



Cooper's Hill Cheese-Rolling and Wake

A view down Cooper's Hill, from the start point of the race to the finish.



The Cooper's Hill Cheese-Rolling and Wake is an annual event held at Cooper's Hill, near Gloucester in England. It was traditionally held by and for the people who live in the local village of Brockworth, Gloucestershire, but now people from all over the world take part.

The Guardian newspaper called it a "world-famous event", with winners coming from the United States, Australia, New Zealand and Nepal.

Format

From the top of the hill, a 7–9 pounds (3–4 kilograms) round of Double Gloucester cheese is sent rolling down the hill, and competitors then start racing down the hill after it. The first person over the finish line at the bottom of the hill wins the cheese. The competitors are aiming to catch the cheese; however, it has around a one-second head start and can reach speeds up to 70 miles per hour (110 kilometres per hour), enough to knock over and injure a spectator. In the 2013 competition, a foam replica replaced the cheese for reasons of safety. The winner was given the prize of an actual cheese after the competition.



The Cheese Rollers pub in the nearby village of Shurdington, about 3 miles (5 kilometres) from Cooper's Hill, takes its name from the event. The nearest pubs to the event are The Cross Hands and The Victoria, both of which are in Brockworth, which competitors frequent for some pre-event Dutch courage (courage gained from intoxication with alcohol) or discussion of tactics and after the event for convalescence (the gradual recovery of health and strength after illness or injury).



History

There are pagan origins for the custom of rolling objects down the hill. It is thought that bundles of burning brushwood were rolled down the hill to represent the birth of the New Year after winter. Connected with this belief is the traditional scattering of buns, biscuits and sweets at the top of the hill. This is said to be a fertility rite to encourage the fruits of harvest.



The first written evidence of cheese rolling is found from a message written in 1826, even then it was apparent the event was an old tradition. Each year, the event becomes more and more popular, with contestants coming from all across the world to compete, or even simply to watch. In 1993, fifteen people were injured, four seriously, chasing cheeses down the hill.

In 2009 it was cancelled due to concerns over health and safety. In 2010 a group of journalists and local residents threw a smaller version, in keeping with tradition.

Despite the cancellation and lack of paramedics, around 500 people showed up in 2011 to hold some spontaneous races; no major injuries were reported.



Cheese

The cheese currently used in the event is 7–9 pounds (3–4 kilograms) Double Gloucester, a hard cheese traditionally made in a circular shape. Each is protected for the rolling by a wooden casing round the side, and is decorated with ribbons at the start of the race. The current supplier is local cheesemaker Diana Smart and her son Rod, who have supplied the cheese since 1988.



In May 2013, a police inspector warned the 86-year-old cheese maker Diana Smart that she could be held responsible for injuries.

In recent years, organizers of the event, have felt compelled to use a lightweight foam version for safety reasons.



Injuries

Due to the steepness and uneven surface of Cooper's Hill, there are usually a number of injuries each year. A first aid service is provided by the local St John Ambulance (Gloucester, Cheltenham and Stroud Divisions) at the bottom of the hill. Members of the local rugby club and Young Farmers volunteer their services by acting as 'catchers' for any participants who lose their balance and also are on hand to carry down any casualties requiring first aid who do not reach the bottom. A number of ambulance vehicles attend the event, since there is invariably at least one and often several injuries requiring hospital treatment.



WARNING

Cooper's Hill Cheese Roll

**Cheese rolling is a dangerous activity
for both participants and spectators.**

**The cheese roll is not managed. You are
strongly advised not to attend.**

It is especially unsuitable for children.

**You attend entirely at your
own risk**

There are typically five downhill races; four for men, one for women, with one uphill component as well, but this can vary from year to year. It's a competition in which broken bones, bruised organs, dislocated shoulders and concussions do sometimes happen; ripped clothing, scratches and other cuts come with the territory. The terrain is a public ground, and it's rough and uneven. It's a likely outcome that some people will end up in the hospital, and it's partly why—oh, apart from the whole cheese rolling business—the festival has been subject to much notoriety.



Men, women, and children compete separately. There is a special book where every year the names of the winners are inscribed. Each year there are a few such lucky people. Anyone with a courage can partake.

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https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cooper%27s_Hill_Cheese-Rolling_and_Wake

<https://rove.me/to/england/coopers-hill-cheese-rolling-and-wake>

<https://www.atlasobscura.com/places/coopers-hill-cheeserolling>

