

Somerset County Carnivals 2010

In 2010, a total of 57 different carts appeared in the seven Somerset County carnivals, compared with 58 in 2009. This was the fewest number of carts since the 1970s. As shown in Table 1, the largest carnivals in terms of carts were Bridgwater and North Petherton with 52. Aliens, Cary Comedians, Club 2000, Marketeers and Poppe Inne did not complete the procession as carts at Bridgwater, and 2Rs, Bovey Tracey, Brimgrovers, Budleigh Salterton and Revellers did not attend North Petherton. Other entries (mostly individual masqueraders and walking groups) totalled 43 at Bridgwater (48 in 2009) which had 96 competitive entries (compared with 101 in 2009). Glastonbury saw a drop in number of carts compared with 53 in 2009. Weston-super-Mare saw a reduction in cart numbers compared with the rest of the circuit, partly due to breakdowns, and had 16 less carts than appeared at Bridgwater and North Petherton. Some of the carnivals now have more walking entries than carts for the first time. To give some comparisons, there were 75 carts in the 1990 Bridgwater carnival, 86 carts in the 1992 North Petherton carnival (the all-time record), and 59 carts at the 1989 Wells carnival.

Table 1: Number of carts and other competitive entries in the 2010 Somerset County season

Carnival	Number of carts	Number of other entries	Total number of entries
Bridgwater	53	43	96
North Petherton	52	41	93
Burnham-on-Sea	44	48	92
Shepton Mallet	44	41	85
Wells	46	47	93
Glastonbury	46	49	95
Weston-super-Mare	36	49	85

The biggest years ever in terms of total number of carts were 1990 and 1992, each with 87 carts, as shown in Table 2. The boom time for carnival in terms of number of cart clubs was between the late 1980s and mid 1990s, but most would agree the standard of individual carts has risen since then, even though the overall number has dropped by 34 carts. There was only a slight decline in the number of carts this year compared with 2009 despite the economic climate, and other health and safety issues affecting carnivals. However, since the 1990 season, 79 clubs which appeared on the Somerset County Circuit have folded. Since 1990, 33 new clubs started, but only 16 of these are still going giving a net loss of 63 cart clubs since 1990. The worst years for clubs folding followed the 1992 season (9), 1995 (7), 2001 (7), 1997 (6), 1996 (5), and 1998 (5). Since 2002, between 1 and 5 clubs have folded each year. Feature carts now dominate the parades; this year there were only 9 tableau carts, which historically dominated the Somerset carnivals (compared with 20 in 1991 for example), 10 comic feature carts (compared with 23 in 1991), and 10 juvenile feature carts, one more than in 1991.

Table 2: Number of carts appearing in the Somerset County carnivals 1985-2010

Year	Number of carts	Year	Number of carts
2010	57	1997	77
2009	58	1996	79
2008	61	1995	82
2007	62	1994	77
2006	69	1993	83
2005	70	1992	87
2004	70	1991	85
2003	71	1990	87
2002	70	1989	84
2001	70	1988	69
2000	68	1987	79
1999	73	1986	73
1998	70	1985	71