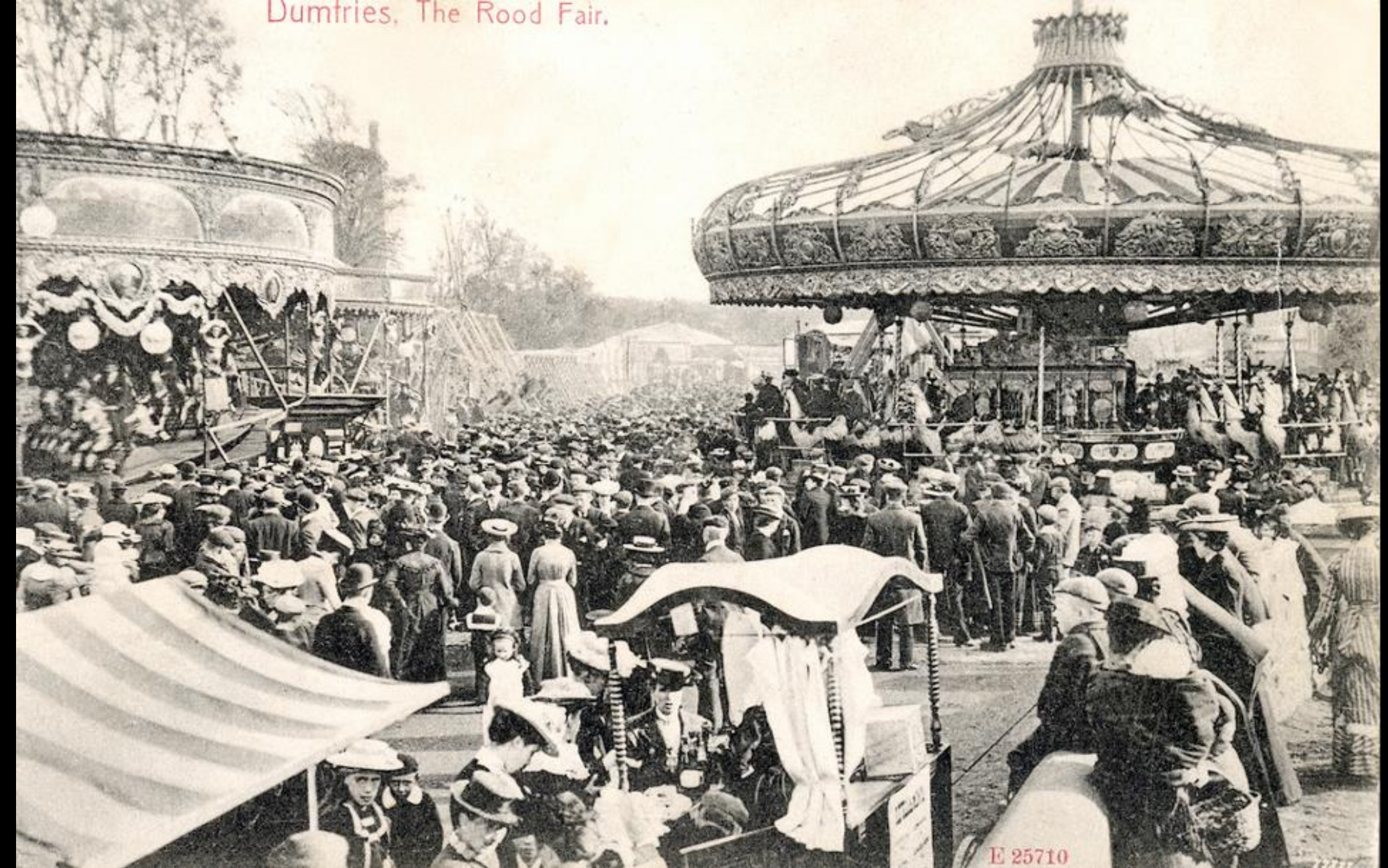


A Tangible Benefit: Intangible Cultural Heritage and the Scottish Fairground

Drs Mitch Miller and ts Beall
Fair Scotland

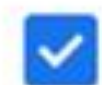








Open in My Maps



Showmen's current Yards



Backcauseway



Rigby Street

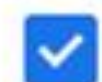


Thomas Wilmot

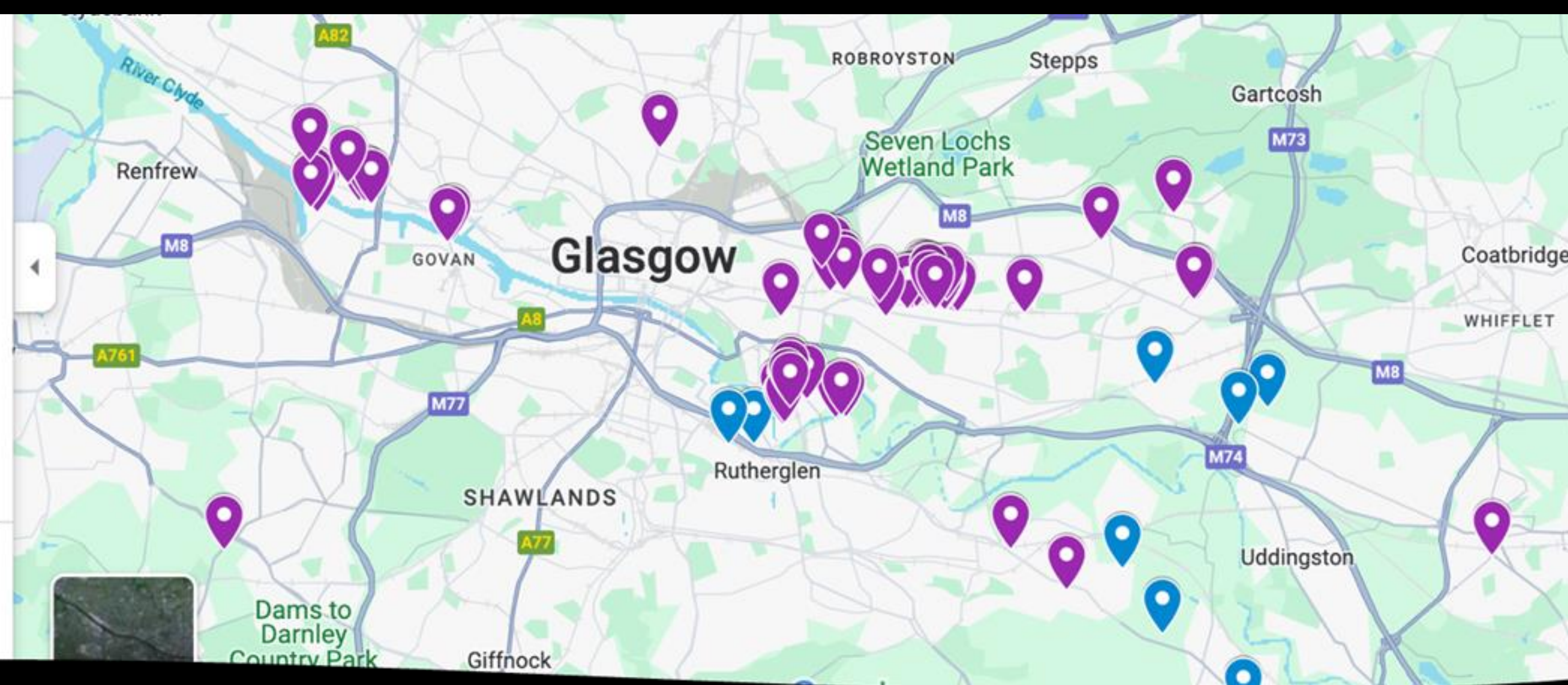


Kayes family Yard #1

89 MORE



Untitled layer



50-Odd Show Yards in Glasgow

- Glasgow is home to 80% of Scotland's Travelling Showpeople (c5,000 people?) Descended from sideshow, circus and other travelling entertainers.
- Domiciled in 50+ sites in the east and south of the city (c70 in the Greater Glasgow Area). 90 in Scotland overall.
- National population in Scotland estimated to be c6,000.



BEHIND THE
SCENES AT

⇒ THE ⇐

FAIR

6TH - 8TH DECEMBER 2013
THE RIVERSIDE MUSEUM

9 museums

THE RIVERSIDE CHRISTMAS FAIR

Join us for a FUN
festive season at
Riverside

6 & 7
DECEMBER
11am - 4pm
FREE ENTRY



CHRISTMAS GIFT STALLS | FREE FAIRGROUND RIDES

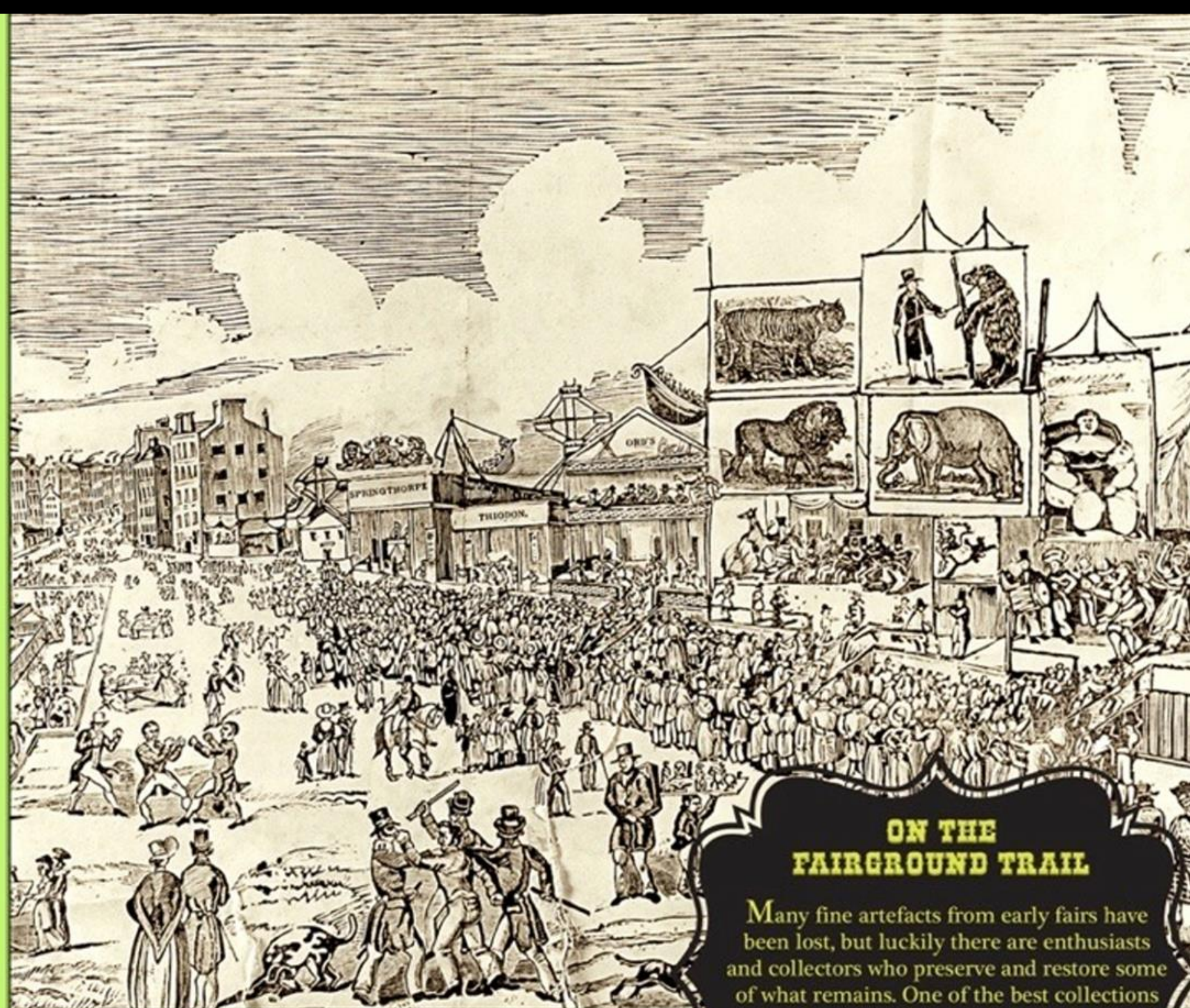
1831 SWINGS

Hand-powered swing-boats date back to at least the eighteenth century. As you can see from Walter Stirling's handsome set of boats, they are still a popular fairground ride. At least two sets are depicted in this print of Glasgow Fair from 1831.

As you can see, the early nineteenth century fairground was very different. Rides were a much smaller part of the fairground line-up, and the emphasis was on the travelling 'geggie' shows and circuses. Popular attractions included waxworks, theatres, mirror shows and menageries.

Ord's circus, which can be seen in the centre of the picture, was founded in the Scottish borders at the turn of the nineteenth century and was a major fixture of fairs all over Scotland. Descendants of the Ords, such as the Pinder and the Miller families still travel to fairs in Scotland today. The Miller family have brought their 100 year old Wheel-em-in to the Riverside Museum.

From 1830-1860, the sideshow reigned supreme on the Scottish fairground. But big technological changes were under-way...



This print of Glasgow Fair from c1830s is one of our earliest records of swingboats in Glasgow.
© CSG CIC Glasgow Museums Collection

ON THE FAIRGROUND TRAIL

Many fine artefacts from early fairs have been lost, but luckily there are enthusiasts and collectors who preserve and restore some of what remains. One of the best collections is found here in Glasgow, held by showman Melvyn Thomas. You can see some of his rarest and most beautiful pieces inside the Riverside in the Education Space.

MIND YER OWN BUSINESS

'THE CANS'

Donated by the Harris family,
the cans are an old fairground
favourite. It takes skill and
good aim to knock them off
the shelf- but it also takes skill
to run the game.

And here's where you
can learn how

*Fancy
a try?*









BBC
TWO
Scotland

Monday 15th December at 21:00

Also available rUK on BBC iplayer and Sky Channel 970

Assistant Producer Emma Lennox Researchers Jack Archer Emily Rimmer Additional Camera David Liddell Neville Kidd

Narrator Mitch Miller Producer John Archer Executive Producer BBC David Harron

Filmed, edited and directed by Joesph Briffa

hopscotch films

What's On

Unfair: The new comedy inspired by living a life with Scotland's showpeople

She has been harbouring dreams of becoming a TV drama writer for years.



By **Brian Ferguson**

29th Apr 2022, 4:55am



By **Brian Ferguson**

29th Apr 2022, 4:55am



💬 0 Comment



The cast of Unfair: Gavin Jon Wright as Uncle Gav; Grant O'Rourke as Bradley, Bentley's dad; Yana Harris as Missouri, his sister; Kat Ronney as Sorchia, Bentley's girlfriend who is just moving on to



FAIR SCOTLAND

**Fair Scotland is a collective
of Scottish Showpeople,
artists & researchers
dedicated to promoting the
rich heritage of Scotland's
Showpeople, & advocating
for their future.**

Registered Charity SC051246



FAIR SCOTLAND

1. We promote the **heritage, experiences and aspirations of Scottish Travelling Showpeople** while advocating for the **continuation of contemporary fairground culture.**
2. We **promote equality and diversity by challenging discrimination** against Scottish Showpeople and aspire to enhance their well-being and sense of identity as part of a diverse, inclusive Scotland.
3. We **actively engage in policy development and advocacy** which will help promote the Scottish fairground as a vital and valued aspect of Scotland's history and contemporary culture.



Scotland's Census
Shaping our future
A' dealbhadh ar n-àrr ri teachd



If it can
improve my
kid's future,
then I'm
filling it in.

23 What is your ethnic group?

◆ Choose **ONE** section from A to F, then tick **ONE** box which **best describes** your ethnic group or background

A White

- ☐ Scottish
- ☐ Other British
- ☐ Irish
- ☐ Polish
- ☐ Gypsy / Traveller
- ☐ Roma
- ☐ Showman / Showwoman
- ☐ Other white ethnic group, please write in:

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Scotland's Census.

Getting the right things out, starts with filling it in.

census.gov.scot

0800 030 8308



FAIRGROUND WALKABOUTS (2020-23)

Dumfries welcome spring fair back to the town for first time since 2019

Organiser and showman Raynor Cadona was "thrilled" that the seasonal event was back

SHARE    

By [Sharon Liptrott](#)

08:20, 22 MAR 2022 | UPDATED 10:13, 23 MAR 2022

Bookmark 



📷 Artist TS Beall with showmen Albert Reid and Alex James Colquhoun at the Dumfries fair which is back for the first spring event in three years

Walk promises to shine a light on Dumfries' history of fun fairs

The public will have the chance to hear their stories while walking the path of local fairgrounds, past and present

SHARE    

By [Sharon Liptrott](#)

08:51, 22 OCT 2021

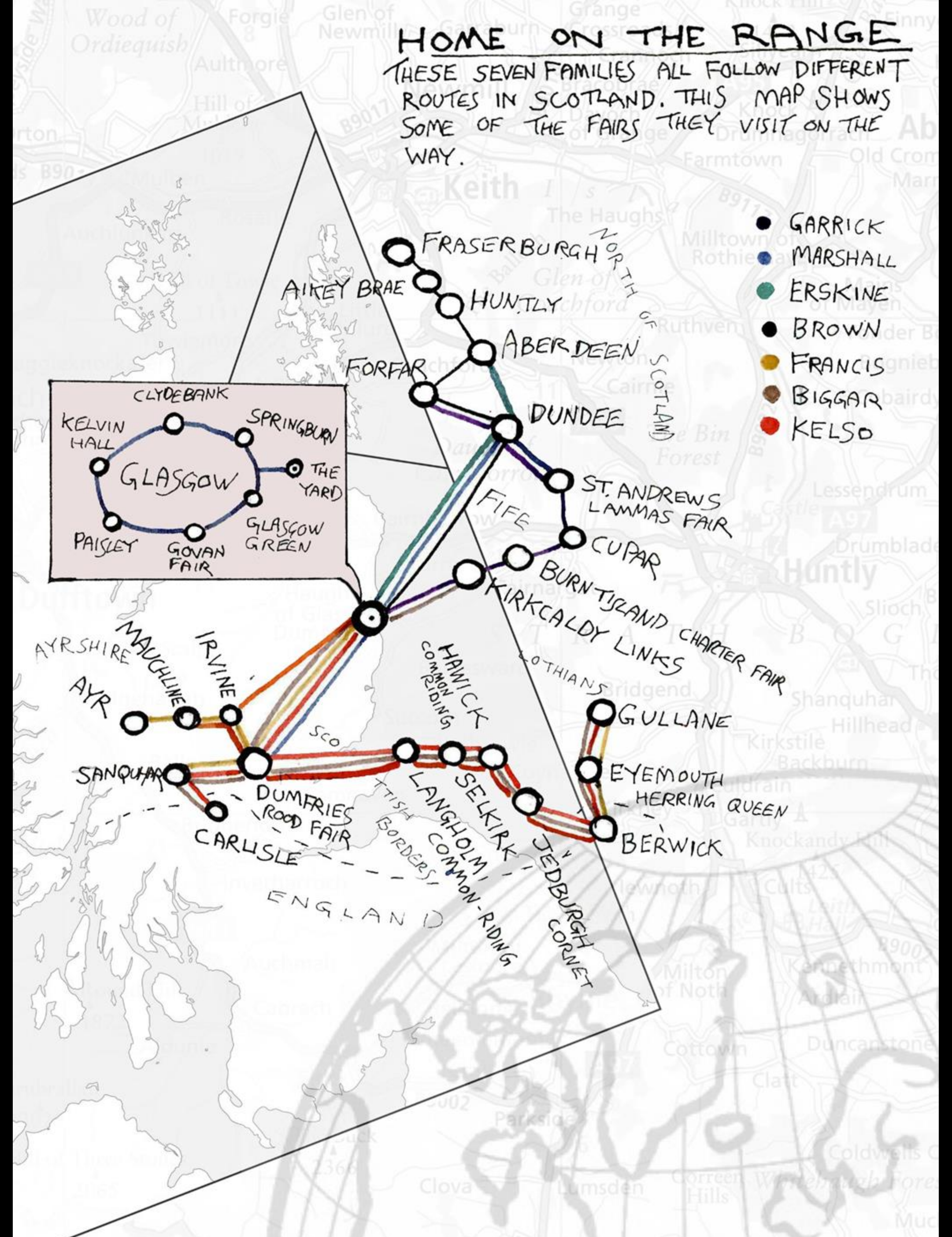
Bookmark 



📷 All the fun of the fair for Dumfries artist Tara Beal with showmen Kevin Carter and Philip Paris.







The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland ratifies the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage



unesco

Fighting for their culture: Govan's Showpeople launch court of session eviction appeal

Karin Goodwin · December 29, 2024



theferret.scot/govan-showpeople-court-appeal-against-eviction/

When Glasgow showman Jimmy Stringfellow feels weary, he calls to mind his ancestors of centuries past. Traditionally, he says, as we stand in the family's fairground yard where their chalet homes share space with old fairground rides, Showpeople would sometimes physically fight to secure their pitch at the fair. "And," he says laughing, "they've been fighting ever since."

This time he and his family are fighting not for their place at the fair, but their right for somewhere to call home.

In 2023 a proposed development on the site of their yard – part of the [£25m regeneration](#) plans of the city's traditional [shipbuilding](#) neighbourhood of Govan – saw them facing eviction by Glasgow City Council.

Now they are taking their case to the [Court of Session](#) claiming the council's eviction decision is discriminatory and in breach of human rights legislation. The family says it undermines their cultural heritage. "We should have the same protections as everyone else," Stringfellow says. "Our entire way of life is under threat."



Rood Fair, Dumfries.



Crowds enjoying the Dumfries Fair c1900



WHITE SANDS, DUMFRIES.

90843.1X

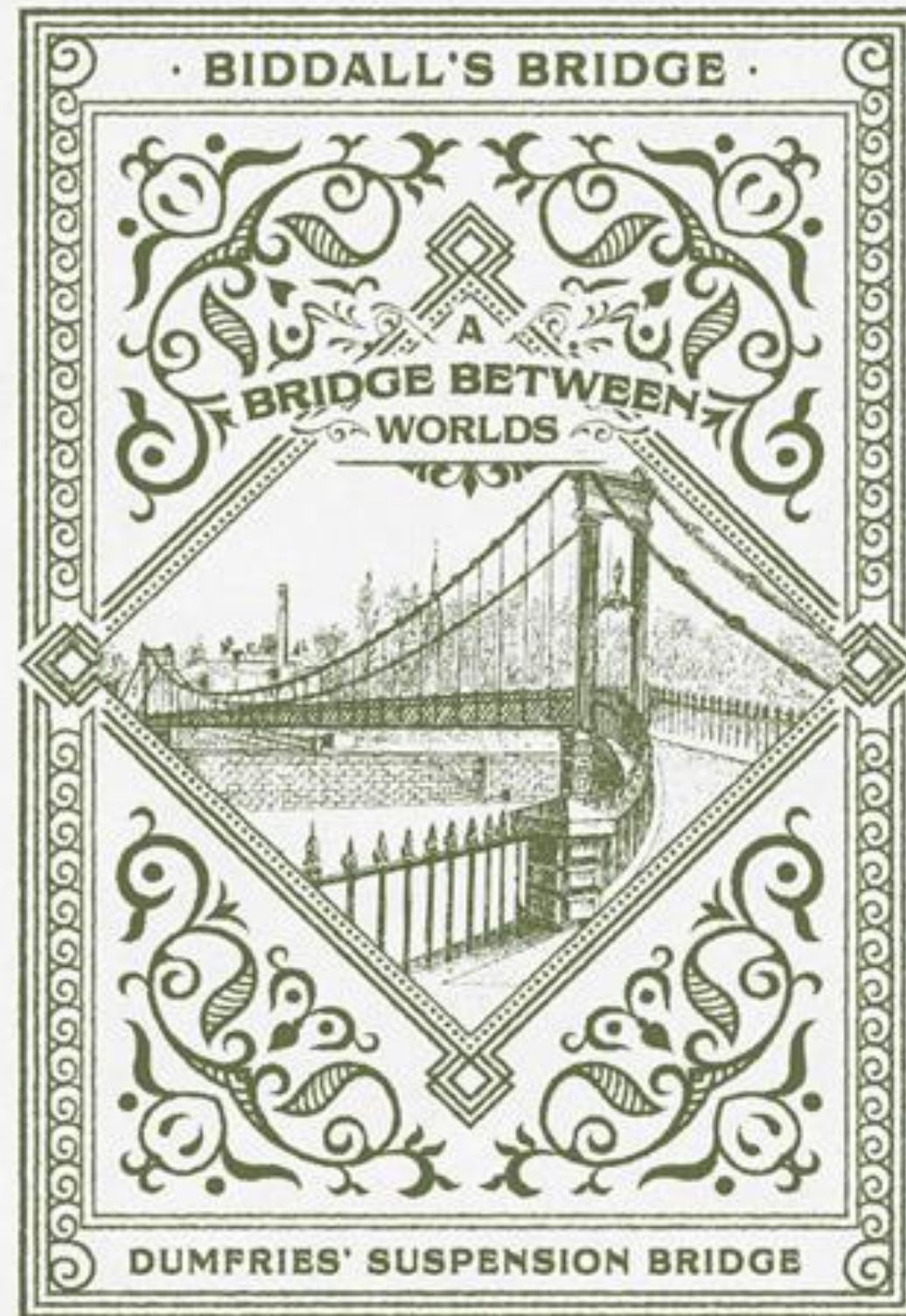


Children attending the Dumfries Rood Fair c1930



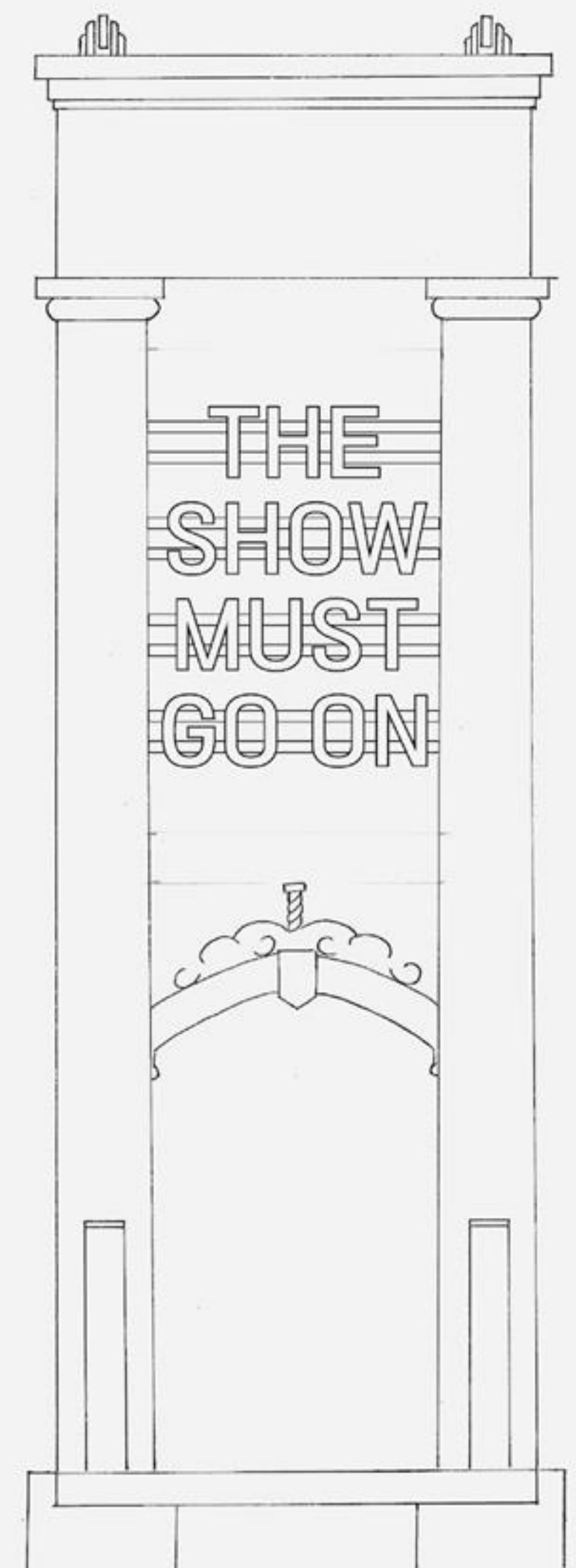






Dumfries' Suspension Bridge, an iconic landmark over the Nith, was inspired by the ornate design of James Barbour and opened on New Year's Eve, 1875. James, the brother of Robert Barbour, founder of Barbours Department Store in Dumfries, left his architectural mark on the town.

The Biddall family, renowned Victorian Showpeople and pioneers, are believed to have played a key role in the bridge's construction, either through financial support or direct involvement. Strategically located by the Whitesands, near the Biddall family's site, the bridge provided a vital link for Maxwelltown residents and mill workers, offering easier access to the vibrant fairs. This earned it the affectionate name 'Biddall's Bridge' within the Showpeople communities.





THE SHOW MUST GO ON

A large-scale illuminated sign creatively highlighting the vital contributions of Scotland's travelling Showpeople to the town of Dumfries and the nation as a whole, situated within one of Dumfries' most iconic landmarks.




Question for ESU Congress:
How have fairs been
accommodated across Europe
within new developments or
public realm improvements?

BLACK LIST of Lost Fairs



- List of lost fairs includes larger fairs with Royal Charters and smaller, local fairs and fêtes
- Goal is to keep fairs from disappearing
- Aims to raise the profile of Scotland's fairs as part of our shared national history
- Includes historically significant fairs like Glasgow Green (linked to Glasgow's 'Fair Fortnight')

RED LIST of Endangered Fairs

- 
- New advocacy initiative of Fair Scotland
 - Formal Launch Jan 2025 (during the European Showmen's Union visit to the Scottish Parliament)
 - Linked to UK's recent ratification of the UNESCO Convention protecting Intangible Cultural Heritage
 - List will include Dumfries' March and Rood Fairs
 - Once fairs are forced to move, they die

Endangered or Lost Fairs Survey

bit.ly/LostFairs





fb & X @fairscotlandorg | insta @fairscotland | [Linktr.ee/FairScotland](https://linktr.ee/FairScotland)

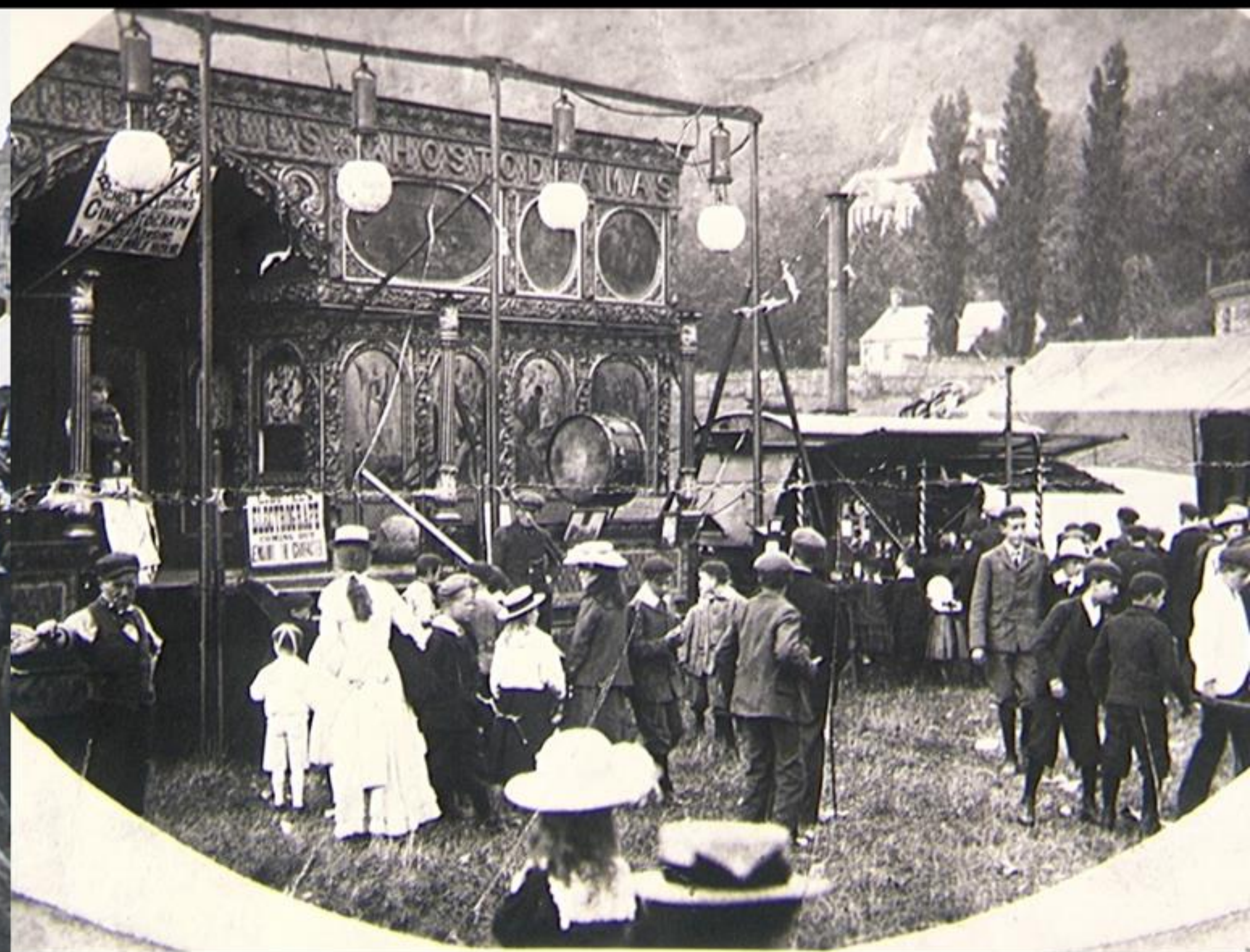


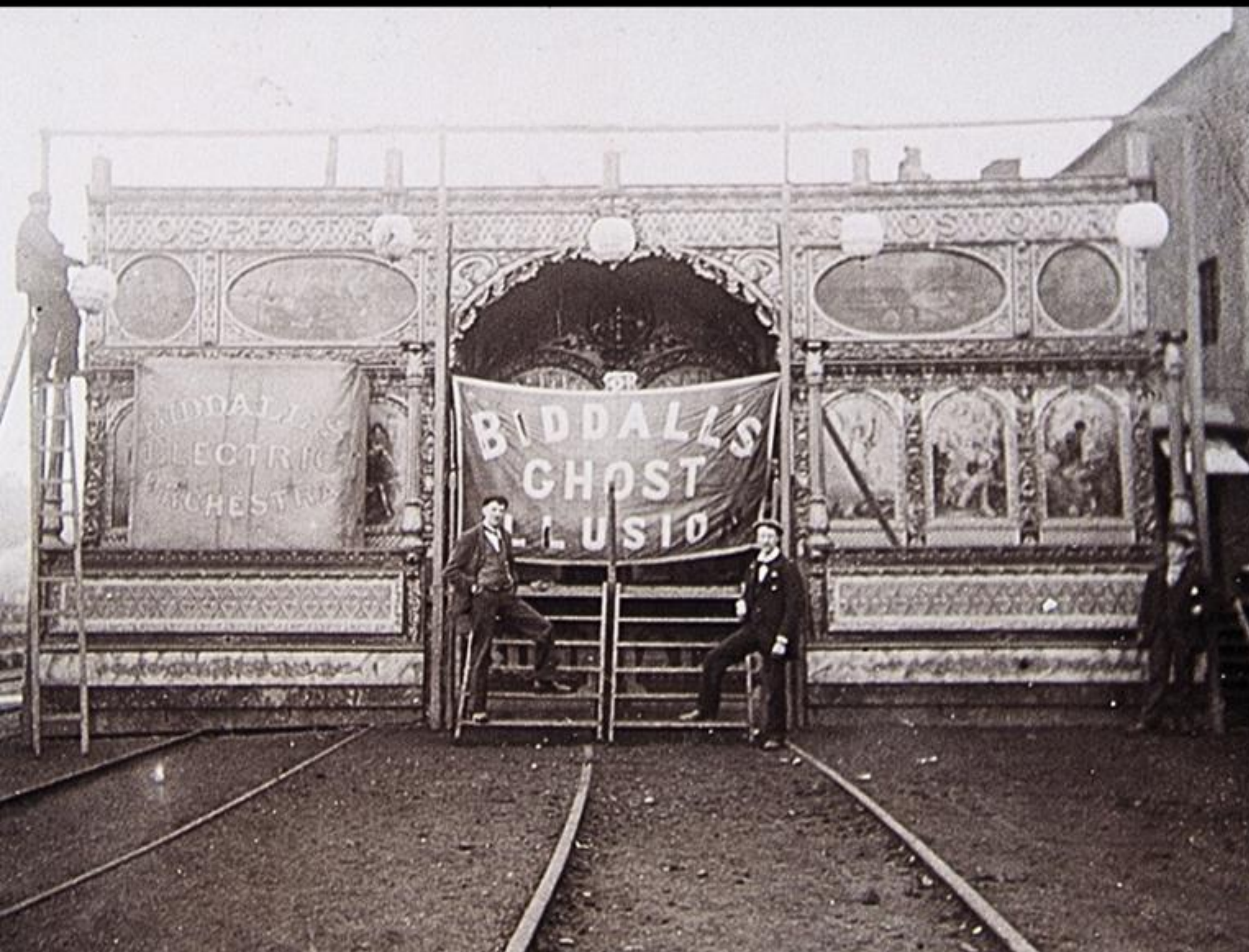


White Sands, Dumfries

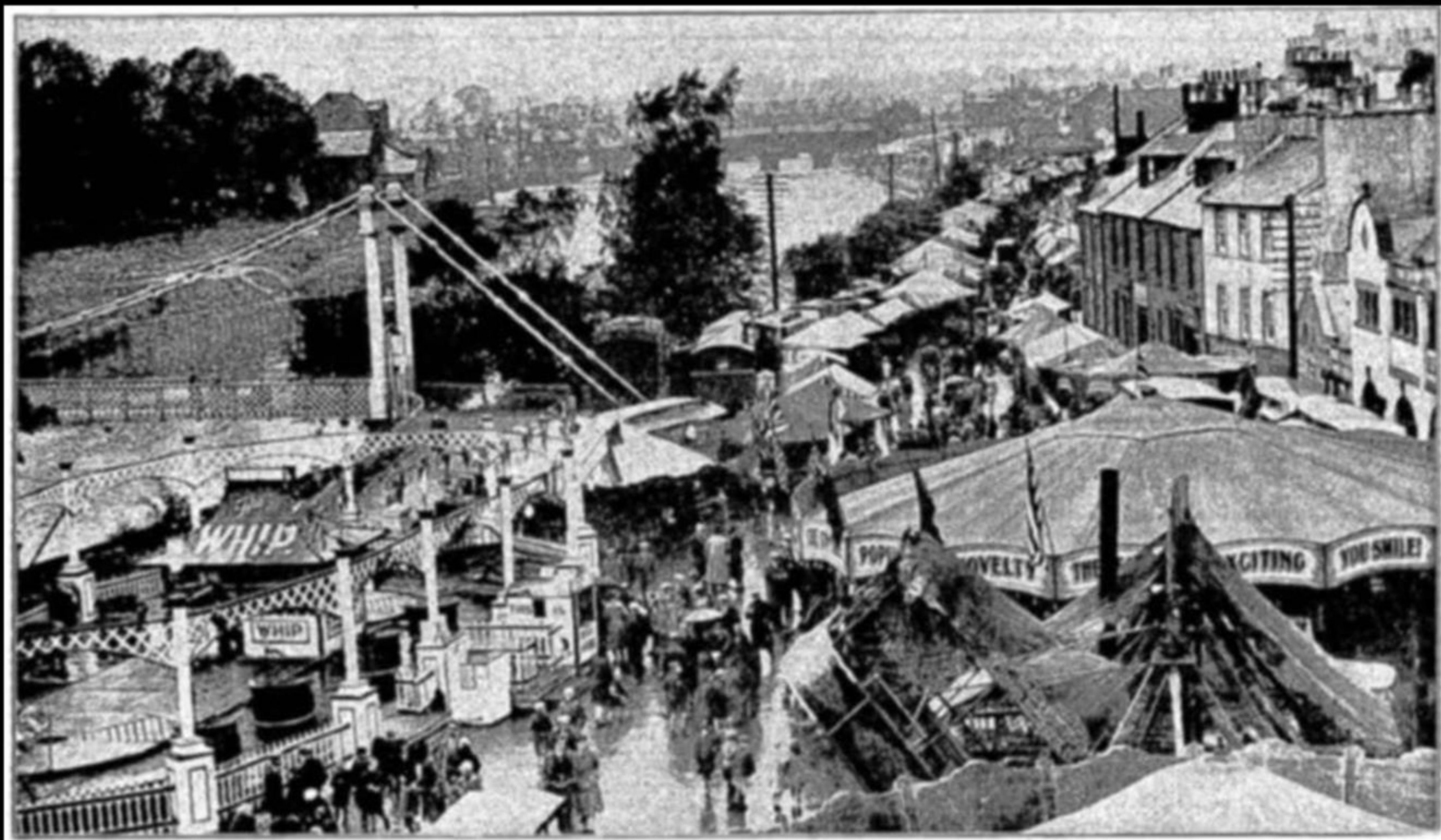
I am letting things drift here







HORSES SECTION LEAVING LOCKERBIE



£100

**IF SHE IS NOT
ALIVE**

WAX MODEL

SHE'S

ALIVE

**ALL
CLASSES**

**SHE
LOVE**

**TO LO
AT**

3D

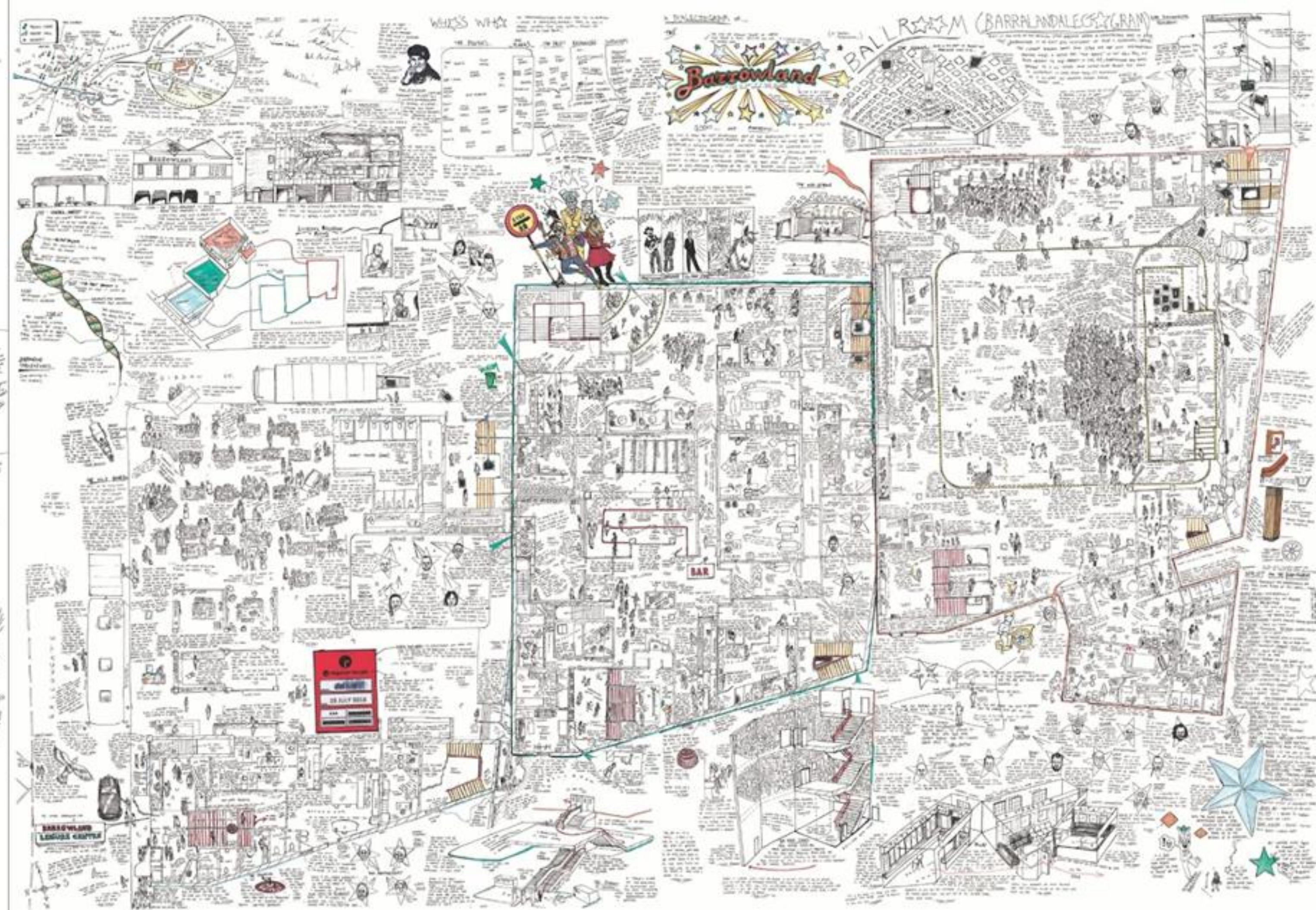
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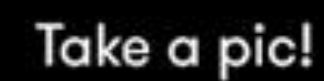
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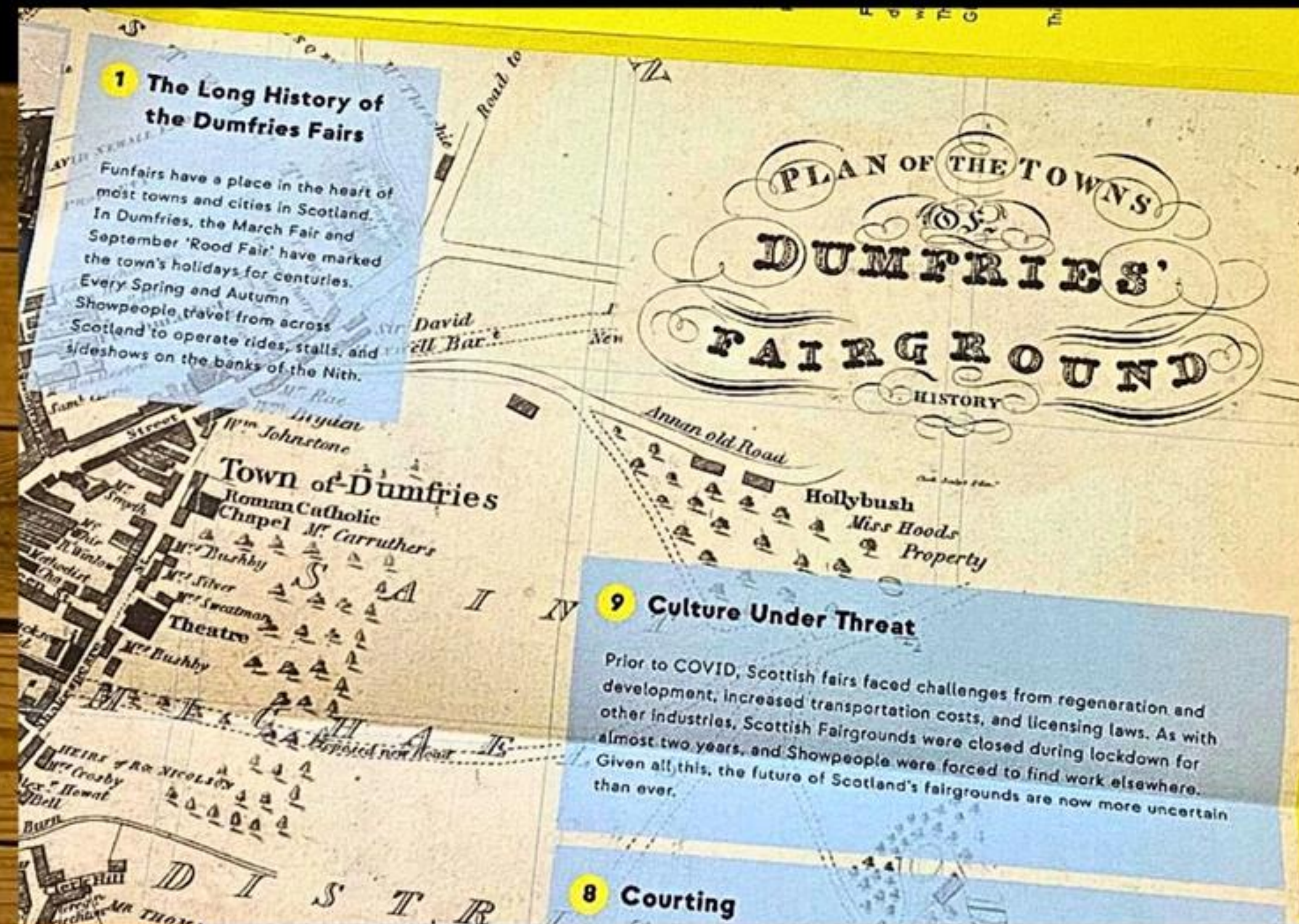
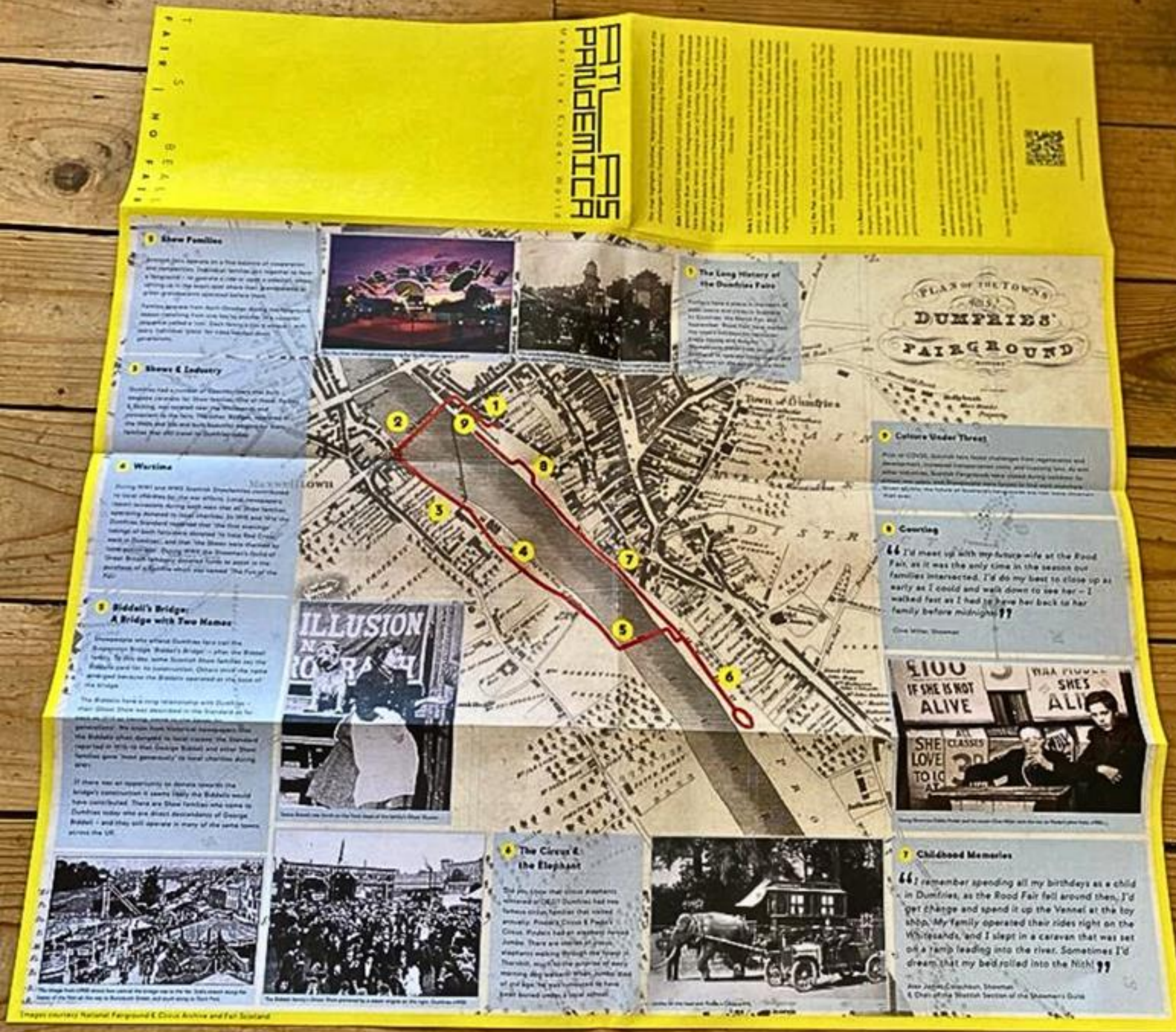
**A project taking place in Greece and Scotland
(funded by Creative Scotland)**

**The 'Tober' part focuses on
Dumfries' Rood Fair...**



Or...





ATLAS PANDEMICA

FAIR | NO FAIR



Dumfries' FAIRGROUND HISTORY

Fairs have a place in the heart of most towns and cities in Scotland. In Dumfries, the March Fair and September 'Rood Fair' have marked the town's holidays for centuries. Every Spring and Autumn Showpeople travel from across Scotland to operate rides, stalls, and sideshows on the banks of the Nith.



The annual September Fair is also called the Rood Fair. This image from the early 1900s shows the crowds, banners, and an iconic Helter Skelter on the White sands.



A Sky Diver brought by the Hanley family, Spring Fair 2009.

Scottish fairs operate on a fine balance of cooperation and competition. Individual families join together to form a fairground – to operate a ride or open a sidestall, often setting up in the exact spot where their grandparents or great-grandparents operated before them.

'I remember spending all my birthdays as a child in Dumfries, as the Rood Fair fell around then. I'd get change and spend it up the Vennel at the toy shop.'

– Alex James Colquhoun, Showman & Chair of the Scottish Section of the Showmen's Guild

A BRIDGE WITH TWO NAMES

Showpeople who attend the Dumfries fairs call this 'Biddall's Bridge' – after the Biddall family.



This image from a 1922 shows how central the bridge was to the fair. You can see stalls stretching along the banks of the Nith all the way to Borthwick Street, and to the south of the bridge along to Duck Park.

To this day, some Scottish Show families say the Biddalls paid for its construction. Others think the name emerged because the Biddalls operated at the base of the bridge.



The Biddall family's 'Carnival' opened in 1915, a black and white image from the 1910s.

The Biddalls have a long relationship with Dumfries – their Ghost Show was described in the Standard as far back as 1915 as having 'come to the Sands for generations'. We know from historical newspapers that the Biddalls often donated to local causes:

the Dumfries Standard reported in 1915-16 that George Biddall and other Show families gave 'most generously' to local charities during WW1.

If there was an opportunity to donate towards funding the bridge's construction – it seems likely that the Biddalls would have contributed. There are Showfamilies who come to Dumfries today who are direct descendants of George Biddall – and they still operate fairground equipment in many of the same towns across Scotland!

SIGNAGE & PRESS

Dumfries welcome spring fair back to the town for first time since 2019

Organiser and showman Raynor Cadona was "thrilled" that the seasonal event was back

Walk promises to shine a light on Dumfries' history of fun fairs

The public will have the chance to hear their stories while walking the path of local fairgrounds, past and present

SHARE    

By [Sharon Liptrott](#)

08:51, 22 OCT 2021

Bookmark



houn at the Dumfries fair

TRAVELLING SHOWPEOPLE'S SITES - A PLANNING FOCUS

MODEL STANDARD PACKAGE

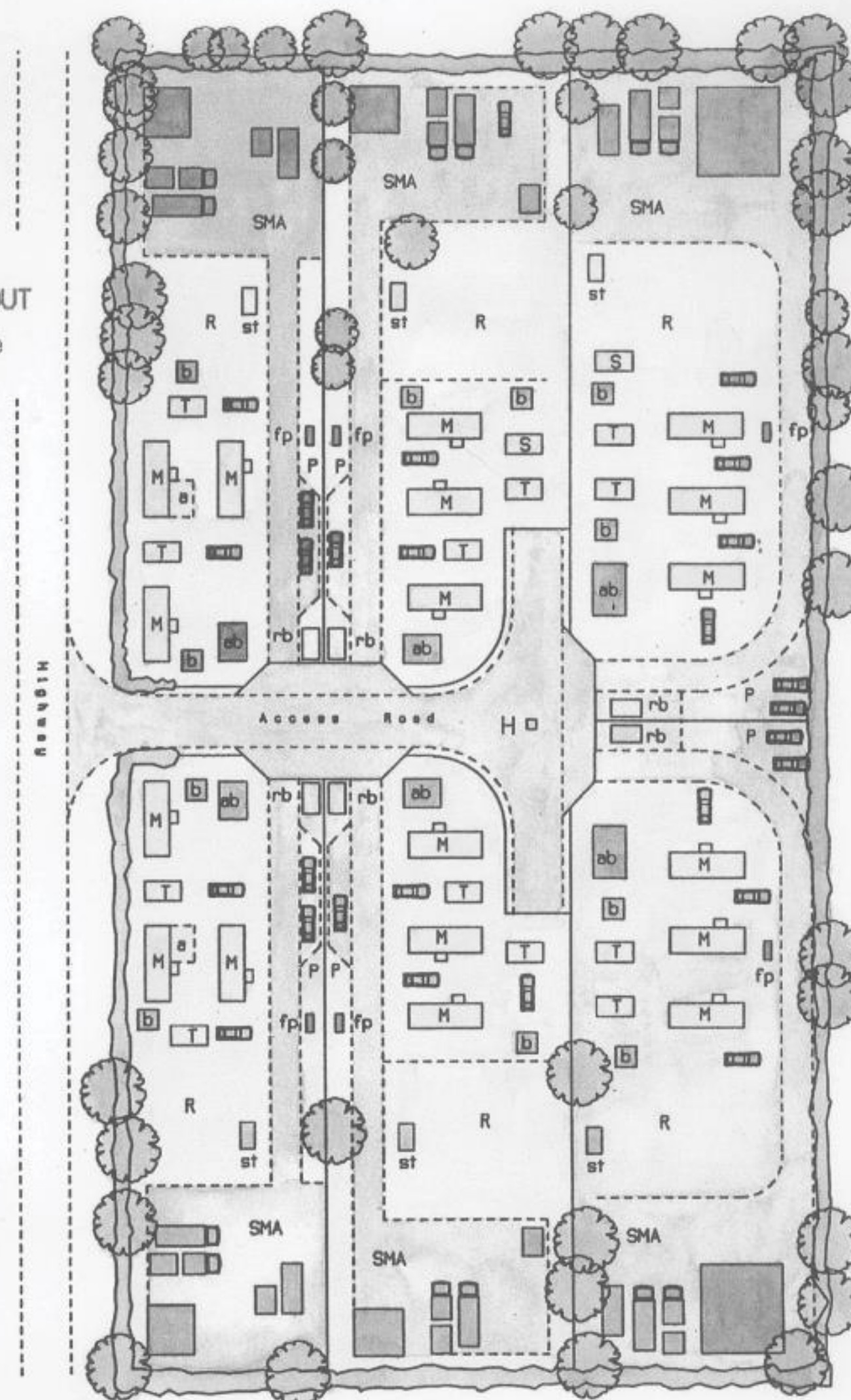
Revised September 2007

The Showmen's Guild of Great Britain

Founded 1889



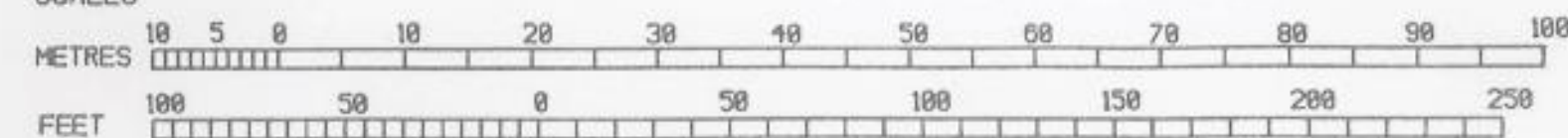
MODEL SITE LAYOUT For Large Site

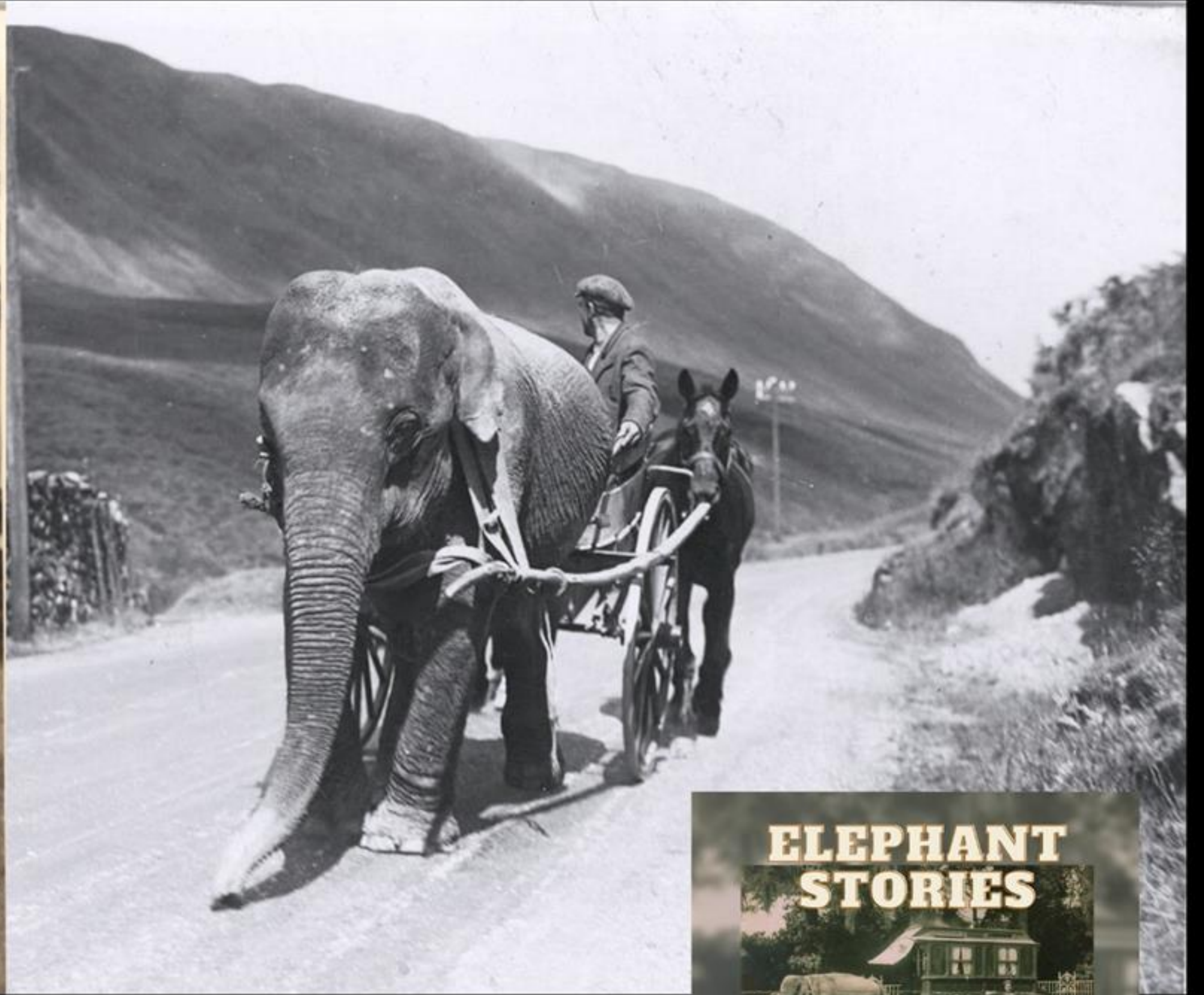


KEY

M	Mobile Home	fp	Fire Point
T	Touring Caravan	rb	Rubbish Bins
S	Specialist Caravan	ab	Chemical Toilet Disposal Point (Toilet-Laundry Optional)
SMA	Storage and Maintenance Area	b	Non Combustible Building
H	Hydrant	a	Awning / Pull Out Section
R	Recreational Area	st	Septic Tank/Cesspool (or Mains Drainage)
P	Additional Parking Area		

SCALES







**Fair Scotland is a collective
of Scottish Showpeople,
artists & researchers
dedicated to promoting
the rich heritage of
Scotland's Showpeople, &
advocating for their future.**

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