# AIRtime

The Roller Coaster Club of Great Britain

Issue 88 – May / June 11

## New for 2011 - Ben 10; Peppa Pig World and Nickolodean Land ... it's all inside and more ...

THE ROLLER COASTER CLUB OF GREAT BRITAIN

UNITING ENTHUSIASTS SINCE 1988

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**May/June 2011**

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# Club News

Welcome to the latest **AIRtime**.

## Charlie Manning

## Felixstowe Park boss - RIP

Felixstowe amusement park owner Charlie Manning has died after losing his battle with cancer.

The 66-year-old, who ran Mannings Amusement Park in the seaside town, died in his sleep.

His father, also Charlie Manning, took over the seafront arcades in 1946 from Sir Billy Butlin. He leaves behind a wife, Sarah, and two sons.

BBC Radio Suffolk presenter and family friend Bob Shelley, said *"Charlie was a real real show man who worked hard for the business and for Felixstowe, and was a real supporter of the town."*

## Star Wars flys into Southport

Costumed Characters from the classic film Star Wars, including Princess Leia and Chewbacca, flew into Southport's New Pleasureland to be the first to ride on the new £2m ride - **Air.**

Air is one of only three such rides in the world, and will tower 100ft above the park.

The state-of-the-art ride travelled 1,200 miles from German engineering company Zera to its new Merseyside location. The ride holds 30 thrill-seekers propelling them into the sky, spinning in a dizzying osculating whirl.

Norman Wallis, New Pleasureland director, said: *"We are delighted to have Air at Pleasureland.*

*"We already have had lots of interest in the ride. Air is only one of a number of new attractions we have planned at Southport."*

# Ben 10 - Ultimate Mission opens at Drayton Manor

The new junior roller coaster themed on Cartoon Network's Ben 10 children's adventure cartoon character, was officially opened by Twist and Pulse on April 23rd at the Drayton Manor Park.

Ben 10 - Ultimate Mission, supplied by Vekoma Rides, is based on the junior coaster system and takes its design influences from the classic Vekoma Boomerang coaster, but without the inversions of the larger ride. It features an out and back track layout that first takes riders on a forward facing tour of the track before returning travelling backwards.

Fully themed on Ben 10 and his adventures, guests are immersed in the storyline as soon as they enter the queue line. Riders enter Asmuth's laboratory where they learn that the earth is under attack from the evil Vilgax. Interactive screens provide information on the show and opportunities to play games whilst queuing, as Asmuth also speaks to riders on TV monitors.

Riders then enter the Alien Chamber and are faced with an alien world, as a host of effects including laser beams, flashing lights and warning alerts create the atmosphere. From here, they move into the loading station to embark on their "mission."

The new coaster, features a 180m long track which rises to 20.5m at its highest point. A single train incorporates 10 x two-seater coaches. The train reaches a maximum speed of 55kph and has a capacity is 640 passengers per hour. Riders have to be a minimum of 1m in height to ride.

And Ben 10 - Ultimate Mission, located in the Aerial Park section of the park, has been a big hit with park guests from the start.

*"It's been very well received by everyone,"* commented Edward Pawley, general manager park operations. *"All ages are going on the ride from children around four years old - to teens, mums and dads and grandparents. It really is a genuine family coaster and is the first family boomerang in the world.*

*"It's probably the largest junior coaster built to date, I refer to it as a 'junior coaster on steroids!' It's something we didn't have before and fits in well between our teen coasters and the family coaster in Thomas Land.*

*"The whole project was completed in just nine months, which is pretty impressive and a credit to all involved.*

*"Vekoma were excellent to work with. We are delighted with all aspects of the project from the ride itself to the design and theming and, of course, the Ben 10 branding.*

# Q4 me? Yes, please!

In the weeks leading up to our Big Trip Down Under, we knew it was going to be a close run thing. After 9 years of stretching them on the rack, feeding them phosphates and making them sleep in gro-bags overnight, would Georgia and Stephanie measure up to the magic 1.4m mark in time for our visit to Warner Brothers Movie World and Dreamworld, Australia?

We planned it so we gave the girls maximum growing time, and did a stop over in Singapore on the way. It would have been rude not to have done Universal Studios whilst we were there, so our first full day on our trip saw us making a mad dash for the queue for Battlestar Galactica, the world's tallest duelling coaster ... only to find there wasn't one - queue, that is! The rollercoaster was most definitely there and finally open! It had been plagued with technical difficulties since the park's opening in 2010, but it was working fine for our trip. Which is good, because if it hadn't I might have cried! We'd pre-purchased VIP (express) passes - which allow you to get on each of the rides without queuing, once - but found that the first couple of park hours were not that busy anyway, and with 5 minute queues we had plenty of opportunities

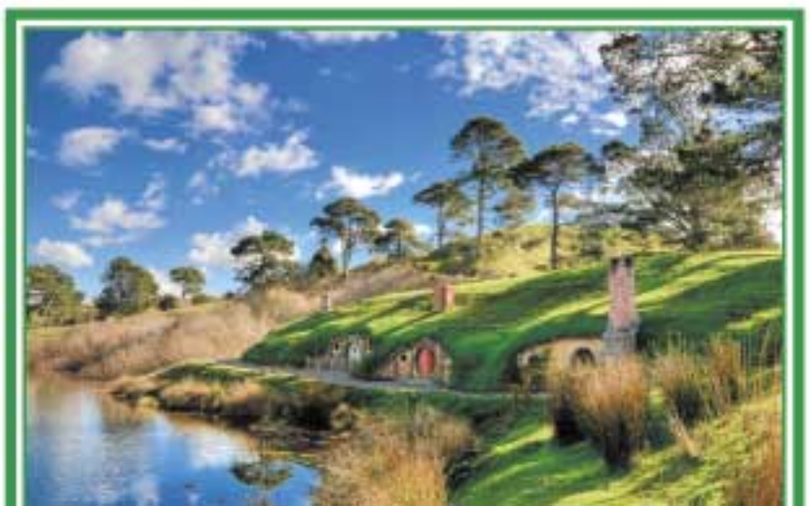
to answer the question: *"Are you Human, or Cylon?"*. Well, clearly we're a family of evil cyborgs, because the suspended track was, in our books, far more exciting than its sit-down sister. Which is fair enough, because the Cylon track was designed to be

more thrilling than the family-friendly Human track, and we concentrated our ride time on the legs-dangling version.

Universal Studios as a park is interesting - it's the only park we've been to where you have to pre-book entry tickets and some dates do sell out - perhaps this is why the queues were tolerable and why it didn't feel at all crowded. If you've been to the US parks in Florida and California, you won't be in for any big surprises (The Mummy ride is pretty much exactly the same) but the Singapore Jurassic Park experience tends to be a good deal wetter than in its American counterpart and fans of Shrek will love Far Far and Away land. And being

on Sentosa Island ("Asia's Favourite Playground"), once you've finished in the park you can go and laze on the sand (admiring the vista of dozens and dozens of container ships moored just off the beach) or do the mountain luge or giant zipwires.

Giving us a further ten days to gain a few extra millimetres, we then went to New Zealand. Hearing the locals exclaim with embarrassment when we mentioned visiting Rainbow's End, the North Island's only theme park (our host's 16 year old daughter had one word to say about it ..."*Lame*") we decided against using up a day on that. Instead we spent our ten days roaming the North Island, spotting dolphins, exploring glow worm caves, watching geysers erupt and visiting Frodo Baggins in his home at Bag End, Hobbiton. OK, so Frodo wasn't actually there, but the movie set for the Lord of the Rings and for the forth coming Hobbit films was well worth the detour and made for an excellent day out.



So, on to Australia and the long awaited Official Height Measurement. Deciding that we may as well order our park trips so as to leave Warner Brothers until last (that's where the two 1.4m rides reside - Superman the Escape and Lethal Weapon) we hit Dreamworld first.

I was looking forward to riding Tower of Terror II ... unlike the hardened Aussies I was chatting to in the queue. Having ridden Superman the Escape (same ride, facing forwards) in Six Flags Magic Mountain on our honeymoon, I thought the "Face gravity, face first" sounded like an interesting variation. However, local fans of the original ride did not seem to be impressed with the change. "*I liked it the way it was*", bemoaned one. "*I don't really like the idea of doing it backwards, all you're gonna see is track*" said another. We thought it was a lot of fun backwards, although if you have a fringe or hair that's long enough to go in your eyes, be prepared for the needle-like sensation of said hair poking you in the retina as you hurtle backwards at 100mph and 4.5G. This is clearly the 'thing' to do to pep up a tired old Intamin freefall coaster - turn the seats around - since SFMM have done the same thing with theirs for the 2011 season, but from listening to the die-hard fans I talked to, I began to wonder why they hadn't found a way to mix n' match - half the seats facing forward and the other half facing back, giving riders a choice.

We fitted all six 'big thrill' rides easily into a day in Dreamworld - TOT II, the Giant Drop ride which shares its tower, a motorbike coaster, a Vekoma Waikiki Wave Super Flip, an Intamin Gyro Swing and another coaster - a looping steelie by Arrow Dynamics. This was largely thanks to Dreamworld's Q4U system, which has to be

# Said Debbie Hance ... down under!

the best express pass system we've come across. Whilst I find it irritating that only Disney seem to be willing to offer their fast pass system as part of normal admission prices and other parks are charging what amounts to be quite a bit of money for a fairly inflexible queue-skipping process, I did not begrudge handing over my $40 (about £30) for the Q4U. Well worth the money. One person in your party gets given a pager-like thing which clips to your belt loop. An easy scroll up and down the main screen tells you what times you can next skip to the front of the queue and jump straight on each of main rides. You strategically select which ride you'd like to 'book' and press a button, and it effectively reserves your place in the queue. It then buzzes you when it's time to board the ride and you waltz on up the exit and get on the next car. Whilst you can only reserve one ride at a time, you can still queue for another if you have a bit of a gap to fill - Q4U will keep your place even if you go past your allotted time - and there is no limitation to how many times you can go on each ride, unlike the fast pass systems we tend to see in the UK. Also, the ride operator cancels your booking before you get on the ride so then you're free to book another one up immediately and (usually) head straight to the next ride once you're done. It's flexible, relatively cheap, easy to use and efficient - it saved us tons of time and I'd really like to see more parks adopting this method of queuing. It certainly makes for a more pleasant day.

I'd also highly recommend buying the cost-effective VIP passes for all the parks on the Gold Coast if you're visiting this area. The combination of separate VIP passes give you access to the main theme parks (SeaWorld, Dreamworld and Warner Brothers), to the two water parks (Wet and Wild and Whitewater World; SeaWorld has a water park but with just one family raft ride and two small pools, it's not something to save a day for ...) and to other smaller attractions such as the Australian Outback Experience. All these parks are within about a 20mins drive from each other, 45mins from Brisbane city. So it's really good just to be able to pop in, do the rides you want, and hop in the car up the road to the next park or to hit the slides for the afternoon.

SeaWorld was covered pretty swiftly; they have two coasters, Sea Viper (an Arrow Dynamics corkscrew) was deceptively rough on the ears and the side of one's head, but Jet Rescue - their Intamin launched coaster - was surprisingly good. You launch out of the station at 40mph and then you're into a wide, highly banked helix. You speed through a tunnel where you 'rescue' the sealions and where a second set of friction wheels spin you up to 43 mph, although it actually feels a good deal faster. Four quick, directional changing turns through the rocks take you to the brake runs and bring a big smile to your face.

With a generous smattering of surfing, tubing, wave-riding, body boarding, sliding and swimming between our coaster fixes, we ended the week in Movie World. After some last minute Heimlich Manoeuvre-style stretching exercises, and a couple of practices at standing up straight whilst holding chin up and breath in, we hit the queue for Superman the Escape. After being measured no less than three - three! - times by different instruments, they finally declared Steph as being exactly 1.4m tall! *(Georgia had trounced her at 1.41m...)* and on we went!

The queue prepares you for your journey on the MRT (Metropolis Rapid Transit). You move through the subway stations pretty quickly, as earthquake tremors cause police cars to fall through from the street and water mains to burst. The MRT tannoy warns of the subway collapsing and then - phew - you hear the man himself say "*Hold on folks, I'll get you out of here. Fast. Superman fast.*" Then you're launched up to 62 mph and into the top hat, followed by a heavily banked turn to the right. Going back into the ride's station for a sharp left hand turn and out again is fun, and the ride's two camel humps provide some pleasing air time and a headchopper effect. Verdict - worth the growing pains!

Unlike Lethal Weapon, which almost lived up to its name. A Vekoma SLC and Australia's first suspended coaster, it's pretty rough on the ears and the side of your head which detracts from the fun of racing through Chinatown with your feet in the air. WBMW's other rides were dispatched fairly quickly, although we found ourselves yearning for Dreamworld's Q4U system when we had to wait an hour for Scooby Doo's Spooky Coaster (an indoor dark wild mouse ride).

Overall, we had an incredible five weeks in the southern hemisphere and we'll certainly miss the weather - it was refreshing not to have to bother with taking rainproof coats into the parks. But we're also glad to be back up topside and can't wait to hit Thorpe Park and Alton Towers this summer now we're all above that magic 1.4m marker ...!

# The Hoff opens Nickelodeon Land in Blackpool

On Wednesday 4th May the £10.3m Nickelodeon-themed area at Blackpool Pleasure Beach was opened by David Hasselhoff with the help of pantomime giant Christopher Biggins and of course our very own Andy Hine!

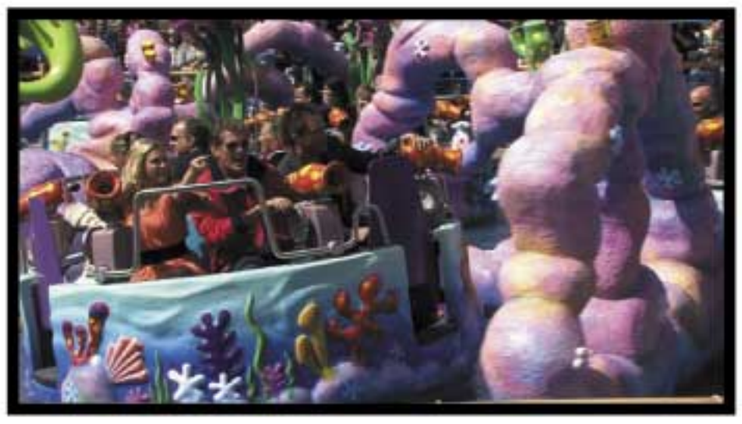
Hasselhoff is best known for his roles on TV shows Baywatch and Knight Rider, but he also starred in the SpongeBob SquarePants Movie.

Talking about the events of the day Hasselhoff commented: *"I've been to a lot of events and openings but those with SpongeBob SquarePants are my favourite! I had a blast working with him on The SpongeBob Movie and have loved joining him on the new rides."*

The six-acre area of the park now called Nickelodeon Land has 12 rides and attractions aimed for all the family to enjoy, featuring characters such as SpongeBob SquarePants. The Rugrats and Dora the Explorer.

The Beaver Creek log flume, originally built in 1992, has been overhauled and rebranded with the classic Nick Cartoon, the Rugrats Lost River. While Rollercoaster has had a makeover to become Nickelodeon Streak, with the track painted bright orange and new sleek green cars, and Zipper Dipper is now known as the Blue Flyer.

New rides include a Disc'O'Coaster themed around Avatar Airbender, where the entrance features a tranquil sculpture garden with lush bamboo and a pair of colossal temple guardian statues.



Joining the water ride line up is SpongeBob's Splash Bash - a world first! The vehicles nestled amongst special SpongeBob corral begin to spin, while all onboard are in for a soaking. Each rider is equipped with individual water cannons for blasting their friends and family both on and off the ride.

SpongeBob fans are spoilt with two more attractions based upon the legendary sponge, The Krusty Krab Order Up and the Bikini Bottom Bus Tour!

Little explorers can take to the sky with Diego's Rainforest Rescue, a hot air balloon ride that then travels skyward, around a rotating tower for fantastic views over the Park.

There is also a bouncy carousel ride, the Backyardigans Pirate Treasure, and Dora the Explorer's World Voyage, a boat ride which sails through France, Russia, Tanzania and China, where guests meet all sorts of new friends and learn how to say "hello" in each of their languages.

The areas food offering is in the form of the brand new Big Pizza Kitchen, which some members experienced during the Blackpool Bash earlier this year, while it also boasts the UK's only bespoke Nick Store, packed with Nickelodeon apparel, toys, gifts and Build a Bob - a product which lets guests create their own SpongeBob SquarePants from dozens of individual pieces.

A visit to Nick Land would not be complete without meeting some of the famous faces, SpongeBob SquarePants, his good friend Patrick; Dora the Explorer, her best friend Boots and her cousin Diego; Aang from Avatar Airbender; as well as Chucky, Tommy and Angelica from the Rugrats who will all be appearing to meet and greet visitors as well as pose for photos and sign autographs.

# Members moments ...

**It's the RCCGB Baby boom! This issue we welcome two new coaster club babies ... Henry Jones and Thomas Gaines.**

**Tim and Adrienne Jones** welcomed young Henry into the world on 3rd March weighing 8lb 5oz - a brother for Joshua.

While **Marcus Gaines and** his partner **Susie Clarke** became a family with the arrival of their first born, Thomas on 22nd May weighting 9lb 6oz.

**Congratulations to you all from everyone at the RCCGB.**

**This issue we celebrate another two BIG '0' Birthdays. Sarah Booker and Lee Bennett who were both born in 1971.**
And for those who can't work that out ... makes them both 40!
*Congratulations to you both on celebrating your 40th' Birthdays.*

**Other birthdays worth a special mention are Phil 'Pip' Davidson Boyle and Ryan Hacket who were both 51 recently.** Ryan celebrated by riding - yes you guessed it - Rattler!

**Other birthdays to celebrate in May and June are ... Adam Bysouth, Lorraine Pratchett, Sarah James and John Hillier** *(pictured)* **along with ... Emma Louise Robinson, Barry Healey, June Ross, Heather Hall, Lesley Hodgeson, Ian Gulliver, Lesley Hodgeson, Maria Robinson, Chris Smith, Lisa Marshall, Adam Cuthbert, Adam King, Carole Hodgson, Kelly-Anne Holden, Kirk Sadler, Andy Hunter, Mandy Smith, Tim Jones, Steve Daly, Norm Mercer, Stacy Harper, Stuart Gaines, Debra Boggis, Kevin Tinson, Steven Caine and Sylvia Bloor.** *Happy Birthday to you all.*

Don't forget if you are planning on doing something extraordinary during this year let us know and we will report it here in **Members Moments**. Just drop us a note to **airtime@rccgb.co.uk** with your name *(your proper name please - not just your web alias)* and also try to include a picture.

**AIRtime** would like to thank everyone who has contributed text and/or images for this issue including:- **Paul Heaney, Debbie and Stephanie Hance along with the featured parks, manufacturers and suppliers** - and anyone else we may have inadvertently omitted.

## 2011 DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

**12th August ~ Mega-GLOW-Mania 2011 -** Oakwood Theme Park, Narbeth, Pembrokeshire,
**13th August -** Folly Farm, Kilgetty, Pembrokeshire

**Sat 8th & Sun 9th October ~ Loopathon 2011 -** Alton Towers & Drayton Manor Park

*Full details will be sent with trip application forms, when applicable.*
*All trips, venues and itineraries are subject to change.*

# Paultons Park is a Peppa Pig Paradise!

**By Stephanie Hance -** aged 9!

Dotted with wobbly looking houses, Peppa Pig World puts a huge grin on little children's faces as they walk in to heaven.

Friendly characters greet (and sometimes tickle!) you as you say hello to Peppa and George at the schoolhouse. The seven new rides that Paultons have built in this big new area are great - even I went on some to try them!

I particularly liked George's Dinosaur Adventure with its hissing volcano vents and cool rocking dinosaurs. The train ride was slow but fun as you went around pretty gardens and a pig-sized museum!

The Windy Castle ride was also very good - the way it went up and down, round and round and rotated around the castle itself meant that you didn't know which way you were going next!

The other rides were Miss Rabbit's Helicopter Flight, Peppa's Big Balloon Ride and Grandpa Pig's Boat Trip. All the rides were really colourful - especially the big balloons - with all the ride cars looking like they were custom made for Peppa.

But we didn't get a chance to jump in Muddy Puddles, which looked like a lot of fun. Maybe next time....

We went with our friends who are 2 and 7 and they really enjoyed the car ride around Peppa's imaginative world. I also liked the little hills that many of the rides and houses were built on - everywhere you looked it was very colourful and just like the cartoon. They've done a brilliant job of making it really look like Peppa Pig's world - even the white pillars around the queue for George's Dinosaur Ride weren't straight!

My family and I went on the RCCGB trip to Paultons last year where we listened to the Peppa Pig World presentation - which was really interesting - and took a tour of the building site. Back then, all we saw was piles of mud, diggers, the empty playzone and one house! It was really good to see it all finished and I think Paultons has taken a big step to sweet success!