

The Fairground Society

Platform

REVIEWS



Restoring the Glen Echo Park Carousel, Deborah Lange. Hard back. 141 pages. Well illustrated throughout in colour. £35 inclusive of p & p, from Michael A Smith, 6 Winswell Water, Petersmarland, Torrington, EX38 8QB.

At first glance one could be excused for thinking this is just a book about a carousel. It is much more

than that. The idea of writing the book was suggested while the author was visiting Rosa Ragan, a decorative painter specialising in the restoration of wooden carousels and fair organ facades. Rosa was concerned that valuable historic information was being destroyed as carousels were restored, and she wanted people to have access to information about proper conservation techniques. This book serves that purpose admirably.

In the past much fairground artwork has been ruthlessly stripped with no thought to the layers of paint removed. The book explains the ways of removing paint layer by layer, and the process of recording, both by photography and charts, the various decorative styles which are still visible. With luck, and with a lot of care, it is possible to get back to the original decoration if that has not already been removed. It is therefore possible to restore a ride to its original decoration and colour scheme.

Painting, gilding, applying aluminium leaf, glazing and blending are among the many artistic techniques described. There is also advice on materials and tools to be used, all accompanied by photographs of the processes as applied to the Glen Echo Park Carousel. The transformation from what the Americans term "park paint" to the original decoration is quite stunning.

This book should be of great interest to anyone interested in fairs, but if you have one artefact or a full ride in need of some work, then this is an invaluable book to add to your collection.

Issue No. 81

August 2005