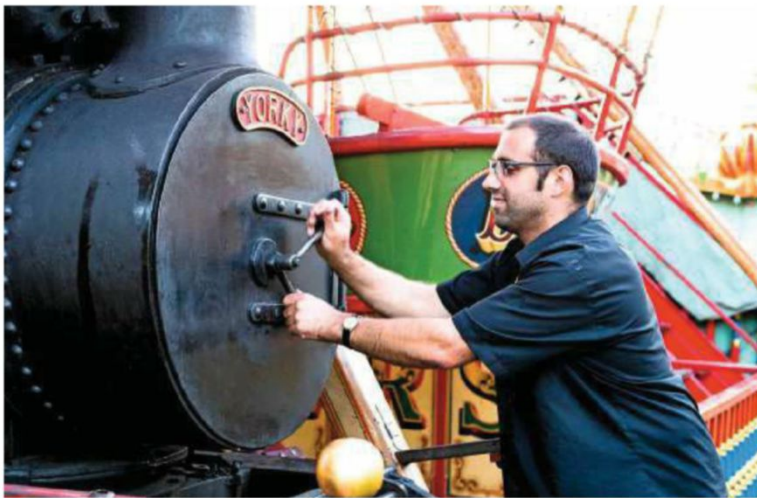




The Mighty Striker tempts young men to prove their strength.



Joby inspects Yorky on the Steam Yacht ride. The 1901 Savage engine from the original Waddington Yachts is still going strong, after showman Harry Lee offered the old engine from his set in the early 1980s.

way. “I’d love to keep buying old rides, and I’ve always fancied a waltzer, but it takes a lot of work to get them on the road,” says Joby.

The 1948 Mighty Striker was the first piece of fairground equipment the Carters owned, buying it before they had any rides. They reckon that today’s showgoers do not have the hammer-wielding ability to hit the bell. “I think people are a bit too much in touch with their feminine side,” says Anna. They have two other machines which are more popular, as they are smaller and require less strength.

Other sideshows include the Ball Blower, which dates from the 1930s, and involves catching a ball with a net on the end of a stick. The Cork Shooter is also pre-war, and offers people the chance to bag a prize with a cork-firing rifle.

### Living on the road

True to form, the living wagons and lorries used by the fair are also vintage. One, a 1955 Hurst, was bought by Joby from Gerry >

## HISTORY OF FAIRGROUND RIDES

The funfair of today has its roots in the trade fairs of medieval times. Alongside commercial stalls, there were entertainments such as strolling players, magicians and puppeteers. Rudimentary swings and roundabouts were also developed. By the early 19th century, the ‘fun’ side of the fair had become dominant, and was based around shows: circuses, melodramas and travelling menageries.

When the first steam-operated merry-go-round appeared in the 1860s, featuring crude wooden horses as seats, the opportunity to add speed and excitement became apparent. Gallopers appeared in the 1880s and Steam Yachts followed later in the century, a genuine white-knuckle ride at the time.

Engineering firms saw the commercial advantage of designing roundabouts for show folk. Key names were Frederick Savage of King’s Lynn and Robert Tidman of Norwich. The skills of carvers, signwriters and decorators were also to the fore, as showmen competed for public attention with elaborate paintings and extravagant claims.

The big wheel was designed by George Ferris, an American, and pioneered at a fair in Chicago in 1893. A British version, 200ft (61m) in diameter, soon followed, and opened at Blackpool Pleasure Beach, which was Britain’s first permanent funfair. A portable wheel was subsequently developed for travelling fairs.

The first decades of the 20th century saw the switch from steam to electricity, which allowed for more variety in attractions. In the 1920s, the dodgems appeared from America. Britain’s first rollercoaster opened in 1920 at Margate. Arks then arrived from Germany in the 1930s, moving along an undulating circular track. The waltzer was a variant, with the added ingredient of individually spinning tubs. The first ghost train was installed at Blackpool in 1930.

Rides often simulated new modes of transport that ordinary people would not have experienced. Blackpool hosted the first British Dive Bomber in 1939. Hurricane Jets were another flight-simulating attraction that appeared in the early 1950s, with cars on the end of rotating arms that soared skywards.