

# HAM SHAG

Kennet & Avon Hash House Harriers

**ALL NEW !!!**

**Summer Special**

**August 2013**

## WHERE ARE ALL THE WASPS?

IT'S SUMMER - the time of year that everyone looks forward to. It starts off with hayfever; continues with getting stressed out while queueing to get to over-priced tourist destinations; you turn red and sore with sunburn; it crescendos with gastro-enteritis caught from burnt, and yet somehow still raw chicken and burgers from the barbeque; and then for the finale you get harassed and stung by swarms of drunken wasps, mirroring the emergence of hooligans at the start on the new football season.

Yes, the British summer is nothing without having these pests buzzing around in your face, crawling around in your glass when you're enjoying a drink in the pub garden, and then chomping away at the fruit and sandwiches in your picnic.

I remember the shrieks and whoops not so long ago when the Bristol Hash disturbed a wasp's nest on a sunny summer's run near Chipping Sodbury. We had thousands of the little yellow and black fellows flying round us. They made the run - they were the

talking point for many, many weeks after that. And this year? All I've seen is a single solitary wasp so far, and that was only as it was being ground down into wasp p ate by Lunchi on Lundy Island.

So what has happened to all the wasps? The summer will not be the same without them.

Those who say that wasps serve no useful purpose are missing the point. There's nothing nasty about wasps. To be sure, they sting people and sometimes people die because they are allergic, and that is immensely sad. And while wasps (on average) cause more deaths in the Britain than any other venomous creature: four times as

many as bees and ten times as many as jellyfish (while none in the UK has been killed by a bite from the poisonous adder since 1975), do they really deserve the malignment they receive so commonly?

What really matters is whether wasps sting people gratuitously; out of malice, or for the fun of it. And even if they do, then do they have any virtues to compensate? Is our customary reaction of waving

our arms around and looking for the nearest weapon to swat the living daylight out of *vespula vulgaris* really warranted, or should we just turn the other cheek and let them get on with their short lives in the knowledge that the balance of nature and agriculture benefit from their presence?

Well, this year may prove the turning point in our attitude to the wasp. With so few wasps emerging after the spring frosts, and the few that did survive facing vastly inferior odds of survival at the hands of a human army armed with their rolled up copies of the *Daily Mail*, their impact on the ecosystem, or rather, the absence of it, will become clear to all.



**KENNET & AVON HASH HOUSE  
HARRIERS**

**FOUNDED 31ST JULY 1991**

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**Internet**

<http://www.bristolhash.org.uk/kah3>

# Roll Up! Roll Up for the Magical Mystery Hash!!



## The **Kennet and Avon Magical Mystery Hash** rolls again. **The Twelfth Year**

You will be transported from your weary urban lives to a magical spot of rural beauty. We shall skip through the last colours of summer, run 'neath trees starting to turn from green to yellows and browns, hear songbirds chirp out their playful calls, leap over streams teeming with discarded drinks bottles, and visit a few pub gardens swatting wasps intent on annoying and stinging!

We have arranged transport to chauffeur you mid-morning from Bath and Bristol to our mystery starting point, so secret we can only call it "A". From there, a hash trail of epic excitement and interest will wend its way high and low through the countryside, maybe **to** pause just occasionally for refreshment breaks, until we reach our final destination, a place known as "B". There, a sumptuous feast of nouvelle cuisine will be laid out before you, for your delectation and enjoyment. The evening will crescendo as the Hash Oscars are awarded (maybe) in a glittering red-carpet extravaganza. And then, when the sun has sunk well below the horizon, you will be transported back to your morning starting point and you can sink into your bed a better person.

This will all happen on **Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> September 2013**, starting at around 10 o'clock in the morning. All we ask in return is that you tell The Fat Controller you are coming, where you wish to join us, and hand over the princely sum of **£20** (no early discounts now). You will then be advised on exact starting location and time.

Alternatively, Email the form to [paulmountford101@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:paulmountford101@hotmail.co.uk) and I will give you the Hashes Bank details where you can make a direct payment. Cheques made payable to Kennet & Avon Hash House Harriers can be sent to 5 Thirlmere Court, Bristol, BS30 5XP.

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I will be coming on the Kennet and Avon Magical Misery Hash

Name ..... Hash .....

Preferred joining point    Bristol Temple Meads (09:45) or    Bath Spa (10:00)

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Food Options -                    Vegetarian    /                    Not Fussy

Hash Run – Sometime in April, set by L'Escargot

A chilly Spring evening was enlightened by the chance spotting of a Ford Thunderbird in a back yard about half way through the run. I use the word 'yard' not to contrive some correlation between this large American car and American parlance, i.e. yard rather than garden, but because it was a concrete yard complete with a number of ramshackle vehicles. It's an interesting point whether the term 'yard' is actually American in origin; could gardens have been called yards a few hundred years ago? This certainly applies to the words 'candy' (sweets) and 'fall' (autumn) which were in common useage here in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century. On a similar theme the route chosen this evening followed a succession of sidewalks and freeways.

The Ford Thunderbird was a fifth generation model made in Detroit between 1968 and 1972 with a super V8 engine and the model was used in the film 'Getaway' with Steve McQueen and Ali MacCraw, who actually went on to marry McQueen a year after the film was made. She's a familiar face from the early 1970's and probably came to prominence for the wrong reason, following that terrible film 'Love Story', nothing but slush and tripe.

Interestingly, the fifth generation Thunderbird model was first road tested in the sprawling north western suburbs of Chicago, home to large Italian and Polish communities who moved there from the inner city in the 1950's when the early suburbs were first built. A thriving youth culture sprung up centred on rival gangs which led to the original Broadway production of 'Grease'. Hollywood decided to locate the film version in sunny climes with palm trees with the female lead played by the Australian, Olivia Newton John, who was hopelessly miscast and far too old for the part. I'm sure the producers would have loved the idea of finding a new Ann Margaret for the role and it would have been all the more authentic as she was actually brought up in the north western suburbs of Chicago, her parents having moved there from Sweden.

Ann Margaret might arguably be best remembered for her rendition of 'Bye Bye Birdie' from the musical of the same name in 1963. She was 22 at the time and was the picture of pre-pubescent innocence and sweetness in a manner that's gone forever. Around the same time we of course had our own sweet girl in the form of Hayley Mills, singing about cobblers mending shoes, released after her starring role in 'Whistle Down the Wind' a beautiful film of childhood innocence.

Along with the loss of such innocent roles, you don't get women looking utterly stupid on album covers any more. The best example of this has to be Herb Alpert's 'Whipped Cream and Other Delights' which came out in the late 60's featuring Delores Erickson covered in shaving cream, licking some of it off her finger. (Incidentally some readers may, like me, have been listening to the live commentary of the recent Sunderland vs Stoke City football game and may also have noticed that at the end of the game 'A Taste of Honey' from the album was being played on the tannoy at the Stadium of Light. I really admire whoever was responsible for that.)

Apparently Delores used her earnings from the photo shoot to purchase a Ford Thunderbird and rumour has it she went on to run a second-hand book shop in Cirencester. It could be the car we saw might once have been hers ...

Chickpea.

The Fat Controller expressed his surprise at the end of this run; he finally realised that the run had gone anticlockwise, having been convinced throughout that it was going to go clockwise. Good job he was rarely at the front of the pack at any of the checks. Had he been, he'd have felt some obligation to do some checking ... and he'd be heading for the Hole of Shame after clocking up a succession of falsies.

If you want to predict the direction of any K&A hash then probability would favour anticlockwise. Around three-quarters of K & A runs so far this year have been set anticlockwise, a ratio consistent with most previous years. And there is a scientific reason for this. It seems that the part of the brain that dominates in determining whether people are left- or right- handed is also responsible for making them favour a particular circulatory direction. Most left-handed people prefer to draw circles clockwise and circulate in buildings clockwise; while most right-handed people prefer to draw circles anticlockwise and circulate counter-clockwise. The greater frequency of anticlockwise runs correlates with the greater incidence of right-handedness.

Peculiarly, mechanical devices that need to be twisted – at least the ones you and I know: corkscrews, bottle tops, taps and the like, are normally turned clockwise. This is because supination of the arm, which is used by a right-handed person to turn a screw clockwise, is generally stronger than pronation. More of a challenge would be how one would describe circular direction prior to the invention of the clock, and the customary usage of “clockwise” and “anticlockwise”. Think about it ... answers at the end (maybe). Meanwhile back to the run, with the promise of more pseudo-science and culture later.

The run started in typical clockwise fashion, heading left from the pub and into the fields past the close with the whitewashed houses. Hereupon, the consequences of the scandal of horse-meat contaminated beef started to rear its ugly head. This was just the first grassy field full of yearling beef calves to supply the likes of Tesco and Findus that we'd have to cross this year, but soon we will find every pocket-handkerchief sized piece of grazing crammed with bovines to meet the demand for home grown beef for frozen lasagne and chilli con carne. And don't the cows know it! There was one aggressive bull(y) of the herd that was intent on taking me and Stuart out as an act of revenge before his innards were mechanically recovered and turned into value ready meals. Luckily for us, Perky had been even more adventurous in checking a false trail and was able to repel it on his return. Should there ever be one hash chip left and you notice Perky with his eye on it, then, given the way he saw off that mad cow, I'd advise you to offer it to him!

The trail continued over the road and around the edges of some fields to Bird's Marsh Woods. At the regroup in the woods, the Fat Controller started marking time by taking on the role of a pendulum, on a frayed rope swing which barely looked as if it would last the course. Stig had his camera phone ready, no doubt hoping to capture the moment that gravity overtook FC's oscillatory movement, but the rope held good and in the end he dismounted unscathed and unmuddied.



The Oldest Swinger in Town?

The trail left the woods and headed over some open fields, the growing crops making it harder to find the footpath and the flour marking the course of the trail, while the frequency of checks also diminished. Local knowledge and a sense of direction saw a series of front runners lead the pack home. We were back in a shade under an hour, which is a very commendable achievement for a virgin hare. So often that first trail ends up taking much, much longer than the customary hour.

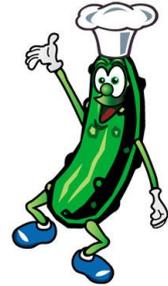
Outside the pub, down downs were awarded to Perky, Fat Controller, and to Kneed for telling a really crap joke, which fortunately I've forgotten, otherwise I'd be repeating here. Inside, Cover Up rewarded the pack with Hash chips, ensuring that this went down as a really good run!

Now back to the pseudo-science and the answer to my earlier challenge. Clocks rotate in the direction we now call clockwise because they are based on sundials. The first clocks were built in the northern hemisphere, where the shadow cast on the sundial moves from west through north to east. This is why hours were drawn on sundials in that manner, and why modern clocks also have their numbers set the same way. Before clocks were commonplace, the term "sunwise", and previously "deasil", "deiseil" and "deocil" with the same meaning (from the Scottish Gaelic language) were used for clockwise (which incidentally are from the same word root as the Latin "dexter" meaning "right"[handed]), while "widdershins" or "withershins" (from Middle Low German "weddersinnes", "opposite course") were used for counterclockwise. Or at least that's what Wikipedia says.

Le Caniveau.

# The Ham Shag Guide to Pickling

The time is fast approaching to start preparations for the annual Spiritual Distillation, what with the hedgerows and grocers starting to bulge under the weight of seasonal produce. So, inspired by Perky's desire to make pickled walnuts, the Ham Shag is pleased to bring you a collection of recipes to make the most of what nature has on offer now, and preserve it, Damien Hurst-like, to enjoy in the cold dark months ahead.



## Pickled Eggs

Ingredients: Eggs (not too fresh), vinegar, pickling spice (pepper, cloves, chilli, whatever!).

1. Put eggs in a pan and bring to the boil slowly, boiling for about 12 minutes or more.
2. You can add a tablespoon of vinegar to the boil to help stop the eggs cracking and a little salt to help peel the eggs.
3. When they have finished boiling, cool and peel the shells from the eggs.
4. Put the eggs in the pickling jar and add the spices and vinegar and a little salt. You can boil the spices in the vinegar first for around 10 minutes to speed things up.
5. Leave for 2 weeks or more as the flavour improves with time.

## Sloe Gin

Ingredients: Sloes, gin, sugar.

1. Prick the sloes with a fork or needle, or just squash them as you push them into a bottle. Use around 10-12 oz of sloes in a litre spirit bottle.
2. Add around 8 oz of white sugar.
3. Fill bottle with gin. You will taste the quality of the gin so use good gin, or use a 50:50 mix of gin and sweet sherry.
4. Shake daily until the sugar has dissolved and the contents have turned vermilion, and then occasionally for 2 months.
5. Strain and rebottle.

## Sauerkraut

Ingredients: Cabbage (white is best, but any will do), salt.

1. Shred the cabbage into thin strips.
2. Pack the cabbage into a Kilner jar, adding around 2 teaspoons of salt per pound of cabbage. Ram the cabbage in really tightly and pack the jar to the top! Air needs to be excluded from the jar for the anaerobic fermentation using the natural bacteria on the cabbage.
3. The salt will draw enough moisture from the cabbage to produce a brine, there is no need to add any water.
4. Leave for weeks or months.

## Piccalilli

Ingredients: Mixed vegetables (onions, cauliflower, courgettes, etc.), salt, vinegar, pickling spices, sugar, mustard powder, turmeric, flour.

1. Slice and dice the vegetables and put them in a large bowl. Cover with a brine made from 2 oz salt and 4 pints of water, and leave for a day. Make sure the vegetables are submerged, i.e. put a plate on top.
2. Heat the vinegar (around  $\frac{3}{4}$  pint per pound of veg.) with the pickling spice for 10 minutes and allow to cool.
3. Mix 3-4 oz sugar, 1 tbs flour, 2 tbs mustard and  $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp tumeric per pound of veg. with a little of the vinegar to make a paste. Gradually whisk in the rest of the vinegar. Bring to the boil stirring continuously to make smooth sauce, and simmer for 15 minutes.
4. Drain and rinse the vegetables several times, then add them to the sauce.
5. Ladle the pickle into warm, sterilized jars, making sure there are no air gaps, before.
6. Leave for a month or more to let the flavour develop

How far would you continue checking after the second blob from a check in the hope of finding the third? Finding a "T" is the most obvious indicator that it's time to turn round and head back to the check, but I feel they stifle the battle of wits between the hare and the pack. As a hare, I would much prefer to make the checkers think whether they have gone far enough - particularly if the trail, false or not, has taken them somewhere that they really wouldn't have wanted to go. If you've already squelched through some deep shiggy, or checked downhill (so it's steep uphill on the way back), I think you would want to be confident that you really do have to turn back and face it again before you actually give up and do so. But while you remain uncertain, the distance between you and the check is growing so you'll have further to run if you're wrong. Battle of wits, see.

There was a time in former days of K&A hashes when hares would sometimes set a "long third", where the final blob to confirm ON was placed much further beyond the second blob than the spacing of the blobs from the check thereto. The checker, always an FRB, would head back to check (and the massing pack of hounds) having failed to find the third, only to be embarrassed when the hare said that he hadn't checked far enough and ON was back in the direction he was returning from. This had the advantage of getting the pack back together again, but the disadvantage that there would be one less willing checker at all future checks!

I've observed that hares nowadays lay fairly evenly-spaced blobs from a check, so you wouldn't need to go much further on after finding the second blob than the distance between blobs. But there are still a few old hands (well, only one really) that do keep going and going just in case, hankering back to the days of the long third. "So what?" you may ask. The point is that when the in-trail comes close to the out-trail, a "T" is needed to prevent the pack from crossing from one to the other, but how close is close? Is a blob-free gap of a hundred yards, or two hundred yards enough? Or is it just wiser to always put down that "T", and lose a little in the battle of wits.

Well, this was the second time that I had underestimated the distance that that old hand would go beyond the second blob. My triple circumnavigation of the Old Ham Tree at Holt in 2008, inspired by a similar run set by Kneed at the Golden Fleece at Shaw nearly 10 years earlier, was catapulted into disaster when Gazza broke through from the first circuit to the third and led the pack round the rest of the trail in reverse. And history repeated itself at Clutton, when once again Gazza bridged a gap between the out-trail and the in-trail, leading to mayhem as the direction taken by the pack was at complete odds with the directions indicated at the checks.

The problem could have been avoided if my originally planned route hadn't proved to be so overgrown that I ended up revising the last 3 miles on the hoof, wasting two bags of flour and an hour of setting time in the process. And even with that, it could have been redeemed had I bought hash chips. Instead I took the wrath of the pack and swallowed my punishment like a man!

# HOLE OF SHAME

**...these shamelessly ducking out of the full run**

Hound	Runs wimped out of	Hound	Runs wimped out of	Hound	Runs wimped out of
Stiff	355	Gazza	13	L'Escargot	1
Fat Controller	354	Our Kid	7	Sir Galahad	1
Le Caniveau	103	Soprano	7	Stig	0
Lightweight	83	Cover Up	6	Sheepshagger	0
Magnum	50	Pinky	6	Dolly	0
Puki Jangut	30	Spiderman	6		
Kneed	21	Farmer Giles	2	Stuart 	28
Toreador	16	Public Enemy	2	Molly 	0
Perky	13	Snails Nuts	2		

## Latest additions ...

Date	Run	Location	Shamed Hounds	Reason
17th July 2013	1194	Bell, Yatton Keynell	Puki Jangut, Fat Controller, Stiff, Le Caniveau, Stuart	The usual suspects.
19th June 2013	1190	Tuckers Grave Inn	Puki Jangut, Farmer Giles, Cover Up, Spiderman, Kneed, Le Caniveau, Stiff, Fat Controller,	40% of the pack knew better!
5th June 2013	1188	Kings Arms, Stratton on the Fosse	Fat Controller, Stiff, Lightweight	Completing the run from the Holcombe Inn in a black (nosed taxi) van.
15 <sup>th</sup> May 2013	1185	Westbrook Inn, Westbrook	Farmer Giles, Puki Jangut	Avoiding part 2 on the other side of the main road.
8 <sup>th</sup> May 2013	1184	Nettleton village	Le Caniveau, Stuart	To get an extra pint in as Chickpea had threatened to drive home early.
24 <sup>th</sup> April 2013	1182	Two Pigs, Corsham	Puki Jangut	He doesn't need a reason ...
17 <sup>th</sup> April 2013	1181	Golden Fleece, Shaw	Puki Jangut	Ditto !

**Hole of Shame stats. have been accurately maintained since 21<sup>st</sup> March 2007 – run 854 from the Rising Sun, Bradford-on-Avon, so there. Any inaccuracies can be greatly exaggerated by bribing or annoying the Edit Hare.**