

## Medieval Merriment 10 August 2013 – What a Day!

### The Scene

The King George V Playing Fields hosted the Medieval Merriment Day which picked up where the highly successful Queen's Jubilee and Village Olympics left off. This time organised by the Events Committee of the Parish Council, **the organisers had aimed to provide a top-class and fun memorial to the Temple Ewell of 800 years ago without charging an entrance fee**, enabling everyone in the village to attend and for everyone to enjoy each other's company. This was achieved through the energetic fund raising efforts of many people, a generous grant from our District and County Councillor, Mr Geoffrey Lymer and kind donations from the local Templars.



To say the day was a roaring success is probably an understatement. The field which had been decorated with the flags of every Dover in the world and with medieval-themed tents and gazebos presented a splendid sight. It was graced with many a fine knight and many a glamorous lady, many of whom had not reached the teenage years but looked magnificent in their Templar battle dress or romantic medieval ladies' robes. The

Events committee had decided to provide many prizes as well as shields, swords and jewellery for the young gentfolk and Jenny Miles handed these out throughout the day and also organised free games for the youngsters. Fields in Trust (who are the organisation behind the Queen Elizabeth Memorial fields) sent four boxes of "goodies", many of which were handed out to the children: who can forget the energetic running of the kids flying the kites they had sent us?



Chris Shilling's public address system blasted out some suitable medieval music which helped to set the scene, the Temple Ewell Newsletter provided a tasty barbeque so that the fine gentfolk and peasants of the village might not be famished.

Con Taylor from our own village had graciously agreed to show some of his magnificent birds of prey and true to his word he showed four of them. One, a merlin, was a mere nine weeks old and totally adorable and the other three looking very regal – much as peregrines should. This brought the sport of royalty close to us all, many thanks to Con for patiently showing these magnificent creatures for several hours.



There were many highlights throughout the day and this account is sure to miss some; apologies to all who do not receive a mention: it is due to forgetfulness rather than malice.

## Re-Enactment

The central event of the day was the re-enactment of the momentous events of 1213 – 800 years ago to the year. King John, a true “baddie” of English history, had picked a fight with the Pope and lost, so like almost all bullies throughout history, he caved in and grovelled for forgiveness, in the process giving away England and Ireland to the Pope. Ta, thanks very much, Johnny.



Cindy Tuson wrote and narrated the script for the re-enactment and a large group of actors, strongly supported by the Temple Ewell Players, DODS and the Freeman of the Blean (more of them in a minute), gave a spirited performance of the spectacle. A real highlight was our own Fr. Paul who played Pandulph the Papal Legate with dignity and gusto and King John (Roger McCracken) received the boos and hisses from the villagers which he deserved. On marching out, the Vikings “harassed” the



spectators which caused more amusement than terror and the entire cast marched off to thunderous applause.

## Games

A comprehensive, energetic and highly successful games programme was organised by Alyson Grayson. This entertained, nay thrilled, the youngsters and one particular adult was also carried away into egging on the two girls he championed. There will have been many favourites but this author really fell for the superb hobby-horses which our youngsters rode in a jousting contest, followed by further tests of their skill.

## The Free men of the Blean

Amanda Lomas had found this group of re-enactors and the Events Committee agreed to hire them for the day. What a sensational find they



turned out to be! Firstly, they set up a medieval tent village which gave an impression of what life would have been like some 800 years ago. From a chicken being roasted on an open fire to bread and corn we then move on to their real





purpose: the enactment of historic battles. The whole range of personal weaponry was on display: swords, maces, daggers, spears, bows and arrows as well as the defensive gear: chain mail, helmets, shields, iron gloves... An artisan was demonstrating and explaining how a bow and arrows are made from raw wood, how the archers of the 13<sup>th</sup> century would have pulled bows of 160 lbs. (when the author struggles with an 80 lb. bow)... None of them ever tired to show and explain and

demonstrate - this old kid at heart was surprised how heavy the materials were...the helmets and chain mail weighed "a ton" and battle must have been totally exhausting.

Well, and then they swung into action! Groups of pilgrims were being plundered and murdered by villainous, scurvy knaves and vagabonds and it fell to the local Templars to rid England of this scourge. A trap was set and battle ensued.

What energy both sides displayed! The fight raged on, swords clashed, spears were thrown, arrows fired, shields used both in defence and to batter the foe. One Templar gave his life to defend the helpless but in the end, the forces of Good prevailed, the villains lay dead on the ground. One final knave was captured and, in the name of God and



England, beheaded most theatrically, much to the joy of the villagers.



In case anyone thinks Temple Ewell has become the home of blood-thirsty monsters, nay, nay and thrice nay, it was "all done in the best possible taste."

It was an enactment but: speaking to the Free men after the battle, two showed off their metal helmet which were adorned with heavy imprints of sword blades. One combatant confessed that "his ears were ringing" from a blow he sustained in the fight.

It is with great delight that one hears that the Free men enjoyed Temple Ewell as much as we enjoyed having them. They really were a fearsome yet immensely friendly group of splendid people who gave authenticity to the day and enriched our event greatly.

### **Bandy Ball**

The Free men of the Blean also taught us Bandy Ball which was a great hit with folks. It is a little like hockey played with walking sticks, the main difference being that the goal is a wooden log and physical contact is encouraged. Not for the faint-hearted but great fun.

### **The Live Band**

An excellent live band played hits of the 60s, 70s, 80s and 90s, the song selection was eclectic and provided quite a few surprises along the lines of, "yes, I remember that one, hadn't heard it in

years.” Their musicianship was excellent and their performance much enjoyed. The author was transported back a long way by Steppenwolf’s “Born to be Wild”; many of us probably thought, “yeah, man, rock on ... if only our bodies were as willing as our spirit”.

### **Fireworks and Beacon**

Any village pyromaniacs were magnificently entertained by the fireworks, organised by Steve Grayson and the lighting of the Jubilee Beacon by Parish Council Chairman, Mr Colin Smithen.

The fireworks were just as entertaining and impressive as for last year’s events, they seemed to go on for quite some time and were greeted with much appreciation.

At 9 o’clock, Fr. Paul rang the church bell eight times, once for every century which had passed since the historic event which we were celebrating. Colin lit the beacon which provided an outstanding, bright spectacle, the flames dancing into the night sky and providing a warm light to the assembled crowd.



### **Summary and Impressions**

As young Mr. Grace might have said, “You’ve all done very well!” The village presented itself in its usual wonderfully friendly manner: the Free men of the Blean commented specifically on this and praised the way they had been made to feel part of the village.

The organisers of the many events did a great job, the games, the enactments (thank you, TEPs), the band, the battle scene, fireworks, beacon...what a spectacle for such a small village! Speaking to a family from Dover, surprise was expressed that we managed to provide all this without charging an entrance fee. Well, quoth I, it’s due to the hard and selfless work of many people in the village and the fact that we receive support way beyond our boundaries, to wit, from our County Councillor and from a number of commercial organisations.

Linda and I have only lived in Temple Ewell for 14 years but we are amazed, time and again, how much this village “punches above its weight”.

“Strong the Force is in this village” (after Master Yoda) and the Treasurer of the Events Committee can report that there is a surplus of cash available from the event to seed the next one. Look out, there’s more to come.

George Ognibeni, TEPC Events Committee

“Old men forget; yet all shall be forgot,  
But he'll remember, with advantages,  
What feats he did that day.”