

This anonymous account was recently recovered and is replicated here for those who may be interested in the lessons that can be learnt therein.....

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE BLACKWATER GAUNTLET

Sir Hubert de Blackwater was apparently typical of many of the landed gentry who controlled these parts in medieval times. He did little for the poor folk who worked on his estates other than to exploit them and little for himself other than to indulge his appetites for bloodsports and women.

The story goes that he took a fancy to one Gwendoline Moel of Mersea and decided to exact his 'Droit de Seigneur'. Our Gwendoline must have been a spirited lass however and told Sir Hubert where to stick his Droit, announcing at the same time that she was betrothed to a fine fisherman named Roger the French. Sir Hubert immediately sent for the young man and challenged him to fight for the hand of Gwendoline knowing he had an infinite advantage because of his knowledge of weaponry and combat. Old Ruben Mole, the girls father, was a wily fox however, and spoke to Sir Hubert in front of the crown which had gathered.

"There is no need for blood to be shed My Lord. I shall gladly give my daughter's hand to the first man to reach Mersea Hard by boat from an even start on the shore near Bradwelle. It shall be a match making race."

Not able to lose face in front of the peasants, Sir Hubert was obliged to accept the challenge and so it was that the two men were equipped with almost identical Oystercle 22's. The course was set at Bradwelle Beacon to port, lobster pot number three to starboard, the Nass Bank mark to port, lobster pot number four to starboard, finish.

Young Roger made a fine start but then found the Sir Huberts sporting pals has trailed a long rope from his Oystercle. By the time he had discovered the villainy and removed the rope, Sir Hubert had taken the lead which he managed to hold around the first three marks. Over confidence got the better of him however and as he looked back to gloat, he ran aground on the marshes near the Olde Packing Shedde.

In utter fury and humiliation he stood there and cried as our young hero swept past to victory and his bride to be.* Sir Hubert raised his gloved fist to wipe away his angry tears and cut himself about the eyes. Half blinded he dropped the gauntlet which immediately sank into the mud.

There it remained until the Great Storm of 1987 which scoured the soft surface away, exposing the gauntlet. A local yachtsman discovered it while searching for the remains of his tender and brought it ashore. A quick rinse under the tap at the end of the causeway showed how beautifully the mud had preserved the object and he immediately decided to offer it to his club as a trophy.

*Authors note:

The local innkeeper immediately changed the name of his tavern from 'The Solitary Dabchick' to 'The Victory' in honour of the event.