

Made circa 1900, the magnificent 46-key Gavioli et Cie organ provides a nostalgic soundtrack. Anselme Gavioli patented the use of book music, allowing melodies to be infinitely long, and ensuring the family became the most famous and prolific fair organ builders.

“Dad went up to Scotland to buy them, and they were just a heap,” says Joby. “It wasn’t until Harry Lee, who had the only other set of Steam Yachts, sold us his spare steam engine that Mum and Dad restored the ride, using the original drawings.” Lee, who died in 1997, was a well-known travelling showman.

### Setting out on tour

In the early 1980s, the first Carters Steam Fair went on tour with a handful of their own rides and some run by other showmen. By this time, the public were being seduced by state-of-the-art white-knuckle rollercoasters at large theme parks. “Everything we did was a risk,” says Anna. “We were definitely bucking the trend,” adds Joby. “When we started, there were very few sets of Gallopers travelling. Now, there are at least 100. I’d say we’ve had an influence.”

The Carters regard the Gallopers as part of the family. Anna recalls one fair some years ago when they experienced a problem with youths behaving badly. “They were jumping all over the Gallopers. I actually got out of the paybox, all 5ft 2ins of me, and unpeeled their hands from the ride,” she says. “You can feel real love for these machines.”

In 2000, John Carter died. By this time, three of his children, Joby, Seth and Rosie, had become too fond of the fair to let it go. “I told the boys I couldn’t do it without them,” says Anna. “It’s a hard lifestyle. It’s hard for men because it’s very physical, and hard for girls to adapt to moving every week in a living van.”

Joby now manages the fair with his >

The steam engine Anna, which powers the Gallopers (near right), and Yorcky which powers the Steam Yachts. They are the only two steam-powered rides at the fair.

