

THE LAST WORD

This doesn't pretend to be a comprehensive round up of all aspects of the faire. It is a cross section of on the spot comments collected by our rather tired and "over-emotional" reporter.

ST. JOHN'S AMBULANCE: yes, it's a bit big, but still well organised.

We have been pushed for two days solid. Two pregnancies, a dozen burns - two of them serious - plenty of upset tummies.... blisters.... cuts. And lots of lost children, lots....about 150 in all.

could do with a few more (reflective pause) about double in fact.

A pity if it finishes - it's really out of the ordinary.

BY-STANDER: Absolutely marvellous.

The whole spirit of the thing... it's like the whole 1960's thing should have been like and wasn't - 'cos it was phoney.

But this is... (words failed, waved expressive hand).

SGT. ALAN FARHAN (BECCLAS POLICE):

It's a unique event.

My biggest problem? Well, surprisingly, it's the selfish motorist who parks on grass verges and makes pedestrians walk on the road.

Then on the camping site it's fires, the effect of drink, people annoying others, and general rowdiness when there's children around. But really we're not needed in the ground. We get such good co-operation with the committee and they handle so many things.

As for many of the people I'm anti-long hair and beards but quite frankly I've learnt to respect them.

ROBBIE: I've been to a lot of festivals, Knebworth, Windsor, Watchfield. This one's more constructive, there's more going on here. And it's friendlier and safer. You know at Knebworth there were people going around with clubs and watching out for muggers at night time. It seems to me Barsham is a place where freaks and straight can mix together.

I think the future should be towards free festivals, smaller ones with just local people.

PEDLAR'S PACK FOOD STALL: An experience! - like the toilets.

It'll be a crying shame if it dies. You see another side of life there. And also so much is done in a group, it makes a big family of us all.

The Saturday was the faire at its best.

When we have covered our costs our profits go to the St. Johns Ambulance, Becclas Hospital, Police welfare fund, and old people's homes.

BECCLAS PHANTOM BOWMEN: It'll be a sad thing to see it go.

I suppose it did get too big...

I'd sum it up that it became an event that one had to go to.

PASSER-BY: What makes it different is that people do acts along the way.

I think it's great the way people dress up in medieval clothes.

Too commercial? Yes, ... Perhaps it should be put on at another time than a Bank Holiday.

VISTOR FROM YORKSHIRE: Excellent sociological therapy! It should be introduced on a massive scale all over the country.

JANET FROM MUSICAL GROUP: 1976 was too well organised. It was not chaotic enough; the stalls were too much in line, all neatly laid out, though perhaps not so commercial as last year.

I definitely would like to see more crafts actually being displayed and working.

Also I felt that perhaps there wasn't enough parading and announcements this year and there weren't quite so many "events" going on in the middle e.g. the strong man, the mouse race, Colonel Suffix, etc.

But the dressing up this year was great, you're relating yourself to that scene, where as at Bungay Fair you couldn't really do this.

Also it gives you a great sense of feeling, getting away from everyday hangups, you... become a different person.

MAN IN COFFEE JUCHE: Fity about the rain, wasn't it? You see, I'm camping, and I don't like rain!

Yes, there were more and more people, it became too big and out-grew itself.

It needs splitting up into local

villages. Perhaps you could have three or four sites, each specializing in certain aspects.

I think there should be electricity on site (Interjection: put down "wife disagrees").

The Dip Theatre should be used.

The day light fire works were too loud. They frightened a lot of kids and animals.

But the community aspect is great, it's a meeting place for everyone. The getting and working together, it unifies Norfolk and Suffolk.

KING RICHARD II: One long, celestial wet and splendid romp, without peer, and without which the world could not long do without.

BARSHAN VILLAGER: I have been to them all, I've watched them all... you know, they've been fine, they've been alright....

They've put Barsham on the map.

TIM RAYNOR (site construction manager): It was the concept of a village fete, and it's grown into a larger version of the original. I think we have retained the right atmosphere - the Barsham atmosphere - from the first through to the last.

It's provided and it's given to people.

The aim wasn't to make money, and money has been used to cover costs. We've only made £7,000 in the five years, and over £5,000 of that was last year. Indeed the year we did make money was in some way rather troublesome. A lot of that went to Bungay May Horse Faire.

But I like to think of the small projects; the books published, the kids given entertainment, the theatre centre van, the mobile cinema... in a way, even so, the money thing is irrelevant.

You know, Sandra's book is one of the most important things to come out of the faire. It's all there, all we have learnt...

It was an easy time this year, there was such a good team of people who really knew what they were doing.

Why is it stopping? Well, the original don't want to do it anymore, they want to put their energies into something else. I'm not an original, but I understand how they feel.

Then there's the field, the surface and size won't really sustain another faire next year.

And there's what I call the creep of commercialism, you know, canned foods, hot dog stalls. Then there was pressure over the ice cream concession. And maybe some new people might not automatically think the same way. There's plenty of things free that could be charged for.

Also, I felt it got rather near to the Norfolk Show last year. Too much of a spectacle.

But I thought the standard of stall-building this year was very high, and there was so much imaginative food on sale.

And then again on the credit side there's been the Barsham people. They have done an enormous amount of work, before and during the faire. They have wandered in each evening, and done all that hard work on the gate and the car park.

And another thing, the flood lighting of the church. I don't know who did it, it just happened this year, and it was beautiful.

And our relationship with the uniformed police was absolutely immaculate. They've always acted through us first.

Maybe it was becoming too much of a show. Visitors used to come round to where the residents were camping and look at them as if they were some strange tribe. Indeed, I've heard some peering into a tent and saying in awed tones "That's where they sleep!"

But the medieval theme has been great, a success, it's such an escape. People can do as they like and it doesn't matter. They all go around saying "Prithoe"... and always asking for ale, not beer.

It's a dream, it's a game.