

Der Meistertrunk

Rothenburg (Germany) is a medieval town on the River Tauber. It's the only walled city in Germany without a single modern building. Most of the buildings were built before 1400. Rothenburg is so picturesque and well preserved that it earns its keep by tourism. The showpiece event, Der Meistertrunk, is a historical re-enactment that has been performed at Whitsun (around May) since 1881. It has become so popular that it gets a second run in September. The costume drama with a cast of hundreds brings to the town good-humoured medieval life, creating a carnival atmosphere.

The Meistertrunk story goes back to 1631 when Rothenburg was attacked by Imperial troops led by Count Tilly. In short, the story goes that the town was under siege and that, on a whim, an impossible drinking challenge was thrown down to decide the issue.

How did it come about? The mayor of Rothenburg, in an unusual and possibly desperate gesture to placate any animosity felt by the invading Count, offered the man a welcome drink of local wine. The Count was genuinely surprised. In return, he offered the town a chance to save itself. What was his offer? It was more a challenge. If anyone could empty a large goblet of wine in one draught, then he would show mercy to the town. His troops would spare the town. The siege would cease.

The mayor accepted the challenge and downed over three litres of wine from a *Meistertrunk*, a giant tankard, and thereby saved the town.

This story is regularly re-enacted. The event is commemorated in a play performed in the Rathaus, while the streets and squares outside are filled with medieval re-enactments, military parades, mock battles, torch-lit processions and a variety of music, eating and drinking events.

The event is depicted graphically high on a medieval building in the town square—it has become a tourist curiosity.

Source: http://www.associatedcontent.com/article/20167/experience_medieval_europe_in_rothenburg.html?cat=16

