

Chaplins Grotto

Chaplins grotto which features scene after scene of festive Christmas animations is one to remember. Attracting thousands upon thousands every year Chaplins grotto has earned itself a well deserved name.

Chaplins have also become popular for their opening day (around mid November) as throughout the years has seen fairgrounds, donkeys, reindeers, huskey dogs, live entertainment and much more.

The 12 scene grotto which every year changes its appearance takes a lot of time, effort and hard work to reach the opening date. After celebrating their 14th year of the grotto being open (2009) the staff cracked on early in 2010 to make it a year to remember. Work commenced in late March with staff who worked throughout the summer and autumn to reach the deadline of the 20th November. And with Chaplins entering a nationwide competition for the best grotto 2010 this had to be an even more special year.

With owners Linda Thompson and Vanessa Plumbridge both passionate about the grotto every year the grotto gets bigger and better! Linda explained "providing the grotto for the last 15 years has been a true labour of love. Santa's grottoes on this scale are now quite rare but it's our way of giving something back to our customers, schools and people of Plymouth and the south west. Thousands upon thousands go through it and when it opens it's the best day of the year!"

Chaplins have always been committed to helping charities large and small and after entering the dragons challenge which supported the 'NSPCC' this year where you had to try and aim to raise as much money as possible and then have the chance to meet Deborah Meden. Well after having a few fundraising events Vanessa decided to raise money from the grotto. In two of the scenes in the grotto there are ponds where the customers have always given their loose change so all the money collected was given to the 'NSPCC' after raising £576.00 it was a fantastic achievement. Community plays a strong role in the thinking behind what Chaplins sells and how it supports its customers and the grotto is just one manifestation of it.

The scenes which consist of swans in an enchanted garden, Cinderella's carriage with the castle and a pumpkin pulled by mice, a village scene with a train, snow queen with polar bears and much more, then you reach Santa's log cabin where you meet Santa and receive an early Christmas present and also have the option of having your photo taken by a resident photographer.

Judges had arrived before Christmas to judge the grotto for the south west region of the greatest Christmas awards. And are absolutely delighted that Linda Thompson (Chaplins owner) went to Harrogate's Christmas & gift fair and was delighted to collect a silver award.

The grotto always invites local schools, disability schools, elderly homes and much more. Another fantastic highlight of the grotto is the visitor's book at the end of the grotto with thousands of comments thanking Chaplins and the staff.