

The hash directions suggested that this was going to be the first ever masked hash but even those less sound in wind and limb seemed to survive despite ignoring the recommendation. Confidential reports reaching the mismanagement advised that the Galloping Major and Mistress had performed very poorly at a recent secret high altitude training session. Nevertheless, undaunted, 61 hashers and 3 voluntary groupies put in an appearance.

Main Run

"There is a tide in the affairs of men which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune" (clever sounding and totally irrelevant words prefixed here in an attempt to give style to a piece of otherwise prosaic and trivial prose).

After oration of the traditionally confused hash misdirections, the pack set off steeply Down-Down. Thinks everyone "Bad sign this". A multiple choice of runs was on offer but it was 21 including the hare Star, or was it Stripes?, who opted for the complete extravaganza of the main run. Welcome newcomers from the seat of learning (Not more academics?) were Paddy Bird, Bullrush and Andy Capp.

The steeply down-down through grass gave way to mixed private plantations and narrow winding paths between. Hash Almanack, STP, complete with pastel orange towelling headgear (No not his gené turban), Outspan and Just Juce were all working hard up at the front while old timers Smer Tars Franglais and Lancelot and not so old-timers, Skavinsky Skavar and Advantage took their time at the rear. The going got steep again and Sauerkraut took a Teutonic tumble and sprained an ankle. Hash sympathy was expressed - everyone laughed loudly and ran away, leaving the injured Sauerkraut to find a foreshortened route On-Round and Beck, On-In.

The trails split and after further descent, Post Tension grabbed the lead and led the pack up through neatly constructed stone steps to break out of the plantation into open grassy country again. Think the old timers "Familiar country this" - and so it was - a flashback to leach-ridden Run No. 47.

However it was dry open going on this occasion and Damp Squib, Zebidee and Late Starter led the pack up over the crest of the ridge and down onto tar.

On-Left along the tar, it was soon down into a warren of paths and across a muddy section of paddy over which Pilgrim Minor was seen sidestepping to avoid sinking neckwards. A check circle on the path beside the river, split the pack with STP, Shalimar the belly dancer and Outspan leading one group On-Left and Lillen, Skavinsky Skavar and Rummy Maddened Truse leading the other group On-Right. Other sundry idlers, namely Superstar II, Dr Phlebotomy, Bullrush and Andy Capp to name names, took the opportunity to cool off in the river. On-Left was the correct trail but some locally laid paper confused the vanguard and allowed the tail enders to catch up. It was then Up-Up and a union with the lemonaders - but not for long.

Again the pack encountered tar — the approach to the 'Great Climb'. All the shandy runners were there panting for all they were worth, flaked out at the side of path. Who was at the front? The hash scribe wasn't and not being able to identify by a view of heels and ankles, it remains a mystery. At last, panting, the pack breasted the ridge at a check circle. On-Left along the ridge to an elevated knoll — and a bar! Exhausted the pack milled around enjoying the view and pretending they were looking for paper.

All of a sudden Lancelot galloped off back to the check circle, passing on the way a smug looking Stripes (or was it Stars?), and the path down the other side of the ridge. It was the dash for home and although it wasn't long before the remainder of the pack followed suit, a substantial lead was established. The trail down soon hit tar and the obvious On-Left, On-In. What though some two wheeled assistance was used on run in? The only rule is Rule No. 6 and it says there are no rules.

(Please note all hounds have received a mention above. So if you think you've been missed out, read again. There is even an extra name; would you like it?).

Lemonade Run

"At the first arrow turn left, at the second arrow turn left- no, no, at the first arrow right, at the second right - no, listen everybody, forget all you have heard..." which we fortunately did and got on with it. With frothy legs, because of warnings that there were leeches lurking in the undergrowth, and already sweaty brows, we descended, into what the further down we got seemed to be a trail to the antipodes. In fact your scribe had to negotiate a major part of the hill sitting on the built-in cushion, to the amusement of many.

Already shaking in anticipation of the On-Ups to be expected after the On-Downs, we embarked on a reasonably level stretch only to be faced with paper strewn in several different directions. Pot Black, High Tension, and the rafting Tick-Tock bravely undertook to explore these trails. In our naivety the entire pack went on a trail that showed paper so long, that we were convinced that it had to be the right trail- but alas, after climbing up muddy paths, negotiating major waterways, we suddenly discovered that there was a parallel trail a little further down the hill, and when we finally met the bar, the surprise was minimal.

My encounter with the next bar is still a bit hazy in my mind. Having opted to do the shandy-run, a very select crowd said good-bye to the lemonaders, and were rewarded for this brave decision with an On-Up we thought would lead us to somewhere in the vicinity of Sri Pada. Fled and Pilgrim were seen to enjoy the view at the side of the path quite a number of times, and it is rumoured that Pilgrim's decision to take up jogging was made during this climb.

But this was not the end. No, we continued climbing (this is where there haze thickened) until we reached a stretch which, for the first time for miles, had a slope of less than 30°. For us not to fall into our habitual sloth, the grass there was waist high and slashing our thighs. At the end of this ascent, guess what met us... a bar!

With this our trials were more or less over. At the On-In we rewarded ourselves amply with beer and very little lemonade, which quickly dispersed any blackthoughts. The day ended in a string of very jolly On-Downs interrupted only by saying good-bye to the very honourable Bertie's Band. Let them start a Maine-Hash!