Herts
Hash
House
Harriers
Herts official Website: hertsHash.co.uk

Run No. 2131
Date: Sunday 22nd December
Venue: The Mermaid
Location: St Albans
Beers/Cider: Jester Blackberry Porter; Citra; White Mild
Hare/s: Mr X
Runners: 21
Virgins: 0
Visitors: 0
Newies: 0
Après: 0
Hash Hounds: 1
Total: 22
Membership: On a yarn-bombed Christmas tour.

So, it came around to the last Trail before Christmas. Once Paxo had been through the honours of welcoming the Pack to the Hash, on the bright but chilly winter morning, the Hare was called forward to tell what lay out there for the Hash. There were mentions of Short Cuts, a View Point & a Held CHK with a sweet stop, there were a lot of Yarn-bombed pillar boxes to look out for. Lastly the Hare added that Sparky was supposed to be making his own way to the Hash, & hadn't arrived, so could the Pack keep an eye out for him.

The Pack were ushered away along Hatfield Road toward the west, in doing so the Hare pointed to the first Yarn-bomb Pillar box across the junction, & that was one with Snoopy from Peanuts Comic Strip upon it. Then it was on to crossing Bricket Road to reach the pedestrian crossing, where the button for the lights was pressed to allow the FRBs to make their way up toward the old red brick St Albans Liberal Club, with its name in large letters of ornate cast red tiles along the front. On to the first CHK of the day by the alleyway northward beside the Veer Dhara (North) Indian restaurant.

While only a couple searched up toward the Blacksmiths Arms roundabout, the likes of Moss Key Toe, Pimp & Pepper Pig Porker (P3), Well Laid & Port all chose to search up by the Restaurant where they found Trail leading into the graveyard of St Peter's Church. On the way, Mr X pointed out the writing on the side of the Indian Restaurant. The large black text on the whitewashed wall said that "Really enjoyed the Lobster Curry!" with Tom Cruise's signature.

The Hollywood actor has stopped several times for curries in Hertfordshire, when he has been filming locally, he has been known to buy one in shop & then take another home. This was back in August 2012, but there was a problem when he went to pay with his American Express card, the restaurant doesn't accept Amex, so another member of his entourage paid in cash, leaving a £79 Pound tip! Fortunately Lobby Lobster didn't see the writing upon the wall as she followed the now marked Trail into the grounds of St Peters Church.

The Next CHK was found in the centre of the Graveyard, from here Moss Key Toe, Pimp, P3 & Well Laid all searched to the northwest between the Yews & other well established trees, they would be called back as the Hare arrived & marked the Trail away to the east, running below the 'Garden for the blind'. Once the Keenies were off on the longer Trail, Mr X told My Lil' the Short Cut would be on the route that the FRBs were called back from, then off by the old Alms Houses on St Peters Street.

Back with the main Pack, Tent Packer, Lemming, & Mother with Buster all followed on as the FRBs led the way through the back passage that leaves the Churchyard & crosses the dead-end of Clifton Street. It continued down the next section of black cobbles to complete a 240 yard trot & emerge on to St Peter's Road. Arrows here turned the Trail on a hairpin to lead up Hall Place Gardens, a serpentine suburban street leading up to the next CHK by another Yarn-bombed Pillar Box, this red post box bears an Edward VII Royal Cipher & was topped with a woolly Christmas Tree.

The Keenies were now split between the two options & some may have been lured off up Townsend Avenue, by the local School, if they recalled that Mr X had used the footpath off between the outbuildings on a Trail before? But things were far simpler, as "On!" was called back on Hall Place Gardens to St Peter's Street to turn right. The Keenies were now well behind the Knitting Circle of Paxo, 3D, Lobby Lobster, Slug, Kylie, Hot 'N' Spicee, Kylie, My Lil' & Slug with Sally.

The Trail moved on up to the Triangular junction where Stonecross & the Harpenden Road split. Here care was needed as cars could approach from all directions, but once safely to the Amrit Indian Restaurant (Formerly the Cricketers Pub) & here some fun was had when reaching the street sign by the CHK.

The road sign was read 'Snatchup Alley'! In something reminiscent of the opening titles of Fawltey Towers, strategically placed hands changed the name to read 'Snatchup All'. The Alley's name is derived from a notorious past, when it would have been a place where you had a high chance of being robbed, especially if you were inebriated from one of the many local Pubs & staggered down this unlit back passage at night. Fittingly this twitchell is sandwiched between the former Pub & the St Albans' Criminal Defence Lawyers!

From the CHK, the Trail was picked up by the Knitting Circle on the snicket, running over 100 yards behind the Jolly Sailor & then out on to the Sandridge Road, heading north-eastward until reaching a CHK on the corner of the green space of Bernard's Heath.

By the time the Keenies arrived here, the Knitting Circle had already picked up Trail away to the north-west, on the tarmac footpath along the bottom of the open space that was the site of the Second Battle of St Albans. For those interested in History: The 'War of the Roses' began with the First St Albans battle in 22nd May 1455, with the House of York coming out on top. The Second Battle of St Albans, February 17th 1461, ended with the House of Lancaster winning, to make it 4-3 to the House of York!

Of the 16 Battles, 10 were won by the House of York, with just 6 to the House of Lancaster but they would eventually come out on top after Henry Tudor (Henry VII) defeated Richard III at Bosworth Field & finally won Stoke. Later, with clever marriages Henry VII would combine both fractions of the House of Plantagenet to create the Tudor Dynasty.

Back to the Trail, here the Keenies were still doing some catching up as the arrows led away on the St Albans Green Ring in to Bernard's Heath wood, by the edge of which was another CHK located by the squat wooden bollard. Four possible options from here, with the one that was almost directly straight on being the correct choice through the woodland on a semi-hard capped [Steady Pebbledash! – Ed] path through the southern end of the wood.

About 190 yards on & the Keenies found double arrows to direct the Hash over the Harpenden Road, once over the fairly busy road, they would head southward on the western roadside footpath, it was along here the Hare caught Hot 'N' Spicee, Milf, 3D, Starboard, Slug & Lobby Lobster of the Knitting Circle as they approached to the bend back around to Stone Cross & St Peters Street, which had a Short Cut marked along it by said Hare.

Arrows pointed the way on the acute turn at the start of Townsend Drive to the northwest, after 78 Yards a CHK was found by Heath Avenue & it was up this side street the Pack went, tuning at the opposite end where it joins Palfrey Close, as there was only one way to go with the south-eastern end terminating with a dead-end.

The Keenies were the first to complete 90 Yards to reach the CHK by the start of an alleyway between two of the homes, they were also first to find the T located just after the elbow in the back-passage [Steady Pebbledash! – Ed] The FRBs came back to start a loop around from Palfrey Close & then down Carlisle Avenue, where the wooden shuttered alley comes out to. Here there was a chance to see an alternative bit of Yarn-bombing, where a house by the alleyway had a knitted Post-box on their gatepost.

The Trail was marked straight over to the continuation of the snicket, heading further southward, then after the slight change of course this would emerge out on Grange Street, where there as a CHK. Here the likes of Paxo & My Lil' went wrong, fooling some of the Keenies to following them straight on & even into overtaking them! They all returned to find the Trail marked down the avenue, where Pimp spotted the Trail turning off down Barnard Street. Halfway along has a warning sign of 20MPH Hedgehogs. Moss Key Toe wanted to know if Hedgehogs can reach speeds of 20 MPH?

Anyhow, the Pack was pretty much back as one bunch, with Lemming being the exception as he dropped back a bit on this twisty turning Trail. Another Yarn-bombed pillar-box was coming up, as the Trail turned at the end of Bernard Street, this one had a Polar Bear & a Penguin topping it.

The likes of Well Laid, Pimp, P3 & Port were now thinking that they would be getting ahead of the rest, though Moss Key Toe in his bid to gain ground was a bit touch & go at the lights for he didn't wait for the 'green man' to light up but instead took a chance to dash over while the traffic was stationary for a few seconds.

Arrows led the Hash down Gombards, with semi-detached homes on either side for its 80 Yard length, where a CHK was found by the start of another alleyway. A search of the alleyway proved this was the correct choice, the CHK really didn't throw any of the searching Keenies off & they were soon on southward on the old cobble footpath between the back of the homes of Selby Avenue above to the east, & the old 'hard fired' brick wall to the west, with a car park behind it.

After 250 yards, the FRBs were first out on to long arcing Verulam Road, another Yarn-bombed pillar box, this one adorned with parcels & letters, before moving on to cross the road a short way down, right before the Punchin Palooka. The reason for this route was that the Hare wanted to take the Hash on down Lower Dagnall Street for the start of the more 'Spiritual side' of the Trail. As the Hare walked along with Milf, he explained that down on the right is the Farriers Arms, an old Mac's Pub, that held the First Branch meeting of CAMRA* in St Albans. *CAMpaign for Real Ale.

The FRBs had lost some ground on the Knitting Circle, for they had gone wrong further back on Spicer Street before realising their error from the CHK at the start of Spicer Street, on his way back Pimp kicked the CHK through to point the way toward the Verulam Arms, where the Trail turned sou-sou-west before reaching Fishpool Street to the west & Romeland Hill to the east. Straight over the start of the T-junction was a CHK.

A cobbled curving arm of Fishpool Street would have the arrows for the Pack to follow up a slight incline & on through the one of the carved stone arches of the medieval 'Great Gateway of the Monastery'. Now on Abbey Mill Lane, the Trail would gently descend below the western walled edge of the Cathedral-Abbey Grounds, taking to the right-hand fork as the Trail came down to the View Stop, right by Ye Olde Fighting Cocks.

Here the Hash could look out from one of the oldest licensed Pubs in the UK (Some claim the oldest), viewing the remains of the old Roman walls from the City of Verulamium, as well as the lakes of the old Fishponds, used by the Monks for their Friday food.

Ye Olde Fighting Cocks is worth a visit, if you have never been there before. Animal Rights Group PETA have complained about its historic name, like they have with the Sly Old Fox in Birmingham where they recently had requested its name be change as it's derogatory to Foxes!

PETA suggest 'A name change to Ye Olde Clever Cocks which, they said, would "reflect society's rejection of needless violence and to help celebrate the chicken". [Perhaps we should ask Pebbledash if she'd prefer Fighting or Clever Cocks? – Ed]

It was here that Supertrouper, Waragi & Hash Test Dummy caught up, after they had a very late start apparently due to the traffic. The option to have a coffee at the little stall here was not taken up, perhaps as the Hare had let slip that the Held CHK & Sweet Stop was back up the hill, behind the Cathedral's Chapel end.

So, after their running to catch up, Hash Test Dummy, Waragi & Supertrouper were all happy to walk up the diagonal path up the grassy hill to the top where the Cathedral sits on the north-eastern end. On the climb up, Hash Test Dummy thanked the Hare for a well-marked Trail (So far). Mr X pointed out the blue tent that had been blown around the Cathedral Green most of the morning, no one quiet knew what someone had pitched it there, or why it was held down with the guy ropes? [Fact time, Guy Ropes get their name from the Dutch ships that used "Gei" ropes hold the mast & mainsail! – Ed]

Anyhow, the 330 Yard climb seemed long & steady enough for most to stop at the top to admire the Cathedral while taking a breather. Mr X pointed out that the late Archbishop of Canterbury, Robert Runcie, is now immortalised as a grotesque, way up along the top of the southern wall, you can spot him if you work your way down beyond the imps & other grotesques creatures, his is the still fairly fresh looking carving that is not so weathered, & he's also the one wearing distinctive glasses.

The Pack followed the arrows around the Cathedral to the walled Vintry Garden, which offered up some shelter from the breeze on this bright morning. Here, within the area where the Monks used to grow their grapes for Holy wine, the Pack enjoyed the sweet stop, well almost all! For My Lil' & Tent Packer were not happy with the Hare's choice of Liquorice Allsorts maker, there didn't appear to be any aniseed buttons in this bag!

The Hare now informed the Pack that the Trail was marked back to the Pub, but he was going to change this by cutting out the twist & turns through Boot Alley. He added that the Pack would pass by the Verdun Horse Chestnut tree, which was grown from a conker taken from the World War I battlefield in France, all the history is on an information sign.

Mr X added that the Trail would pass out through Waxhouse gate, where once out of the stone archway, to the side on a shopfront wall is one of the St Albans Abbey Parish Memorials from the First World War, naming those who died in action & were once residents of this & surrounding streets,

St Albans has other War Memorials, but the 13 Parish ones are pretty unique. In 2018, to mark the end of the First World War, Herts Hash House Harriers carried out a 'Poppy Run' Trail taking in all of these, & a few more, with money raised going to the Royal British Legion.

Having looked at the WWI Memorial Plaque, the Hash crossed over to walk by the distinctive stone & flint Curfew Tower, with its clock-faces to warn the medieval populous of when to be back safely behind the old city walls. The arrows hit the southern end of the St Albans Market, which was bustling & filled with some nice odours drifting from the various food stalls.

The Hare had given permission for those who wanted to, most of the Harriettes in fact, to break off & wander the market with its Christmas decorations & features like festive Teddy Bears or large sparkly lit up Santa's to sit in, as Super Trouper & Milf did. There were many arrows up beyond the Boot Pub, leading up around the Town Hall to pick up on.

Having crossed St Peters Street, the arrows led on through Civic Close, off of which is the County Court, the Waterend Barn which is the local 'Spoons, fascinatingly his was moved from Lord Brockets Land in 1938 from the outskirts of Sandridge to the City centre. This was also the place where Well Laid's mother & father first met!

On the way back in, Lemming had problems with Buster, who wanted to know where Mother had gone, just as they hit the market. He was being stubborn all the way until turning on to the Hatfield Road, when he picked up the scent of the Pub & he soon got inform of Lemming to drag him in! How did Buster know there were free 'dog-treats on the Bar?

The On Inn was found to the left of the Alban Arena, where P-arrows led the way back by the multi-story car park to the Pub. The keener ones were back in the bar, enjoying the Ales, while some did go a wandering around the Market, it wasn't until they were back that the Circle could be called, for this couldn't be done before the Song-Mistress was back. There was one bonus when the Landlord gave out some very nice eggnogs, he even knew My Lil' would be there as there were free festive Humbugs available on the Bar!.

As the Hash were the only ones in the bar, the circle was held inside, with Paxo raising the Hash Toast, then presented the Hare with a descent Pint of Ale. All agreed it was a good 'historic' Trail, & after the Pint was dispatched 'normal service was resumed', but after a few had already departed, including Port who had competed his 100th Herts Trail.

Anyhow, we did have another anniversary & that was Tent Packer, who had completed his 400th Trail, he will be getting his engraved hipflask & a bottle of something 'Peaty & warming' at the Christmas Weekend. Kylie was called out for sitting in as Hash Cash & missed out collecting Pimp's 'Tick' money, bring back Milf as stand-in Hash

Cash! Moss Key Toe was called out for having Skis on, or Claude Hopper shoes that kicked Buster's water bowl to wet the floor right where the RA was sitting.

After the Circle Mother was being teased about her never receiving a Berkshire Hash award when she reached 100 Runs with them. This then led to both Mother & Lemming telling that they never received a Tankard after completing their 100th Herts Hash Trail, no one seemed to know why they didn't, but their 100th didn't fall under the current Haberdasher's tenure! Mr X said he'd rectify this as soon as he could.

If you have been failed by a previous Herts Haberdasher, Please settle your claim with your friendly RA!

After the Circle, Lobby Lobster had issues with her bank card, the txts & automated calls that definitely sound like a scam, so her card was locked. It was sorted the following day, but even Mr X said it's easy to get caught out, even for the professionals, he gave the use of a Cyrillic letter in fake emails.

Although the Hash had the Pub its self, a guitar playing duo came in & set up stall in the corner ow vacated by the Hashers who were moving on. By the time the last two were leaving, the Pub was packed with festive punters there to listen to the duo. In the end Sparky wasn't seen, but Mr X called him to find out that Sparky had set off but then returned to have lunch with a neighbour.

On the subject of scammers & this is not a joke:

Spot the Difference?

citibank.com is not the same as citibank.com

(the first one is correct, the second one is from hackers)

The "a" in the later url is a cyrillic alphabet.