AN ACCOUNT O' THE STURMINSTER NEWTON CHEESE FESTIVAL



As told by yer friendly new Stur correspondent, Ravin Bill (who claims decent from Rabin Hill).

Now then, if you've never bin to the Stur Cheese Fest, you'm missin' out on one o' the finest gatherings this side o' the Stour. 'Tis the sort o' place where folk turn up from miles around — some from as far as Shaftesbury, though they do look a bit travel-worn — all keen to stuff their faces wi' dairy products till they'm fair bulgin'.

The day starts early, wi' stallholders settin' out their wares: wheels o' cheddar big enough to use as patio furniture, soft cheeses what look like they'm about to slide off the table, and blue cheeses so strong they could knock a grown man backwards if he sniffs 'em too close.

I wandered in meself, feelin' brave, and was greeted by a cheery farmer shoutin', "G'wan then, try a bit o' this — 'tis matured in a cave, mind!" I weren't sure if he meant a proper cave or just his cousin's damp garage, but I took a nibble anyway. Lovely stuff, though I did lose feelin' in me left ear for a moment.

Further along, there's always that one stall what claims to sell "experimental cheeses." Last year they had one infused wi' nettles, one wi' ale, and one wi' what they called "hedgerow essence." I asked what that meant, and the lad behind the counter said, "Well, we jus' waved it near a hedge, really." Fair enough.



By midday the whole place smells like a dairy dream — or nightmare, dependin' on yer constitution. Folk wander about wi' paper plates piled high, lookin' dazed, mutterin', "I'll jus' try one more bit," even though they've already had enough cheese to stun a small pony.

There's music too, o' course. A local band strikes up a tune, usually somethin' lively, though the accordion player tends to get carried away and frighten the children. And there's always a demonstration o' how to make cheese the proper Dorset way, involvin' a big vat, a wooden paddle, and a man who looks like he's been stirrin' since 1983.

Craft Stalls: The Land o' Things You Didn't Know You Needed

First stop: the craft stalls. 'Tis a magical place where you can buy knitted ferrets, driftwood shaped like celebrities, and tea towels printed wi' inspirational quotes like *"Live Laugh Stilton."* One woman tried to sell me a

candle what smelled o' "Dorset dusk." I sniffed it and said, "That's cow muck, that is." She nodded proudly.

Beer Tent: The Centre o' Cultural Exchange

Then I ventured into the beer tent — a structure held together entirely by hope and cable ties. Inside were men who'd clearly arrived at 9am and decided to stay until the cheese started talkin' back. A chap offered me a pint o' something he called "Sturminster Stout." I took one sip and immediately forgot me own postcode.

Hot Food Stalls: A Culinary Assault

The hot food stalls were in full swing, each one shoutin' louder than the last. "SAUSAGE ROLLS!" "VENISON BURGERS!" "CHEESE-ON-CHEESE-ON-CHEESE TOASTIES!" I bought a pasty the size o' a small badger and ate it while watchin' a man try to juggle three scotch eggs. He dropped all three, but the crowd cheered anyway — Dorset folk appreciate effort.

By the end o' the day, everyone's full, happy, and slightly wobbly. You stagger home thinkin', "I'll not touch cheese again for a month," but by breakfast next mornin' you'm back on the cheddar like nothin' happened.

So if you've never bin, get yerself down to Stur next time. 'Tis a proper Dorset day out — full o' laughs, full o' locals, and full o' cheese. What more could a body want.