

England and it's Odd Traditions



C.E. Holloway

Vol.2



Left: 'The Haxey Hood' by Homer Sykes



Right: The 'Lord of the Hood'

The Haxey Hood exists as both a village game and an elaborate ritual. The tradition starts with the 'Lord of the Hood' and his 'Boggins' visiting the four public houses that represent the playing teams. They then return with the 'Fool' who is smoked in the Mowbray Stone square as the start of proceedings.

Often thousands of people then follow the march to the farm fields at Uppertorpe, where the game has taken place 'without planning'.

Played with a two-foot tightly wound piece of leather, or hood, the aim is to reach one of the pubs without throwing or running with the hood. Instead it is lost in the 'sway' and carried for hours in a large and unorganised rugby scrum.

The public house that wins is the first to have the hood cross the threshold, where the celebrations continue to traditional village song. There is a motto sung before the game too:

"House agaisnt house, Town agaisnt town,
If you see a man, Knock him down."



Smoking 'The Fool', Dale Smith, in front of the 'Mowbray Stone' Church in Haxey

Haxey Hood

The folkloric tale of the Hood is that of the 14th Century. Lady de Mowbray riding a horse over the vale lost her silk hood, which was reclaimed by one of thirteen men. This claimant was too afraid to return the hood so it was instead returned by another man, who was rewarded as a Lord. The original claimant was labelled a Fool. Lady de Mowbray is said to have been so enamoured with the pursuit she gave 13 acres for the chase to be re-enacted.

There is a more likely link to the past origins of the game in Bog Burials. Sites have been found with the mummified body wearing a hood, burned at the stake in a death ritual. The Hood takes place near a known site, and the ritual has several mirroring features. This theory can be found in a journal by Turner and Scaife, 1995.



Homer Sykes, 'The Burry Man'

A tradition that happens as part of the Queensferry Summer Festival, this alternative 'Jack in the Green' ceremony has lost origins, although there are three alternative stories.

The Burry Man gains his name from the baldock burrs that make the suit. They have a velcro like quality so they adorn a plain but thick undergarment, balaclava included. The dressing starts at 7am at The Staghead Hotel before the man has to walk a seven-mile tramp around the town, visiting

homes as a well-wisher. The date for the walk was changed to mid-August to account for the availability of the burrs.

As the task is such a burden for the burrs make walking and moving awkward, there is a tradition for helping the man along with gifts of scotch, fed through a straw. The role is maintained by the same person for as long as they're willing or able, the last being Alan Reid, who maintained the role for 26 years.



The Burry Man celebrations recorded in a local Firth of Forth newspaper and the costume shown for display

Burry Man (Jack in the Green)

Although the true origins of the tradition are unaccounted for, two similar traditions were honoured in the fishing villages of Buckie and Fraserburgh, where a burr laden man was paraded by cart or horse through the village after a bad season. These traditions are last recorded in 1864. The other possibility is that of the burrs representing the bad sentiment of the village being driven out, making the man a scapegoat figure.

As a part of the Ferry Fayre, which was given its legitimacy under Charles II in 1687, its origins are unknown, although the inclusion of the man alongside the crowning of the Ferry Queen is welcomed.



A player, and winner, of the game is hoisted aloft with Silver Ball in hand

Hurling the Silver Ball is a tradition title for a game known as Cornish Hurling. Played in St. Colomb and St.Ives, the game dominates the streets and takes the format of many village sports in forming a large scrum surrounding an object.

The St. Colomb game is played between two teams 'the Townsman' and 'the Countrymen', with the aim of the game that the ball crosses a parish boundary, depending on where the game is being played, either in the town or country.

Touching the ball brings good luck, so the game starts as a non competitive scramble, where the ball is tossed between teams allowing for children and those incapable of playing the game proper to enjoy the tradition. The ball is then 'called up' and the player who won the previous game brings a ball and starts play.

At the end of the game, much like rugby, the winner is called up to declare whether the year's ball is "town-ball" or "country-ball".



One of many Sterling Silver balls previously used
for the game

Hurling the Silver Ball

An old saying in the Cornish language goes "hyrlían yw gen gwaré nyi", which means "hurling is our sport".

The silver ball is sterling silver bonded to an applewood core, held by a band tacked with silver nails. The ball is similar in size to a cricket ball and weighs between 19oz. and 21oz., handmade previous by John Turver, now Colin Rescorla. The band is engraved with a local motto, "Town and Country do your best, for in this parish I must rest".



The scramble on Hare-Pie Bank

A custom dating back some 300 years, the Hare Pie Scramble and Bottle Kicking is a Hallaton tradition embraced by the villagers of Hallaton and Medbourne.

Played on Easter Monday, the festivities start with the Hare Pie Scramble. A procession follows the large Hare Pie through the village to the church, where the dole is blessed by the Vicar. Taken to the 'Buttercross', the pie is cut and given to the villagers with loaves and drink.

The next procession follows the players to the 'Hare Pie Bank' where the Bottle Kicking game is played.

The aim of the game is for either team to carry one of a number of ale barrels or 'bottles' across one of the two goal lines, which are miles apart. The scrum is likely to last for hours and the game is decided on a best of three basis.

The winners are allowed to climb the 'Buttercross' and take celebratory sips from the barrel.



The 'bottle' can be seen lose amongst the scrum

Hare Pie Scrambling

A tradition born of late 18th Century origin, the beginnings are told as a tale of two young women crossing a Hallaton field, spotted and charged by a large bull. The women were saved when a hare spooked the bull. Thanking the lord, they proceeded to the local parish Church and Vicar where they donated the income from a furlong of the Hare Crop Leys on the proviso that the vicar gave two hare pies to the villagers in need.

In a document titled "The Histories and Antiquities of Leicestershire", written by John Nicholls in 1797 there is reference to 'Hare-Pie Bank' offering an insight that the tradition was up and running by this point. The custom for Bottle Kicking and its scrum is unknown in origin.



Players charge after the game ball in the streams of Sturston and Clifton Mills

The town of Ashbourne plays host to a game of football that is closely linked to the Haxey Hood and the Hallaton Bottle Kicking.

Played by two teams, the 'Up'Ards' and the 'Down'Ards' over Shrove Tuesday and Ash Wednesday, the aim is to score as many goals as possible. A goal involves touching the teams own millstone three times, since 1996 located in the streams next to the mills at Sturston and Clifton Mill.

The Game starts at 2pm and play begins with the ball being turned

up from a specially made plinth in Henmore Brook, and the game continues until 10pm at the latest. If a goal is scored after 5.30pm, play stops for the day.

There is no limit to the number of players on each team, and the rules are few and far between although there is a clear rule forbidding murder or manslaughter. The ball must be in clear sight too.

Since 1891, records show that the game has only been cancelled twice in 1968 and 2001, both to prevent the spread of foot-and-mouth disease.



The game starts in the square with hundreds involved and thousands spectating

Royal Shrovetide Football

Unfortunately local records including those documenting earlier iterations and stories of the game were lost in 1890 with a records office fire, however the earliest mention of the traditions comes with journal entry for "The Compleat Angler" in 1683, written by Charles Cotton. There is also a folk tale that Edward III sought to ban the event as it interfered with Archery practice. In 1943, records show the first goals to be scored by female competitors, with Doris Mugglestone scoring for the Up'Ards and Doris Sowter scoring for the Down'Ards. Each year, the ball is handpainted, and there is a current study into the game's French origins, as a coat of arms painted on a 1909 game ball matched that of the Tricot Heraldry, one of three adjacent cockerels.

For more Odd English Traditions please see the other volumes. Included are these traditions:

Abbot's Bromley Horn Dance

Furry Dance

Morris Dancing

Mayor of Ock Street

Weighing the Mayor

Swan Upping

Cooper's Hill Cheese Rolling

Whittlesea Straw Bear

Esk Valley Quoits

Hunting the Earl of Rone

Dwyle Flonking

'Obby 'Oss

Mummer's Dancing

Model Villages

Allendale Tar Barrels

Photographs:

HaxeY Hood

<https://www.sheffieldtelegraph.co.uk/jp-ct.co.uk/image/onecms:007070cd-2fc5-4934-94fa-b1aef9e4709fab91e66c-a787-4f24-adc1-3d5c6154a1d8/NDFP-02-01-20-haxeY-NMSYupload.jpeg>

Burry Man

<https://artcollection.culture.gov.uk/wp-content/themes/gac/includes/cimage/artworkimage/O17000/05e5b812cec0707.89119137.jpg&w=800&crop-to-fit>

<https://www.fulltable.com/vts/f/face/b.jpg>

Hurling the Silver Ball

<https://i.pinimg.com/originals/24/93/d6/2493d6741be969190abe5ecd05e2ce18.jpg>

Hare Pie Scrambling

https://lh3.googleusercontent.com/proxy/k10tMZDiQvF1GfZhoTD4f10CpPSjBZr3bRy2SQ85FFhq0pcqb4n4kG7Wlck9TgE2qcPujglBtvAv_FHiuXHiFcB2rK7RijKz1dEK1FJGTL12jTlyga36KR1j4DYrkfK8HeKjlE7eNCOMO5Lvpu0ivejgezhdug

<https://www.mercurynews.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/669446936.jpg?w=810>

Boxing Day Football

https://i.dailymail.co.uk/i/pix/2010/02/17/article-1251575-0851BA26000005DC-245_964x569.jpg

https://lh3.googleusercontent.com/proxy/DVkmrXM4XG3FQI1jr_VVKlnwKLTG12dENWbnnyGCmYg2AbwGCDhAg4MvcGxuaC4bpX8frUcMFZjAc1m0vbDqqsheokJI4RFSpivAO5WZg7NE1mq3_9KQF1uNZsTOi_-5