

Press release

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For immediate release

Oldest British amusement park ride becomes latest listed building

Britain's oldest surviving amusement park ride, the 'Aerial Glide' at Shipley Glen Pleasure Grounds, Baildon, West Yorkshire, has become a Grade II listed building after an emergency application by local campaigner, Mike Short, and amusement park historian, Nick Laister. This is only the second time an amusement park ride has been listed.

Set into a hillside fringing the moors above the World Heritage site of Saltaire village, the 'Aerial Glide' is one of two surviving Victorian attractions that once brought Bradford mill-workers by the thousand to spend their Saturday and Sunday afternoons at the local beauty spot of Shipley Glen. The other survivor is the nearby famous Shipley Glen Tramway, the oldest surviving cable railway (excluding cliff lifts) in the country.

Local campaigners had been fighting to save the pleasure grounds for over a year after the owner, Mr Paul Teale, had submitted an outline planning application to redevelop the site for housing. The strength of local opposition had meant that the planning application had been deferred but, following strong local rumour last week, campaigners feared that the 'Aerial Glide' might be about to be demolished.

Mike Short, who lives opposite the Pleasure Grounds, sought the help of Nick Laister, an Oxfordshire based chartered town planner and an amusement park historian who had been responsible in 2002 for securing the listing of the wooden Scenic Railway roller coaster at Dreamland, Margate.

Within/

More to follow

**Sheet 1 of 2
plus attachments 2 sheets**

For more information contact:

Nick LAISTER: daytime 01235 838214; mobile 07778 207036; evening 01235 762186

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plus attachments 2 sheets**

/Margate.

Within a couple of days Mr Short and Mr Laister had prepared a detailed case for emergency listing and sent it to the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and to English Heritage but became worried when it became caught up in the postal dispute in London. It eventually arrived on Thursday last week (30 October 2003) and by the following day the 'Aerial Glide' was a listed building.

Nick Laister said, "I am very pleased that the DCMS and English Heritage have accepted our recommendations and listed this hugely important part of Britain's amusement park history. The Shipley Glen Pleasure Grounds is a charming local tourist spot and a well-visited recreational resource. The fact that the site also includes Britain's oldest surviving amusement park ride makes it all the more important to ensure that its heritage remains intact." "I hope that this listing helps to ensure that the ride can continue to entertain families for many years to come and ultimately saves this popular little park."

Mike Short added, "I am overjoyed at what is a tremendous victory but this is only the first hurdle we have to overcome. We have to make sure that the ride is properly maintained and secure the long-term future of the Pleasure Grounds. Three generations of my family have ridden on the 'Aerial Glide' and I want to make sure that it is around for generations of children to come."

Constructed in about 1900 entirely of steel, riders on the 'Aerial Glide' sit in individual chairs suspended from an elevated rectangular-shaped track and descend under the force of gravity to the bottom. The rider alights and walks back to the top; cars are then hoisted back to the station.

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Notes for editors

- At precisely what date the Aerial Glide was constructed is not known. The likely date of construction is thought to be 1900. It was certainly before 1910 since it appears on cine footage at that date.
- The official listing entry (DCMS case ref: SL1680/03) describes the ride as follows:
“Steel frame construction. A continuous rectangular loop set into the hillside of the Shipley Glen Pleasure Gardens. The sides of the structure are framed by parallel slender steel beams, subdivided with short vertical beams and ‘X’ bracing. Underneath and at the centre is the rail from which hang the seats. The boarding station is at the highest point, from which the track drops steeply and turns two corners; here, riders alight and an electric motor carries the chairs back up to the starting point. Thought to be the earliest surviving example of a static amusement ride, built as a component of the Victorian leisure park Shipley Glen Pleasure Gardens, and that has contextual historic interest with the nearby milling communities including Saltaire.”
- The Shipley Glen Pleasure Grounds opened in 1879. In addition to the Aerial Glide, there were many other rides added and there were other attractions. At one time there was even a bear and a lion in cages not much bigger than the animals. The heyday of the Pleasure Grounds was the 1930s and 1950s and it is clear that some of the existing rides are from that period. A vintage swing-boat set still remains. Some original penny slot machines also survive alongside their modern counterparts. The Pleasure Grounds are open from Easter to mid-October, bank holidays and public holidays and during the week during school holidays. They also open for a short period before Christmas.
- When a structure is listed it is placed on a statutory list of buildings of 'special architectural or historic interest' compiled by the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Listing ensures that the architectural and historic interest of a building is carefully considered before any alterations are agreed. There are currently over 37,000 buildings and other structures protected by listing status. For more information on listed buildings, visit the English Heritage website on www.english-heritage.org.uk.
- The contact number for English Heritage is +44 (0) 870 333 1181.

Note for picture editors: the Shipley Glen Pleasure Grounds are now closed until Christmas and picture opportunities will be severely limited.

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Notes for editors

- A copy of the submission to DCMS and English Heritage by Mike Short and Nick Laister that resulted in the Aerial Glide being listed can be downloaded for free from:
www.joylandbooks.com/shipleyglen
- **Mike Short** is a local resident and has lived opposite the Shipley Glen Pleasure Grounds with his family for almost seventeen years. He took his first ride on the 'Aerial Glide' at the age of four in 1954. Mike Short and his wife, Di Millen, together with neighbours Paul Roberts and Cathy Richardson Roberts of Ventura House, Prod Lane, led the campaign of public opposition and organised the public petition against an outline planning application to demolish the Shipley Glen Pleasure Grounds and build houses on the site.
- **Nick Laister** BA(Hons) DipTP MRTPI MIPI MIHT is a leading amusement park historian, planning consultant and publisher. He is a Chartered Town Planner and Technical Director with the RPS Group PLC and specialises in planning for tourism and leisure. He is involved in the promotion of major development projects around the UK and Ireland, and has appeared as expert witness at several public inquiries and hearings. He has written articles for a number of newspapers and journals and has been invited to speak at conferences on the subject of planning for tourism and leisure. He is the co-owner of Skelter Publishing LLP and editor of the website www.joylandbooks.com, which specialises in books on amusement park history. A report issued by Nick Laister to the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and English Heritage in 2001 resulted in the listing of the Scenic Railway roller coaster at Dreamland, Margate, Kent, the UK's oldest roller coaster. This was the first time an amusement park ride had been listed.
- Contact details for the **Shipley Glen Pleasure Grounds** are:
Vulcan House, 2 Prod lane, Shipley Glen, Baildon, West Yorkshire BD17 5BN
Tel: 01274 585119
- Further reading about amusement park and fairground history can be found at the specialist online bookstore www.joylandbooks.com. Regular articles on the subject appear monthly on the fairground preservation website www.thegalloper.com.