place, a staple method of the fairground with its simulative vehicles and themed spaces. If certain heritage as sequenced encounter-engagement-experience ultimately aims to transport you to somewhere else sometime in the past, a there-and-then (a recalled train journey, a domestic experience of your childhood, a schoolroom trauma), then the heritage fairground transports you to a fairground of the past. But the there-and-then of the fairground is a time and space when you are taken to another there-and-then. The transformative powers of the fairground bend traditional logic, taking you to fantasy spaces of film and pop music, taking you into an imagination of your future where you may be a film-star, pop-star, disco-dancer, racing-car driver or secret agent. Switching from the apparent super-object 'whole' of Folly Farm represented by the entrance façade, to the second-order-object of a fairground part, the elderly respondent in chapter 7 observes the small boy driving a vintage fairground car on Carters Steam Fair. He is taken back to a time when he was that age doing the same thing, but the magic of that moment in the respondent's

past is premised on the transformative power of being able to drive such a car at that young age. In actuality, the respondent recalls being a young boy briefly empowered by the fairground to be taken into a magical place in an imagined future scenario, tightly gripping the steering wheel of the crafted toy car and feeling he is in control as it careers around the oblong track of the ride. It is a 'knight's move' so to speak, a double articulation, as Carters Steam Fair takes him back to a time and place where he was taken back (or forward) to other times and places. This, in my opinion, is an example of the dialogical power of heritage understood through an assemblage model.

Enthusiast discourse

Understanding and accounting for enthusiasm is central to the thesis and it was necessary to map it out and develop its implications within a critical framework, undertaken primarily in chapter 2 and the subsequent visual intermezzo. Enthusiasts emerge and populate most of the narratives of the heritage initiatives explored, often seeing fairground heritage as a kind of property or with a sense of responsibility, and the various fairground heritage initiatives as something they somehow manage and dictate as if from an unofficial committee of trustees.

It would have been possible to approach the thesis through the lens of enthusiasm to contribute to that emergent discipline, and draw on some of the existing work by academics such as Ruth Craggs, Hilary Geoghegan, and Hannah Neate, or Luke Bennett's detailed work on bunkerologists. This approach brings in ideas from fan theory, audience theory, subcultural theory and social capital, as well as exploring Robert Stebbins' 'serious leisure' perspective. Certainly an organisation like the Fairground Heritage Trust, with its dependence on volunteers to run (and maintain) its public-facing operation alongside its user community of fairground enthusiasts, would provide a fascinating business study model using Stebbins' categorisations of leisure between serious, casual and project-based (Stebbins 2009: 13).

Craggs, Geoghegan and Neate (2013: 879) define a 'collective passion' and investigate enthusiasts as agents for change in heritage thinking and action, emphasising the importance of the minoritarian activist position, later re-emphasised as a 'destabiliser of expert status' (Craggs, Geoghegan and Neate 2016: 1). Elsewhere, Geoghegan (2013a: 41) stresses social capital emerging through the 'proximity of others of like-mind', though cautiously tempers this with a kind of simultaneous two-way movement for 'enthusiasm as an emotion, which is characterised by its ability to move us towards and away from others' (45). The social distancing of fairground enthusiasts, which echoes this observation and proposal by Geoghegan, is something I bring up in chapter 2. Much of the work around industrial enthusiasm focusses on groups that self-acknowledge their niche status, providing an impetus for their own social capital in terms of specialist knowledge and inward-facing competitiveness, their own brand of 'social glue'. The enthusiasm is enclosed, and my work in the thesis on fairground enthusiasm mirrors this enclosure. However, a key difference is that my thesis deals with large collections of fairground heritage pushing out towards a public facing operation. In Craggs, Geoghegan and Neate's studies of heritage groups there is an uneasy push-pull between the amateur and expert when it comes to the moments of articulating material towards the public domain of display. I encounter and document some of this in my own research – collections such as the one at Scarborough which seemingly fail to engage any kinetic or informational strategy of display and entertainment, and instead reflect the prowess of the collector. There are other tensions evident around Margate Dreamland,

and the decision to brand and thematise the space around subcultures and hipster trends (ultimately proving to be a part of the salvation of the venture), which upset many fairground enthusiasts.

Luke Bennett's extensive work on bunkerologists operates from numerous perspectives, but he draws on and contributes to the enthusiast discourse with regularity. Bennett (2011) challenges the more obvious readings of the emancipatory and transgressive, looking instead for alternative knowledge schemes and the attaining of rank and cultural capital within the bunkerologist milieu. His subsequent paper uses Foucauldian discursive formation theory to argue that bunkerologists practice their own discursive multivalence. Finally, Bennett (2013) tackles gender and bunkerologist enthusiasm, supporting a gender focus on enthusiasm explored by Stebbins (2007: 85) and Craggs, Geoghegan and Neate (2016: 4).

Farming as fascination

In chapter 4 – considered as a furrow and geographically situated into the east of England – I proposed and subsequently supported a triangulation between farming, the fairground and a vernacular sense of heritage that brings into display objects that have a provenance of salvaging, and would most likely still be in use in some capacity if not transferred to display artefact category. I justified this chapter as an 'alternative narrative bridgehead into the chapters that follow', and worked on the aspects of the connections between farming and the fairground, and parallels between farming heritage and fairground heritage. There is as a strong synergy with common back-stories, regional placement and contextualisation of site, technology transfer between fairground and agricultural engineering, and a tendency towards tinkering, salvaging, storing, organising and re-using. This in turn produces what I call a 'farmyard legibility' within heritage spaces such as Strumpshaw Steam Museum (chapter 4) and the Scarborough Fair Collection (chapter 5) that mix and match agricultural, industrial and fairground artefacts (the Strumpshaw example was most vivid with the unexplained inclusion of stuffed farmyard birds amongst the exhibits).

The farming theme also clearly underpins the steam rally, explored in chapter 6, and offers another line of enquiry that directly addresses farming and heritage. In the case of the thesis here I only explore links where the fairground heritage activist has roots in farming, and I draw these common points together to emphasise a connection that loops back to the early technology transfer between the agricultural engineer and the showperson. An exploration of the links between farming and heritage practices is itself worthy of detailed study, as I feel that the only work that engages this subject, Wilson (2002), simply sets out the history of a number of examples of heritage collections that the author is personally connected to. A fuller exploration of vernacular heritage collected and curated by farmers could be undertaken in the spirit of Candlin's *Micromuseology*.

Likewise, the steam rally opens up to manifold interpretations and discursive engagement. My chapter here is a good starting point for other directions, setting out the history of the movement itself, and offering a way of reading the space of the rally field from setting, to zoning, to spatial practice. The scores of people watching old military equipment trundling along, roads and railways being built to authentic past methods, and frantic threshing and mowing displays offer an untapped demographic slice of heritage engagement that further granularises into questions of gender, inclusivity and national pride.

Heritage tourism and other readings

The thesis as a whole is a considerable work that explores the fairground, the heritage fairground in several distinct formats, and the possibility of creating fairground heritage. It is focussed on collections of real objects that are brought back to life in different ways and in different types of spaces. These spaces are public-facing, and so the thesis also functions in a parallel fashion as a how-to of heritage tourism.

The thesis refers to, but does not foreground or analyse, other modes of the fairground becoming heritage and asserting itself in the present. These include, but are not limited to, specialist antique trading, fairground branded products, rekindled fairground design as fashionable retro, period arts (films, television, literature, product advertising themes) including the fairground of the past, and specialist groups and social media formations devoted to the fairgrounds of the past. Furthermore, the thesis sets out to confine itself to the space of the travelling fairground, but veers into the space of the seaside amusement park as certain heritage fairgrounds (Folly Farm as the clearest example) summon up memories of seaside amusement spaces. Whilst Kane (2013) has recently set out considerable historical, contextual and theoretical groundwork in the serious study of the British amusement park, my own thesis encroaches into this space with the inclusion of Margate Dreamland as a final case study undertaken at something of an analytical and critical distance due to the contemporary volatility of the site. The next feasible leap from here, not taken in the thesis, would be the heritage situation of the theme park, and a critical exploration of the artist Banksy's 2015 installation Dismaland which politicises both theme parks and heritage.¹⁵

A heritage tourism approach could have been adopted as a principal methodology or rationale, however this would have produced a significantly different thesis. Rather than investigating and challenging what we understand as heritage and its manifesting in our contemporary times, it would instead look at maximising customer satisfaction in lieu of expectation. This work would navigate the same precipice between the museum and the theme park stated in the outset of this concluding chapter, but be situated more stridently on one side of the divide.

This leads on to a further, related consideration: who would directly benefit from reading the thesis? Another way of phrasing this is to consider the thesis as a potential academic monograph, and situate its potential readership. The key audience for the work would be those interested in critical heritage discourse, in either an academic or practitioner sense: the thesis (or thesis as published monograph) explicates a directly transferable way of doing heritage assessment (the utilisation of methods from art history, spatial practice, material culture and object ontology) and an informative discussion on how heritage works. The work strongly embodies a methodology – a way of investigating rather than simply a scope of investigation and set of presented results and conclusions, drawing on cultural geography which itself draws on fictions, photographic and visual representations, and playfulness. This method could be transferred to wider popular cultural enquiries that attain and exhibit geographic-specific clusters, characteristics and expressiveness. It could also be applied to investigating other popular heritage movements that have developed a vernacular and independent strand.

¹⁵ See <http://www.dismaland.co.uk/> (accessed 4 May 2018).

Another further use for the work would be as a more thorough and critical scoping study of fairground heritage, as attempted by Historic England and their 2015 publication in the series 'Introduction to Heritage Assets', acting as an urgent action list of potential spaces and objects.

As Brian Steptoe's numerous books on heritage illustrate, the audience of enthusiasts who engage heritage prefer their books to be visual spectacles that mirror the heritage of their interests. Objects are presented in a sequenced and ordered fashion with a subject whole given maximum exposure (angle of framing, size of image, colour and lighting) and supported by structured close-ups of remarkable facets (first-order and second-order-objects). My work here, as a story of fairground heritage and preservation (in terms of a history of attempts as well as a history of objects) digs deep and is thorough, offering critical comments and engaging critical ideas from other areas. However, such as work would not easily find favour in the enthusiast milieu.

The question of whether the case studies I cover would in turn benefit from the final thesis is also difficult to answer. As stated, the work is not primarily rooted in a tourism studies discourse or methodology, and so offers no directly transferrable guide on how to make heritage experiences more profitable or sustainable in the long term. Certainly the Fairground Heritage Trust, the lengthy final case study in chapter 5, associates itself with an expectation of stepping up to professionalism with stated policies on collection development, audience development, codes of conduct, cogent and robust arguing of national significance, pedagogical expectations and future planning. Other case studies differ on a case-by-case basis: Thursford considers itself as 'more than a museum', Carters refuse to use the word, and so there is the feeling that common ground is not something that should be sought to further success.

Rings in the grass

It is dangerous to generalise from the thesis to other heritage without taking on board an understanding of the nature of the collection materials – the fairground and its array of attractions. Firstly, these are experienced in the original instance as pure pleasure; secondly, they are commonly engaged in a narrow slice of time in one's past; and thirdly, there is an acceptance and expectation of visual fooling and trickery alongside a poly-sensory overload. This does not mean the thesis has no transferability, just that an understanding of the heritage domain to be mapped onto needs to be clear. In many instances, such as pop music, there is a synergy, and the UK's chequered history of trying to capsule-ize pop music heritage demonstrates this. This is where the tension between heritage education and entertainment is most pronounced. I would consider the fairground and its heritage presentation as a kind of upper limit, but it has a transferable value. I would draw on other 'limit' cases such as the cultural museum writing by Timothy Luke (2002) and Douglas Crimp (1993) looking at exhibitions of atrocity objects like the Hiroshima bombing. Thinking at the limit helps you re-assess other examples where you may be approaching these limits.

The challenging idea of the fairground-isation of heritage, seen in the introduction of this conclusion through the highlighting of MacDonald and Alsford's paper, creates discomfort and tentative engagement in equal measure. Authors such as Tony Bennett play a key role in taking on the authoritative, normalising and discursive function of the museum (see his 1995 work *The Birth of the Museum*), though Bennett is also at the forefront of the voices who critique

the living museum for its tendency to embrace the popular and exploit its mutability and nostalgic hooks. Mellor (1991: 113) offers a more balanced view, suggesting that the understanding of the heritage industry invokes ‘the wrong explanatory framework ... the point of departure has generally been, not people’s intentions and activities, but the meanings and representations that surround them’, whilst Message (2006: 5) boldly states that museums can offer a ‘productive rupture’. The wider field of writing in new museology is characterised by this tension between museums as a dangerous shaper and authenticator of identities, an apparatus of power, and the dangers of undermining that authenticity such that the museum loses its own identity and authoritative reason for being. Authority itself is buoyant in discussion, with Karp and Lavine (1991: 7) prefacing a wider collection with the warning ‘people are attracted by the authority of museums, and audiences could lose interest if that authority is called in to question’. The theme park, and its alleged Barnum-esque fairground attraction of the authentic illusion, is clearly such a threat.

An interesting parallel can be observed in Voorhies (2017), in which the efficacy of the critical art exhibition, travelling through the late 20th century to the recent trend for social practice and relational aesthetics, is proposed to be recuperated and drained of critical capacity as it is co-opted to serve a simple experience economy in the name of capital. Carsten Höller’s exhibition *Experience* is identified as the tipping point, the introduction of several fairground rides and sensations into the exhibition space. Though the rides are finished in shining chrome (figure 10.9) and potentially invite something of a critical engagement at the level of situational and spatial aesthetics or classical minimalism, their simple recognition as ‘carousels’ is enough to taint the criticality and a raise a cry of ‘evacuate now’.



Figures 10.9 – Carsten Höller’s *Experience* Exhibition / copyright Steve Cannon

From my own observations of the case studies in this thesis, the two most popular and socially vibrant instances of representing and reliving fairground heritage were evident at Folly Farm and Carters Steam Fair. Both had grasped a sense of the past recreated in a wider experiential whole, that drew from a carefully curated palette of designs, effects and affects, readily deploying illusion and the floating authenticity of vernacular flow. At the same time, neither Folly Farm nor Carters Steam Fair considered or marketed themselves as museums. This indicates a critical distance, or stand-off, between the fairground as heritage and the museum space. Whilst other collections such as Scarborough and Thursford, or the self-absorbed and sprawling assemblage of the steam rally, move forward with their own motivations and dynamics, it leaves the FHT and its housing at Dingles in a complex and precarious position. If it achieves its desired museum accreditation, it will signal a positive acknowledgement of the fairground as important and manageable heritage, building upon the preliminary document of Historic England that simply states a need to start thinking. The complexities of audience demographics and expectations, objects at different levels of structure, the entanglement of the popular and nostalgia, and the navigation of authentic illusions and illusory authenticity, all of which I have developed throughout this thesis, will have to be addressed. This can be seen as a positive challenge, which informs the wider practice of heritage planning, provision and articulation as we accelerate through the cultural excess of the present era.

Appendix - Time line of fairground heritage

Housed collections (dates for opening to public rather than private collecting)

- Folly Farm 1995-present
- Hollycombe 1971-present¹
- Thursford 1959-present
- Fleggborough Village 1994-2004
- Strumpshaw Hall 1964-present
- Scarborough Fair 2008-present
- Dingles 1996-present
- FHT 1987-present (merged to Dingles in 2007)
- Bressingham 1967-present
- Wookey Holes 1970-1998

Rally (key events selected – note a large explosion of rallies post-1970)

- Appleford 1950-present
- Pickering 1953-present
- GDSF 1969-present
- Kegworth 1954-1990
- Shottesbrooke 1964 (one off)
- Blackbushe 1974 (one off)
- Stratford Ancient and Modern 1964-1967
- Stratford Edwardian 1969-1971
- Warwick Edwardian 1970-1971 and 1976-1977

Travelling

- Carters 1976-present

Living Museum Collections (dates when fairgrounds incorporated)

- BCLM 1983-present
- Blists Hill / Ironbridge 1990-present
- Beamish 1989-present

Dealers

- TRAD shop² 1962-c1975

¹ Hollycombe began as a private collection by Commander Baldock in 1951, with fairground interest in the 1960s, opened to public in 1971. The rides as a collection were sold in 1981 and new project attempted at Crowlas (Cornwall) which failed. Hollycombe was re-instated in 1985 run by volunteers.

² Eddy and Marjorie Bangor, collection then housed at Wookey Holes

- Relic design³ 1977-2000

Societies

- Friendship Circle Showland Fans 1940-1967
- British Fairground Society 1950-1963
- Fairground Society 1962-present
- Fairground Association Great Britain 1977-present
- Fairground Organ Preservation Society 1957-present
- Leeds and District Traction Engine Society⁴ 1963-present

³ Malcolm Glickstein and Grierson Gower, shop at 127 St Pancras Road, regular auctions at Brillscote Farm, Malmesbury

⁴ Many smaller traction engine societies exist too numerous to mention

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