



Hash	Pub	Village	Date	Hare/s	Scribe
338	The Royal Oak	Wootton Rivers	24 Oct 2010	Tim	Maurice

It was the perfect day. An autumn day, with that little stab of sharpness when you stand still which feels like an advance warning that winter is about to follow, but not quite yet. A clear blue sky deepened the colours of falling leaves in the village and there was a giggly expectation as we stamped our feet and blew warm air into our hands while Tim gave his briefing.

Tim took us on a delightful route and someday I hope he takes us along it again so we can double-guess him with the experience of the less-bewildered and maybe even enjoy a pint before the pub closes. That statement is heart-felt from Hilary and me who were last home. We walked the runner's route and then ducked down off a hill into Oare to get our bearings to discover we were on the wrong side of the hill. It was just as well Hilary was with the GOM so she didn't feel lost. She had no phone (a lesson learned) and my phone ran out of battery as I tried to find Google maps (oh, another lesson learned!) So, not only were we lost as far as we knew, but we were truly lost as far as everyone else knew.

But back to the good bits. It was Tim's first Hash and I know for a fact that he ran it several times with the consistency that he always applies to make sure it would be perfect. And, as we all know, the first time is always tricky, trying to work your way around in such a way that you get the pace right, introducing a few deviations with studied timing so no one gets bored, and of course making sure you don't get lost. Yes, the first time is so pressured it can all go horribly wrong.

He did tell us he had used several bags of flour though. But where did they all go? It wasn't a case that Hilary and I got lost, everyone else did as well and remarkably they all got lost in different directions. If it had been orchestrated it would have won prizes!

For me, the beauty was seeing the younger runners making their way along the ridge in a tight line – Aoife, Izzy, Eleanor, Olly and Philip silhouetted against the crisp blue sky and it was easy to imagine the camaraderie. They ran with conviction over the Giant's Graveyard and got dramatically lost. They told me it was an adventure so they asked locals how to get back and had a lovely run along the canal back to the village. Did they enjoy the day? They loved it . . .

At another stage we saw Colin out ahead followed by John, Vivien and Fiona tracing patterns along behind. Somehow that group broke up and Fiona ran the walker's route and got back to the start. She was the only runner who didn't get lost. The walkers on the short route did well. They followed the short trail and got back safely, so well done to the walkers.

Which left Hilary and me. We were animated in conversation, a bad endeavour as you forget to notice the flour signs and make assumptions about the trail that inevitably prove to be completely wrong. You would imagine that retracing our steps would teach us a lesson but I am afraid your GOM recovers his ability to be correct far too quickly and simply resets his assumption gauge with increased conviction. It was that kind of day. We were, in fairness, confused by a lack of flour at strategic points. The runners even put stones down as arrows to help us which could be a deviation we might want to consider for a future Hash if the price of flour continues to rise.

At one stage we were clearly lost and I tried to make contact on my phone but nobody answered. I tried to figure out where we were on Google maps but the phone ran out of battery. Hilary had no phone so we decided to head to the nearest village. On the way we met two teachers, who told us they were teachers and proceeded to tut-tut that we had no map and were lost and they then explained twice where we should proceed. We were to turn left at a sign along the path and head back

over the hill. When we got to that sign we saw a flour circle heading in the opposite direction. We were caught between our confidence in the hare (!) and the admonishment of teachers. We chose the hare.

We met another couple and asked them to confirm the route. He sided with the teachers and she said go straight ahead. They got a bit animated so we continued along the path while they had their domestic. Not sure what profession they were but it could have been good research.

Then into a field where everyone had got lost before us. They had clearly moved what flour there was to add to the confusion. We went around the field twice and then, behold, found two blobs on the far side of an electric fence, then along a hedgerow and through a private garden where Tim had had an altercation with the owner when setting the trail. The owner had tried to close the public path so Tim called the Council and there were new signs, big signs at that, showing the route.

It was easy from there and we realised quite soon we would be in the village and we got a bit light-headed. It was a moment of some concern that Hilary moved into the realm of philosophy at that stage. If I recollect, there was some correlation between Life and the Hash, how we all start out together full of joy and expectation of a long run or a tolerant walk. Of course there are exits and entrances as we make decisions around flour circles but with the help of family and friends we move along less travelled roads and everything works out for the best. I think that was the tenet of her stream of consciousness. It was a moment for me to nod and obey the sound advice of my father (*whatever you say, say nothing*) so I kept quiet and did not remind her that not only had we got lost, but there was no flour, there was no sign of family and friends, we had come down the wrong mountain without tablets of stone, and the only bit of advice in terms of direction was cruelly wrong. But that's for another time!

A few had stayed at the pub, eating and drinking and worrying about us (!) and we had a good session and a good laugh at the day. For my own bit of philosophising, it was a wonderful route and an amazing day to be in the country. It went wrong if you want to define perfect as getting around without a problem. But these are the Hashes we remember with a great deal of fondness, knowing that the hare will be the butt of snarky comments for years, and that we all had had a great day.

When I got home I phoned Tim around 3:30 to ask for bearings from the top of the Giant's Grave Hill. He wasn't there so I left a message that we would stay there until he called back. He did phone later with a great deal of anxiety . . . wonderful!!!



ON ONs

340 21 Nov Old Boathouse @ South Cerney Keith

341 5 Dec Crown & Anchor @ ramsbury Jeremy

If you want to have a bash at a Hash, or find out where The Bugger's Arms is please ring GOM Maurice on 07887 608019

Email mspillane@appligenics.com or visit our website <http://www.kvhash.co.uk/>