

Tumbling!

Posted by Peter on 19 March 2010



Tumbling down Coopers Hill in pursuit of a cheese! Photo by [Nicoze/flickr](#)

Have you ever thought that the English are mad? Of course you have. And after today's podcast, you will know that it is true.

But first we must meet the English verb "to tumble". "Tumble" means, simply, to fall down. For example, if you are coming down some stairs and you [trip](#), you might tumble to the bottom. You would fall, perhaps you would roll over, and two seconds later you would be on the ground at the bottom of the stairs, wondering whether you had broken any bones. We can use "tumble" in a figurative way too. We can talk about a stream tumbling down the side of a mountain. Or if a supermarket reduces its prices, it might put notices in the window saying "Prices tumble throughout this store!"

Now for the story in today's podcast. Last week, we read in the newspaper that an important sporting [event](#) will not take place this year. It is not a football match or a horse-race. It is much more important than that; it is the great Cooper's Hill Cheese Rolling event.

Cooper's Hill is not far from the town of Gloucester. It is a very steep hill, covered in grass and trees. Every year at the end of May there is a cheese rolling at Cooper's Hill. About 15 [competitors](#) stand in a line at the top of the hill. Many of them wear batman suits or other [fancy dress](#). A man with a big hat, called the Cheese Master, throws a 3 or 4 kilo cheese down the hill. The competitors run after the cheese. The rules say that if one of the competitors catches the cheese, he or she can keep it. In practice, no-one ever catches the cheese, because it goes too fast. And the competitors do not run after the cheese, because the hill is too steep. Instead, they fall, they roll, they slide on their bottoms - they tumble, in fact.

At the bottom of the hill, there is a line of [stewards](#). They catch the competitors before they can tumble all the way to the M5 motorway. And there is a line of ambulances too, for those competitors who break their ankles on the way down.

There are several races, some for men and some for women, and for the really crazy there are some uphill races too (though, obviously, the cheese cannot go uphill). After the races, those competitors who are not

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actually in hospital gather at a local pub to drink beer and tell stories of the heroic events of the day.

Obviously, for an important event like the Cooper's Hill Cheese Rolling, you could not use just any sort of cheese. The cheese is of a type called [Double Gloucester](#). It is made locally by a lady called Diana Smart. She is 83 years old. The cheese rolling is an important part of her business. She is fed up that it has been cancelled this year.

So, why has it been cancelled? For hundreds of years, the only people who came to watch the cheese rolling were local people. But the event is now internationally famous, and lots of people want to come. Last year there were 15,000 spectators, from many different countries. The police and organisers of the event are worried about the safety of the spectators, and about car-parking, and about the fact that there are no toilets, and other problems of having so many people. The organisers think that they can solve the problems for next year, so the Cheese Rolling should take place again in 2011.

My own proposal is that cheese rolling should become an Olympic Sport. Then it could be included in the London Olympic Games in 2012. We could build a super stadium on Coopers Hill, with room for 50,000 spectators, lots of toilets and a car park for thousands of cars. The stadium could have a roof in case it rains. But this year you will have to find a hill in your own country, and throw a cheese down it, and tumble after the cheese. Happy cheese rolling!

This is the text of the podcast at <http://www.listen-to-english.com/index.php?id=520>,