

centre

Derbyshire: In the peaceful market ~~xxxxxx~~ of Ashbourne, the shopkeepers greet their annual custom by boarding up the windows. It's the traditional game of Shrovetide football - which, for countless generations, ~~has been~~ ^{almost literally} has been "splitting the town asunder".

The cause of the trouble is a decorated leather ball, filled with cork - which is thrown to the rival teams from Shaw Croft - a kind of village green. Then - once again, the centuries-old tussle between Up'ards and Down'ards is on.

In this free-for-all, the "Henmore" (a little brook that runs through the town) gives the teams an icy reminder of their birth-qualifications. For those born north of the Henmore are the Up'ards - and south, the Down'ards. By the way, the goals are three miles apart: you can kick, handle or carry, and by tradition - all goalscorers keep the ball.

During this match, the Down'ards scored - so it seems that long before Waterloo - the battle of Shrovetide football was being won on the market streets of Ashbourne.

Outside Britain - the season of self-denial is greeted by the traditional pre-Lenten carnivals. In San Remo - on the Italian Riviera, a two-hour procession of floral floats brought a welcome breath of Spring to the winter season.

In Germany, too, from the Rhineland to Bavaria - the spirit of Carnival moved through the towns - driving away, if only for a time, the ~~xxx~~ anxieties and tensions of the post-war world.

Belgium's contribution to Europe's festival mood is the famous Carnival at Binche.

On this Shrove-~~day~~ ^{TIDE} occasion, baskets of oranges replaced the flowers in the parade; - they may not smell ^{quite the same -} as ~~sweet~~ but they make ~~juicy~~ juicy ammunition.