

EASTER PARADE - PHEW!

A hundred thousand Londoners flock to Hyde Park for the Easter Parade, and though it's Rotten Row, it's oh, what a wonderful day! Happy memories return of travel before the Basic, as crowds throng to show off their Easter best. And with temperatures at a London record of 83 in the shade, milady shelters under the weekend order from the fruiterers.

Spanning a hundred years of fashion, hat designs extend even to the youngest generation. New-style hats, but underneath, old-fashioned nappies. Over to the Surrey-Sussex border, where fame comes for a day to Tinsley Green. It's the Marbles Championship of Great Britain. Marbles skill is handed down from father to sons, as from "Pop" Maynard, 73, to sons Arthur, Percy and George. The Gophers Spitfires (an all-Maynard family team) play Tinsley Green in the semi-finals. But Tinsley follow the football fashion by signing world marbles champ Harry Landridge, and at the finish the local side wins the trophy.

For the individual winner, the perfect prize for the hottest day of the year. Blackpool lays on sunshine that puts even the Riviera to shame. The North's great pleasure-ground turns on all the old attractions as, once again, the record seaside scramble brings holidaymakers from all round.

Overnight, the town's weekend population goes up by 150,000. Between them, Blackpool's visitors account for a fair proportion of the total of 228,000,000 which Britain drew out from banks and post offices for Easter spending. At the pleasure-beach, fun-seekers rediscover the old way of making the money go round.

Eighty-miles-an-hour on Britain's only un-nationalised railway comes hard on stomachs conditioned to trains that only occasionally run to time. For the less hardy spirits, Blackpool assembles its usual gallery of sights seen once and never forgotten.

For a short weekend Britain forgets the cares of one kind, only to find cares of another - how to get out of a spot like this in one piece.

After all, the Easter holiday comes only once a year, and after much of this getting back to work is quite a pleasure.