**Great Days Out - Alton Towers,** **by James Kenny**

My last trip to Alton Towers was on a hot summer’s day and was an annual excursion organised by my school. I remember them announcing it in assembly at the start of the year and for the next eight months it was virtually the sole topic of conversation in the school yard.

When the day finally came, I remember waking early and instructing my mother to give me a light breakfast, so I wouldn’t have to feel the embarrassment of vomiting while on a rollercoaster. I don’t remember much about the journey there, apart from the fact I was worried about where I’d meet my friends, due to the fact that we were unable to travel on the same coach. My anxiety subsided as I began to see the signs for Alton Towers, tension replaced with anticipation. We passed through a couple of small, picturesque villages and, despite the fact that my adolescent mind was full of excitement, I caught sight of one of the villagers shaking her head at the fleet of coaches rolling by. For a brief moment the excitement died, and I felt sorrow for her. I realised that the expansion of Alton Towers must make life in these wonderful villages a nightmare in the summer months.

Once there, we were relieved we didn’t have to worry about queuing at the ticket office as we had paid in advance. The first queue we encountered was the one to get through the turnstiles but the guys in the ticket booths were very quick and we didn’t have to wait too long. Once in, the noise and euphoria hit us like an intoxicating drug.

The first sight we saw was a long street, namely Tower Street. On each side was a row of food outlets and gift shops. At the end of the street we were confronted by Swan Lake where you could ride on a Swan Boat. Adults probably like that sort of thing but my friends and I, of course, had no interest whatsoever in any of this and were certainly not the slightest bit interested in messing about in a Swan Boat. We ran like crazed, teenage lunatics, heading for the X Sector- home of Oblivion, the world’s first vertical rollercoaster.



**Oblivion**

Oblivion is one of the scariest rollercoasters you can ever experience and the long queues only add to the tension. You’re also subjected to a number of video clips of a man calling himself the Lord of Darkness, who tells you that the ride is perfectly safe, but then lets out that familiar, sinister laugh associated with all villains. Once you’re on the ride, the tension rises even further as you ascend slowly upwards on the track then wheel to the right towards the infamous drop. The carriage comes to a stop just slightly over the edge so that you are actually staring right down into the hole. After a brief pause, you plunge downwards at a gut-wrenching speed of 68 mph. I must admit I remember little of the drop, as I was too busy screaming. I do remember feeling relieved though when the carriage came to a stop. I didn’t know it at the time but I had plunged 150 feet. The decision to have a light breakfast was a good one on reflection.

**Nemesis**

After taking an hour to relax and enjoy some lunch, my friends and I proceeded at a more leisurely pace towards another famous rollercoaster, Nemesis, the first rollercoaster in Europe to run on the underside of the track. Once again, a long queue loomed but this time there were no video clips or booming laughter. Instead you shuffled slowly through an artificial canyon with rivers of red water. I remember a woman began to have a full-blown panic attack as she obviously thought the water was blood, or maybe she was just generally scared. She was rushed from the queue to have medical attention. Finally, after what seemed like an eternity, our turn had come. To my delight, the operator signalled us to seats in the front row. ‘I will not shut my eyes,’ I said to myself as I strapped myself in. The ride started and almost instantly we were thrown into a series of terrifying loops. The promise I had made myself was overridden by instinct. My eyes slammed shut and I screamed, shouted, laughed out of terror. I felt the motion but saw nothing until we came to a stop. Only when I was safe did I remember the promise and feel regret that I would not have any visual memories of the experience.

