

Opinions

Everybody has one...

Firefighter Graduation

On June 21st, Union County Fire Department held a Firefighter Graduation Ceremony. The ceremony was a great opportunity for family, friends and fellow firefighters to honor the students and to celebrate their achievement of completing the classes and becoming a firefighter.

The department has not had a graduation ceremony in a few years due to COVID-19; however, we continued to have firefighter classes when we were able. After the completion of Recruit Class 106 in May of 2023, we decided to have a graduation ceremony and to include the classes that were completed over the last couple of years.

This graduation had firefighters from four Support Firefighter Classes and three Recruit (Georgia Firefighter I) Classes which were completed between the years 2019 and 2023. Some of the firefighters took both types of classes and received a certificate from a support class and recruit class.

The initial training to become a firefighter begins at the support firefighter level. The support class teaches basic fire topics and how to safely operate on the fireground. Support firefighters perform essential functions to support the other firefighters operating on the emergency scene.

The next, more challenging level is the suppression firefighter (Georgia Firefighter I). These classes are considered our Recruit Classes and involve more time and physical training. In these recruit classes, firefighters are taught more firefighting tactics which enables them to actually enter burning buildings, perform rescues and fight fires. The training can be both mentally and physically demanding.

The graduation ceremony acknowledged the difficulty of the training, the sacrifices of the firefighters, and the dedication of each person to achieve their goal to become a firefighter. We are very proud of these men and women who have dedicated their time and effort into becoming a firefighter. We want to congratulate them and welcome them to the fire department family!

We want to thank the instructors for dedicating their time and effort to sharing their knowledge. We want to thank the families and friends who supported the students through the long nights and Sat-

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Fire Dept. from Union County Fire Chief
David Dyer



Sustaining Freedom

The gameshow "Jeopardy" was in the headlines. Seems that none of the contestants knew the word "hallowed" that appears in the Lord's Prayer.

There's a lot Americans don't know these days. A school board doesn't know the difference between the Bible and pornography. A guy makes a documentary, "What is a Woman?" because people don't know anymore. People don't know any better than to do whatever is right in their own eyes. This willful ignorance has implications for the freedoms which Americans celebrate this time of year. "The ultimate threat to the American Republic will be Americans," cultural critic Os Guinness writes. "The problem is not wolves at the door but termites in the floor."

America is still an experiment in liberty. It has been a shining city on a hill for those seeking freedom and prosperity. That's why immigrants, whether legal or not, long to reach our shores. But liberty is not guaranteed. "Sustainable freedom depends on the character of the rulers and the ruled alike, and on the vital trust between them," Guinness writes. "The constitution should be supported and sustained by the faith, character and virtue of the entire citizenry."

Loss of virtue erodes American freedoms. TSA checkpoints, increasing taxes and national debt, and cancel culture signal loss of freedom. People with sincerely held religious beliefs lose their jobs when they refuse to cooperate with a lie. People are subjected to critical theory, which values people based on skin color - e.g., Harvard faces a lawsuit for discriminating against white and Asian American student applicants. Politicians hold citizens financially liable for providing public benefits to non-citizens, who are invited to vote for those politicians.

Such loss of freedom is derived from a dangerous and sharp disagreement about the ultimate authority for values and meaning. British philosopher G.K. Chesterton anticipated the risk that America faces: "Men will more and more realize that there is no meaning in democracy if there is no meaning in anything; and that there is no meaning in anything if the universe has not a center of significance and an authority that is the author

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All Things New

Wayne Fowler



Commissioner's Questions

My office has received questions concerning Georgia's outdoor burn notification system that was effective July 1, 2021 and also the burn ban that is currently in effect for 54 Georgia counties. This week's questions will address the basics that could impact Union County residents.

Q. How has the burn notification law changed?

A. GA code section 12-6-90 eliminates the need to notify the Georgia Forestry Commission when a person, firm, corporation, or association intends to burn hand-piled vegetation/yard debris. Important fire prevention precautions for burners, however, were added.

Q. Do I need to do anything special to burn my yard debris?

A. Yes, people burning are required to follow Five Safety Standards. 1. The burn location must be no less than 25 feet from any woodlands, forestland, or field that contains brush, grass, or other flammable material; 2. The burn location must be no less than 50 feet from structures, which includes homes, outbuildings, etc.; 3. The burning must take place between sunrise and sunset; 4. The person responsible must attend burning at all times until fire is completely extinguished; and 5. The person responsible must take reasonable and necessary precautions to prevent fire escape or spread from the original location.

Q. What am I allowed to burn?

A. Only hand-piled leaves or naturally occurring yard debris can be burned. No household garbage or man-made refuse can be burned under this provision. Debris may not be transported from one location to another for burning.

Q. How does weather play into this scenario of burning?

A. Local current and forecasted weather information is readily available through local media sources and regional and statewide weather forecasting agencies. In addition, the Georgia Forestry Commission provides comprehensive fire weather and fire danger information - information that is readily available at: GaTrees.org

Q. Will Unlawful Burn Notices (UBNs) still be issued? Under what circumstances?

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Q & A from Union County Commissioner

Lamar Paris



IRS Whistleblower

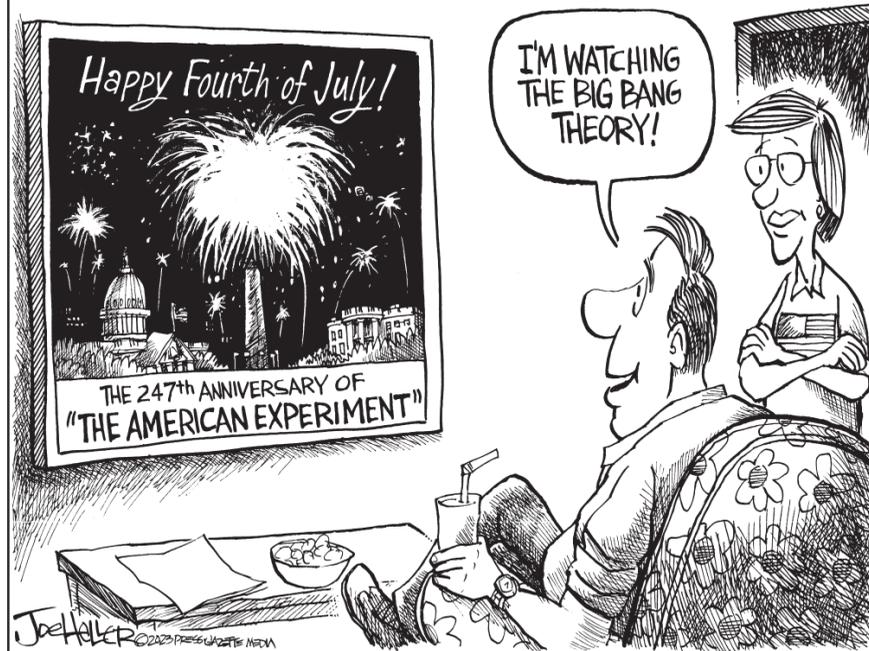
Bombshell IRS Whistleblower Testimony - As you may know, two IRS whistleblowers pulled back the curtain on the federal investigation into Hunter Biden - and the allegations are damning.

Just two days after the Department of Justice announced Hunter's sweetheart plea deal, Republicans on the House Ways and Means Committee voted to publicly release transcripts of the IRS agents' testimonies. These bombshell transcripts reveal the corrupt contours of the years-long investigation into Hunter Biden.

According to IRS supervisory criminal investigator Gary Shapley and a second unnamed IRS investigator, the DOJ repeatedly stonewalled efforts to probe Hunter's criminal behavior, including activity related to tax evasion and foreign business dealings. For example, IRS and FBI agents were blocked from searching Hunter's residence as well as a guest house

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United States Congressman
Representative Andrew Clyde



Chamber of Commerce

It's summertime, and that means that the 4th of July is here. I would like to say that with all that is going on in our Country today, we are still the best Country in the world to live in. As you drive around town, you will see all the crosses containing the names of the men and women that gave the ultimate sacrifice to give us the freedoms we now get to enjoy today. I hope that our future generations are always aware of the history of our Country and what it took to make us a world Leader Country.

We have recently participated in opening the Downtown Welcome Center and Museum that will help share a view of our Union County history. If you have an opportunity, take a few minutes to visit the Historical Society, the Downtown Welcome Center, and the War Memorial to learn about the men and women that made Blairsville - Union County one of the best places to live in the North Georgia Mountains.

Be sure to say a prayer for our Nation.
See Chamber, page 5A

Blairsville - Union County Chamber President

Steve Rowe



Letters to the Editor

An Open Letter to Congress

Dear Editor,
Oh no! KUDZU!!! When my family moved to Blairsville about 30 years ago, I remember the kudzu "plague" and how overgrown the roadside was with THAT vine - and how long and hard it was to get rid of.

Today, going down to Jasper - there it is, rampant. I hope someone in the Road/Highway Department or the Agriculture Department will act quickly. Please...
Pat Shaffer

Chick-fil-A

Dear Editor,
On May 23, 1946, S. Truett Cathy opened a restaurant in Hapeville, Georgia, called the Dwarf Grill. This restaurant was the precursor of a fast-food chain known today as Chick-fil-A.

Over the years, Chick-fil-A has become wildly popular. Their statement of corporate purpose, "To glorify God by being a faithful steward of all that is entrusted to us," was especially appealing to Christians who made this chain their favorite fast-food destination.

However, Chick-fil-A has made a U-turn and is distancing itself from Christians by making decisions that do not glorify God. First, they announced they were ending donations to such groups as the Salvation Army and Fellowship of Christian Athletes because their positions on marriage and sexuality were too "controversial." Next we were informed the company was funded

See Meier, page 5A

Fight for Supreme Court Reform

Dear Editor,
Our fundamental freedoms are being attacked by the Supreme Court.

The partisan right-wing majority on the bench gutted voting rights, opened the floodgates to unlimited corporate money in our elections, struck down gun safety laws, and limited the government's ability to protect our air and water.

In the year since they overturned Roe v. Wade, abortion has been effectively banned (with extremely limited exceptions) in 14 states. Nearly 1 in 3 Americans have lost access to abortion care.

This can't go on. We need to move away from these types of extremely partisan rulings and restore the legitimacy of the Court.

Congress has a constitutional duty to act as a check on the Supreme Court and restore faith in our judicial system. It's time they act before it's too late.

Sincerely,
Doreen Sasso

Time Awareness

When we were young, we viewed Time differently than later in life. As young people, the concept of time was based on how quickly we got what we wanted or how slowly we were made to wait. As we get older, time becomes more valuable. We begin to understand that time is either friendly or hostile, depending on how we are using it. From dawn's early light we are off and running, maintaining personal and family relationships, doing necessary errands, and enjoying pleasure activities.

At the end of the day, we may be free to smile. Time, for the most part, may have been good to us. We had the opportunity to produce positive results for our use of time. Our day turned out to be good, hopefully, based on our positive experiences and accomplishments. We can even pat ourselves on the back because we have successfully utilized our waking hours. All seems well in our universe. Hallelujah!

Time is an awesome commodity. It permits us to be active or passive, people-centered or task-centered or not, alone or not. While there are moments in the day when our schedules (and bosses) dictate our activities, we are still the ultimate masters of our time in the sense that we are in control of our daily lives.

A mother was teaching her daughter how to tell time. "There are the minutes and there are the seconds," she said. "But Mama," the daughter asked, "Where are the jiffies?" Our presence may be restricted to one space but not our thought-processing. While we may be in the most boring meeting of the ages (and I have), we can be anywhere else on the globe, doing anything we want, and be with whomever - in our creative minds. Time cannot limit our minds. We are free agents.

One Sunday morning, a small boy came downstairs, leaving the rest of the family asleep. The grandfather clock was striking eight but was out of order. As it struck nine, ten, eleven, twelve, fourteen, the boy's wonder grew. Finally, he turned and faced upstairs, calling, "Get up quick! It's later than it's ever been!"

Time is the most priceless gem we own. However, it cannot be saved for a better day or even frozen, banked, or temporarily put on hold. We cannot rent, buy or store it. Time carries no balances into one's new day. There is no going back to yesterday to retrieve our time, and there is no securing time against tomorrow's account. It is irrevocable, irreclaimable and irreplaceable. Time is our "here and now" property. Time can be our Friend because we

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Successful Mental Health

Dr. James Ray Ashurst PH. D.



My Curly-Haired Baby

I didn't mind the phrase when I was very young, but, as I grew into my teenage years, I felt embarrassed by my mother's pet name for me, "My curly-haired baby." I remember coming home from a hiking trip with a bunch of boys from church. Mom met us in the parking lot, and while she tussled my hair, she asked, "How is my curly-haired baby?" The boys rode me pretty hard about that for a long time. I don't know exactly how the phrase originated, but mom still uses that term from time to time. The term may have come from an incident which occurred when I was very young.

My Daddy walked away from a baseball scholarship at Arkansas because he missed my mother. So, he came home and married my mother in 1957. Dad got a job at a textile mill in Hackleburgh, Alabama. He was paid to work part-time and play on the mill's traveling baseball team. I was born a little over a year later in 1958. Daddy didn't make much money, probably not much more than a \$1.00 an hour. The house we lived in was a renter house on my grandfather's farm located about 1/4 mile south of my grandparents.

The house was an old clapboard house built by my grandfather's brother. An old coal-fired potbellied stove was used to heat the house. We did have electricity. The lights of the house were nothing more than screw-in light bulb sockets with hanging down chains used to turn them on and off. The house was not built very tight. The linoleum rug would rise up from the floor when the wind would blow outside. The house had no running water. We had an outhouse and a well where we would retrieve our washing, drinking and cooking water.

During the winter time we all slept together to stay warm. I was only 3-4 months old that cold December night. Mom said she awoke to the sound of me crying. She felt for me in the bed and could not find me. She woke up Dad in a panicked voice and said, "Somebody has taken our baby." They could hear me crying and Dad said, "Your voice sounded as if you were going farther away." So, Dad reached for his shotgun and ran outside looking for the kidnapper. You should remember we were located 7 miles from the nearest town. Our nearest neighbors were my grandparents, and they were a quarter mile away. Why would anyone come to our house to steal me?

While Dad was running around the house, Mom calmed down enough to logically think about the situation and looked between the bed and the wall of the house. There I was, lodged between the bed and the wall. She picked me up and

See Cummings, page 5A

Around The Farm

Mickey Cummings



Ripe Watermelon

Watermelon is almost a necessity for the 4th of July in my opinion. Everybody has a favorite way to eat watermelon. Mine is to put it in the fridge to get it nice and cold, cut it up in slices, and put a little salt on each bite as you eat it. If you don't have a fridge around a cold creek is a good alternative. But, if you accidentally pick a watermelon that's not all the way ripe, it might be a bummer once you cut it open. With the 4th of July coming I thought I would talk about how to select a ripe watermelon.

Watermelon requires a lot of heat to be able to grow. That means that watermelon grown in the mountains won't be ripe in time for the 4th of July. There are smaller varieties that don't take as long to grow. Typically, watermelon take 70-90 days to be ready to harvest. If you are planting your own watermelon it's typically easier to start them from transplants, but you can start your own seeds. Watermelon plants will need 8 feet of space on each side.

If you are picking watermelon off the vine you want to look at the curly tendril that is on the stem closest to where it meets the fruit. When you see that curly tendril dry up and turn brown the watermelon is ripe and ready to harvest.

If you are looking at watermelon that has already been picked there are a couple of tricks that you can use so that you look will a pro and WOW onlookers at the grocery store or market. You can thump a watermelon to gauge its ripeness. A ripe watermelon will have more of hollow thud sound to it. An unripe watermelon will have a higher pitched, less hollow sound to it. It's usually best to thump multiple melons with this approach to really be able to gauge the ripeness. Another approach is to check the ground spot. This is just the spot where the watermelon sat on the ground. If it has a creamy yellow or buttery white color then it is ripe. If the ground spot is plain white then it's not ripe yet.

As watermelon ripen the green color will start to dull. So, if the watermelon still has a sharp green hue, it's probably not ripe. If you are picking a striped watermelon this method is particularly useful. Another tip is to pick up two watermelons of similar size. The heavier one is riper. Be careful using this tip because if it is too heavy, then it's overripe.

A whole watermelon will stay ripe for about 2 weeks if its stored below 60 degrees. At room temperature it will last for about 10 days.

Seedless watermelon is very popular and make up 92% of watermelon sales in the US. Seedless watermelon is not genetically modified.

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UGA extension
UNION COUNTY

Watching and Working

Jacob Williams



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A. Unlawful Burn Notices are issued whenever illegal materials are being burned, including household garbage, man-made materials, personal papers, corrugated boxes and pallets. Rangers at the local county unit who respond to wildfires determine whether an Unlawful Burn Notice must be issued. UBNs may be issued if wildfire results from a yard debris burn AND if it is clear that the fire required safety precautions have not been followed. At the website: GaTrees.org you will find a copy of the legislation, helpful videos, and information about burning safety.

Ashurst... continued from Page 4A

are able to accomplish our daily goals and to become a better person within ourselves and in our relationships. It's what we do with our time that matters so much in our daily lives. And yet it can easily slip away or be wasted.

Wasting time is the most extravagant and costly of all expenses.

--Anonymous

"We wake up in the morning, and lo! Our purse (wallet) is filled with twenty-four hours of the magic tissue of the universe of our life (time). No one can take it from us. No one receives either more or less than we receive. Waste our infinitely precious commodity as much as we will, and the supply will never be withheld from us. Moreover, we cannot draw on the future. It is impossible to go into debt of our time. We cannot waste tomorrow; it is kept for us!"

In our younger days, we thought we had all the time in the world to carry out our wishes. As the years accumulated, we realized that Time

Q. Is Union County one of the 54 counties listed in Georgia's current burn ban?

A. The burn ban went into effect May 1, 2023 and goes through September 30, 2023. Union County is not listed as a county required to refrain from burning outside debris. Debris burning can still be done in Union County as long as the following rules are followed: Set spacing between fires and woodlands and structures, burn times from sunrise to sunset, burner attendance at the fire, and reasonable precautions such as weather awareness and suppression tools.

does not work that way. We are held accountable. Some of us fidget away precious time, and what is very sad is that we know we are doing it. At our early age, we are constantly told to beware of time. Whether it was to be home on time or to get our homework finished, we knew that time was of the essence. And all of us had to make a decision—use our time wisely or not.

A motorist far from home was taking a detour along a country road that ran between two highways. Spotting a farmer swinging on his front porch, the motorist stopped to ask what time it was. "Twelve o'clock," said the farmer without breaking his swing. "Only twelve o'clock?" the motorist said. "I was sure it was more than that." "Nope, it's never more than that around here. It goes up to twelve o'clock and then starts all over again."

God instructs us to use time wisely because we have no idea when it can be in jeopardy—Ephesians 5:16a

Clyde... continued from Page 4A

at Joe Biden's Delaware mansion, where Hunter frequently stayed. Additionally, Shapley claims that U.S. Attorney Lesley Wolf tipped off Hunter's legal team before investigators searched his storage locker in Northern Virginia, allowing ample time to remove evidence from the facility.

In addition to more examples that solidify the preferential treatment Hunter Biden received from the DOJ, the IRS whistleblower testimonies raise serious questions and concerns about Joe Biden's involvement in his son's shady foreign business dealings.

You see, Joe wasn't just aware of these business practices – he was physically there for them.

In a threatening text message, Hunter wrote to his Chinese business partner: "I am sitting here with my father and we would like to understand why the commitment made has not been fulfilled. Tell the director that I would like to resolve this now before it gets out of hand, and now means tonight. And, Z, if I get a call or text from anyone involved in this other than you, Zhang, or the chairman, I will

make certain that between the man sitting next to me and every person he knows and my ability to forever hold a grudge that you will regret not following my direction. I am sitting here waiting for the call with my father."

Talk about a smoking gun!

Over the last few years, President Biden has repeatedly denied having any knowledge of his son's overseas business dealings. Americans should not only be concerned that Joe Biden lied about his involvement, but also the length to which the President is now compromised due to his role in Hunter's business practices.

Please know that House Republicans will investigate every solitary allegation levied against the DOJ, IRS, and FBI, as well as Hunter and Joe Biden. But Americans deserve more than just the truth; they deserve justice. I'm confident that an impeachment inquiry into Attorney General Merrick Garland regarding his weaponization of the DOJ is on the horizon – and these whistleblower testimonies will surely be at the forefront of that vital investigation.

Cummings...continued from Page 4A

hugged me tightly. She said she carried me outside and watched by the light of the full moon as my Daddy ran around the house in his long john underwear. All the while he was threatening the kidnapers with his shotgun. After the fourth trip around the house, he was losing his breath, so he stopped. Momma looked at Daddy and said, "I found my curly-haired baby."

A few years ago, I was driving to the Union County Canning Plant at 5 a.m. while listening to the bluegrass channel on satellite radio. They were playing a song out of the 1950s called, "My Curly-Haired Baby." That song was heard by my mother long before I was born. I can just see Paw paw, Maw maw, Ray, Shirley (Mom), Ralph, Debra and Carolynn sitting around a radio listening to the Grand

Ole Opry hearing the words to the song, "My Curly-Haired Baby."

The song was performed by various artists over the years including Bill Monroe and the Louvin Brothers. But my Grandfather's favorite version came from Bill Monroe. Those words don't embarrass me any longer. As a matter of fact, I am quite fond of them and now I wear them as a badge of honor even though my hair has turned gray and is no longer curly.

Williams...

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fied, rather it is how they are bred that makes them seedless. Some watermelon is diploid, which means they have 2 sets of chromosomes. Other watermelons are tetraploid, which means they have 4 sets of their chromosomes. When plant breeders cross pollinate a diploid with a tetraploid it creates a watermelon that produces a seed that are triploid. Those triploid seeds are planted to make seedless watermelon. Triploid watermelons are sterile. It's a similar concept breeding a mule, which is a cross between a horse and a donkey. These seedless watermelons might still produce a few seeds, but they won't mature and turn black.

If you have questions about watermelon contact your County Extension Office or send me an email at Jacob.Williams@uga.edu.

Fowler...

continued from Page 4A

of our rights." The increase in secularism, a religion in itself, means values are relative to the cultural moment, and the end justifies the means. Will America rebel against the Authority, deny the Author?

Christians believe a society that knows and respects God-given values and His created order is good for all. But preserving America and sustaining freedom is a secondary goal. Like Jesus, who looked with compassion over Jerusalem saying, "How often I wanted to gather your children together, just as a hen gathers her brood under her wings," so do we appeal with compassion to our fellow Americans. Our primary message is simple. "Seek the Lord while He may be found" (Isa. 55:6). Find Him, and you find freedom.

Chamber...

continued from Page 4A

Community, and all of our Leaders to keep us safe and keep our Country strong to make Life Better in Blairsville! God Bless America!

Dyer...

continued from Page 4A

urdays. We also want to thank Commissioner Lamar Paris and Larry Garrett for their support of our program; the fellow firefighters who practiced with the students; the Fire Chiefs of the surrounding departments for their confidence in our program to teach their students; and the citizens of Union County for always encouraging and supporting our efforts.

Union County Fire Department ~Our Family Protecting Your Family~

Meier...

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ing radical and LGBT activists. They also gifted money to the extremist Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) and partnered with the Covenant House, an organization that hosts such things as Drag Queen Story Hours. The latest news is they are catering to the diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) crowd.

Despite this departure from biblical truth and drifting from its biblical roots, the corporation continues to exploit and profit from its Christian reputation. I'm sure many Christians are unaware of the new trail Chick-fil-A is blazing away from glorifying God. Since we have such a restaurant right here in our midst, I am writing this letter to make sure the citizens of our surrounding counties know the truth about Chick-fil-A.

By knowing the facts, they may decide to take their business elsewhere.

Gary W. Meier

Ten Things You Did Not Know About the Knights Templars



The MASONIC TRESTLEBOARD Whitey White

Part 3 of 10:

Templar Discipline Was Harsh

Templars knights were legendarily tough soldiers, known for their iron discipline. This was enforced with a system of harsh punishments.

Minor infractions were punished with floggings, while more serious misdemeanors, such as fighting or disobeying orders could result in a brother being forced to eat his meals on the floor with the dogs for up to a year.

Punishments were carefully outlined for even the most minor infractions. Some were relatively mild and almost comical. For example, if any Templar displayed pride in his appearance and sought out nicer, finer garments, he was to 'be given the worst'.

But what if a knight committed a more serious violation of the Latin Rule? If a Templar fought with a fellow knight, lost their horse, was found to be telling lies or succumbed to his baser desires by sleeping with a woman, he could face the loss of habit – meaning being stripped of his garments, weapons and status in the order. It was only by appealing for redemption that the brothers could restore his habit after a period of time.

Even more serious

violations – such as killing a fellow Christian, committing sodomy or fleeing the battlefield – would lead to a knight being expelled from the Templar order.

However, redemption could still be found even for such men, as they could be ordered to join the Cistercians, an order of monks with close ties to the Templars. It's one of the bitter ironies of history that the Templars, who were so synonymous with their ultra-strict and pious lifestyles, would eventually stand accused of the most extreme heresies and debaucheries.

During the purge and bloody downfall of the order, the knights were said to have indulged in occult worship, spitting on the cross and engaging in homosexual rituals. They were tortured into giving (false) confessions, leading to the Catholic Church (and Pope Clement V) to take down the Fraternity, ultimately arresting the grand master, Jacques de Molay, on charges of heresy, sacrilege and Satanism.

Under torture, Molay and other leading Templars confessed (proven to be false) and were eventually burned at the stake.