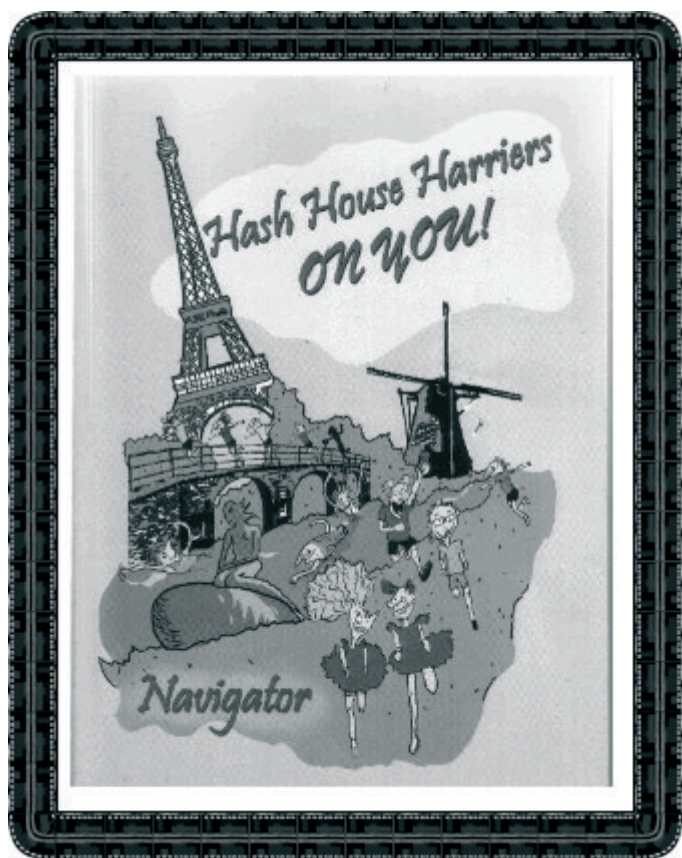


HASH HOUSE HARRIERS ON YOU!



**HASH HOUSE HARRIERS
ON YOU!**

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Hash House Harriers - On You!

ISBN-13: 978-1-9066280-1-7

Published by CheckPoint Press, Ireland



CHECKPOINT PRESS, DOOAGH, ACHILL ISLAND, CO. MAYO,

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

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WWW.CHECKPOINTPRESS.COM

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The events portrayed in this book are true. If any hashers remember things differently, one of us must have had too much to drink! I would like to thank everyone who has contributed to the text knowingly, or unknowingly, and I particularly want to say a big thank you to the Isle of Wight hash for making my time with them so memorable.

Thanks also to Fracas and Di for proof reading.

I am now leaving the Isle of Wight to work in Birmingham - that well known hashing desert. I will try some missionary work and see if I can convince the Brummies to get into the hashing spirit.

All I can really say is 'ON ON'.

Navigator

N.B. Some names have been changed to protect the innocent.

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CHAPTER 1

THIS IS HASHING ON THE ISLE OF WIGHT

The view from near the summit of Clatterford Hill on the Isle of Wight is spectacular. To the east is Carisbrook Castle a huge stone monolith guarding the island's capital, Newport. To the west, a line of perfectly rounded hills marches down to the horizon, the shadows of clouds gradually drifting across them. To the North is the Solent and a clear view across to Portsmouth and Southampton Water; white sails billowing in the wind on hundreds of small sailing craft. The only blot on the landscape is the oil refinery at Fawley; black smoke staining the sky, spoiling what is otherwise an idyllic scene.

I actually have very little time to take this all in, as I am attempting to run up to the top of the hill as quickly as possible. It is eleven thirty on Sunday morning and I consider, not for the first time, what I am doing here. I could have stayed in bed with my wife, watched the television, read the newspapers and convinced one of my children to make me a cup of tea. But, no, I had travelled the seven miles from Ryde to Newport just to follow a trail of white flour over a five-mile course; the blobs of flour are leading up what feels like a vertical incline. I am trying to convince my legs to move and losing the argument!

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This is hashing! There are about thirty of us, all climbing the hill and looking for flour. The Hash House Harriers is called by some the drinking club with a running problem. This is not far from the truth! Every Sunday a group of us get together to follow a trail laid out the day before by a fellow hasher known as a hare. The trail starts at a pub and finishes back at the same pub.

Three white blobs in a row mean the trail goes in this direction; a call of 'On! On!' indicates the trail has been found. A circle indicates a check; these are located at junctions and mean that all of the directions should be checked out until three blobs of flour are found. A call of 'On You!' means 'does the trail go this way?'

I leave checking activities to those fit members of the Hash who can actually run rather than trot, as if you get the direction wrong you will have to run back and catch up with everyone else. There are also fishhooks (flour laid in the shape of a hook on the trail) that require the first five or so runners who reach them to turn round and run to the back of the pack. This is a good idea as it slows down the fit ones, preventing them from getting too far ahead. There are also line outs - white lines of flour that are not to be crossed under any circumstances.

Excellent news! The path at the top of the hill is 'lined out': all those runners in front of me are making their way back down the hill. I am now third from the front rather than trailing at the back. I will make the most of this, putting on a downhill spurt and keeping well ahead. A nice idea, but Shergar* has just passed me - he clearly has good form on the downhill dry sections. Stalker is also closing in; he is a proper runner who takes marathons in his stride. Disaster! A fish hook I am fifth in line - I should really go back behind the rest of the pack and then run on, I will try and avoid this by pretending I have missed it. I am sure no one will notice, as I am not usually the type to get involved in fishhooks.

I seem to have got away with the fishhook. No one is paying me any attention; it is all downhill now and very easy going. I can hear the gentle babbling of a stream ahead. The trees are forming a canopy

** Hashers generally have a hash handle (nick name by which they are known to other hashers). Hash members give these names to each other, usually in response to some misdemeanour.*

Shergar is an Irish guy who runs like a horse, he also got lost (went missing) on his first ever run. I am called Navigator because of my inability to find anywhere. Some others are known as Fat Bastard, Miss Whiplash, and Shit for Brains (never has a name been more apt!).

1: This is Hashing on the Isle of Wight

over the path and the ground is dappled with sunlight. This running is pretty good; everything is fine with the world.

Oh, No! There is a ford in the road and the bridge for pedestrians is 'lined out'. In the middle of the water is Hard On (don't ask!) who enjoys baptising people I am not talking about a few splashes either. He seems to be of the Baptist persuasion - only full immersion will do. Hard On is at least six foot two inches and weighs about nineteen stone. He seems to be involved in an attempt to drown Dangerous, a large, bald cockney who used to know gangsters in the East End of London (hence the name Dangerous). I will sneak through while they are occupied.

I am now very wet - Dangerous and Hard On united against the sneaky Navigator who evaded a fishhook earlier on. The water was fairly cold but I did not go under without a fight! At least they are both soaked as well! The trail is now heading uphill towards Carisbrook Castle. I feel a short cut coming on. Hard On is joining me and we are dripping our way back towards the pub and the cars. A quick change of clothes and we are ready for a few beers.

The Waverly pub (named after a paddle steamer that used to travel between Southampton and Cowes) is situated at the top of the High Street Carisbrook and is basically a Victorian building that had a makeover in the early 60s: the windows are small and rectangular; cream coloured window frames are spaced regularly in a two storey brick box. There is a good-sized car park and a peeling sign showing the paddle steamer in all her former glory.

Inside, the 60s theme continues, with two separate bars, one used for dining. The tables no longer have Formica tops but they could quickly revert if given a chance! A narrow passage leads to a small door and you eventually arrive in the drinking bar. This is furnished with a few seats around the edge and just two small tables.

This room is given over to standing at the bar and drinking - none of your namby pamby comfortable chairs and areas to relax, just hard stools and a bell to pull if you want your pint topping up. Here you can drink yourself into temporal oblivion, listening to the Beatles, Rolling Stones and Cilla Black on the juke box. The landlord is welcoming and the beer is excellent.

The hash all head for the drinking bar. There is a certain inverted snobbery in hash circles: we don't do foody pubs where you sit down

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to enjoy a pint and are immediately asked whether you will you be eating now or later? Well sometimes we do, but the response is usually 'Will you please go away! (Something like that anyway, but often involving the word off) we want to have a quiet drink. It says "PUBLIC HOUSE" on the sign outside, not "RESTAURANT"! If it had said "restaurant" we would not have come in. Will you please leave us alone. If we want to eat we will tell you.'

The tradition after a run is to have some 'down downs'. These involve drinking a pint of beer in one go while the rest of the hash sing a song. The beer glass must not be removed from the lips until finished. Then the empty glass should be inverted and placed on top of your head.

The first two down downs usually go to the hares. Today it was Baldrick and his partner Slack Bladder. The Religious Adviser (RA)* Mr Magoo, a short Geordie with a generous figure, described the run, pointing out its salient features. 'It was a good run, short and hilly, but with far too many fish hooks and not enough short cuts. However the scenery was spectacular and we all feel the hares should be congratulated on their first laying of a trail'.

Snowman - average height, snow-coloured hair and a reasonably generous figure - was also given a down down for casting aspersions on the figure of the Religious Advisor. He had been discussing the previous weekend when one of the hash had seen the RA walking on Ryde beach. Snowman had the cheek to suggest that if the RA was seen too close to the shore Green Peace would drag him back into the water!

Steve Butler, a fast running slim whippet, was given a down down as he had just returned from Australia. Naturally he had to perform his down down while turned upside down.

There was also a virgin present (first time on a run!) but she was asked to watch the others to see how it was done.

The hash then sings a song;

* *The Religious Advisor presides over all hash formalities, introducing the hares at the start and telling amusing stories found in the press the week before. The RA told us about a trade dispute between France and America when George Bush is alleged to have remarked 'The trouble with the French is they have no word for Entrepreneur'*

1: This is Hashing on the Isle of Wight

'They are hashers, they are blue
They are hashers through and through
They are arseholes so they say
And they'll never get to heaven in a long long way'

At this point those with down downs start drinking. Hard On, Dangerous and Lost Boy ably assist Steve Butler into an inverted position.

'Get it down down down down down' etc

Lots of rapid drinking takes place, although in Steve Butler's case most of it reappeared out of his nose or was spilt. Slack Bladder actually managed to beat Black Adder in drinking her pint of beer, so there were loud comments of 'Beaten by a woman!' (to the tune of nare nare na nare na) and other politically incorrect statements such as 'You great wuss!'

The next group of sinners was introduced. Flossing (Gorgeous blonde female who wore a thong on her first hash run, hence the name flossing!) received a down down for doing a short cut. Mongrel (whose name derives from her mixed ancestry, not to the incident of her dog trying to fly off Culver cliff),* for passing a NO DOGS ALLOWED notice. Navigator, for not going back on a fishhook, BT (short for big tits) got a down down of water because she avoided the ford.

I failed to drink all of the beer in my down down so poured the remainder over my head. From outside came the roar of motorbike engines and about twenty five rockers drew up in the car park.

* This is a very sad story. BT volunteered to look after Mongrel's dog while she was away on holiday. It was a lovely golden retriever that used to run everywhere, full of life. BT took the dog for a walk up Culver Cliff above Sandown Bay. The dog was having fun chasing the rabbits that live in profusion on the grassy meadow at the top of the hill. The rabbits are very devious and use the cliff as a method of avoiding predators; they dig their burrows just under the lip of the vertical drop at the cliff edge. When the rabbits run into their burrows they look as though they are going over the cliff. Sadly the dog chased them and followed a perfect parabola as it fell to its death on the rocks below. BT phoned the Cliff Rescue to collect the dog's body and stored it in her freezer until Mongrel returned - she didn't want to spoil her holiday by telling her what had happened till she got back. (It gave Poor Sod one hell of a shock when he unwittingly opened the freezer to get something out for dinner!)

Several people looked around with a certain amount of apprehension. As this was a Bank Holiday weekend the rockers could be followed by a group of mods and all hell could break loose.

The rockers looked superb. dressed in serious leathers, clambering off their Harleys and BMWs all of which were immaculate; visions in shining paintwork and glistening chrome. As they walked in through the door it was clear that there wasn't going to be any trouble today. All of them were in their late fifties or early 60s, removing the Zimmer frame attachments from the back of their Harleys and ordering some Sanatogen tonic wine.'There would only be a rumble if a group of Mods came in with walking sticks and started spraying Deep Heat around!

We drove back to Ryde on the Newport Road passing the Eight Bells pub - famous for the quantity of its food portions and the river running at the end of its garden. Many a happy hour has been spent there watching the swans and ducks while enjoying an enormous ploughman's lunch. There is something really magical about sitting in a pub with a river running past. Pubs, I feel, are great places anyway but to be able to enjoy glorious scenery and have the sound of a river babbling past is something special.

The road leads on to Newport, the capital of the Isle of Wight. It is still possible to see the Victorian terrace houses along the High Street if you look above the glass shop fronts. There are no shopping malls here - the shopping centre is a throwback to the 1950s.

There is a pedestrianised area around St Thomas's church where there are shops selling jewellery, paintings and leather goods. Opposite the church is Gods Providence meeting house. This has been converted to a restaurant where they do some wonderful homemade food. I can highly recommend the vegetable soup and the Quiche. This is not mass produced standard food but individually cooked and delicious. It is a great shame that so many restaurants are going over to heating up food that is cooked in a factory and delivered to their door. Wherever you go in the country, you get the same fare, no cooking skills or individuality required.

At the bottom of the High street is the main traffic island, known as Rubics roundabout to locals. It is a huge three lane beast with traffic lights set up every 50 yards; it is almost impossible to get in the right lane and often, when aiming to go to Cowes, you find yourself

1: This is Hashing on the Isle of Wight

heading for Sandown or turning into the multiplex cinema and watching a film!

The road to Ryde leads past Medina arboretum ('I walked around the place for hours and couldn't find the arboretum anywhere - it was just a load of trees' Snowman's quote of the week!)

On the way back to Ryde we passed over Wooton Creek: the road is built on a low bridge with a lake on one side and a small river estuary on the left. There are many yachts moored here as there is easy access to the Solent. Driving over the creek we met Isle of Wight Piltdown man. He has a skinhead hair cut; is built like a gorilla and drives a white van which he parks in the middle of the road blocking as much traffic as possible.

A polite request to move was greeted with the traditional two-finger salute and he continued his conversation with a female vision of tattoos and hundreds of body piercings who would only be attractive to a magnet! However Isle of Wight Piltdown man is afraid of fire and flashing blue lights. It was very satisfying when a police car drew up behind us and told him in no uncertain terms that he was causing an obstruction. Who says you can never find a policeman when you want one!