



Artistic prowess runs in the Carter family and they faithfully reproduce the signage and decorations on their rides. Themes are followed, such as a nautical motif for the Steam Yachts, including an illustration of Brunel's Great Eastern steamship.



From top: a traditional living van; No 12, a Scammell which was originally an articulated lorry, and No 13, once a cattle truck. The Carters made it a new body from a Foden lorry, adding 'greedy boards' along the top for extra showmanship.

## FAIRGROUND ART

The brightly-coloured paintwork, depicting fantastical scenes of faraway places and larger-than-life characters, was designed to transport fair-goers away from their everyday lives into a world of wonder. Scrolls, fancy calligraphy and gold leaf were all common.

The Carters are keen to preserve the art of fairground painting, and still paint everything by hand. The rides are themed. For the Dive Bomber, Anna painted wartime planes. The Steam Yachts have a nautical motif, and on dodgems, it is racing cars and rock 'n' roll stars.

Joby is especially keen on signwriting. "I learned to signwrite when I was 17. I used to look out the window and see all this beautiful lettering. Stan Wilkinson, a phenomenal signwriter who worked for us, taught me, and I'm so glad he did. I use a brush and oil-based signwriting paint. We also use 23.5-carat gold leaf. We have our own preferred colours.

There is a certain cream we use, for example."

Cottle, the circus owner. While restoring it, he found that the sun had etched the original scroll pattern into the aluminium under a layer of paint, so he was able to recreate it.

The 1954 Royal Windsor is Joby's family home on the road. Originally owned by the Smart family, of circus fame, he bought it in 2012, restoring and extending it. The polished woodwork inside is maple and mahogany veneer. The 1948 Vosper is Anna's living wagon, and even includes a marble fireplace. It is thought to have cost approximately £6,000 when new, a fortune at the time. This was another purchase from Gerry Cottle, this time in 1986.

The lorries include a 1950s Scammell dairy truck, a Second World War petrol tanker, a 1970s council gritter lorry, a cattle truck, and a 1932 Ford.

### Setting up shop

The fair stays at each site for anything from two to eight days. Fifteen large loads, weighing 250 tons, are conveyed from one