

A Pleasurable Experience by Esme Baldwin

I walked past the large group of people queuing up to go on the Big One and made my way up the slope surrounded by red railings towards the station house for the Big One. I looked back at the throng of people eagerly awaiting to ride the two hundred and thirty five feet rollercoaster feeling glad that as I had a special pass I was exempt from queuing. I was spending the day at Blackpool Pleasure Beach which had been organised by a group my support worker worked with. We had just entered the park and had chosen to go on the Big One first. As myself and the other clients of the Unite Group stepped into the carriage and a member of staff fastened the harness, the same fear that I felt the first time I had ridden the Big One returned. The carriages began to move and were soon approaching the tunnel which resembled a can of Pepsi Max. The ride had been built way back, twenty one years ago in 1994 when it had been sponsored by Pepsi Max and so named Pepsi Max Big One. The carriages moved swiftly through the black and white striped tunnel and began ascending the red steel track. We climbed steadily higher giving us an excellent view of the theme park and an impressive view of Blackpool beach and the sea in the distance. As we reached the peak of the two hundred and thirteen feet hill, I braced myself for the almost vertical drop, set at an angle of 65 degrees which was soon to follow and clung to the safety bars. The carriage hurtled down and proceeded to race around the track, plunging and rising as it went reaching speeds of up to eighty seven miles per hour. I shrieked with excitement enjoying the ride and remembering to smile at the camera just before the ride ended. As the carriage arrived back at the station house, I thanked the staff as they unfastened my harness and stepped out. As we walked towards the exit, I exclaimed to members of the Unite Group how exciting the ride had been and asked how they had found it. Everyone seemed to have enjoyed the ride and I complimented everyone on their bravery to ride the Big One! I then went towards the hut which displays and sells photographs, key fobs, magnets and magnetic frames of passengers riding the Big One. I bought a large print out with a Union Jack themed background which I planned to scan onto my laptop and display on Facebook later that day.

As the Red Arrows Skyforce, the newest ride at Blackpool Pleasure Beach is situated next to the Big One we headed there next. As we approached and scanned our wristbands, the other members of the Unite Group explained that each person sat in their own cockpit and had individual control over the seat they were sat in. On opposite sides of the seats there were wings with handlebars. When the ride began to move, the passenger would have the opportunity to take hold of the handlebars on the wings and use them to spin or glide in mid air. As I am too scared to go on rides which go upside down I refrained from doing any spinning or gliding and held onto the sides of my seat, watching other passengers trying out the spinning and glide function. Once the ride stopped, we stepped out of our seats and began to walk towards our next ride, the River Caves

We then headed for the River Caves and climbed into a boat to begin our tour. The boat moved steadily forwards into the mysterious tunnel in which the entire ride takes place. At the entrance, the words 'tunnel of love' are placed above it in lit up gold letters with a waterfall shortly after it.

Just as we were about to go through the waterfall, the water stopped falling as we passed underneath it. Throughout the ride, different areas are displayed as models and art work to visually represent a selection of countries and time periods throughout the world, including China, the Triassic Period, under the sea, the jungle, Egypt and the ice age. As the boat moved steadily around I relaxed and enjoyed the beautiful scenery and the tranquil music which accompanied the scenes. As the boat ride ended we emerged back through daylight back into the outside world. The ride stopped for a moment or two and swiftly descended down a miniature splash drop with water on either sides.

After we had finished the ride on the River Caves we headed to Burger King for lunch. As it was busy downstairs, I went upstairs and sat down. As everyone else tucked into food from Burger King, I opened my lunch box and began to eat my pasta salad flavoured with tomato ketchup with onions and sweet corn and a diluted bottle of Robinsons Summer Fruits squash. As I follow the Slimming World diet and go to the gym six evenings a week for thirty three minute sessions, it was important for me to keep on track with my diet and have a healthy lunch.

After lunch, myself and Lizzie Smart agreed with the Unite Group that we would pair up and go on rides around the park separately from the other members of the Unite Group. Lizzie mentioned that she would like to go on Infusion, the five loop suspended rollercoaster which rotates fully upside down during the ride and hovers above water. Lizzie attempted to encourage and tempt me to go on it, unsuccessfully however, so I stood and watched, admiring her bravery as she went on it. When Lizzie had finished her ride on Infusion we headed to Nickelodeon Land which is designed for children to go on Avatar Airbender. Avatar Airbender is a disc shaped ride in which everyone sits next to each other in a circle and the ride spins in a circle and goes up and down a track which is semi circle shaped. I consider this ride to be mediocre and quite gentle, yet still fun to go on.

After Avatar Airbender, Lizzie and I made our way across the park to go on Avalanche which is a bobsled style roller coaster with a track which twists and turns and reaches a speed of up to fifty miles per hour and the course is 1160 feet long. After we had finished our ride on Avalanche we went downstairs to the photo booth and I purchased a photograph of myself and Lizzie during our ride on Avalanche.

After purchasing my photograph we headed towards Ice Blast the vertical tower shaped ride. Lizzie felt particularly nervous about going on Ice Blast and explained to me that although she had agreed to go on the ride, she would be pushing herself to do it. I reassured and encouraged Lizzie as we walked towards our seats on the ride and sat down. I understand how nervous she would be feeling as I had felt equally nervous and unsure when I was deciding whether to go on Infusion or not. The members of staff strapped myself and Lizzie into our harnesses and the suspense began to build up as myself and Lizzie waited for the ride to begin. The ride crept upwards several feet from the ground very slowly and gradually, our legs dangling from the ground. Myself and Lizzie chatted

briefly. My words were lost in a shriek of excitement as the ride shot upwards leaving the ground far below. The ride rose up and down quickly several times before it returned to the ground. Members of staff approached the seats and unfastened myself and Lizzie's harnesses and lifted the arm rest up. Eager to see the photograph that had been taken of myself and Lizzie on Ice Blast we looked around for the photo hut. After looking round for several minutes we spotted it and approached the hut and asked the man behind the counter to show us the photograph on one of the display screens. To our dismay, when the ride had shot towards the top of the tower we had both been looking at the ground falling below us and it was not possible to see our faces on the photograph that had been taken. We thanked the man for showing us the photograph and made our way back to Ice Blast for another go on the ride and to attempt to have a better photograph taken of ourselves. As we sat down in our seats and our harnesses were fastened I advised Lizzie to look straight ahead throughout the entire ride and to keep her head up. Once we had finished our second ride on Ice Blast we walked back over to the photograph booth and asked to view the second photograph that had been taken of myself and Lizzie on Ice Blast. This time, the photograph showed a clear view of myself and Lizzie's excited faces. I purchased the photo and chose to go on Grand National next as it is in close proximity to the photo booth for Ice Blast.

We made our way towards the station house and stood on the platform waiting to board the ride. Both carriages soon returned to the station house from their last race and a stream of passengers stepped out of the carriages and headed towards the exit. Lizzie and I stepped into the carriage and sat down, waiting for the other passengers to board the carriages and take a seat. Once everyone was ready both carriages began to move simultaneously towards the starting point. Built in 1935, the eighty year old roller coaster had been running as a ride ever since my first visit with school friends many years ago. Sixty two feet high and travelling up to fifty miles per hour with lots of steep and sudden drops, I had always enjoyed riding the roller coaster.

Upon arrival at the station house myself and Lizzie stepped out of the carriage and made our way to a neighbouring ride named the Wild Mouse. Lizzie was unfortunately unable to ride the Wild Mouse due to health issues, so I began walking towards the station house for the Wild Mouse alone. As I sat down in the carriage I knew from past experience what lay in store for me: Not a rollercoaster for the faint hearted I had always thought of the Wild Mouse as a dynamic and adventurous ride. Full of twists and turns at ninety degree angles and short sharp drops it never failed to disappoint me and was always well worth a ride.

After I had finished my ride on the Wild Mouse we headed towards Valhalla where I rejoined the rest of the Unite Group party who were seated in the same boat as me. Valhalla is a Viking themed water ride on which passengers travel in boats. The boat travels almost all the time in total darkness with four different element areas themed as ice, fire, wind and snow featuring bursts of fire, freezing cold drafts, strong winds and snow throughout the entire ride. With overhead water features and lots of steep splash drops into the surrounding water, you were certainly guaranteed to emerge dripping wet.

Once we had stepped off Valhalla I said goodbye to the members of the Unite Group and called my dad on my mobile phone, asking him to meet me just outside the entrance. Myself Lizzie and who walked with me through the park towards the exit. On the way, we passed SteepleChase, the horse racing themed ride on which up to two passengers mount each horse and race in lanes of three at a time. As Steeplechase is located near to the park exit I decided to go on as my last ride of the day and made my way towards the station house to mount one of the horses and begin the race. With lots of twists and turns at a speed of thirty miles per hour, I had always considered SteepleChase as a rather mediocre yet enjoyable ride. Once the ride had ended I continued to walk towards the park exit to meet my dad who had driven from Kirkham to pick me up.



(Above) Myself and members of the Unite Group on the Big One at Blackpool Pleasure Beach