



Hash	Pub	Village	Date	Hare/s	Scribe
356	Tommy Fletcher's	Naas, Co. Kildare	25 June 2011	Peter (from Naas)	Mike

Hash number 356 will long be remembered as one of the great moments in the history of the Kennet Valley Hash and GOM has done me the honour of asking me to write this record for the history books. So, if you're all sitting comfortably, I'll begin.

It all started at 4 am on Friday 24<sup>th</sup> June – you'd be amazed at how light it is then – when Annie and I leapt out of bed, collected loli and drove to Bristol airport for our flight to Dublin. A small group of hashers were there already - propping up the bar – Hilary, Val, Sue, Brian, Lynn and Malcolm with his son Kristian and we greeted them warmly.

Ryan Air were very efficient and we flew to Dublin in about 30 minutes. Maurice met us from the plane and organised the bus into the city centre and shepherded us to our hostel – called Gogarty's – where we were made very welcome. Everything went so smoothly that we were all relaxed and ready to enjoy Dublin. And what a place to enjoy !

Maurice took us on a walk around the old part of the city telling us the history and stories about each place. He has a love of language and an encyclopaedic knowledge of Irish history and I was fascinated by it. We then moved seamlessly on to the Guinness Storehouse where you can learn all that there is to know about Guinness and more importantly how to drink it. We climbed right to the top floor for this purpose to a bar with panoramic views of Dublin and where pints of Guinness were being dispensed with consummate skill and attention to detail. Did you know that It is important, essential in fact, that a pint of Guinness is poured in accordance with a precise ritual which lasts for 119.5 seconds? Half a second too long and the flavour is reduced.

We met runners from the Copenhagen Hash in the bar and being a sociable lot we decided to have a few more Guinness with them. It was pouring with rain when we teetered out and so we decided to drop into one of the many pubs that were filled with people and wonderful Irish music and that was it really for the evening – singing and more Guinness - although we did manage to fit in a meal later.

Half a page written already and we haven't got to our Naas Hash yet - so 'On On'.

By Saturday morning Margaret and Jeremy and Colin had arrived and Des came on his motor bike (we thought he was going to cycle so his bike must have had another puncture) and full of anticipation we all piled into a bus which took us out to Naas - where we all piled into a pub called Tommy Fletcher's.

I should explain at this point that time in Ireland is an entirely different concept from that experienced in, say, Swindon. Somebody said that Maurice and Peter (the leader of the Naas Hash) were just finishing laying the trail and would be back for the start in about five minutes. An hour later they arrived and suggested that, as there was no rush, we all had a couple of beers before we did anything else. We had kept busy in the meantime taking group photographs and singing 'Happy Birthday' to Kristian whose 19<sup>th</sup> birthday it was and so we either had a beer or went and looked at the shops for a bit.

Eventually we had a briefing behind the pub from Peter and it was the most delightful briefing I have ever heard – full of humour and spoken in that lovely laid-back Kildare accent. I was particularly touched when he said how pleased people in Ireland had been when the Queen came on that historic visit of reconciliation between our two countries.

Then, finally, we were off – up the high street, passing flour arrows that were about three feet long and two inches deep - through the backstreets and on to the bank of a canal running through a vale of trees. Colin was way out in front – he had already been for a nine mile run at about six that morning so he was nicely warmed up. Margaret and I were in our usual position at the back but this time we were joined by Maurice and his daughters who were excellent company. Maurice peeled off at the long/short divide and Brian ran with the four of us for a bit but he got bored with the slow pace and raced away eventually.

The trail took us round the town, over the railway line at the station and then on to the right tow path of the same canal that we started with.

That was fine until we caught up with the walkers where we began to smell a rat. They were on the other side of the canal, the nearest bridge was miles away and we had been advised to bring a complete set of dry clothing with us. Could it be that the trail led across water at some stage ? - no ! - Maurice would never do that to us – would he?

The answer to that question turned out to be yes he would because, when we arrived at a point immediately opposite where we were to enjoy the après, there was an arrow pointing across the canal. I looked at the cold black weed-infested water of the canal and I wondered for a moment

whether I really wanted to jump into it. However Margaret then said anxiously “I can’t swim” - so that settled it – I decided to look after her instead and we turned back with Maurice’s daughters (who gave Dad their views, rather bluntly I thought, about being asked to jump into a canal) and went through a tunnel under the canal. I heard later that Colin had been the first to plunge in followed by Jeremy and Brian and Des and Maurice and they all apparently enjoyed the experience – Ah, what it is to be young.

We were the last back but it did not matter – the après was simply wonderful. There we were on an allotment in the middle of rural Ireland drinking beer and eating delicious food cooked on the barbecue with children running round and enjoying the most delightfully warm company of the nascent Naas Hash. We sang and we told stories and we admired the cabbages and then we had some speeches.

Maurice introduced Margaret and Jeremy and me and we each said a little bit about our hash. I presented Peter with a Hash Horn for use when the Naas Hash was up and running and Margaret presented him with a pair of bags – which he promptly put on to much laughter and banter. He then made another classic speech saying how pleased he was that we were there and thanking Maurice for making it possible. What a party and what an atmosphere.

We all mucked in to stow everything away when the bus came to pick us up and travelled back to Naas together and when the Naas Hash left us they stood on the pavement waving and smiling until we had disappeared round the corner – wonderful.

I don’t think I shall ever forget today. Our GOM did a fantastic job in organising this historic Dublin weekend. Not only was the planning and booking organised superbly, the whole weekend and everything we did was immaculately organised too. And Mrs GOM, Fiona, was marvellous too making sure everybody was looked after and shepherding us on to buses and into pubs - and just by being there with her infectious sense of fun. Thank you, Maurice and Fiona, from all of us.