



Hash 154 - The Royal Oak, Wootton Rivers, 14th December 2003

The last Hash before Christmas and in true Keith literary eloquence ... it was another glorious sunny Hashing Sunday! (not very original I know, but I'm doing my best). Timing for us hash walkers couldn't have been more perfect, for as we arrived along side the obligatory pub there appeared almost like a festive vision of Angel Gabriel (Keith No.1) - how else could he have arrived so early! Suitably dressed in his hashing gear and looking forlorn from having just finished off the flour trail, he grunted and pointed us towards the car park of local Church hall where we dutifully parked.

As we decanted from the car and donned our walking gear, our ears became alive to the sight and sounds of Jenny B and her chatter. In her own inimitable style Jenny treated us to some of her verbal entertainment, telling tales/bedtime stories (fairy stories no doubt) of toenail painting - and sucking, performed by her latest boy friend, to the embarrassment of those of us who were ignorant of such things [especially me - Keith]. So there we were gathered together around the village car park awaiting the arrival of more walkers and runners when suddenly there appeared our very own Fairy Godmother (GOM no less) toggled out in tinsel hanging from her knickers - no story is complete without a mention of Margaret's undies - and everywhere else. Margaret insisted we all follow suit, and so lemming like we obliged placing the tinsel like halos on top of our hooded heads. Just as we were getting used to the glittery sights of ourselves looking and feeling like Christmas trees personified, there arrived (having been missing from many recent hashes) Steve wearing a luminous green hat - perhaps he thought we hadn't noticed his absences from the hashes in the proceeding few months, I really can't imagine, but we were certain of his presence that crisp Sunday morning!

We gathered and listened with much enthusiasm to Keith who was now demonstrating to us the latest version of the flour trail symbols (no nonsensical symbols, and symbols about symbols here) no not Keith, he was very clear and so off we marched with confidence to begin our journey across the rolling Wiltshire countryside.

While the runners sped past us with their usual enthusiastic sprint with Ian at the helm, we walkers were left with Graham, with a very dirty-knotted hanky placed firmly on his head - obviously not wanting to look a pansy in the tinsel that the rest of us were wearing. As we looked towards the narrow pathway taking us across the first field beyond the village, we could see that it was going to be a little bit muddy and murky underfoot. We trekked across swampy field and muddy bog but the irritation of the day was the stiles. There seemed to be a never-ending supply of strategically placed narrow and awkward stiles to navigate. I could often hear the moans and groans of the walkers behind me, berating the wooden and barbed wired constructions they tentatively struggled across. In the distance we could hear what sounded suspiciously like a firing range. Had we taken a wrong turn? Like all good soldiers we marched on pretending we hadn't noticed, and hoping and praying that our confidence in Keith's organisational skills would bear fruit. Blissfully ignorant we walked down bridle path, across mud track over farmed crops and back across open land. At one spot Graham pointed to some dismal barren landscape and recounted how he almost lost one of his boy scouts some years previously. Smiling cynically, he looked at Liz; the penny dropped and she realized that it was her very own son Paul who almost never made it back - and to think we put our trust in this man to organise our weekend walking trips up Snowden, Brecon etc. etc. heaven knows what could become of us.

Despite this harrowing story we moved merrily along our way, chatting but not quite able to comprehend why we hadn't spotted a runner yet. We began to think that perhaps Keith had arranged a completely separate trail for us walkers. Then lo and behold in the distance, as we descended towards the village, there to our amusement, we spotted, not a bright shiny star... but a green fluorescent woolly hat worn by our very own Steve!

We didn't glimpse a baby in a manger that day either but we did get sight of the next best thing - a ram in a shed - annoying the locals (not a donkey) but a pair of horses.

Nearing the end of this festive hash and not quite understanding our latest instructions, we felt lost and so we looked to Joseph (nee Graham) - in the absence of the three wise men - for help. There were not one but two stiles with two options of which way to proceed. Dumbfounded and completely disorientated we sent Joseph to investigate. In his intrepid way he beckoned us towards the left stile saying he had found flour and assured us this must be the right way forward. Momentarily (like fools) we believed him, but luckily there was one wise walker left amongst us who spotted that we had passed this way on the way out. Thanks to our heroine of the day (Liz) we were spared the disaster of missing our companions awaiting our presence in the pub, and from re-visiting the trail for a second time!

Happy New Year to all Fools (sorry Walkers) and Runners, and Happy Hashing for 2004 [and thanks to Sandra, this week's scribe!]



Fifth Coming Hash Runs

155 - 28th Dec - The White Horse, Woolstone - GOM & Dave

156 - 11th Jan - Prince of Wales, Wootton Bassett - Steve

157 - 25th Jan - 5 Mile House, Duntisbourne Abbots - Keith 2

158 - 8th Feb - The Bugger's Arms - Katrina

159 - 22nd Feb - The Bugger's Arms - Ray

160 - 7th March - The Bugger's Arms - Jeremy

If you want to have a bash at a Hash, or find out where the Bugger's Arms is please ring GOMargaret on 01793 703744, or the late Keith Mitchell on 01672 511530 - email keith@pallettfs.co.uk - website <http://kvhash.mysite.freemove.com/>.