



## **KENNET VALLEY HASH HOUSE HARRIERS**

**Hash No 371- Boxing Day 2011. The Keepers Arms at Quennington**

**Hare - Olly. Scribe - Mike**

It seems only the day before yesterday that we were at our, by now, traditional Boxing Day pub at Quennington at the end of 2010 and yet there have been so many great hashes to remember and treasure since then. And what a difference in the weather! Last year we had trouble getting there through the snowdrifts and Margaret and I had to lay the trail with orange-coloured flour – and here we were today in warm mizzle under lowering skies. The fancy dress was different too. We had to wear a ‘silly hats with a hint of Disney’ – a sensible theme (suggested by Elizabeth) so that we didn’t have to run six miles dressed as a gorilla or the back end of a camel whilst still full of beers wines and Christmas pud. We had some good silly hats; Maurice came as Darby O’Gill, Annie as the Snow Queen with me as her sort of King consort, Brian was a policeman, Elizabeth was a cat and Viv was a Sleeping Beauty. I thought John had had a heavy night the night before but he helpfully explained that he was in fact Rudolph the Reindeer. Ioli had a smashing hat on but I’m afraid I still have no idea who she was.

Annie and I arrived at 10.52 approximately and were alarmed to find the place deserted – until Robin appeared, worrying that he was at the wrong pub. Gradually however all the hounds bowled up followed by hares Olly and Maurice covered in flour and by 11.10 we had six runners – John and Viv, Brian and me and Ioli and Elizabeth (who ran the short trail) and six walkers – Liz and Kathy and Annie and Rita and Robin and Malcolm. Olly gave us a brief brief as we were all seasoned hashers but he did warn us to be extra careful when running through a field containing a savage bull. So we set off down the hill weighing up the odds against our getting back to the pub without being gored or trampled too badly. We needn’t have worried though – Olly had made up the bit about the bull just to add a frisson of danger to the fun of the day.

Two paragraphs gone and we’ve only just started - must get on. Down the aforesaid hill to the first circle where I galloped confidently off to the right towards the river (a false trail – b..... \*\*!!). Everyone else had had more sense and had gone left so I was miles behind even the walkers from the start. Undaunted, I put in a couple of 4 minute mile bursts and caught up with the other runners in no time and as we were few we stuck together (or to be accurate the others slowed down so that I could keep up) as we ran round and through Quennington and then out across the fields to Coln St Aldwyns. On to a long loop along narrow lanes running through the middle of flat open farmland back into Coln St Aldwyns (what a lyrical name that is) and then down a familiar path to the water-mill and up the hill back to the pub. A clearly marked trail and an excellent run. It was a little longer than Olly had originally planned as he had had prior permission from a landowner to run through his estate but unfortunately said landowner had forgotten to unlock the gates on the day and so we had to run round the estate instead of through it – which meant we were back in about an hour and a half.

The walkers had been back for a while and they bagged an area at the the pub where we could all be together and once again we had that warm atmosphere of old friends who have experienced a lot together. GOM Maurice thanked Olly for his excellent trail (modestly not mentioning that he had been up since 7 himself helping to set the trail) and asked Elizabeth to present the hash horn (sometimes humorously but inaccurately described as the bugle). She gave it to her Mum for a reason which escapes me for the moment. Nobody seemed to know who had the bags ( I think it must be that Kevin) and so we moved on to the award for the best fancy dress. We all had to say who we were and one or two didn’t seem too sure. Malcolm was asked to be the judge and he said without hesitation that Viv (Sleeping Beauty – see above) was a clear winner.

GOM then announced the winners of our poll on what had been the best mag and the best trail of 2011. There was an unspoken assumption that the Dublin hash had been so special and different that it should be outside the scope of the poll. Thus the prize for the best junior mag went to Elizabeth (mag 366 on the Blue Boar at Aldbourne) and the best hash went to Keith ( Hash 367 at the Tunnel House Coates) - both clear-cut winners. The voting for best mag however was very close between three of us - there was Olly's mag 359 on my run from the Carriers at South Marston, Kathy's mag 364 on Colin's run from the Swan at Wilton, and my mag 367 on the Tunnel House run. Maurice said that voting had been so close that he had decided we were first equally and he presented us all with lovely Christmas-wrapped prizes. He also told us that the voting had been spread over a whole range of different hashes - and so it just goes to show that pretty well every hash was enjoyed and thought to be the best by someone.

Many thanks to Maurice for organising and presenting the results and prizes so generously and with such good humour - and of course for making it possible - it would have been very hard to decide on a vote without his comprehensive record of all our hashes on our website.

Another memorable Boxing Day hash - thank you Olly for a brilliant second trail and thank you Maurice for making the day so memorable.