



Quadrophonia event at the Carlton Cinema, Easter weekend, 2010

DREAMLAND TEAM NEWSLETTER April 2010: Issue 2

On your marks, get set, go!

By Jonathan Bryant

The Dreamland project now has its design team virtually in place. Just a few appointments are still to be made and we have a full complement covering project management, quantity surveying, CDM (the safety dimension of design) landscape architect, architect, structural engineer, mechanical & electrical engineer, creative etc. Co-ordinating this work is project manager Gardiner Theobald. Full details of each firm will be provided in the next newsletter.

We are confident we will have the best team for the job and now have to motor hard to hit the end July deadline for finalised designs not just of the park and ride layouts but of the entranceways, new buildings, landscaping, power distribution, sound & lighting, public circulation, refurbishment of part of the Dreamland Cinema and of course restoration of the Scenic Railway.

The story of Dreamland must be brought alive to its future visitors in new and attractive ways and this will be fundamental to the design thinking. Also the way in which the new Dreamland can place host to a whole range of exciting events and activity that will bring people back time and time again.

The Independent on Sunday (11 April 2010) ran a good feature on the interest in historic amusement parks and rides. It preceded a Southport conference on the subject at which Dreamland Trust chairman Nick Laister is speaking. Dreamland's Scenic Railway was well featured.

It's all about the rides!

By Bob Preedy

Hello from Bob Preedy. I joined the team a couple of weeks ago with the brief to co-ordinate the rides that will eventually grace our Dreamland site. In the 90s I compiled a couple of books on the history of Roller Coasters in the UK - the research for which led me down many utterly fascinating paths. So here I am in a dream job!

It'll be two years before most of the heritage structures will be seen in public but between now and then the present rather unloved amusements will have to undergo a huge refurbishment. First though the rides will have to be brought by road to Kent, stored, X ray-ed, checked and given a schedule of action. Many of the rides are already in the county - having been heroically rescued by Nick Laister and his team of very willing volunteers over the past three years. Others are still to be rescued from storage in defunct amusement parks or packed away for safe keeping by previous owners.

One example is the Corbiere Wheel, built in the mid 50s by a French firm lead by Henri Corbiere. His design was an improvement in the Battersea Funfair structure, manufactured in 1950 up in Leeds. This novel Battersea Big Wheel had the standard rotating chairs, but with a platform which also slowly rotated - giving a 360 degree view of the surroundings. This wheel did however suffer from a major design fault - the huge forces produced by twin motions proved too great for the side supporting structures. Very soon after opening at Battersea major repairs led inevitably to the wheel only operating in the standard mode. Corbiere's improvement was to give the side structures two separate base fastenings each side, thereby spreading the g forces around four equidistant points on the ground circle. The Dreamland Corbiere wheel last operated a few years ago at Pleasureland in Southport and has been carefully stored outside Blackpool by the owner whose proper job is head of Blackpool Illuminations.

Other pieces of the ride jigsaw are also still in Blackpool, Southport, Barry and Porthcawl. Eventually all will be here to await expert renovation. This inevitably will brush up against Health and Safety factors, electrical and metal investigations and then finally a stylish reinterpretation of their heritage by a scenic artist.

My other task is to delve into the history of each ride and produce reports on their development through the decades. Most originated in America but Germany was also a creative centre for ingenious and entertaining ideas. John Henry Iles, the owner and main driving force behind the popularity of Dreamland from the early 20s also had a stake in many overseas parks. Here he would have cast his sharp eye around for novelty - and then imported the fresh idea to Margate. This tradition continued long after the Iles era - remember the Orbiter - designed and built in Erith and premiered at Dreamland in the late summer of 1976. So maybe if you have a novel idea for a new ride - perhaps you could once again put Margate at the forefront of entertaining invention.

Historic rides are still being discovered across the country and we will be investigating the feasibility of adding these to our bulging stock. Who knows what will turn up in the next two years - so that the rides of yesteryear can again be given pride of place at one of the country's best loved amusement parks. If you have information on the whereabouts of classic older rides - please do get in touch - we want what you want for the next new and exciting phase of a reinvented Dreamland.

Something for the weekend...

By Jan Leandro

The installation of the Ronnie Lane Music Recording Studio outside the Carlton Cinema in Westgate Easter Saturday morning caused quite a stir. By 10.00am we had started to attract the attention of the local people and anyone who happened to be passing by.

Inside the cinema the telephone booking line was hot with calls from last minute hopefuls wanting to secure a ticket. They were out of luck - the cinema had already sold out.

People started to arrive around mid-day to explore the Ronnie Lane Studio and learn about its impressive rock and roll history and to view the Dreamland Remembered window exhibition, featuring a large scale print of the Scenic Railway as its centre piece and a display from Nick Evans inside the cinema building.

Outside the building a large crowd had gathered to await the arrival of the scooter rally, which did not disappoint when the scooterists rode into town in formation and full regalia! By now the atmosphere both inside the cinema foyer and on the street was charged with anticipation.

The film was well received and the post-film discussion, led by our Trustee Neil Sparks, started with a thoroughly interesting and entertaining visual talk by Heritage Advisor, Nick Dermott, followed by Roger K Burton's talk about the making of the film and Paolo Hewitt's take on the Mod scene and popular youth culture.

An after event evening was enjoyed at the newly opened Britannia in Margate where The Whoo tribute band delivered some excellent tunes.

After such a busy weekend I thought I would have a bit of a breather, but that has not been the case! This week I met with Anna Carter of Carter's Steam Fair to discuss the possibility of bringing the fair to Margate this Spring Bank Holiday weekend. This will coincide with the Ace Cafe's rally and the Margate Meltdown on the Piazza on Monday 31 May, 2010. Anna will be coming back to Margate next week to work out the logistics, so watch this space...

A BLAST FROM THE PAST
BY GRAHAM WARD

Graham enjoyed a very constructive visit to Blackpool Pleasure Beach at the beginning of the month, accompanied by Bob Preedy, our new member of the team whose expertise in the area of roller-coasters and historic rides will be invaluable to the Project. We were given full access to the BPB archives which, whilst not formally catalogued, the material it contains is wide-ranging and of great historic interest. Several of the proposed attractions for the new Dreamland have been acquired from Blackpool, and some of the original material pertaining to them is housed in a room adjacent to the Pleasure Beach itself. We also visited the onsite Drawing Office, where many of the original technical plans have been stored, including those for the Caterpillar, Whips, Wild Mouse and Water Chute (which Dreamland has acquired, and which is currently in storage in Ramsgate awaiting reconstruction). The staff were very accommodating, and are willing to copy the plans for us, and in some instances, there may be the possibility of acquiring the originals from them on a long-term loan basis.

Meanwhile work on researching the best possible method of databasing the material we do have in our possession is nearing completion, and the process of cataloging should begin shortly. The material - and that which we hope to acquire during the life of the project - is likely to be diverse, and we need to discover the best method of capturing it so that it can be cross-referenced and accessed easily, particularly at this early stage of the park's redevelopment. At the present time, the archive remains small, but there is scope for development, and we sincerely hope that the public will come forward with not only their memories, but also with any material they feel able to share with us.

To echo my colleague Jan's observations of the recent 'Quadrophenia' event at the Carlton Cinema in Westgate. the day was in all respects, very successful, and her hard work rewarded not only by a good crowd in the cinema (swelled by the thrilling sight of massed scooters that turned up in advance of the screening) but also a lively atmosphere as the evening wore on, courtesy of the Britannia bar in Margate, where we were treated to a very convincing Who tribute outfit.

And finally...



We thought you might like to meet our latest team member who will be promoting Dreamland, over the summer season at various events in, around and beyond Kent. She was greatly admired at her coming out at the Quadrophenia event last Saturday. Her job will be to distribute Dreamland's promotion material as well as selling some delicious ice cream and confectionery from the Stylish Ice Cream Co. Unfortunately she doesn't yet have a name, so any ideas would be very welcome.

Jan Leandro
Audience Development Officer
jan@dreamlandmargate.com

