

John Hinde's postcard-perfect images of Butlin's are now well known. But a new initiative aims to bring his wider work to public view, starting with an exhibition at this month's Vintage Festival. Diane Smyth



Battersea Park Funfair, London. Photograph by Eimar Ludwig. John Hinde Studios.

In 1951, following more than a dozen years of war and rationing, the Festival of Britain took over London's South Bank offering "a tonic for the nation" with its optimistic view of a modernist future, made better by design. Five years later, John Hinde launched a similarly rose-tinted venture with his postcard company specialising in brightly coloured images of Britain, Ireland and the Commonwealth. And now the two are united as the South Bank celebrates the anniversary with an exhibition of Hinde's pictures, selected by retro designer Wayne and Gerardine Hemingway for their Vintage Festival (29-31 July).

Hinde founded his company in Ireland, a popular tourist destination usually depicted in romantic black-and-white imagery. He decided to use colour to set his business apart, shooting on 5x4 Ektachrome transparencies almost as big as the postcards themselves. If the sky wasn't bright enough he would have it coloured afterwards by retouchers; if a passerby was wearing a drab beige jumper, he would have it changed to red. He was also happy to fake his compositions – if something ugly was in the way, he would cover it with a rhododendron bush or have it taken out in postproduction. Hinde employed photographers Eimar Ludwig, Edmund Nägele and David Noble to help and, between them, they travelled from Butlin's to Nigeria, depicting a world in which the sun is always shining and cars are always new.

Hinde sold the company in 1972 and, while The Hinde Group is still going strong, its postcards are more conventional now.

The originals, however, have become cult items that are traded by collectors, gaining more widespread appeal thanks mainly to the book, *Our True Intent Is All For Your Delight: The John Hinde Butlin's Photographs*, published by Chris Boot and edited by his biggest cheerleader, Martin Parr. And now the fuller range of classic postcards has been collected together into one huge online catalogue by Marcus Davies and Michelle Abadie, who are also working with The Hinde Group to restore some of the original transparencies (excluding the Butlin's images). They have been allowed to make prints for the Vintage Festival exhibition, and to create a limited-edition set of prints that will go on sale in September.

"The collection was a working archive, so many of the transparencies are very scratched and damaged," says Davies. "We're spending a week on each one to restore them, starting with a selection of our favourites. The good thing is that, because they're 5x4, you can print them almost as large as you like. It's a bit of a mystery really why they shot them large format when they would only reproduce them at postcard size. I like to think they cared about their work – as professional photographers, they used the best available kit."

The Vintage Festival is at the South Bank Centre from 29-31 July. [www.vintagebyhemingway.co.uk](http://www.vintagebyhemingway.co.uk). For more information about the exhibition, the prints and the John Hinde Collection, visit [www.johnhindecollection.com](http://www.johnhindecollection.com). A new paperback version of *Our True Intent Is All For Your Delight: The John Hinde Butlin's Photographs* is available this month, priced £17.95 (ISBN: 978-1905712205).