

There's nothing like a bit of tradition to add spice to an event, so when Len Horton sent me this little piece by Ian Lockwood, the editor of the Craven Herald newspaper, it just had to go in - 21st August is the date for this year's race if you want to be a participant in a bit of history.

Burnsall Feast welcomes back an old friend.

Burnsall Feast loves tradition. So it was with some pride that President Len Horton was able to make his customary stride past the church to the village green at the head of Skipton Brass Band.

The last time Skipton Band played at the Feast a nasty chap called Hitler was hoodwinking Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain. By the time that was sorted out and the historic event was restored, the Burnsall Committee had turned elsewhere for its musical accompaniment.

Maybe there was a falling out, or maybe it was just because one of the Committee had connections with the Hammonds Sauce Band. Whatever the reason, Skipton was out and when the Hammonds Band left the scene, the Middlesmoor and Lofthouse Band became a regular fixture on the green on the first Saturday after the first Sunday after St. Wilfrid's Day (the somewhat arcane formula for working out the day of the Feast - which has taken your editor ten years to finally conquer).

Time moves on and the Middlesmoor band was unable to provide musicians able to take part in the march which has to open the gala - a ritual to honour one of Burnsall's earlier bandmasters, who requested he be buried near the church gates so he could for ever hear the band go by. That was the signal for Skipton to return - and a good fist they made of it too.

It was symbolic that they were in a slightly different position to their predecessors, a touch further away from the river-bank and, if memory serves me right, facing away from the bank rather than towards it.

Other than that, nothing had changed. Motorists on a Bank Holiday "drive out" gawped at this traditional village scene as Burnsall and its "suburbs" gathered for their annual get-together and friendly joust in a tradition which goes back to Elizabethan times.

With all due respect to the youngsters who showed commendable determination in events such as the Egg & Spoon race, the main focus is the classic Fell Race, which climbs to the top of Burnsall Fell. This year, for a different view of the race, I took the decision to climb to the top and watch proceedings unfold from the highest point. The programme states that it is a climb of less than 1,000' (Burnsall being 473' above sea level and the cairn at the top 1,345') but I don't believe it. It's impossible to appreciate the steepness of the climb from the green into the skies.

The descent is worse, in parts a sheer drop on a thin track almost hidden by the heather with treacherous rocks and holes ready to trip up even the most nimble feet. Practice probably makes perfect, which is why Rob Hope (Pudsey & Bramley) was able to retain his title.

Trailing Rob Jebb (Bingley) by some fifteen seconds at the cairn, he shot down the descent to catch and overtake his man and triumph by four seconds in a time of 13 minutes 51 seconds, while Ian Holmes, a three times winner himself, made the fastest descent and finished a further two seconds back.

Among the finishers though was Don Robinson, from Pool, a mere seven-six years old and competing in his first fell race - what a way to start !!