

THE MEDIEVAL FAIRS: 2



THURSDAY, OCTOBER 2, 1980 THE BANBURY GUARDIAN

A day for knights and wide-eyed wenches

**Pictures: IAN BUCHANAN
Story: DAVID CHADWICK**

If Sir Gallahad had passed through Steeple Aston on Sunday he might well have abandoned his quest for the holy grail and stayed awhile to enjoy the medieval merriment of the village fair.

Even the perfect knight could have been forgiven a little rustic revelry as amorous queens, beguiling witches, wizened wizards and wide-eyed wenches wandered along the narrow streets.

Peddlers and hawkers were out in strength, their stalls bedecked with everything from Steppulastone pottery to brass rubbings and... boomerangs?

What on earth was a boomerang-maker doing at a medieval fair?

"Well, I suppose there were boomerangs in Australia at the same time as there were fairs in medieval England," explained Mr Geoffrey Dysch. "They are great fun to make — and they do come back!"

Steeple Aston's second medieval fair boasted a host of other attractions from times-gone-by, such as jousting, contests, Morris dancing, archery, a hardy swine chase and music from the middle ages.

A blacksmith worked his forge beneath the spread of a huge oak tree and a duel between footpads and young bucks from the village was enacted as peasants clad in sack-cloth looked on.

Not an arrow's flight away, a sinister-looking apothecary conjured secret love potions for young ladies while their unsuspecting menfolk sampled fine ale and traditional cider.

"Last year I had to take out someone's tooth and I'm ready again. If you want false teeth, I have a fine selection," joked Mr Paul O'Sullivan, who played the apothecary.

For budding knights, Merlin's 100 feet long mechanical jousting machine provided up-to-date training while the less energetic were able to feast on a delicious barbecue.

"The aim of the day is to provide fun for everyone and allow the villagers to get together and enjoy themselves, which encourages community spirit," said Mr Simon Harrison, who helped organise the fair.

"Some 3,000 people attended last year and about £2,000 was raised. We hope to get the same this year, but the emphasis has been more on having fun than raking in cash," he added.

All proceeds are to go to the village fabric fund.

