

## Excerpts from the craziest book in the world

### World Worm Charming Championships – what on earth...

'Over the years the event has seen tap dancing, an unorthodox use of knitting needles – which unfortunately skewered the worms – and even a pony to hoof the ground, although those charming at the rear end of the pony probably had more to contend with. On the even sillier side, in 2006 one competitor played the double bass, hoping to entice more worms. However hard you coax the worms, music is unlikely to charm them, even if it's in tune.'

### World Gurning Championships - a tip to win, as if some of you need any assistance...

'The transformation in the face is crucial to winning, which means that natural ugliness is not necessarily a pre-requisite for victory – in fact it may be a hindrance. Competitors are encouraged to jump around and grunt noisily to improve their chances.'

### World Hen Racing – even the history is crazy.

'There are also stories of a rivalry with the neighbouring village of Ible, where hens could have first raced, and there may once have been an egg-laying contest as a precursor to hen racing, but it was Bonsall where the World Championship title was established. The village also lays claim to the last bullfight on English soil and is apparently a Mecca for UFO sightings. Can this place get any weirder?'

### World Nettle Eating Championships....ugh! (we did warn you)

'One by one, entrants drop out of the contest, and those who remain – usually less than a quarter – have succumbed to the wretchedness of the whole contest but stubbornly remain seated, picking off leaves and pretending to eat while maintaining an impressive gurn, consoled by the pride of remaining till the very bitter end.'

Cooper's Hill Cheese Rolling – do you still really want to take part?

'There's no turning back once the chase starts, as a near-vertical drop confronts competitors immediately. Out of the 30 or so who take part, only three or four actually go hell-for-leather after the cheese, all exhibiting an utter lack of self-preservation. 'Those who attempt to 'run' downhill, especially in drier conditions, will almost certainly require medical attention, with common injuries including finger dislocations, nosebleeds and sprained ankles. Supportive clothing and footwear will minimise damage, but such precautions are not considered in the spirit of the tradition.'

World Black Pudding Championships – we have a cunning plan...

'The platform which supports the Yorkshire puddings is loosely tied down and susceptible to a powerful shot from underneath. Such a shot could tilt the platform sufficiently to knock all twelve puddings off, breaking the world record and leaving the crowd in awe.'

...big brother around the corner!!

Ottery tar barrels – stand well back.

'Those closest to the action often scream, half in jest but also with genuine fear, as the barrel moves within scorching distance, each twist and turn of the barrel setting off yet another Mexican wave of pandemonium among the crowd.'

World Bog Snorkelling Championships – think I will sit this one out.

'The return journey becomes increasingly arduous; the legs tire, the snorkel begins to leak in even more fetid water, and the arms feel a desperate urge to attempt some sort of butterfly. It's not uncommon for tired competitors to resemble beached whales as they lie stranded halfway back, no energy to kick, their heads and bodies looking like something from a horror film as they briefly emerge to get their bearings.'