

= Oblivion (roller coaster) =

Oblivion is a steel roller coaster located at Alton Towers in England . The ride opened as the world 's first dive coaster on 14 March 1998 , amidst a large publicity campaign . It was the second in a long line of ' Secret Weapon (SW4) ' rollercoasters to have opened at Alton Towers . The ride has a height restriction of 55 inches (140 cm) . With a maximum speed of 68 mph , it is the third fastest roller coaster in the UK , behind Stealth at Thorpe Park and the Big One at Blackpool Pleasure Beach .

= = History = =

= = = Construction = = =

During 1997 , Fantasy World (the area of Alton Towers in which Oblivion was eventually situated) was closed off and all the old fantasy @-@ themed rides were removed except the Black Hole . Details about Oblivion were not revealed until March 1998 .

The " SW4 " codename stood for " Secret Weapon 4 " . SW3 was Nemesis , and SW 1 and 2 were unbuilt roller coasters originally intended for the Nemesis site .

Oblivion 's opening was accompanied by a massive publicity drive , including appearances on Blue Peter , The Gadget Show , news channels and cereal boxes . In 1997 , before Oblivion opened , some marketing memorabilia was released , including its own brand of deodorant .

= = = Opening = = =

When Oblivion did open , the area was re @-@ themed to look like a sinister government facility , unlike Fantasy World 's fairground theme , and renamed X @-@ Sector . The only surviving ride from Fantasy World , the Black Hole roller coaster , was also changed ; the large tent that it was situated in was repainted to blue and silver instead of green and yellow stripes . To make the new X @-@ Sector a major ride area , Alton Towers added two old rides from other parts of the park : Energizer and Enterprise (both from Festival Park , now Dark Forest) . Both rides were repainted to fit to the new theme .

= = = Sponsorship = = =

On 21 April 2011 the area around Oblivion was given a slight revamp to incorporate promotion for Fanta , the ride 's new sponsor . The sponsorship included posters saying ' 15 @,@ 000 ft drop , bring it on ' , despite the fact that the drop is actually 180 ft (60m) . However , these were later removed after complaints from riders .

= = = 2012 incident = = =

On 8 May 2012 , a 20 @-@ year @-@ old man climbed over safety fences and accessed the underground ride area . He reportedly dropped into the hole from which the roller coaster track re @-@ emerges from the underground tunnel , walked through the underground section and emerged on a ledge where the track enters the ground . Neither he nor any guests on the ride were harmed following the ride cars being held at the boarding station . He was arrested for a public order offence , and the ride returned to normal operation the following day .

= = = 2013 = = =

With the new roller coaster The Smiler opening in 2013 , Oblivion is no longer the only coaster in X Sector , as it had been since Black Hole 's closure in 2005 . In late January / early February 2013 ,

Alton Towers began a process of repainting Oblivion 's fading grey track , which had become very worn since opening in 1998 .

The repaint took over 6 weeks to complete , with some cosmetic upgrades also being made to the station building and queue line structures . The coaster is now the same dark grey colour as its neighbour The Smiler .

In June , Oblivion suffered downtime owing to a gearbox component failing . The ride remained closed for a few weeks while a replacement part was manufactured . The ride re @-@ opened on 25 June .

= = Ride experience = =

While riders queue they are shown three briefing videos featuring actor Renny Krupinski as a sinister man surrounded in darkness , who explains at length the physical and psychological effects of riding on Oblivion . Although based on scientific facts , his speeches are deliberately exaggerated with hyperbole and dark humour to give riders a sense of intimidation while preparing for Oblivion . The man remains unnamed throughout the videos , although the character was originally referred to as the Lord of Darkness during production . The final preshow video features a second character whose image appears inverted and therefore glowing white , who argues with the Lord of Darkness as to whether Oblivion is really safe for riders to experience ; to which he is repeatedly ignored . The Lord of Darkness maintains that the ride is safe , before the video ends with the sound of his ominous laughter .

The queue line takes riders through a large , drawn out upwards helix , repeatedly passing under , through and over various buildings of abstract architecture , before traversing metal bridges into the elevated station building . Here they are batched into rows and board their ride cars , while various technical graphics are displayed on overhead screens . As the cars dispatch , the screens play an automated video featuring the Lord of Darkness in his final appearance as he recites the following monologue :

For some things , there is no rational explanation . There is no way out . There is no happy ending to the story . Welcome to the unknown ; welcome to eternal darkness ; welcome ... to Oblivion .

The roller coaster has a simple layout with a 150 ft drop at 89 @.@ 5 degrees , and is the world 's first vertical drop rollercoaster The car slowly ascends 60 feet at a 45 degree angle to build tension , then levels out , slowly travelling around a curve on a unique chain system , seen only on Oblivion , as the cars approach the drop . As each car reaches the drop it is held by a holding chain for a maximum of five seconds , giving the rider a clear view of the long drop , before a brake is released allowing the car to drop into the tunnel . This is followed by a highly banked turn that climbs up and makes the train lie on its side as it goes through . Then after dropping out of the turn the train climbs over a small rise in the track to the brakes , slowing down , and then pulls around back to the station . The open design cars accommodate sixteen passengers in two rows of eight . The back row is slightly raised to give passengers a clear view of the drop . A pre @-@ recorded and disembodied voice saying ' don 't look down ' was played just before release . In 2004 , this sound effect was removed due to sound restrictions on the park and the words " Don 't look down " have instead been painted on the floor of the guest observation area which is visible to riders when the train is hanging over the edge .

= = Reception = =

When Oblivion opened , it was very well received , partly due to a massive advertising campaign by Alton Towers However , it never appeared in the top 25 list of the Golden Ticket Awards . In Mitch Hawker 's worldwide Best Roller Coaster Poll , it peaked at number 43 in 1999 , and has had a mixed performance since