

World News



Citrus twist: The printers from the Cromwell Press bombard their opponents during the festival in Ivrea, Italy, main picture; what it looked like to be on the receiving end, inset

Your future is... Orange

By Barry Leighton
b.leighton@bepp.co.uk

IT began with an ominous roll of drums followed by the stirring sound of pipes and then, after a heartbeat of anticipation, the world turned orange.

The air was suddenly full of citrus fruit as thousands of oranges squished on heads, bounced off bodies and exploded in balls of juice.

Battle cries rang through the normally placid piazzas of the medieval Italian town, its cobbled streets running orange with the gore of combat.

The hostilities raged for hours as opposing sides remorselessly pelted each other with tonnes of fruity missiles.

Right in the thick of it, and for the first time in the 200-year history of the Battle of the Oranges, was a hardy group of Brits, showing a spot of West Country grit.

The 50-strong party from Cromwell Press in Trowbridge travelled to Italy for a team-building exercise, blissfully unaware of what boss Allan Hicks had in store for them.

But they literally threw themselves into the fray, suffering an assortment of black eyes, bruised bodies, aching arms and – worst of all – stinging eyes from spattered orange juice.

They emerged several hours later sticky but triumphant, having acquitted themselves with honour at one of the world's most bizarre annual rituals.

Print operator Steve Wilson, 49, who suffered several direct hits on the head and a particularly painful body blow, said: "It was amazing, absolutely unbelievable."

Full of excitement, passion and oranges

"There was virtually no let up. We spent the whole afternoon fighting with oranges. It got very intense and very, very slippery."

"Thousands of spectators were cheering. I've never done anything remotely like it before."

In all 340 tonnes of oranges were used during the mighty affray in Ivrea, 30 miles from Turin.

Cromwell Press director Mr Hicks, 54, was delighted with his staff's response. "You had to be there to believe it."

"It was full of excitement, passion and of course, oranges."

Every year Cromwell Press organises a team building weekend in foreign climes.

This year they teamed up with specialist tour operator, Tastes of Italy to throw in something a little different.

Tastes of Italy director William Goodacre made a personal plea to one of the nine teams who take part, Chess Piece, to let the English in for the first time.

The event harks back to 1266 when a milkmaid named Violetta resisted the feudal rights of the local ruler to deflower her. She cut off his head.

Soon after fellow peasants rose in rebellion. Early in the 19th century locals decided to commemorate the battle with a carnival, culminating in a re-enactment of the hostilities, with oranges doubling for arrows and rocks.