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Era ends for shire horse centre



End of an era: heavy horses being auctioned

Eight heavy horses have been sold at auction following the closure of the National Shire Horse Centre near Plymouth.

Hundreds of people from across the country came to Yealmpton to bid for a part of what was once a major tourist attraction.

A few weeks ago the centre closed to the public for the final time after 22 years. The auction marked the end of an era as the entire contents went under the hammer including the last remaining heavy horses.



Going to good homes: the last remaining horses

All the horses were sold to private owners, one will be making the long trip to a new home in York. Prices ranged from as low as three hundred and eighty guineas, to the top price, a mare and foal which went to local farmers for three thousand three hundred guineas.

In its heyday in the eighties the Shire Horse Centre attracted up to 300,000 visitors a year. It first ran into difficulties in 1996, but was bought by the Hockin family.



With the benefit of hindsight, owner Michael Hockin says he wishes he'd never bought the centre. "It's been a major problem for us. At the time we thought it would be a lot of fun, but it turned out to be a major headache." he said.

He dismisses speculation it'll become a golf course. Instead, he says there's keen interest to turn it into a national theme park.

**"Centre was a major problem":
owner Michael Hockin**