

Berkshire Hash House Harriers

Wallingford Orient Express

The sleek train gleamed and steamed in the station, waiting eagerly to pull away into the night. Passengers readied themselves for the journey. The team of train attendants scurried around, finishing the final checks, loading the food and drink, polishing the brass fittings. Out of the engine cab window, train driver Mr Slapper looked back along the glossy carriages as the last passengers stepped aboard. Then reached for the whistle cord and pulled twice.

"All aboard!" "All Aboard! The Orient Express is now leaving. Please make your way to your compartment and prepare for your journey. Two nights and a day - one murder!"

The train glided smoothly away through the cloud of steam, gathering pace...

Friday - Poirot Investigates and an Endless Night

Lonely had worked hard on the Poirot Investigates Ale Trail Quiz. Beautifully prepared sheets (and sheets) of information awaited us as we sleuthed our way around Wallingford, attempting find answers to our question sheets. However, drinking snifters and quaffing pints at every pub contributed to a mass mis-firing of 'the little grey cells'. Even the real Poirot would have been scratching his egg-shaped head and fingering his moustaches in confusion after several alcoholic 'tisanes'. The sheer volume of Lonely's information (and booze) we absorbed was staggering... which was what one or two Hashers were doing after the fifth pub. Or were they emulating Poirot's shuffling, short-step walking technique? Pleased to report that the locals regarded us favourably as harmless eccentrics with one drink short of a round. We now know everything there is to know about Agatha Christie, the Oxford University Boat Club and William the Conqueror. What most of us didn't know was the answers to any of the questions! Thank you Lonely for an illuminating, but frustrating evening.

A number of us reached the The Boat House by the bridge and decided that we were starving hungry and couldn't wait for the fish and chip van that was going to feed us at the camp site so ate at the pub. A lucky move since some people later didn't eat until 10:30. Not through want of trying by the good frier and his assistant – they were working flat out. But the mass of slavering, wild-eyed Hashers pressing against the van almost overwhelmed them.

So we took a deep breath to clear some of the beer fumes, changed into clothing that befitted our favourite detective (there were some very loose associations) and made our way to the splendidly decorated (thanks Mr



Blobby, C5, PissQuick, WaveRider, NappyRash and Donut) main hall. I must particularly mention HappyFeet who had made her own police uniform, complete with epaulettes displaying silver numbers 2016 and a pair of non-standard issue black shorts. Following our Ale Trail many found the thought that she'd come as a 'rozzar' exceptionally funny, since her real name is Roz. Little things etc...

Rather like the moment when Yana fell off her chair. She was laughing so much she couldn't get up for a while.

The band, UkeTunes, played for us. I have rarely seen so many people on a stage at the same time. They perform to raise money for charity. On the night it was obvious that Hashers were very much supporting them. They raised £500+ for [LMND \(Motor Neurone Disease Association\)](#) and [YAWN 16 \(Young Adults with Needs\)](#) Just about everyone was up and dancing. A number of the male BH³ (and other) Hashers had used the evening as a heaven-sent opportunity to cross-dress. C5 and NappyRash appeared, frighteningly, as Miss Marple (not in the same dress, you understand). Not the diminutive, retiring, slightly hesitant Miss Marple that most of us know. Both are tall and pretty (not a descriptive word I should perhaps use at this time) extrovert so we had a pair of looming, twerking Jane Marples on the dance floor. It was all too much for some – I'm sure Caboose won't mind if we share in his "I was just relaxing my eyelids" moment ☺



Equally, I'm sure C5 won't mind if we share in a more intimate moment in a picture kindly supplied by Iceman, who obviously visits men's toilets looking for unusual photo opportunities. ☺



The 'Endless Night' celebrations grew to a rousing crescendo, with only a few people realising that they were going to have to run rather a long way in rather a lot of heat the next day. In the early hours of the morning, the band were applauded off the stage and, in various stages of sobriety dishevelled Miss Marples, Poirots, police women, Starsky, Magnum P.I. and others staggered out of the hall and headed for various tents, camper vans or home.

The Orient Express slipped smoothly through the night. The white-gloved conductor reached up to dim the lights in the mahogany-lined corridor. In their rooms, the passengers variously yawned, slipped into a silk kimono, finished off that last whisky, brilliantined their hair and put on their moustache protector before pulling the crisp white sheets over and letting the little grey cells rest for the night. Little did they all know that there would be a murder the very next day...

Destination Unknown

The morning was hot and sunny as three groups of Hashers prepared for the ordeal ahead. There were three Trails:-

Death on the Nile – the Short Trail, organised by Foghorn, Snowy and Slips.

The Thirteen Problems – the Medium Trail, organised by GnomeAlone, Hotlips and (bringing up the rear) Uranus

Nemesis – the Long Trail, organised by Dunny and Rampant.

Nemesis runners were forming an orderly queue to board a coach that was to take them to a secret location, miles away from where they would run back to base. Mr Blobby told me later that he had run 14 Kilometres. No mean feat when the temperature was an eyelid-baking 33 degrees Celsius, with no water stops. At least the Trail was fairly flat, but it was a bit 'eyeballs out' for the group.

The **Death on the Nile** Trailers had a fairly unusual outing when some of them chanced upon an immaculately dressed old gentleman with leg problems who had somehow broken his Zimmer frame. Shifty attempted a Heath Robinson-style repair with his shoelace. But, since some sort of spot-welding was required, it wasn't too successful. A couple of sturdy Hashers decided to carry the gentleman to the nearby pub. Which was a shame in a way since it turned out that he lived nearer to the place than where the pub was. Apparently, his family had locked him in his house so he didn't wander off (he was apt to) but the crafty old chap had secreted about his person a back door key and made his successful bid for freedom, undone only by the flimsiness of his walking aid. Lord knows what he would have done if the Hash hadn't wandered up the track where he was palely loit'ring. Incidentally, this Trail was where Skids, now CooGrr, was renamed. Apart from chatting up the old fellow she

tried her best also to chat up the attractive young pub barman and persuade him to come to the evening's party. I think that if the lad had known what she would be wearing he would certainly have turned up – more later.

The Thirteen Problems was the Trail I had selected so, of course, know a lot more about it than the other two. It started very well for me since I managed to guess the right Trails for most of the early Checks and found myself about ½ a mile ahead of the Pack. Not a particularly good idea, running fast in the hot sun, and the first long False Trail reminded me just how much dancing had been undertaken the night before...

The Pack got back together again at the next village and, somehow, StraddleVarious appeared in our midst. Since he was meant to be on another Trail MisDirection told him in no uncertain terms to "Go and run up your own alley!" In the sweltering heat we tripped along, diagonally up a cornfield, sweeping around the edge of another, gamely ploughing into tropically-hot thickets where brightly coloured birds flitted and whistled and iridescent lizards skittered (yes, we were starting to hallucinate). We began to climb a steep hill in the forest. Up and up we gasped until, nearly at the top, we came across a group of very young lads and their adult leaders who formed an applauding human avenue through which we lurched, tottered and wobbled. All the while pretending that we were enjoying ourselves. We almost did until we reached the top where Uranus stood smiling... next to an 'F'!!! Fortunately, we were prevented from saying the words we were thinking by the presence of the young lads, so we cheered them through our own breathless human avenue as they topped the hill. Before running all the way back down again.

It didn't stop with that hill though. Oh no, we had to climb our way to the top of Wittenham Clumps, a steep hill with a Bronze Age hill fort on the top that has also been known in the past as Mother Dunch's Buttocks. The superb views across the countryside made the effort all worthwhile and we hardly even noticed the two or so miles of oven-hot, sweaty Trail on the way back to the blessed coach with the nice lady driver that took us back to base. After, that is, we had managed to prise the alcoholics among us away from the pub.

The packed lunch, a great deal of water and a cooling shower was much appreciated by us all. ☺



As was the Excellent Agatha Christie talk by the curator of the local museum. Fascinating information which we could add to that already given to us by Lonely. That is, for those of us who could remain awake. Both Dumper and Lilo gave excellent impressions of people supremely interested in the talk. So interested that their heads rested against the back of the settee, their eyes closed to enable concentration and their mouths open in wonder...

Afterwards, there were three different Down Downs, one for each Trail, so we organised ourselves into three groups. C5 presided over the Long Trailers, CSGas over the Medium and OldDog over the Short. I do know that Iceman received a DownDown for falling asleep during C5's awards and NappyRash received one for advising the group that he wasn't surprised that anyone should fall asleep since C5 had droned on for ages. Skids was properly renamed CooGrr and HotLips got around 3 or 4 DownDowns for a variety of misdemeanours associated with her Haring. She tottered back to her chair at the end looking rather the worse for wear.

Looking also worse for wear were a number of Hashers.

Here Glittertits exemplifies the look.

Now there was a variety of games in the afternoon, mainly organised by Motox and RandyMandy, such as welly-throwing and paper aeroplane launching. I have to confess that, due to exhaustion, Donut and I went back to WaveRider and NappyRash's tent and had a cup of tea while enjoying a chat and a bit of people-watching. Fascinating, people-watching. LoudonTasteless walked lightly across the grass to his tent (unused over the weekend by the way – he and Spex put it up, went home every night, then took it down on the Sunday) having showered. Our little group were reminded of the recent Tarzan film since his long hair hung down wetly almost to his shoulders. As he reached the tent we saw him switch into slow-motion as he tossed his damp mane, silver droplets cascading around him and the slogan 'Because you're worth it' flickering in neon lights above his head. A moment to cherish and we gave him a cheer.

The passengers had enjoyed a long day's travel while the glorious train steamed along the gleaming rails. The last rays of the sun flashed off the steel as people began to prepare for the evening, dressing for dinner and entertainment. The excitement covered a dark secret. Murder was in the air...

Murder on the Orient Express

This was the theme for the evening and people had dressed superbly for the occasion. There was a Russian Border Guard in an authentic uniform, a Chinese ticket collector, Foghorn in a silver 'flapper' dress, Shifty as a French waiter, train drivers, Software in a home-made, superb, conductress' uniform, CooGrr in a 'slapper' rather than 'flapper' dress and most ladies and gents dressed up to the nines. Including ladies who were actually gents. NappyRash, for example, in a black number, wig and 20's style feather headband. Though he rather spoilt it when dancing – since his lady shoes were a tad painful he swapped them for his Crocs. An interesting pairing with the dress. Zebedee, of course, wore that blasted old nurse's uniform! OldDog dazzled with her leopardskin print pyjamas.

Flamboyance vied with suavity. The place fairly oozed with opulence and decorousness. At least it did, until WaveRider knocked her drink all over our pristine white tablecloth. She was spared too much embarrassment though when someone at the next table did exactly the same thing. ☺

The evening was a rip-roaring, high-class success, with the band, The Cherries, playing a storm and feeding off the mass breakout of Hash dancing.



But in our midst was a ghost, threading his way between the dancers. Monsieur LeZit (Spot) had been murdered! A knife stuck bloodily into his back. Another into his front. Who was the murderer? And how come Spot could drink without it spurting out of him? These and other questions were to be answered tomorrow...

A scream had split the night air and broken into the regular noises of the moving train. There was a hubbub of concerned voices, the sound of doors sliding open. People in night attire peered into the corridor, wondering what had happened. The conductor had hurried to Poirot's compartment but the great detective had already donned his quilted dressing gown, smoothed his hair and was walking purposefully towards where the scream had sounded. The conductor met him and hurried back down the train, waving away the queries. He opened the door and let Poirot in, who nodded at him curtly and indicated that he should close the door after him. In the dim night-light he could see the body of Monsieur LeZit lying on its side on the bed, two knives stuck into him. One in his back and one in his chest. Poirot bent to examine the wounds...

Black Coffee

Sunday morning was again hot and sunny. Hashers (some wearing sunglasses – not necessarily because of the sun) blew like desert tumbleweed across the car park and fetched up by the side of the building. There were walkers and there were erstwhile runners, some of the latter looking particularly worse for wear after the exigencies of the previous day's Trail, followed by prancing about and singing like lunatics until the early hours.

The walkers set off half an hour before the runners. I'd like to say they were 'purposefully striding' but it was more like 'idly shambling'.

The Trail Hares were Florence, Zebedee and TT2 and the blighters had set a twisty old Trail around Wallingford before leading us out into the country along the side of the Cholsey and Wallingford Railway. It all went a bit squirrely from the outset – we lost WaveRider, Donut, C5 and Mr Blobby very soon into the route. Lord knows where they went and the Hares were rather concerned. No need, of course, since everyone turned up eventually. To confuse matters a little more there were 3 Regroups, the first marked 'RG', the second and third marked 'AC' (guess what those initials stand for ☺). Quite why the second was marked so was a tad unclear though the third was obvious. It was next to the grave of Agatha Christie and husband Max Mallowan in the churchyard of the Parish Church of St. Mary in Cholsey.

The run along the railway line was perfectly lovely. A huge blue sky above us, grass slipping by our legs, to our right golden corn, and then a silky field of gently waving barley curving up to meet the horizon, red kites spiralling upwards on the warm air. One's god, one thought, is in his heaven and all's right with the world.

After paying a little homage at the grave we trotted off to the Beer Stop. Slight disappointment when we found the van with the beer in but nobody with a key. The more thirsty among us either licked the van or broke teeth on the door locks until up thundered Lonely, shortly followed by C5 and MessengerBoy, the holder of the keys to Nirvana. You've never seen a barrel of beer, workbench to support it, lemonade and water bottles unloaded so quickly. The clever lads had commandeered a sturdy wheelbarrow to take the load and Dorothy picked up the handles and fairly burned off into the park to set up the pop-up bar. Very welcome it was too after running in the heat. The walkers joined us – a masterly piece of Trail timing by the Hares. People creaked their way down to the grass to sup the ale, wondering if they'd ever be able to get back up again – it had, after all, been a fairly busy weekend! Chopstix must have been busier than most. She showed us where most of the sole of her running shoe had ripped off and was opening and shutting like a hungry podiatric crocodile.

She managed to make it to Cholsey station where we packed the narrow platform, waiting for the fine old steam train that was due to take us back to Wallingford. The platform was two-sided. One for the branch line that we would be on. The other for GWR trains. An immaculately dressed volunteer from the Cholsey and Wallingford Railway exhorted us time and time again to "Remain behind the yellow line for your own safety!" The interesting thing was that there was no yellow line on the non-GWR side so, presumably, there was no need to worry about our safety when the large steam train and carriages rolled into the station on that side... Twanky, being Twanky, couldn't resist regurgitating the Peter Kay railway yellow line joke. "If you get too near the edge you'll get sucked off!" He informed us gleefully.

A most enjoyable rattle n'roll, smoke-smelling, nostalgia-filled train journey back to Wallingford to the station where the society is celebrating 150 years of railway. Check out <http://www.cholsey-wallingford-railway.com/> for information.

Poirot faced the immaculately-dressed suspects in the slightly swaying railway carriage. His eyes swept slowly across them. There was innocence, yes. There was hesitation. There was avoidance. There were challenges. But was there guilt? If so it was not obvious. He removed his pince-nez, polishing the gleaming glass with a spotless silk handkerchief he produced from his pocket with a slight flourish. Ha. He thought. Always the theatre. And always the wait. "Make them sweat." His friend Chief Inspector Japp had said and he was right. Was there a flicker of guilt in one pair of eyes? He addressed the group with a pinched smile and a slight incline of his head. "So. My friends. We 'ave a leetle puzzle, hein? Oo killed Monsieur Le Zit. What was ze motive. Was eet one person or two 'oo plunged the knives into ees bodeah?" Looking at each person in turn he slowly folded the handkerchief, replaced it in his pocket and, lifting the pince-nez he returned them to their place below the bridge of his nose before peering over them again. "I know oo is ze murdehrer!" He said suddenly. There was a shuffling of feet, a hand to a mouth, an intake of breath, an eager leaning forward. "Eet was..." Poirot slowly lifted his hand, finger pointed, and moved it from left to right along the row of wide-eyed people. He reached the end person. Then suddenly moved it back to the middle of the group. Loudly, he declared, "Eet was you Monsieur Slapper! Admit eet! Admit eet now and tell us all why you committed zees 'orrible murdehr. I Hercule Poirot must know!" Slowly. Mr Slapper rose to his feet, a look almost of relief on his face...

Three Little Pigs

Ah! The hog roast in the sunshine. Delicious! Having returned, showered and changed we dragged our tired legs over to the far corner of the rugby field for a sit down, chat, beer and pig out on piggy baps. Amusingly, Slapper drove up in his car next to the stall and Simple called out, "It isn't a drive-through." to much chortling.

We were also here to enjoy the last of the Down Downs, presided over by the venerable C5 (who didn't look a day over 69 – he wasn't then. He is now☺). There were a number of awards for a variety of reasons - too many to record here - which were all applauded enthusiastically. Apart from the fancy dress awards. C5 declared the outright winner (who was then wearing his blood-stained apparel with knives motif) as Spot also known as Monsieur Le Zit. "But who killed him?" Asked C5 of the crowd. "No-one know?" He peered round for an answer but none came. "Then I'll tell you. It was... Slapper!" Who stepped forward to be given a Down Down of his own.

It was late morning as Poirot sat down primly in the privacy of his compartment. He glanced out of the window as the Orient Express raced past fields and telephone poles. The murderer had been apprehended and locked in a compartment, ready to be taken into custody by police at the next station. People were going about their business. The conductor had been warned to allow no visitors to Poirot's compartment.

He raises his intelligent eyes and looks into yours, readers, with a slightly amused, quizzical way. "And so my friends," he says to you, "I 'ope you 'ave enjoyed your journey on ze Orient Express. I Hercule Poirot 'ave caught ze murdehrer. But I 'ear you say what was ze motive, why did 'e do it. Ah my friends. Now ees ze time to use **your** leetle grey cells." He taps the side of his head and smiles his pinched little smile. "Enjoy your leetle mental exercise my friends. And now I shall enjoy my lunch. Santé!"

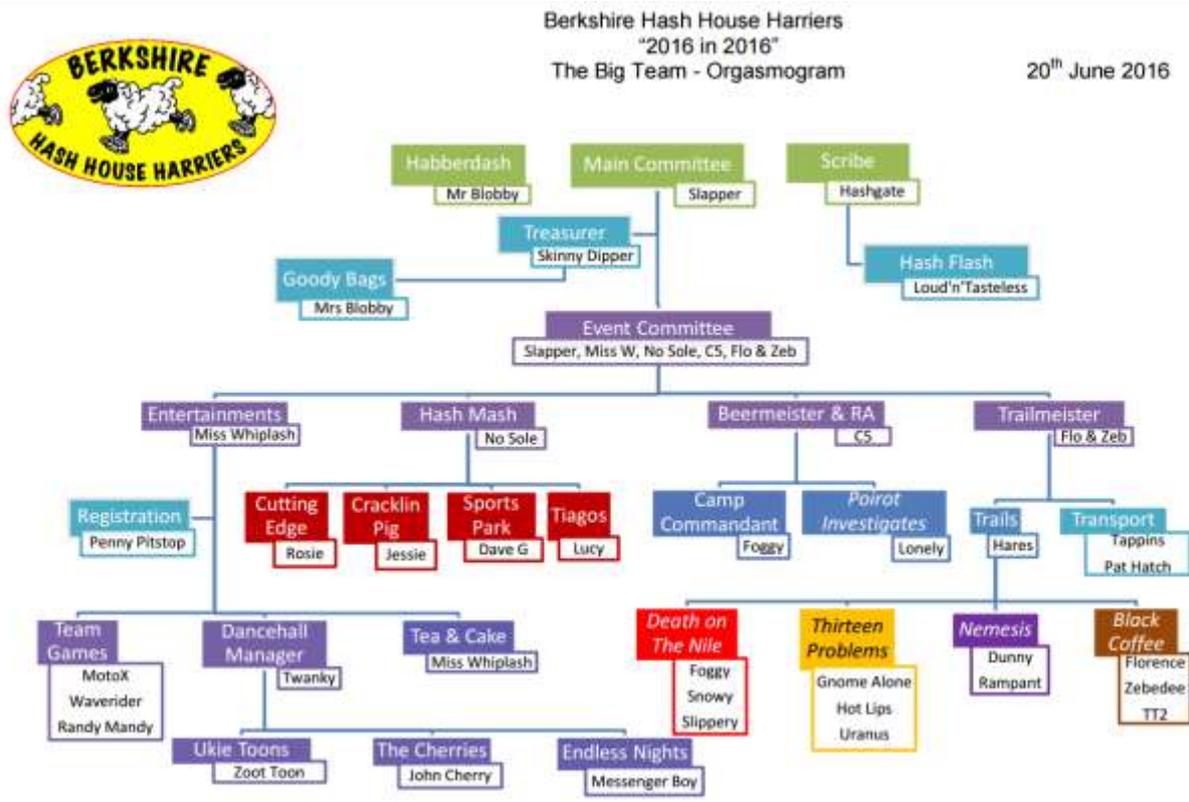
With a flourish of his hand he indicates the food and drink in front of him. By a crisp white linen napkin, on a gold-edged plate of finest white porcelain, rests a Belgian Verviers bread roll, laden with succulent pork. To its right, an elegantly fluted pint glass filled to the brim with West Berkshire Good Old Boy beer. Poirot reaches for the glass...

On On. **Hashgate.**

The Organisers

The success of the BH³ 2016 in 2016 weekend was down not only to you, the participants, (and thank you to all who travelled from far away) but to all the people in the very hard-working group that pulled it all together.

Our thanks to them all and a huge "WELL DONE!"



The Trails

Red	Short Trail	'Death on the Nile'	Foggy, Snowy & Slippery
Yellow	Medium Trail	'The Thirteen Problems'	Gnome Alone, Hot Lips, Uranus
Purple	Long Trail	'Nemesis'	Dunny & Rampant.
	Sunday Trail	'Black Coffee'	Flo, Zeb and TT2

Passengers on the Orient Express

Berkshire H3			Brighton H3	Didcot H3		FOTM H3	Hastings H3
Just Adam	Hashgate	Outdoor Pursuit	Black Stockings	Big Stiffy	Skidmarks	Dongle	Bushsquatter
Aqua	Hi-Viz	Piss Quick		Cheap Date	Uranus	Funky Gibbon	Cliffbanger
Blind Pugh	Iceburg	Posh Tart	Bristol H3	Cheap Skate	Wimpey	Pesticide	Kingfisher
Bomber	Iceman	Pyro	354D	Comet		Snap-On-Tool	Muppet
C4	Just Jana	Rambo	Shiggy Valentine	CS-Gas		Software	Queenfisher
C5	JJ	Rampant Rabbit		Gnome Alone		Special Knees	
Cabin Buoy	Just Moist	Randy Mandy	G2H3	Hot Lips		Stormin. Norman	
Chopstix	Lemming	Salome	Yob	Hutch		Tbar Twin	
Damp Patch	Lilo	Shandyman	Golden Shower	Lemony Snicket			
Door Mat	Lonely	Shifty		Noddy		FUKFMH3	Milton Keynes H3
Dorothy	Loud'n'tasteless	Shylight	HOVMRCH3	Rubber Sole		Stiff Meat	Bell End
Doughnut	Madam Butterfly	Simple & Skids	Bogman	Scrumptious			
Dragon Lady	Messenger Boy	Skinny Dipper	Megga Mouse				
Dribbler	Miss Whiplash	Slapper	Night Maiden	Looe & Liskeard	North Durban H3	North Wilts H3	R2D2H3
Dry Rot	Mother	Slippery	Soapsuds	Back to Front	Angaze	Babe	Catnap
Dumper	MotoX	Slowsucker	Tall Paul	Bronyon		Bonio	Miss Direction
Dunny	Mr Blobby	Snowballs		Captain Dates		Utterly Butterly	Straddle Various
Dwight	Mrs Blobby	Spex	Jacaranda H3	Pilgrim Faster			
False Tart	Nappy Rash	Spot	Caboose	Potbelly	North Hants H3	Oxford H3	VVWH3
Florence	No Name Dawn	Swallow		Rubber Legs	Clogs	FBI	Pushover
Foghorn	No Name Peter	Tequilova		Too Posh	Non-Stick	Goldilocks	
Glitter Tits	No Name Sheryl	Tin Opener	Cheltenham H3	Whingeing Pom	Commercial Whale	Technicolour Horn	
Greenfly	No Sole	Twanky	Martini	Withanee			
Handful	Old Dog	Wave Rider					
Happy Feet	Penny Pitstop	Zebedeee					