

= Tewkesbury Medieval Festival =

The Tewkesbury Medieval Festival is a medieval fair held over the second weekend of every July near the town of Tewkesbury , United Kingdom . Its main feature is the re @-@ enactment of the Battle of Tewkesbury , which was fought in 1471 . Located on parts of the ground where the original battle was fought , the festival also features a medieval camp , in which traders ply their wares and visitors are entertained by musicians and acrobats . The largest medieval fair in the United Kingdom , the Tewkesbury Medieval Festival was listed in Footprint England as one of the " ten most bizarre festivals " in the country .

= = Background = =

The Tewkesbury Medieval Festival started in 1984 as a simple fair with 10 stalls , a beer tent , and a small @-@ scale re @-@ enactment of the Battle of Tewkesbury , which was originally fought in 1471 near the town of Tewkesbury , United Kingdom . The festival became a regular celebration held over the second weekend of every July on parts of the original battlefield . In 2005 , the organisers ? a group of local re @-@ enactors named the Companions of the Black Bear ? registered the event as a company to facilitate the application of grants and their protection . Besides the re @-@ enactment and the camp , the festival offers guided walks of the battlefield . Since its start , the event has expanded to become the largest medieval fair in the United Kingdom . Attendance of the festival is open to all , but participation as a re @-@ enactor is by invitation only . The sight of hundreds of men dressed as medieval soldiers and fighting in a battle led Footprint England to list the event as one of the " ten most bizarre festivals " in the country .

= = Re @-@ enactment of the Battle of Tewkesbury = =

The festival 's main feature is its re @-@ enactment of the Battle of Tewkesbury , which was fought on 4 May 1471 between the Houses of York and Lancaster . The engagement was a decisive victory for the Yorkists and their leader , King Edward IV . The forces of the House of Lancaster were decimated , and their leaders killed or captured , leaving Edward as the unchallenged ruler of England . Several Lancastrians fled the battlefield and sought sanctuary at Tewkesbury Abbey . The Yorkists stormed the abbey , captured their foes , and executed them .

The re @-@ enactment at the first festival was a simple affair compared to later years : approximately 100 local enthusiasts , kitted out in crude imitations of medieval gear , fought each other on the fields of Tewkesbury . They wore woollen chainmail or armour made of fibreglass . Their swords and pole arms were made from wood ; arrows were rolled @-@ up wallpaper . As the festival became more popular over the years , the scale and quality of the re @-@ enactment changed . Re @-@ enactors from other parts of the United Kingdom joined the event , as well as those from Poland , Germany and other European countries . The armour and weapons used in the later years were faithful steel reproductions that could cost thousands of pounds sterling (£) . By 2002 , the Battle of Tewkesbury was re @-@ enacted by approximately 2 @,@ 000 men and women , and the British Broadcasting Corporation called the next year 's re @-@ enactment the largest in Europe . Aside from the battle , the storming of Tewkesbury Abbey is also re @-@ enacted during the festival . The subsequent trial and execution of the prisoners are acted out in a mock fashion .

= = Medieval camp = =

Since 2002 , the festival has been more than a small setup of stalls . It has grown to be a camp of up to 120 stalls , where life in medieval times is enacted by participants of the battle and their families . The beer tent is a regular fixture , and the stalls peddle herbs , sweets , and food . Entertainers , such as acrobats , fire @-@ eaters , and jugglers , wander the area , performing their arts . Musicians and dancers also entertain visitors . Re @-@ enactors demonstrate pottery , yarn

spinning , and other medieval craft . These enthusiasts come from foreign countries , such as Belarus and Hungary . The German Mittelalter rock band Schelmish has performed several times at the festival . Short bouts of simulated duels are performed in the camp and a jousting tournament was also featured . The festival has attracted visitors from as far as New Zealand and the west coast of the United States ; the local tabloid quoted an estimate of 25 @,@ 000 visitors to the festival in 2003 .

= = Town of Tewkesbury = =

Although the town council of Tewkesbury plays no part in organising the festival , it has supported the event by giving it grants (the amount for 2005 and 2008 was £ 1 @,@ 000 each) . Most of the money for organising the festival is recouped from " tithes paid by the [stall holders] " , which at times proved insufficient to cover the expenses ; the event was operating in the red for 2002 ? 2004 . Under encouragement from the Companions of the Black Bear and the Chamber of Commerce , the town 's traders support the event by decorating their shops and dressing up in medieval @-@ period costumes . The pubs and restaurants serve medieval @-@ style fare as well . A free bus service connects the town and the festival .