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THE FAIRGROUND **MERCURY**

The Journal of the Fairground Association Vol. 4 No. 1

Spring 1981



EDITORIAL

The blue skies that heralded the start of the Showman's Calendar at Kings Lynn this year must have caused more than one pair of feet to be itching to go. Still, if you were unable to make the trip to Norfolk the next few weeks promise an exciting start to the season, with the overlap of dates providing a veritable cornucopia of fairs over Easter. One can only hope, given the economic climate, that the prospect is equally attractive for the travelling community.

A well-attended a.g.m. saw the election of our first President, Redditch showman Tom Wilson. Tom has been one of our staunchest supporters since the formation of the Association and we welcome his acceptance of this nomination with great pleasure. Also for the first time we have a showman on our committee; Abie Morris, another good friend of the Association since our early days.

We now have quite a comprehensive list of area reps so for your information we record them together with the Association's officers.

Chairman/Mercury Editor:

Graham Downie, 1 Holly Court, Frome, Somerset. Tel: Frome 66335

Treasurer/Membership Secretary:

John Ray, 57 West Way, Stafford ST17 9XS. Tel: Stafford 48529

Secretary:

Rod Jesson, 3 Warwick Close, Studley, Warks. Tel: Studley 3482

Sales Officer:

Paul Angel, 8 Hampton St., St. James, Hereford, HR1 2RA. Tel: Hereford 66288

Midlands:

Rod Spooner, 7 Lansdowne Rd., Studley, Warks. Tel: Studley 3869

Ron Newbould, 26 Arden Rd., Henley-in-Arden, Warks.

Eastern Counties:

David Springthorpe, 33 Evison Rd., Rothwell, Kettering, Northants. Tel: Kettering 712036

Leicester:

Jim Lawson, 11 Merton Ave., Syston, Leicester LE7 8JP. Tel: Leicester 609804

Notts & Derby:

Bernard Mitchell, 69 Clumber Ave., Chilwell, Beeston, Nottingham. Tel: Nottingham 259680

Lincolnshire:

John Clay, 161 London Rd., Branston, Lincoln. Tel: Lincoln 791300

Lancashire:

Kevin Scrivens, 305 Market St., Shawforth, Nr. Rochdale. Tel: Whitworth 3519

Yorkshire:

Stephen Smith, c/o Freeman's Hall, 548 Castle Leazes, Spital Tongues, Newcastle upon Tyne NE2 4NZ

Northern:

Barry Brown, 32 Eastmount Road, Darlington, Co. Durham.

Cumbria:

George Dawson, 43 Wellings, Kendal, Cumbria, LA9 5LN

Scotland:

Stewart Thom, Drummond Park, Logiealmond, Perth, PH1 3TJ

Michael Smith, 43 Cross Gates, Bellshill, Lanarkshire. Tel: Bellshill 842540

South Wales:

Alastair Arnott, 1 Ystalfera Court, Commercial Street, Ystalfera, West Glamorgan

West:

Chris Russell, Luton House, 15 Livingstone Rd., Teignmouth, Devon TQ14 8NL.

Tel: Teignmouth 4527

Peter White, 40 Morrab Rd., Penzance, Cornwall TR18 4EX

London:

Chris Coutts, 29 Newry Rd., Twickenham, Middlesex.

South Midlands:

Terry Darby, 26 Old Kiln Rd., Flackwell Heath, High Wycombe, Bucks. Tel: High Wycombe 23375

Not forgetting, of course, our two peripatetic members of committee, showman Abie Morris and shoe man Ben Lovell—who may shortly become our first rep. in the U.S.A.

Cover: Orton & Spooner dragon's head, taken at Wookey Hole by Richard Ward. At the time of going to press it seems likely that Richard and Geoff Weedon's magnum opus on Fairground Art will be published late July.

ROUNDBABOUTS

New Rides

<i>Machine</i>	<i>Manufacturer</i>	<i>Owner</i>	<i>Date</i>
Meteor		A. Traylen Jr.	Oct. 80
Satellite	Turnagain	A. Stevens	Feb. 81
Lifting Paratrooper	Harry Steers (Nottingham)	G. & D. Guyatt	Nov. 80 (to open 1981)
Coaster	Pollard	J.J. Rogers (Bristol)	Winter 80/81
Paraglider	Bennett	Whaymans	Feb. 81

Changes

<i>Machine</i>	<i>From</i>	<i>To</i>	<i>Date</i>
Coaster	M. Houghton	Bill Clark (Whitley Bay)	Oct. 80
Autodrome	H. Remblance	R. Remblance	Oct. 80
Octopus	C. Summers	S. Sheppard Jr. (Whitley Bay)	Nov. 80
Reverchon Dodgem	South Coast	Pullin Bros.	Nov. 80
Chairoplanes (German import in 50s by Codona, once J. Hoadleys at Spanish City)	Morgan Stewart (Scotland)	Albert Noble	Mid. 80
Skyliner	?	Martin Jennings	Late 80
Dodgem (rectangular)	H.J. Wallis Jr.	G. de Koenig	Late 80
Waltzer (Wonder) (Odeon, new 1947)	H.J. Wallis Sr.	H.J. Wallis Jr.	Nov. 80
Jets	W. Watkins Jr.	D. Hamer	Winter 81
Satellite	A. Stevens	J. Houghton	Winter 81

Your Editor has asked me to append notes on these lists where appropriate. Certainly there are some interesting comments that can be made on some of the new machines and those that have changed hands in the recent past.

In the last issue you will have seen the photograph of Biddall's new Easyrider. For those of us who saw it built up at Hull fair with all its flash complete for the first time (except for the ceilings under the front canopy) it did look strikingly similar to Crow's machine. Decoratively they certainly are, but mechanically they are fundamentally different from each other. Whereas Crow's ride has the normal electric motor centre drive, Biddall's has hydraulic friction drive on the outside to the rims of the platforms. This does make some difference to the quality of the ride itself, and having sampled both I prefer Crow's which is very smooth. The outside hydraulic drive tends to give a rather jerky ride.

Several changes of ownership in the last issue were of interest. The Dodgem which passed from H. Armstrong to M. Holland in 1980 is basically a very old track indeed. It dates from pre war years and the woodwork suggests that it was of Orton & Spooner manufacture. It has had many parts added since by Supercar and others, and very little of the original is left.

The little Orton Ark which passed from E. Atha to P. Gray last July was new in 1932 to Ben Hobson of Yorkshire who had it until the beginning of World War II. It then went to Ernest Atha with its run of fairs. In 1957 Atha acquired the big Orton Cycledrome Ark of Charles Evans (South Wales), later of Hall & Sons New Brighton. Up until last summer Athas were travelling both of these fine machines. The small one was a convertible and I believe the larger one has also been made convertible to a Waltzer.

The Skid which passed from Tricketts to Peter Shayler last March has also had an interesting and checkered history. It was a very old pre-war machine which spent some time in South Africa before Albert Barker acquired it in 1962. A few years later it was sold to the Dowse family who travelled it up until the early '70s when it was sold to Tricketts.

The Waltzer which W. Davis bought from Bernard Hayes last year had been Harry Marshall's famous "20th Century Thriller" in the late '50s. This was an Ark entirely fitted with space rocket mounts and a magnificent "Dan Dare style" extension front depicting space ships on launching pads preparing for take-off. The machine passed from Marshall to Arthur Holland round about 1961 or 2 when Harry Marshall

bought a new Maxwell Speedway and in the mid '60s A. Holland also had a fine Maxwell Speedway at which time the rocket ride was again re-sold. Today it looks nothing like it did in its heyday except that it still has the rather curious curved brackets on the tops of the uprights.

Turning now to my lists in this issue, I am pleased to note that Whaymans have a new Paraglider as they appear to have been travelling Dodgems only last season following the sale of their Jets to Billy Watkins Junior. These Jets were, and are, interesting as they could well be the first set of Jets that ever travelled. They were new to J. Codona Limited in the early '50s and were built by Maxwells with lattice-girder type arms similar to those on Walter Shaw's Maxwell Jets. It also had an Odeon style paybox with a characteristic vertical column bearing J. Codona's name. You will notice from this list that this Jet machine has now gone to Lancashire riding master Danny Hamer.

The most interesting machine of all mentioned in my lists this time, from an historical point of view, is the Autodrome of Remblances. It was originally built as a Loch Ness Monster for Fred Gray, and had the most exotic decoration. The hand rails and false uprights were representative of seaweed, whilst the rounding boards and extension front sported giant shells. There was also a lighthouse in the middle of the machine. You may remember that it was featured in one of Ron Taylor's celebrated

"Showman's Heritage" series in the World's Fair. It did not remain a Monster for very long and by 1939 it had been converted to an Autodrome although it still had all the Monster scenery. Incidentally, the same thing happened with Harry Studt's Monster. It must be conceded that the Monster ride, though an imaginative and unusual idea, was not a commercial success. Fred Gray's machine later passed to John Biddall and when I first saw it in 1957 at Lindfield Fair it still had all the original Monster scenery except that the front and roundings had been re-decorated with racing cars of the 1930's Brooklands type.

During the '60s it was re-fitted with very plain wooden hand rails, and new rounding boards which were very nicely decorated although more prosaically than the original, and the machine was now John Biddall's "Joy Ride". Something also seems to have happened to the cars as the fronts and backs of them appear to have been flattened compared to how Lang Wheels Autodrome cars normally look. It still is very smart as Remblances, and, though London area based, spends much of the season in the Northern half of England.

Mike Hanna

All news items regarding machine changes welcomed: please contact Mike Hanna at 3 Powell Road, Newick, Sussex.



Late Items

John Studt's new Maxwell Waltzer (see picture) made its first appearance in late February at Clydach. Decor is on a Crimson Lake base and all notices are in English and Welsh. John's previous machine has been sold to Glasgow showman Arthur Milne, thus adding another chapter to the ride's history (see Vol. 3 No. 2).

The Meteorite belonging to John Greatorex—the first of its type to be built by Ivan Bennett—has been sold to Billy Watkins, Jnr.

East Midlander Chris Coombes is the new owner of the set of Chairs formerly travelled by Bobby Foster.

Bristol showman Albert Heal's Waltzer (ex-Pat O'Neill) can be seen at Brighton this year with its Fred Fowle decor splendidly revamped by showman/decorator Bobby Edwards.

Latest ride to get the "black look" is the John Collins (ex-Michael Collins) Waltzer, the work of its makers, Maxwells.

May Run

The end of April and the month of May is a busy time for showmen in the Welsh Border counties. Many fairs are held within a radius of fifty miles at places like Ludlow, Leominster, Tenbury Wells, Hereford, Shrewsbury, Bishops Castle, Knighton, Presteigne, Pembridge and Kington.

Years ago even more fairs were held than today. At Clee Hill the famous Alf Peters used to attend with his gallopers on the common, followed in later years by Wilsons of Redditch who also used to attend Cleobury Mortimer.

Leominster Fair (Fair Day May 2nd) used to be held in the streets (Corn Square and Broad Street) but now it is held in the lorry park at the one end of the town. Before the war this fair was held under the banner of Deakin and Sons followed later by Con Studt, Chris Morris and now by his son, Abie Morris, supported by Billie Danter and Sons who also attend Presteigne and Pembridge (Fair Day May 13th).

But perhaps the most famous of the May Runs was that of the West Country firm of Hills who used to attend Ludlow (Fair Day May 1st) Bishops Castle (May 8th), Club Church Stretton (May 14th), Knighton (May 17th) and Craven Arms (May 24th).

Sadly only three of these fairs remain; Ludlow, Bishops Castle and Knighton. Two of these have been removed from their original grounds—Bishops Castle from the Cattle Market

Riding School?: The Savage set of Gallopers sold earlier this year from Cleethorpes Amusement Park to Jack Schofield has now been acquired by Dr Pandora Moorhead, principal of Hathrop Castle Girls School in the Cotswolds. The machine has been erected in the school grounds.

Diary

Sunday 5 April, 7.30 p.m. Wildmoor Hotel, Stratford upon Avon (on A422 to Alcester, ¼ mile from town boundary). Film and slide show. Contact Rod Spooner, Studley 3869 for details.

May 30–October 17. Exhibition at the Stevenage (Herts.) Museum to celebrate the 700th anniversary of Stevenage Charter Fair.

to a field outside town and Knighton from Offa's Dyke Field to the Cattle Market car park.

Of these fairs perhaps the showpiece of them all is Ludlow. Still held in the Castle and Market Squares, Castle Street and Mill Street. This was one of the few fairs that took place throughout World War Two.

Before the War this fair was under the banner of Hill Bros who attended with their Dodgems, Noahs Ark, Skid and Whip and their superb engines Vanguard, King George the Fifth and City of Bristol.

During the War and after Bernard Hill attended with his Dodgems. After the War the Dodgems were joined by Whittinghams Ark (until 1954) and Bernard's brother Jimmy's Whirlwind in 1947 and Caterpillar in 1950.

In 1952 our good friend Tom Wilson came with the Waltzer and has been attending ever since.

Ludlow Fair is now under the banner of Wynns Amusements who attend with their Dodgem (still the original Hill track although modernised somewhat from the original) and Twist, Tom Wilson's Waltzer, Michael Phillips' Round-up and Percy Rogers' Wheel or Joe Wilson's Ghost Train.

All these fairs are noted for their late hours, Ludlow, Bishops Castle and Knighton going on well past the midnight hour on Saturdays.

May is a magic month to us in this area when everything seems to come alive with the arrival of the fair. Our only hope is that it will continue for many many years to come.

Bob Passey & John Tristram

JOE LING AND SONS

Today the Ling family are a well known family, travelling many counties, especially in the North, with numerous rides, each maintained to a standard to which we have come to expect from them. To this day the family travel rides; indeed at the present there are three generations travelling machines of varying ages, types and pedigree.

At Pudsey Feast, in 1921, Joe Ling opened a brand new set of Savage steam Yachts. It had been brought to Pudsey by rail from King's Lynn and then pulled to the fairground behind Howden's Burrell engine "Kathleen Mary". Mr. Long acquired Foden 1540 from Hill Bros., naming it "Duchess of York". This was George Simons old engine "Prince Llewlyn". The Yachts were powered by Savage engine 886 and music was provided by a small Gavioli trumpet barrel organ.

In the following year Joe Ling acquired two Fowler 'B6' road locomotives, from a batch of ex WD surplus, converted for showland use by Chas. Openshaw of Reading. The first was No. 14119 (road registration number DP6655), and named "The Great Bear". The success of this first engine led Mr. Long to acquire a second, identical engine, this time number 14112, again from Chas. Openshaw (road registration number DP3513). "The Gladiator" had been used for a short time by John Studt but was returned to Chas. Openshaw and sold to Lings. In the meantime another Fowler, 11126 "Our Fancy" had been bought from 'Tippler' White, but by 1925 had been sold to John Collins of Liverpool.

The Yachts were proving to be a good attraction and travelled over Yorkshire. They attended many fairs big and small. One small gaff which they regularly attended was at Drypool, Hull, where they opened with Corrigan's, Shaws, Paynes and Doubtfires. In the late 1920s a new living wagon was built for Joe Ling by Messrs Orton and Spooner, and was a magnificent example, and was used for many years before being sold into preservation.

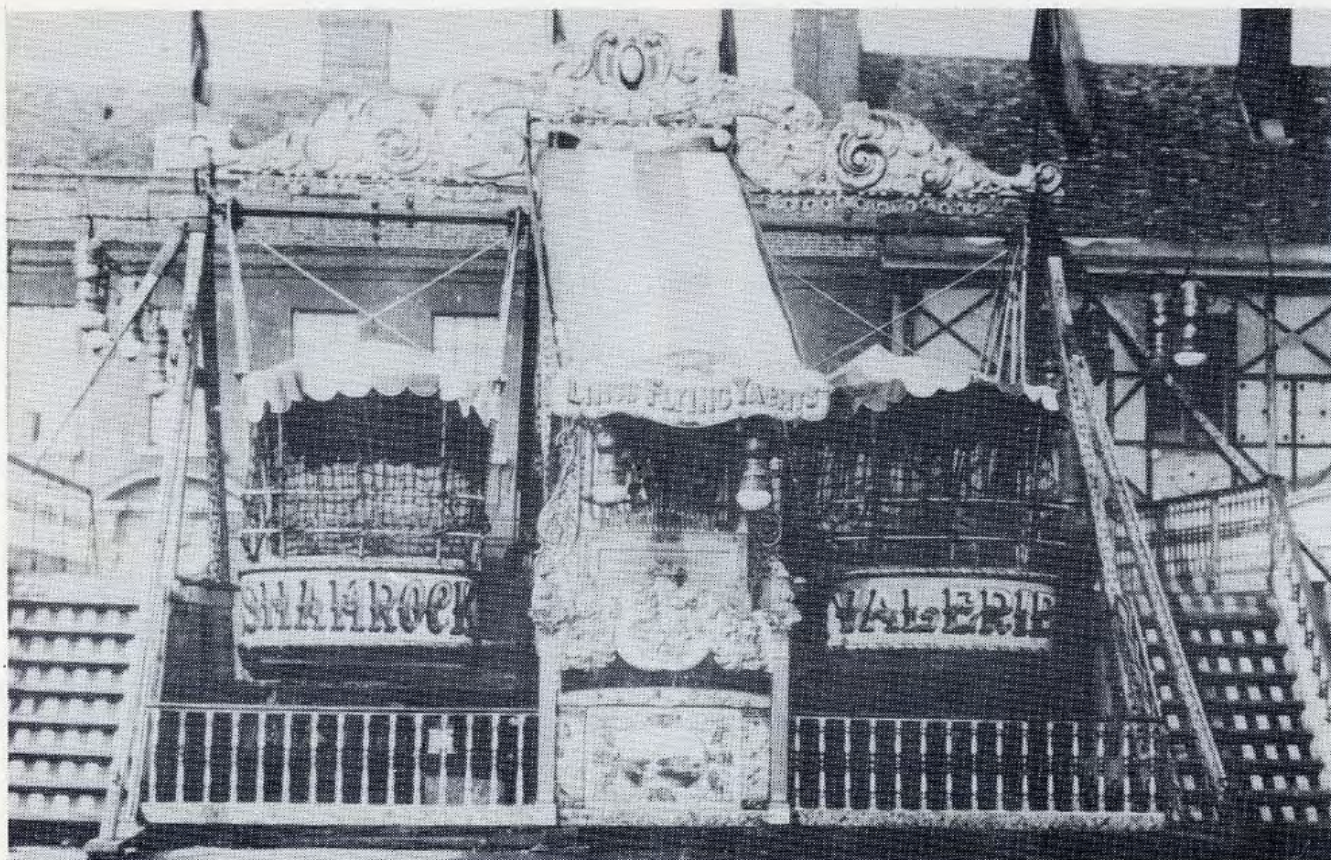
Over the years a good run was built up by travelling the Yachts, and grounds all over the country were attended. Stamford and King's Lynn were among the 'foreign' gaffs visited. The Yachts: "Shamrock" and "Valerie" as they were initially known, did well wherever they went and the turn of the new decade ironically while the depression set in, saw good times for showmen. The magnificent arks, Mont Blancs and other rides built by Lakins, Ortons and Lang Wheels in the inter-war years proves that while

there were hard times people still enjoyed visiting their fairs. In 1936 Lakins delivered a superb Ben Hur thriller. It was a huge machine with scenic rounding boards and four pillar, twelve board extension front with a particularly fine Ben Hur scene.

It was built to the special order of Joe Ling and unusually featured twenty-one platforms. The idea here was that two platforms of horses pulled a carved Dragon Chariot on every third platform: thus there were seven chariots and fourteen platforms with horses three abreast. The Yachts now took a secondary place to the Ark, which was considered one of the foremost in Yorkshire. Around this time a Ghost Train was acquired and travelled for some time. "The Gladiator" travelled with the Ben Hur for many years until it was laid up in 1951 and replaced with Scammell Pioneer (EET 715) which carried the old engine name plate until eventually scrapped in the mid 1970s. The Scammell was later used by John Ling with the Rocket and a Waltzer. "The Great Bear" was laid up at Retford c 1946, and both were scrapped at Wickersley.

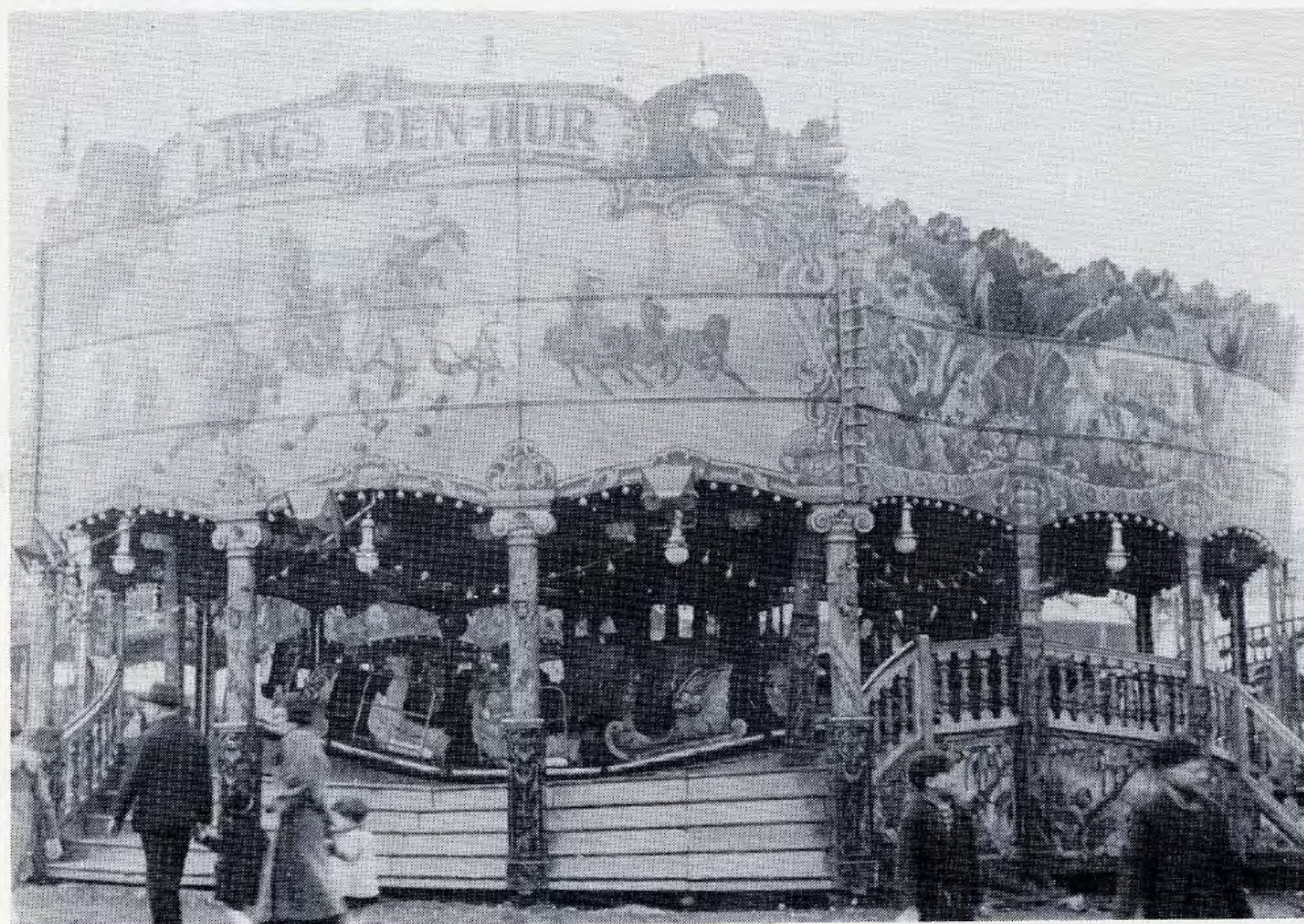
Just before the outbreak of the second World War another big machine was delivered from Lakins. This time it was one of the new Moonrocket rides which were gaining popularity. The front, an Edwin Hall masterpiece, differs slightly, as do all Rocket fronts. Either side of the rocket scene are concentric circles rather than an earth and moon. The rocket is conveying passengers on its cosmic cruise, and all but one seem to be enjoying the trip; the one suffering from air-sickness bears a striking resemblance to a figure in world politics who only a few months later entered into war with Britain. Since the rides sale to enthusiast and member Philip Knightsbridge the front has been displayed at one of the Association's Extravaganzas at Manchester.

Life continued during the war, and the Yachts appeared several times, now bearing the names of "Monty" and "Winnie". Shortly after the war they were again renamed, patriotically becoming "Elizabeth" and "Margaret", and the latter becoming Phillip following princess Elizabeth's marriage to the Duke. In the early 1950s the Yachts were joined by another machine from the King's Lynn workshops; a set of Four Abreast were bought from Bottons, previously having been travelled by Heals and Waddingtons. They were driven by Savage Mark I Type 6 engine 704 and contained a very ornate Marengi organ. These were soon disposed of



The Yachts new to Lings in 1922 at King's Lynn Mart. (Fairground Soc.)

Ling's Ben Hur at Wanstead in 1939. (Reproduced by permission of Philip Bradley.)



and until recently were at Felixstowe. In 1958 the Yachts were disposed of to Thompsons, and later travelled Scotland being laid up in Glasgow before the parts were sold to an enthusiast.

On the death of Joe Ling Snr., the rides were distributed among the four sons: Joseph, John, David and Walter. The Moonrocket was travelled by John Ling until it ceased travelling in the early 1960s. During the 1950s it had been rebuilt after one of the flat trucks had been destroyed by fire. A Lincolnshire joiner was responsible for building a new set of gates as well as a new Popeye figure which also fell victim of the blaze. Moonrockets being heavy, cumbersome machines saw their demise in the early sixties, and John Ling eventually pulled his into Burn for the last time in 1962. The two original boxtrucks and centre became overgrown until the ride was sold in 1978 and transported to Warwickshire. The Popeye figure was, for a short time, used on John Ling's son-in-law's tractor but has been reunited with the ride.

In 1954 John Ling purchased another Rocket, from Southend, and had it rebuilt by Maxwells into a Waltzer. This was travelled for many seasons, spending some of the summer months at Withernsea with Joe Shaw's Ark and also occasionally Wm. Shaw's Speedway. This passed to son-in-law Albert Evans in the 1970s. John has now settled in Bridlington where he runs an arcade with automatics and a fairly new Dodgem track, but the Twist continues to travel in his name. This was rebuilt a few seasons ago by Pollards into a self contained articulated load, pulled by an eight wheel Foden tractor (YRC 771H). A small Slip is travelled in John's name by Martin Holland, the box truck pulled by a smartly painted and lettered Atkinson tractor.

The old Ben Hur passed to David Ling and is travelled by him and his son to this day. It has changed drastically over the years and has been thoroughly modernised. In the early 1960s the front was discarded and a smaller front, canopy and boards were fitted, a more practical if not as ornate an addition. Many of the old horse mounts and dragon chariots remain in use but in the mid 1970s then Easyrider bikes were added to the outside row giving the machine a new theme. New decoration followed, with a new centre paybox, lighting and sound-system giving a very modern and popular appearance to an old ride.

Joseph Ling today travels an automatics arcade with a Leyland artic. tractor which also pulls his living wagon. The machine business has been passed down to his son Joseph Ling Jnr. Since his fathers death Joseph Snr. has travelled a multitude of rides. A Lang Wheels Autodrome was travelled for many years. This was new to

Lings and it last opened in York before the centre was sent to Supercar who were to rebuild it into a Calypso novelty ride, but nothing ever came of this. A few remains of this ride remained until recently, and may still be at Tickhill. A Waltzer, Octopus and Dodgems were later travelled, and of course the Dodgems, a large Lang Wheels track from Hunstanton, is still travelled by Joseph Jnr. Another novelty was the Loop-o-Plane, or Pendulum, built by Eyerly, and now Chadwick's Overriders. This was replaced by a portable Roller Coaster which was in turn disposed of to Southport and replaced by a Maxwell Waltzer purchased from Lancashire. This was a "Flower-Pot" machine reflecting the flower-power era of the late 1960s. Now passed the decoration has been replaced by more conventional, and more attractive work, by Albert Barker. A set of Tinsley boards and front have since been added.

Much transport has been used with the various rides over the years. Perhaps the most memorable vehicle used by Joseph was the ex Army Albion CX22 tractor which was replaced only three years ago. This carried two generator sets (Gardners, of course!) with the familiar shaped Foden radiators from two old DGs used by Lings many years ago. Present transport for the two rides (Dodgems and Waltzer) was changed this season. The Guy tractor, which replaced the Albion, tows Joseph's superb living wagon and the mens trailer. The Atkinson box truck (KWY 434D) tows the car truck, boxed in last season. Two Atkinson eight wheeler joined the fleet this year. MXG 809G replaced a six wheel AEC, carrying Waltzer platforms and pulling the centre, and FDB 953D replaces an 8 wheel ERF carrying the cars, roof, etc., and pulls the old Dodgems box truck.

Walter Ling also travels a Waltzer, which he has owned for more than twenty years. It was new in the 1930s to W. Codona and after the war rebuilt as an Odeon style machine by Lakins; this included decorating in the distinctive style and the addition of the large "Odeon" front, but remained unique as the only such machine with corniced roundings. The smaller of the two fronts despatched by Lakins is used today with smaller roundings. A new paybox was added a few years ago and much of the machine has been re-decorated recently including the cars which have been returned to the style of the 1950s. Transport is eight wheelers carrying the traditional names "The Gladiator" and "The Great Bear".

In 1957 Walter purchased Harry Gray's Steam Yachts. At that time they were still driven by Savage engine 867 of 1915, the year the ride was new. In 1958 this engine was transferred to Joe Ling's set and Walter had the set conyerted to



Joseph Ling's Albion CX22 tractor used for several years until replaced by the Guy tractor now in use. (Courtesy Malcolm Slater.)

drive off a diesel engine using a drive through gearbox, differential and lorry axles. New boats were constructed, but the ride ceased travelling in 1968, apparently after a road accident. Although stored for a few years they were eventually scrapped, though the boat trailers, converted from old Dennis bus chassis are thought to be preserved (!) The old Savage engine also exists, stored at Harry Lee's depot at Bradford.

Another of Joseph's sons, George, is now a riding master, having married W.H. Marshall's daughter, Carol. He took over travelling the Marshall Lakin "Odeon" Waltzer and last season took delivery of a new Bennet lifting Paratrooper. The Waltzer has been much modernised with new cars and front. The Paratrooper was new to Oakes Park last September and is on a self-contained artic. trailer, pulled by a Leyland tractor "The Gladiator".

This article I hope has given some sort of impression of a family who have travelled Yorkshire, and indeed the whole country, for over half a century. It is impossible to mention everything and more details of the many rides travelled are in need of putting into their place.

One novelty travelled by Ling's at one point was the "Rock 'n' Roll Boat Ride". This was presumably a type of fun house, which rocked on imaginary waves. Articles of this nature tend to overlook the side stuff and juveniles which have accompanied the rides; and it would take an article twice this size to give the history of all the transport used. If any mistakes are noticed by any reader, or if any extra information can be added I would be pleased to hear from you.

Stephen Smith

STOP PRESS!

SUNDAY 19 APRIL 7.30 pm. THE TABARD, BATH ROAD, CHISWICK (2 minutes walk from Turnham Green Underground Station) – just around the corner from Botton's fair on Chiswick Back Common. 1st ever London EASTER social: epidiastroscope show, slides & cine films booked. Members to bring photographs & models. Admission 50p on the door.

GREEN DRAGONS

Following the publication of the short history of this machine in 1978 a great deal of interest was shown by Showman Member Tommy Green from the Lancashire section. With the memories of his father Robert Green he has been able to expand and correct many of the points in the original text, in addition to including some practical and technical details.

Green's Golden Dragons Scenic Railway, built by Orton and Spooner's of Burton-on-Trent was delivered new to Blackburn Easter Fair in 1921. The eight Dragon Cars had five full width well upholstered seats and each had a 5 h.p. Mather and Platt series wound motor, which drove the rear axle via a Hans Renold Roller chain.

Earlier scenic cars were fitted with a differential on the axle to compensate for the difference in circumference of the inside and outside trams. The cars on this machine however, were fitted with rear axles which had a smaller diameter inside wheel, which simply dispensed with the more expensive and trouble prone gearing.

All eight cars were connected together with pulling bars and the motors parallel wired. The twin live rails were fitted between the trams at the top of both hills and were arranged to ensure that a minimum of two and a maximum of four cars made contact at any one time.

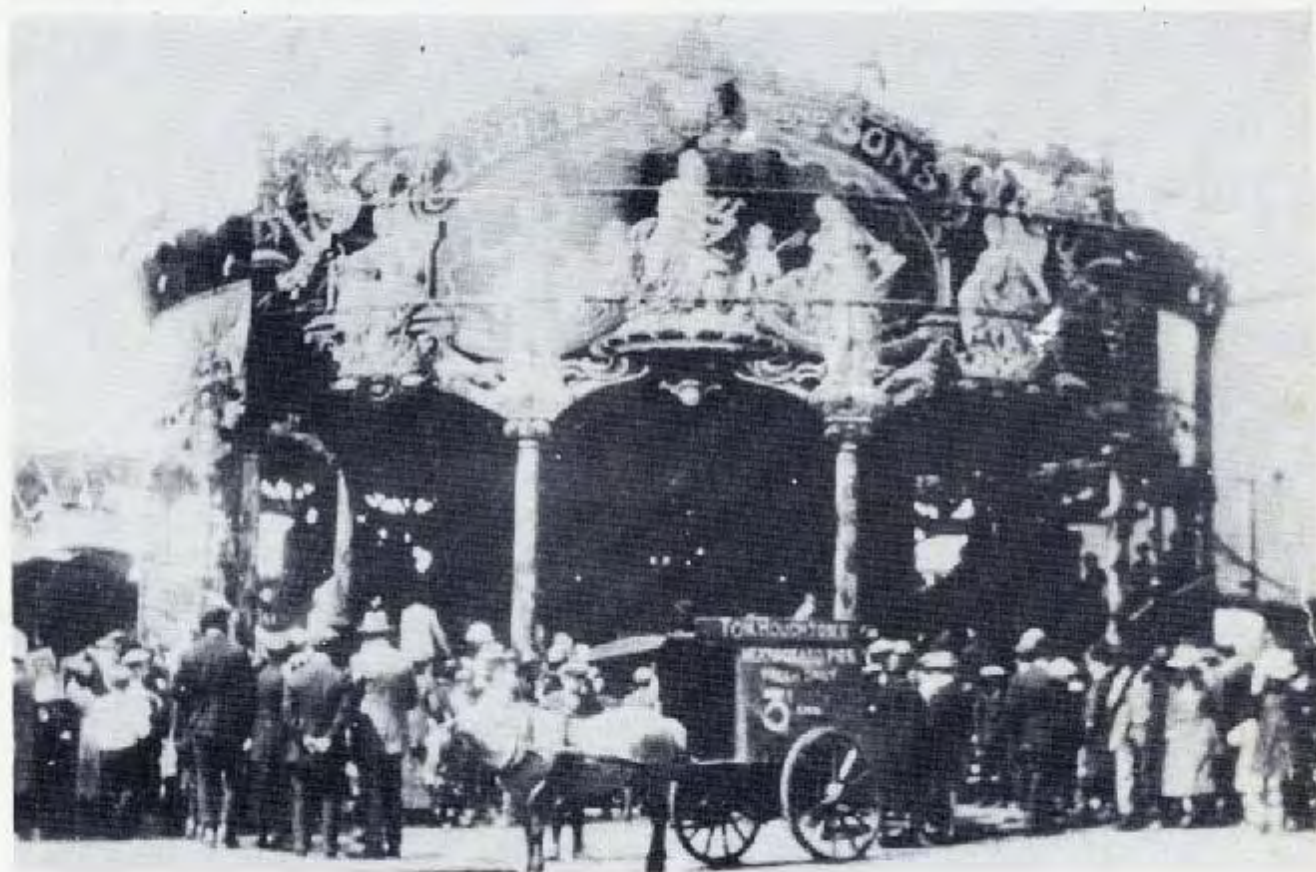
The Dragons were hand carved at Charles Spooner's works and the decoration was effected by the application of leaf to the head, front back and sides of the car and coloured with flamboyant colours.

The First organ used with the ride was a 87 key Gavioli which had been previously used on the steam Motor Car Switchback, (later Tanks) with additional wings fitted to fit the larger Scenic.

The Crane engine used with the ride was Burrell No. 3840 "Queen Elizabeth", whilst Burrell No. 3444 "His Lordship" did lighting duties.

In 1924 a large 98 key Gavioli was acquired via Arthur Oram, this was a converted 112 keyless Gavioli new to Patrick Ross Collins for his Jungle

Preston Whitsun 1924 (F.S.)



Scenic later to become Harniess's Velvet Coaster.

Following the example of Messrs Harniess, Greens introduced Sunday Recitals and these proved popular, raising considerable sums of money.

Economic necessity forced the Scenic into storage by the end of 1930 and the organ was lent to John Murphy for use in his Peacock Scenic, attending its last big fair at Newcastle Town Moor 1934 in this ride.

In 1935 the Dragons were in action again at the Tower Grounds, New Brighton, where they operated with other equipment of Green's until moved to the adjacent resort of Moreton in 1939. After one season here they moved to the Winter Gardens, Morecambe, and were operated together with Green's Monster (ex Jb Studt's) until 1940.

The Scenic was then put in storage at Morecambe until it was advertised for sale in the columns of the World's Fair late 1942, it was sold to Middlesborough Corporation, who operated the ride together with a three abreast (ex Sam Crow) in Albert Park, Middlesborough

as part of the 'Stay at Home' holidays.

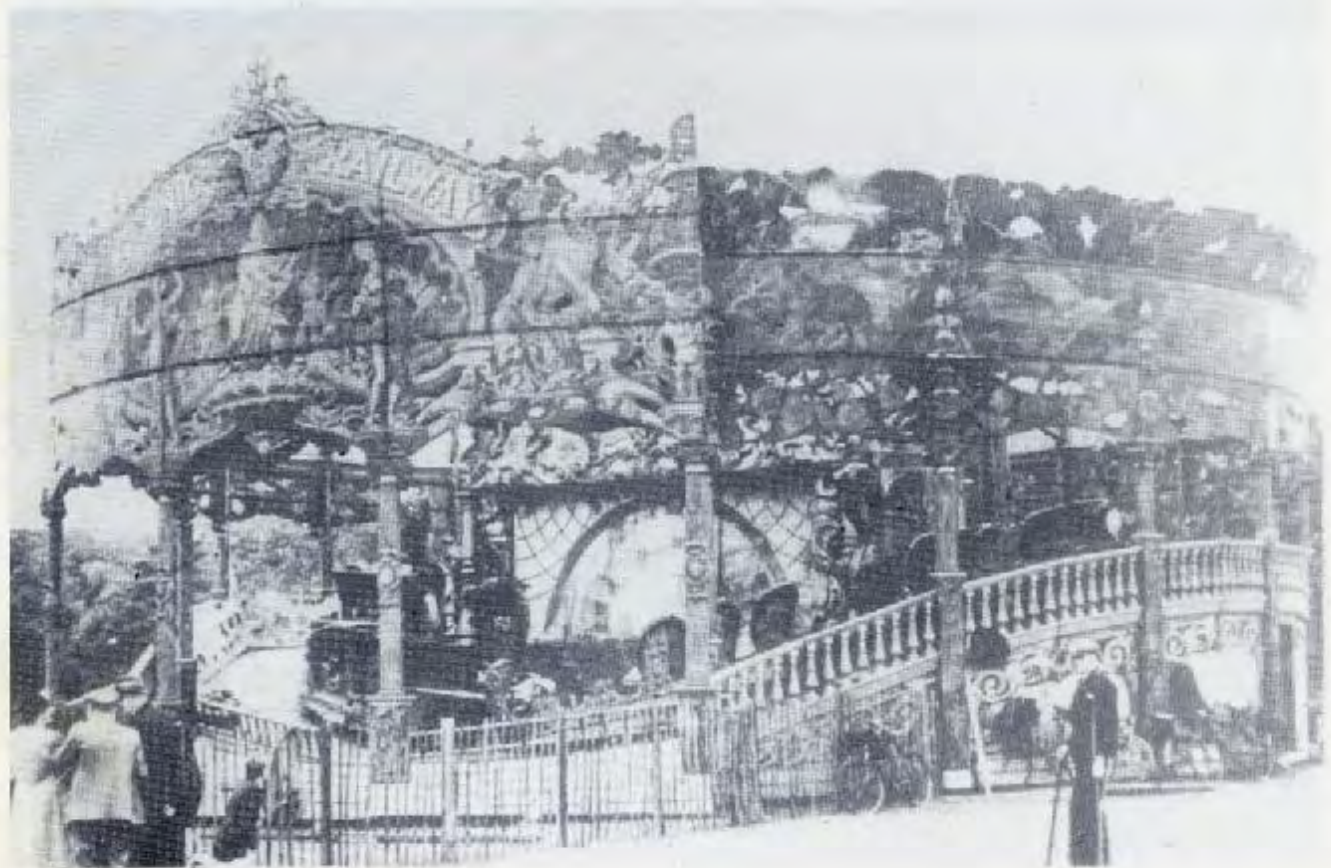
In 1947 the ride was bought by John Collins and erected at Barry Island, but the organ did not play at this time. In 1949 the ride was moved to a different pitch in the park, the organ was taken to a field at the rear of the Railway station where it remained until 1952. A plaster mountain was built up in the centre and this remained until 1952.

The ride was scrapped, the organ truck used as a carnival float and the cars as ornaments. The late Tom Alberts arrived too late to save the organ, but rescued the key frame and some books of music.

Again my thanks must go to the members of the Green family without whose help this article would not have been possible.

Paul Angel

Middlesborough circa 1945



ENCORE!

Kirkcaldy Links Mart, Scotland's premier fair, draws near and in response to the enthusiastic reception which greeted the '50s Photos' feature in our last issue we include a further selection of Bill Oswald's pictures of this Fifeshire event, taken a quarter of a century ago.

The pictures are in the main self-explanatory but Bill adds the following notes:

The Strato Rockets were at the time the photo was taken in the ownership of Billy Codona, John Codona's eldest son. Later the machine was owned by William Codona who is one of Nathaniel Codona's sons. The swing out cars on the Strato Rockets were a Codona idea.

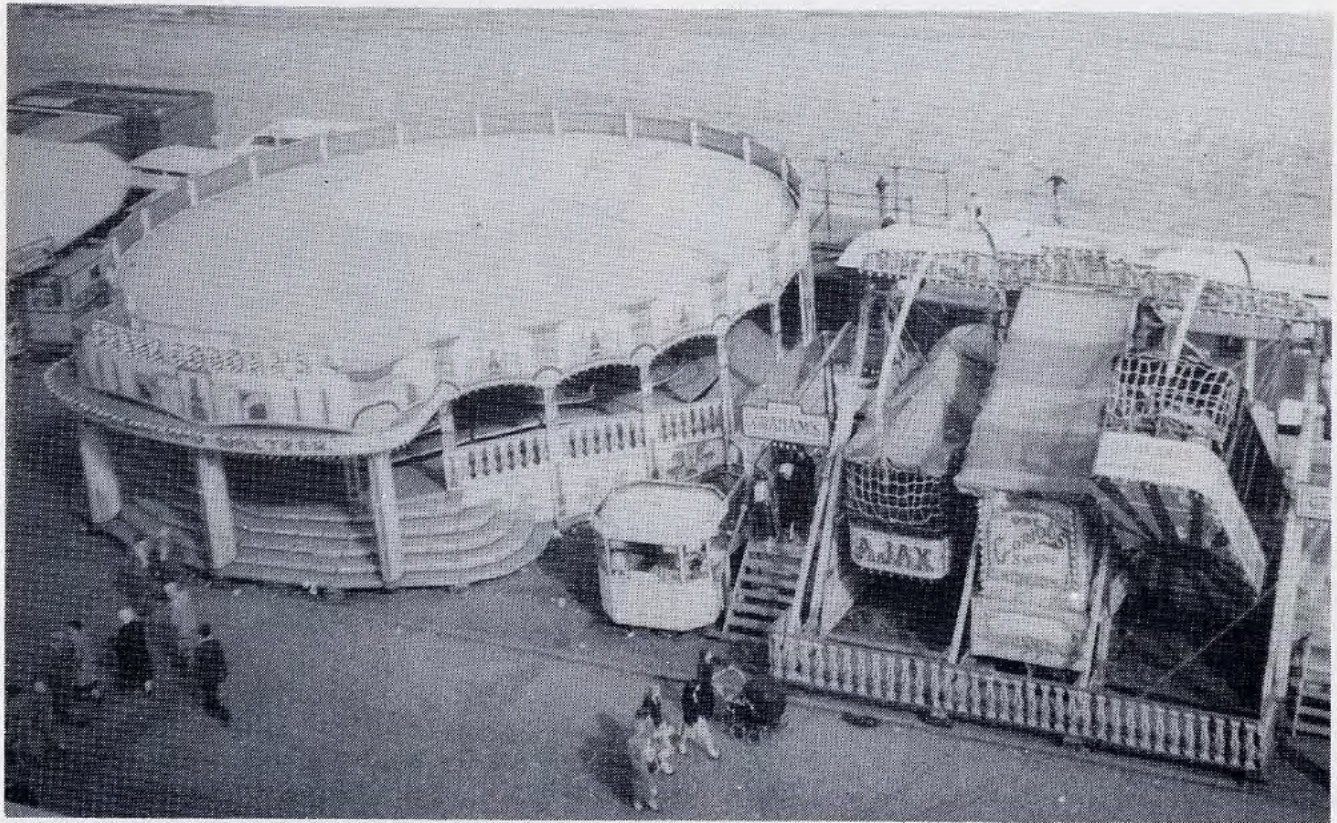
The shot of Buckley's lorry was taken at what is



known, or used to be known, as Birrells Farm. Just up the road from this spot Bert Evans' Burrell 'Edinburgh Castle' broke her back at Bankhead Cottages in April 1940 and was cut up on the spot. This part of the road, which is from the West (Glasgow, Dunfermline, etc.), hasn't changed a bit.

Bill also writes that the format of the negatives

of these pictures makes it impossible for him to make any further prints with his current enlarger. He is pleased to read members' appreciative comments on his pictures but regrets that because of this and other practical problems he is not in a position to supply prints. However he hopes that by publishing them in The Mercury it will afford everyone a chance of seeing them.
—Ed.



WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

"Step Right Up! Alive and showing on the inside!" This familiar cry was once heard along every fairground alley. . . Garish and colourful banners depicting a hundred-and-one curiosities, were once a staple part of any traditional fairground scene. . . "The World's Smallest Woman" or "The Tallest Man in the World" were as an intrinsic attraction to old-time fairgoers as were the toffee-apple stall and the gypsy palmist. Where are they now? Are those fabulous banners with their exotic and strange pictures in gaudy primary colours—folded forever, and lying in some dust covered room, awaiting some mystical revival? Certainly my own correspondence on the matter indicates that interest in the old-time sideshow has never been greater—with a high percentage of young fairground enthusiasts anxious to conjure up once more the nostalgic world of the "Bearded Lady" and "The Lion-faced Man". I have seen a rapid decline in the sideshow world since my own youth, when I would stand gazing at Appleton's Siamese Twin showfront at Northampton's County show and fair—twenty years on, I believe the Twin Show still tours the East Anglia grounds—but few other sideshows remain. At Newcastle Town Moor Fair—once a regular 'Venue' for the top sideshow acts—just a handful appeared this year—with even less at Hull. Ironically the few sideshows present did very good business. . .

So what has happened? Knowing that many traditionalists truly mourn the passing of the 'old time' fairground; knowing also how many people have been abiding interest in the sideshow booths—why in twenty years has there been such a rapid and almost total decline in this oldest of fairground amusements?

Economy? Well, yes. It does play a significant part. Modern day costs make it impractical (and unprofitable) for some showmen to employ a top-class sideshow performer. . . Scarcity of performers? Yes again. . . fewer and fewer midgets, or giants, perhaps wish to endure the tedium and difficulties of the travelling way of life. Today, life offers them scope and opportunity in many walks of life—strange, then, perhaps that in the U.S.A. many hundreds of 'live' performers still travel the road every year with carnivals, large and small. . . some making a very good living, and enjoying the lack of restriction and formality found in a city life-style. . . In the U.S.A. at this time some big rail-road carnivals still carry upward of thirty sideshow acts—and attractions.

It was heartening last year to see Tommy

Smith's "live" shows at Newcastle—with his "Jackie—the Living Doll"—bringing back memories to the old-time fans of Edith Barlow perhaps—or his "Wee McGregor" show reminiscent of the late Harold Pyott; once the Moor fairs 'perennial' "Tiny Tim" favourite. . . the former performer ending her long-life on the Moor town fairground.

Mr Smith's shows did good business—indicating perhaps that a sideshow attraction is still a feasible proposition for the showman. Perhaps the gaudy, noisy, ultra-electronic gadgetry that increasingly dominates our fairgrounds will eventually give way to a more traditional and nostalgic format—with the "Fat Lady" booth and the "World's Tallest Man" again taking their rightful place on the fairground—alongside the Gypsy Fortune Teller and the Bearded Lady?

Since those far off days when I first saw the Siamese twins in a bottle I have devoted almost every spare moment to researching the sideshow industry—from its early and crude beginnings, right through its salad days, up to its present day decline. I have amassed a great deal of documentary and photographic evidence about this strange and fascinating world—with biographical data on almost every sideshow act who ever lived and worked both here and in the U.S.A.—also showfronts, transport and economic details—and will gladly provide information and data (where I can!) for any readers who care to write to me.

I hope I shall, in time, be able to record also, a real and definite resurgence in the world of the Sideshows—whose beginnings—warts and all—stretch back to the very birth of our modern-day outdoor amusement business.

Anyone who is interested in the sideshow and might wish to contact me, please see the classified ads. section in this number of the 'Fairground Mercury'.

Paul Bradshaw

MODEL TOBER - 8

Jigs & Fixtures

Anyone with experience of manufacturing industry will know of the vital importance of Jigs & Fixtures. Indeed, most large firms will, more than likely, have departments devoted entirely to the design and manufacture of these items.

Jigs & Fixtures are basically manufacturing aids and their function may be described as— (A) To speed up an operation—(B) To control accuracy—(C) To control uniformity. They fall into two categories: (1) Jigs to assist and control the assembly of a given number of parts, and (2) Jigs to control and speed up any one individual task.

You must excuse me if this all sounds a bit technical, due, no doubt, to my 36 years in motor car manufacturing, but the use of jigs can greatly improve and speed up Modelmaking Activity particularly when it comes to Working Fairground Models of the rotating circular type.

The term "Fixture" relates to a somewhat more elaborate type of jig so I will now simply use the term "Jig" for further explanation.

There is one other "Jig" connection not mentioned so far and this is the use of "Self Jigging" components. This is where the actual parts to be assembled are designed in such a way that they will interlock together, rather like a jig saw puzzle. Parts designed in this manner need no assembly jig as such and can be put together by hand. The basic frames of the two model organs currently available in the M.F.D. range of model plans, are designed for simple assembly in this manner.

A similar technique can be applied when constructing the roundings and top framing of "Fixed House" models such as the—Noah's Ark—Waltzer—Autodrome—Mont Blanc etc. and any other machine with fixed circular roundings. The top frame of the rounding or "rounding ring" is marked out in one continuous ring on a large sheet of plywood, and a central hole is drilled to match the diameter of the centre pole. Draw a circle of about 2 inches diameter around the central hole and draw in a number of equally spaced radial spokes, about half an inch wide connecting this with the outer ring. The result should look like a very slender wheel—the outer rim of which is the rounding ring. This should now be cut with a fret saw and then placed in position on your model so that the centre hole drops over the centre pole and the rounding ring rests on top of the ring of posts surrounding the model. Make sure that all posts

are perfectly upright and then the rest of the rounding frames can be constructed between the posts and glued in position—safe in the knowledge that everything will be held symmetrical. Roundings are completed by glueing on the thin plywood facings as I described in the previous article and as was shown in the photograph of Richard Whatmore's model Ark in article No. 5.

When roundings have been completed in this manner, a number of the rafters should be fitted from the posts to the centre pole while this is still held in the "wheel jig". Only after this has been done should you cut the "spokes" away from the top rounding ring, and the final task will be to separate each individual rounding panel by cutting the top ring with a razor saw, across the top of each appropriate post.

Spinning Frame models, such as Gallopers, Chairplanes, and many of the more modern rides, need to be constructed in a fixed jig designed primarily to locate the swifts in the correct angular position, but they can also be elaborated to position roundings accurately and to set the length of tie rods. It is essential to construct the revolving tops of Gallopers or Chairplanes in this manner if you are to achieve true level running.

Assembly jigs, as described, are included in the designs offered in the M.F.D. range of Fairground model plans, and the photograph shows the top assembly of a set of 1/24th scale Chairplanes using an assembly jig which locates the swifts both radially and at the correct lateral angle, and also positions the rounding panels for level running.

The number of small jigs for individual operations is almost limitless, but I will describe just three which I have found most useful and which can be made in well under an hour.

Jig 1—For sanding correct angle to ends of swifts—quarterings etc. Take a piece of wood batten approx. 2" x 1" and 12 inches long. Mark across it—the angle you wish to cut, and glue on a smaller cross batten to this mark. Tack the whole thing to the bench for stability, then simply hold the swifts to be angled—against the cross batten and run a sanding block along the side until the end is correctly shaped.

Jig 2—For drilling pin holes into bottoms of posts size 1/4" x 1/4". Take a similar piece of wood batten and a piece of 1/2" x 1/4" solid brass 2" long. Place the brass in vice with the 2" x 1/4" face uppermost and mark the exact centre both across and lengthwise. Accurately centre punch this point and drill through vertically with a drill

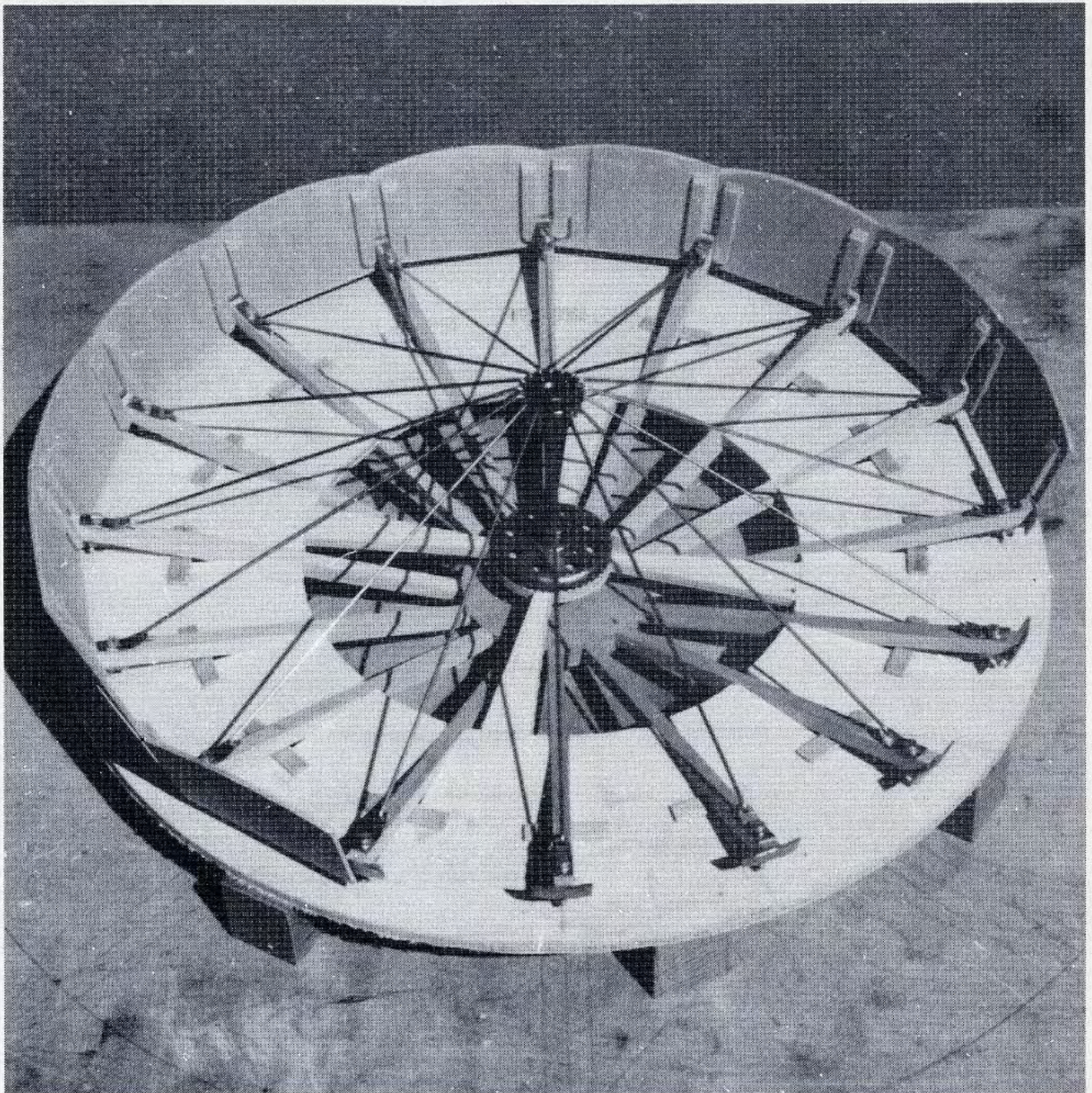
equal in size to the pin to be used (use a drilling machine or power drill on vertical stand). Drill two more holes in the $\frac{1}{2}$ " face—one either side of the central hole. You have now made a drill guide and it simply remains for this to be screwed across the end of the wood batten. Insert the pin drill in the hole and draw two parallel lines $\frac{1}{8}$ " on either side of the drill centre and along the length of the batten. Glue two thin wood strips along these lines so as to form a slot $\frac{1}{4}$ " wide. To operate—drop post to be drilled into the slot with its bottom end against the brass guide and clamp in position in a vice with the guide uppermost. Using a hand drill—drill down through the guide the required distance.

Jig 3—For marking radial boarding on aluminium walk platforms or "gratings". Take a

piece of wood board approx. 6" x 1" and 15" long and drive a 12 gauge panel pin centrally about $\frac{1}{2}$ " from one end. Assuming this represents the centre pole of your model mark the position of one section of walk platform at the correct radial distance from it. Place the section of platform over this mark and hook one end of an old 12" hacksaw blade over the pin—with the smooth edge on the right. Using this smooth edge where it crosses the platform, the board lines may be radially scored using a ceramic tile cutter.

Vic King

This was to have been Vic's final article—however he has two further articles in preparation, one on lighting, the other on painting—Ed.



HAVE JETS - WILL TRAVEL

Charles Thurston bought his set of Lang Wheels Hurricane Jets when I was ten years old, in August 1956. Then the ride carried cigar-shaped cars. Eager pilots flew in tandem, their jets being raised and lowered in orbit by compressed air from the main valve in the centre truck. Then also the ride was conveyed between fairs by two Fodens of the 'DG' series, one MLD 664 pulling the centre truck, the other, the tractor unit, hauling the compressor unit and living wagon.

Charles Thurston himself travelled with the ride until 1977, Robert Summers becoming manager during 1978, and the amiable George Wharton taking over for the '79 and '80 seasons. A cursory glance was all I gave the ride in 1966 at Boston May Fair, the first year that I became aware of the machine. Then the ride was still very much in its original form, much of the artistic design being the work of Charles Thurston. The centre flash, the uprights on the walkways, though built by Lambs of Norwich

were the ideas of the ride owner, who also painted the marbling effects.

In 1968 the present cars were fitted and the supporting arms shortened fourteen inches to allow for a larger run-up. The new jets carried punters two or three abreast and in greater comfort. By 1978 my interest in fairs made my domestic circumstance not quite as comfortable, and Charles Thurston's rides and transport filled the frames of too many of my colour transparencies. The slides from this period show the old paybox wearing 'JETS' as cut-out letters on its roof and painted swooping jets on its sides. Transport was as now, two 'Mickey Mouse' Fodens, the tractor YBF 382, carrying the original body fitted with kip quarters and three Gardner 6LW generators (two as spare). I have always considered the lettering on its bodysides to be some of the classiest in showland, it being in fact the work of a group of Norwich art students done in 1970 as an exercise in graphic design. The rest of the lettering on this and the



other Foden 8-wheeler XJF 70 is the work of a firm in Kettering so I'm informed. Both lorries are of 1960 vintage.

At Long Eaton fair in May 1979 I asked a busy George Wharton about the new paybox. It had been built by young Charles Thurston and a gentleman from Lowestoft known as 'Lofty' who also made the neat compressor truck, and maintains the Thurston fleet during the winter break. The modern metallic artwork on the box was by the Eastern Counties showman Richard Carter who can be credited for the earlier painting on the ride. As with the modifications made to the families Swirl, the aesthetics of the Thurston rides carry a classic almost ageless quality and warmth. At the Oxford St. Giles fair this year (1980) the Jets stood in line with Bob Wilson's Zipper, Michael Phillips Meteorite, and the Thurston Orbiter, and looked as modern as ride as its rivals, the new digital style perspex lighting over the paybox being a simple but effective step in updating the ride's appearance. This new sign was again the work of Lambs of Norwich, but designed by Charles Thurston. The present cars by the way, were also made in Norwich and were painted by Georgie Whyatt.

During the past twenty four years the ride has travelled the traditional run of this branch of the Thurston family (detailed on the map which shows fairs visited during 1980). At the Goose Fair this year however the machine enjoyed sole rights as the Shaw family's set had been replaced by their Ramba Zamba. With the Stanley Thurston (Theodore Whyatt) jets up for sale, as well as almost every Twist on the Goose Fair site, clearly the impact of rides such as the Orbiter whipping the public around at more than the Jet's thirteen revs per minute, is being felt. This year for example, the Orbiter replaced the Jets at Loughborough, Belper fair being the last of the 1980 season, after which George Wharton and the crew of three split up and the ride returned to Norwich, George doubling with both loads as usual.

Sitting with George in the paybox on the last night of Belper fair, despite the efforts of lively sounds from the Simms-Watt 200 watt P.A., it was easy to detect that the ride is now firmly a family one, lucrative teenagers elsewhere, and business mostly children and parents. With the fairground experiencing rapid evolution in machine design, and showmen sensing the effect of this on the business life of some well-established rides, more so now than ever the leading showland names are choosing new rides carefully. Charles Thurston, for example, so George informed me, would probably be visiting the United States this winter in search of a new novelty ride to replace the Jets. In the World's Fair of 15.11.80 the ride and its

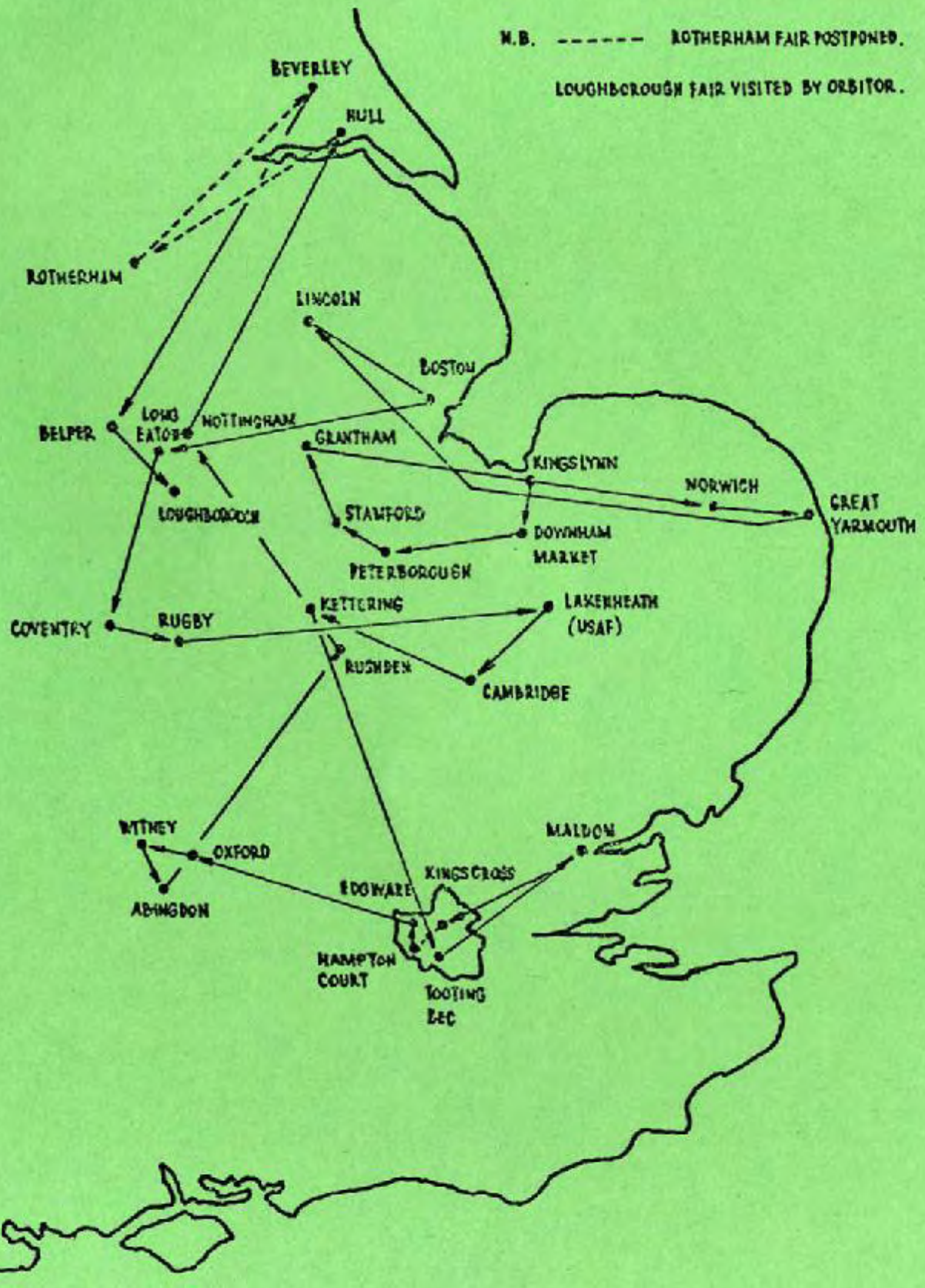
transport was advertised for sale.

No matter what new ride may trundle out of 60, Ketts Hill, Norwich in months to come, the future of at least one form of the Thurston Hurricane Jets is assured. Enduring a soggy but welcome breakfast at Stourpaine in September I found I was sitting opposite veteran model-maker Fred Loades. We enthused about Thurston family rides past and present and Fred, who aims to make one new model each year, explained that his latest project was the construction of an exact replica of Charles Thurston's Hurricane Jets, only he was having problems working out how to make the planes lift realistically.

Bernard Mitchell



1980 Tour



Small Ads

Fairground colour photos and slides, featuring rides transport and on-the-road views. S.A.E. please for latest lists for late 1979 and 1980. N. Vanstone, 1 Valley Road, Bude, Cornwall, EX23 8EP.

Wanted: Any old photographs, slides, negatives and information appertaining to showmen's transport of all ages. Especially keen on pre-1960 shots of early petrol and diesel vehicles in service and showmen's engines in use. Also horse-drawn transport. Your prices paid. Please send details to: Paul Redfern, 40 Hall Close Ave., Whiston, Rotherham, Yorks. S60 4AH.

Fairground ride and transport colour photos. Keep a pictorial record of the changing scene, new rides and transport. Take the first step by sending s.a.e. to: A.E. Davies, 64 McKinell Crescent, Rugby, Warks. CV21 4AU.

Wanted to buy. Photos of showmen's Macks, Scammell Explorers and Diamond Ts. John Walker, 16 Station Road, Bagworth, Leicester LE6 1BH.

New FAGB member wishes to purchase or borrow Vol. 1 Nos: 4 & 5 and Vol. 2 No. 1 of Century of Tobers. If borrowed will take care of and return as received. R. Summers, 137 Dane Road, Southall, Middlesex.

Sideshow History: members are welcome to write for information regarding my collection. All enquiries on shows gladly answered and material provided where possible. No charge but please send SEA (large for materials). Paul Bradshaw, 29 Admiralty St., Stonehouse, Plymouth, South Devon.

1980 colour print collection of fairground machinery, transport, organs and engines now available. Send large SAE for free list of over 400 items. Please note new address: Paul Angel, 8 Hampton St., St. James, Hereford HR1 2RA.

"South Lodge" Polapit Tamar, Launceston, Cornwall. Tel: 3606 is open each day during the summer (except Sundays) as an exhibition of some 70 Working Models of Fairground Rides, Generating Plant, Engines, Switchboards, Water-wheels etc.; made by the owner, a disabled and partially-sighted person. No charge is made but donations are appreciated to help maintain the project. We would be interested to hear from any genuine person who may care to join us in this 6-year old project.

Transport and Traction Engines in colour! Send SAE for list of photographs. Jim Lawson, 36 Merton Ave., Syston, Leicester.

Coloured photos of showmen's engines, steam wagons, fair organs, rides (inc. over 60 sets of Gallopers) and showmen's transport. 1980 list now available. Send 1st class stamp to Terry Darby, 26 Old Kiln Road, Flackwell Heath, High Wycombe, Bucks. Tel: 06285 23375.

Common Market Swopperama! French member willing to exchange items from his collection of vintage fairground pics for similar British scenes. Contact (in French please if possible) Albert Lefebvre, 70 rue Leonard Danel, 59800 Lille, France.

NEW FROM M.F.D. Design No. 8-1/24th scale Chairplanes. Plans now available—Price £4.00. plus 40p post and packing. Or send S.A.E. for further details to: Vic King—Model Fair Designs—187, The Avenue, Kennington, Oxford. Tel: 0865 735828.

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