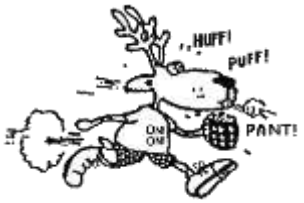
HERTS CHRISTMAS WEEKEND 2026
GARDEN HOUSE HOTEL
STAMFORD, LINCS, PE9 2LP ///
TIPS.CLEAR.HOTELS
FRIDAY 2ND – SUNDAY 4TH JANUARY 2026

I don't have an advent calendar so I'm just opening cupboard doors and eating what's in there.



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

Guess the Christmas Hit?

Run No. 2133/34/35
Date: Friday 3rd – Sunday 5th Jan 2025
Venue: The Ram/Brand House Hotel
Location: Brandon (Suffolk)
Beers/Cider: Rocking Rudolf; GK Abbot;
Hare/s: Mr X & My Lil'
Runners: 18
Virgins: 1
Visitors: 0
Newies: 0
Après: 2
Hash Hounds: 1
Total: 22
Membership: A Panic Stricken Start!

Time to head back one year!

Well, what a start to the morning Friday for some of the Committee. The fitter Hare was over halfway through setting the long section of the Saturday Hash Trail when he received 'an emergency' call from the other, limping, Hare that he needs to call No Eye Deer very urgently, immediately!

So, pausing on route, Mr X got the message that Now Eye Deer & DWSS were 5 minutes from the Hotel, but... Here comes the catch, No Eye Deer had received a txt message from the hotel to say that the weekend booking had been cancelled, as per the email? Then No Eye Deer discovered the email in her Spam box. [Always check your spam box! – Ed]

After some frantic calling, asking why it was cancelled? As the Hare's American Hash Friends say it looked like a potential "Cluster-f*ck' was about to happen, & it wasn't even lunchtime!

Being so far into setting the Trail, Mr X then had no choice & was resigned to 'Keep calm & carry on!' At least as he continued with the Trail laying, he looked up at the sight & heard the roar, of a couple of F15s flying about in the clear blue sky to take his mind off of the potential balls up, all before meeting up with My Lil' at the Red Lino.

Mr X informed My Lil' of what No Eye Deer was dealing with, he replied "Has our resident Hash critic made any comments yet?" which he had been pre-warned not to do, or he may be wearing bow-testicles at the Black-tie dinner! No Eye Deer got back to the Hares as she had managed to turn things around after talking to the Hotel Secretary & get the Christmas Weekend back on track.

However, it wasn't long until there was a post on the Herts Hash WhatscrApp app, mentioning no one could get in until 15:00Hrs & not the previously advertised Noon! The Ram was open & the Village has nice warm eating places to visit & occupy even the most bored.

The Pack would be split between those billeted in the Brandon House Hotel & the rest of the hoi palloi in the Ram across the road. Some of the Hash Travellers had an issue finding the correct Hotel on Googlemaps & confused the Bridge Hotel next to the Ram for the Brandon House, stubbornly refusing to use the What3words map-link. [Mind you, having your testicles tightly tied around your next may cut off the blood supply to the brain? – Ed]

With Trail set, a couple of pints tasted (for quality control) at the Red Lion as well as checking on the Saturday food situation was still on, it was a drive back to base for the Hares, where after a fresh set of clothes, these two Hares went off to grab some nose-bag before checking out the evening Pub-crawl, as Mr X was now going to add the local branch of the Royal British Legion. This was a success & would be added to the other two pubs.

Another moan was posted on the Herts WhatscrApp, this time after getting access to the Hotel, the comment was that the stairs in the Hotel only had underlay laid down in places [A TBT OBE trip-hazard if there ever was one! – Ed] Strangely TBT OBE didn't mention, at the time, that the lower draw in his room had women's underwear & stockings scattered within, they weren't Mrs Teebs' nether garments either! Later Pepé le Pew wondered if TBT OBE had tried them on? [Others were suddenly struck-dumb at the thought, in a Reggie Perrin like flashback but with Bridget Jones' big pants! – Ed]

Flanders, Sludge, then Milf, Kylie & Flying Solo with her arm bandaged up like Keith Lemmon, joined the now returned Hares of Mr X, My Lil', all were more concerned about having a bite to eat, than the venue's flooring issues, as later they all ended up in the same local Café.

Over time others arrived at the Ram, from where Pub Crawl would start, Mr X & My Lil' were disappointed to see that the Ale they wanted to drink had already gone, its busy Pub when the Post-persons knock off, it's like their unofficial Social Club.

Off the small Pack went, following the P-Arrows Trail marked in Blue on this fresh, dry early evening, heading southward down the High Street, there some nice decorative festive lights, including little lit up model Churches outside of some of the residencies & two Hair Salons that were side-by-side in the stone & flint built terrace, all to be admired on the way down to the main junction in the town.

The Trail turned on to London Road, to the southwest & the Pack of Mr X, My Lil', Mother, Lemming, Ketchup, Wanktlers, Where's Wally?, Soggy Butt, Fliptop, DWSS, No Eye Deer, Daimond Geezer, Caroline, Milf, & Kylie walked on by an interesting looking Tandoori, then the Brandon Church of Christ to reach the local Royal British Legion. It was nice to relax in the cosy club house & enjoy a great pint, with Mr X, Wanktlers & Fliptop all being RBL members it wasn't necessary for them to show their Membership Cards as non-members were just as welcome to come in.

The Legion was selected as Brandon has lost a few of its Pubs in the current climate, with the huge Red Lion by Brandon Station, that now looks rather run-down & maybe a Chinese Restaurant? The Bell further down the High Street also looked like it had been closed for business for some time.

On their Reconnoitre, the Hares discovered that the Five Bells, was now Tilly's Tea Room, the type of place TBT OBE would set a Hash Trail from, now converted in to a gentille, nick-nacks & doylies, with No Hash Songs type of place, where TBT OBE can sit & sip his tea, all refined while sticking his little pinkie out. [Steady Pebbledash! - Ed] So, there are now only three hostelries within a short walking distance in town.

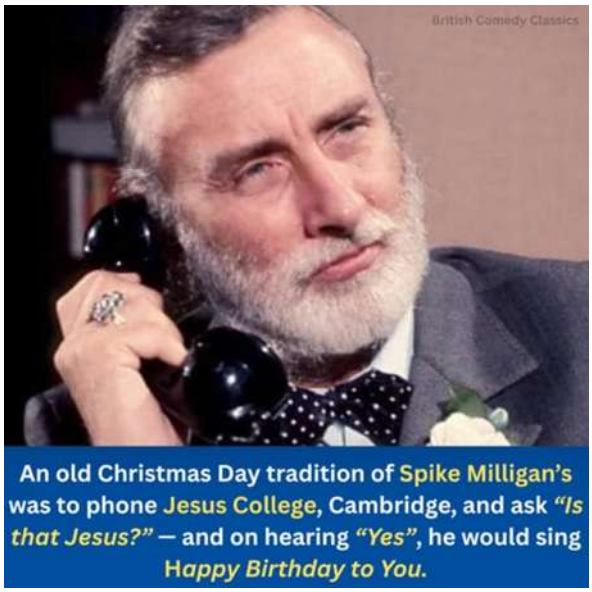
While sitting on one of the large red bench seats, with a nice & 'fitting' poppy wallpaper, it was noticed that Lemming's bobble was missing from his Herts Christmas Bobble Hat, it seems that it had attracted Buster's attention & it was soon chewed off, but the woolly hat still looks just as stylish [On somebody else who's more handsome? – Ed]. Having the bobble chewed off of your hat was something the RA knew all too well, for a year earlier as Sally chewed the end off of his Bah Humbug! Hat.

Now Mr X received some attention from a local girl in the Legion, having spotted his Hash Handle on the back of his H^4 sweatshirt, she kept insisting he was someone else she knew of known as Mr X [Our Mr X has had a few mistaken identities over the years, must be a very handsome bloke! – Ed].

After the RBL, the Pack moved the short way up to the Flint Knappers Arms, situated on the small smart pedestrianised square with its nice bright white lights Christmas Tree, here Flying Solo, Tent Packer, his daughter & partner would meet up with everyone else.

'Flint Knapping' was the ancient art of chipping flakes off large flints to whittle them down to make tools, mainly arrow & axe heads, with Brandon being on the 'Peddar's Way' – a long-distance footpath still in use, that the Ancient Britons used a route along the top of east Anglia & then down to Thetford. It passes through the nearby Grimes Graves, where the flints were mined & worked before travelling around the rest of the Country. [Most school kids of a certain age will no doubt remember having school trips to the flint pits! – Ed]

The Flint Knappers is a large old Victorian building, they weren't doing food by the time the Hash arrived, but the Landlady graciously allowed the Hash to bring in food from the local Takeaways, which was handy as large bags of proper chip-shop chips came in to the section of the Pub the Pack sat down in, the stain-glass windows behind the Hash indicated that this was the former Smoke Room of the Pub.



The arrival of Chips had the attention of the Pub Dog, & the other pooches in this dog friendly boozer. Most of the locals were wrapped up in watching Luke Littler in the Darts. Those not enthralled with the 'Arrows', were entertained when Flying Solo's wig did the rounds early, the Irish-Jig ended up on Tent Packers pate, it was noticed that he had more a resemblance to one of the Beatles, John Lennon back in the Seargent Pepper's days. Some though that there may have been a hint of some of the stars from the Madchester scene in the 80's? [No melons were twisted in the Flintknappers! – Ed]

The traditional Friday Night Pub crawl would finish back at the Brandon House Hotel, where the Pub-Crawlers could meet up with Max Factor, Alpha Male & Austin, Pebbledash & Pepé le Pew. Here the Pack could chat & enjoy savoury snacks out on the small tables, as well as mince pies & some splendid stollen cake.

Later, a few crossed back over to the Ram for a few last night-caps before crouching down on climbing the crooked wooden staircase to Bed-fordshire. Mother & Lemming were not so enamoured with the Honeymoon Suite

Some, were up surprisingly early, like Wanktlers, who had popped down to the Brandon Park Run, which trails around the Brandon Park, others had less enthusiasm as they turned-out for Saturday Breakfast, which was over at the Ram. It seemingly a nice thing to do, having everyone in one cozy place for petit-déjeuner, everyone would discover the *real* reason for this later in the day.

Once downstairs, Mr X realised that he had missed a call from TBT OBE to say that they couldn't get in to the Ram, while everyone else had no issue in using the rear 'Tradesman's entrance' as requested. [Steady Pebbledash! – Ed] Mr X left his breakfast seat & walked over to unbolt the front door for TBT OBE & Mrs Teebs to make their entrance.

Suddenly a lot of gleaming, very highly *detailed* BMWs pulled up, seems like they were meeting outside front window as Pack sat inside for Breakfast, these guys stood around taking photo's of their gleaming high-powered German pride & joys, as case of 'VorsprungDORKtechnic' before taking them off toward the centre of town.

Breakfast service was all over the place, with some early birds not getting served until late & a few not long before the Circle was to be called. It was rather like a few Christmas Weekends ago, when Sparky took My Lil's breakfast & then sat there devouring it, all while moaning that he hadn't order half of the food on the plate that wasn't his! This was a precedence for what was going to be the theme of the whole weekend!

Milf would drive Mrs Mallet & Mrs Teebs over to the Red Lion at Hockwell-cum-Wilton, yes were all waiting to see Pebbledash's reaction to the village name where the Beer Stop would be. 3D & Slug drove over from Cambridgeshire to Brandon just for the Herts Saturday Trail, along with Sally who would enjoy an adventure in a different part of the UK.

The Hares wanted an early start, due wanting a reasonable amount of time to be enjoyed at the Beer Stop, as the whole Trail was really restricted by the village's limited bus services. Anyone would have thought it was a horse-pulled Omnibus service! However, the Circle & traditional shot of Port was delayed as Moss Key Toe was going around, in the Hotel, falsely declaring the Trail starts at the usual11:00Hrs! Mr X now had to enter Brandon House to shout out for the Hash to "Circle up now!"

Finally, Fliptop could raise the toast & the Trail could get underway, some 20 minutes late. The Hares had to explain that they Trail was a long one, it was not the originally planned route, but on their reconnoitre the choice of just around 4 miles was scuppered, all due to an impassable, overgrown & flooded footpath where the Little Ouse passes under the railway.

With a rerouted Trail, an extra mile at least was added. On the reconnoitre these two walked over *nine* miles before finally staggering up to the Beer Stop! It was mentioned that the Trail would be an A to B, with a Bus back to Brandon, the Pack were warned not to miss this as it was the last one of the day, & there are only two a day!!

Mr X also added that the Hash may be treated to the sight of some F15 fighter jets, these $30 Million machines had entertained him as he set the Trail, or there could be a lone Bloke still out there pushing bike all the way back from Lakenheath to Brandon after getting a puncture.

This time around the Herts Crimble weekend had some newbies amongst the ranks, with Caroline, Charlotte & Graham all present for the Christmas Trail, so a quick description of Hash Markings was run through [Mainly for Sludge's benefit! – Ed] & not Tent Packers Daughter!

The Trail began heading back down the High Street, crossing the wide Little Ouse River, then just by the Fried Chicken Shop a CHK was found. With those who checked out the passageway picking up the Trail out to the west, then after 69 Yards up the back-passage [Pebbledash! – Ed] turned by 30 degrees to the southwest to lead out on to Coulsdon Lane to the farm area to the west of the village.

The Trail headed around the narrow drive, with large barn to the west, the Dust now moved on southward by the horse paddocks to come down to a CHK at a point where Coulsdon Lane peels away to the southeast, from there were three options, head southward toward London Road, take a northwest footpath through a metal kissing gate, or southwest on a track by a small plot of land being developed by the end of the older homes.

Arrows were picked up on southwestern choice, for a nice 200 Yard trot passing behind St Peter's Centre formally a Church, then on to a CHK by the start of Victoria Avenue, a long & wide south-westerly footpath with ornate black metal arches with a light suspended in the centre. Along either side there was the avenue of trees. This would be the Trail's route down by the grounds of the Brandon Leisure Centre & the Brandon Remembrance Playing Fields to the north.

Over 300 Yards later & the Pack would split, with Mr X going on a loop with the FRBs, while My Lil' would chaperon the Knitting Circle on a shorter route from the CHK at the entrance to the Sport Grounds. The Keenies would

take to Church Road to the west, crossing to the south side of the road by the Brandon Cemetery, with its well signposted Polish War Memorial.

A little further around the road to the west & the Trail would branch off on a footpath leading diagonally through the graveyard of St Peters Church, passing by the Church itself to come out on to dead-end of Church End, the FRBs were now on the edge of the 1960-70's estate section of Brandon. Here there was a CHK point.

It took a little while for the Keenies to pick up the Trail where Church Road becomes Manor Road, there is a desire line of a footpath cutting up at angle over a slightly scrubby common like area to the northwest to start with. The scrubby section soon gave way to the proper footpath up through the various horse paddocks, hemmed-in with wire & electric strap fences for 400Yard until the narrow path finally came out to a CHK by the junction of Smallfen Lane & Chalk Lane.

Mr X was surprised that there were none of the Knitting Circle in sight, but on the plus side it meant that the Keenies would have to check out the Falsies to the south back toward Manor Road, & to the north on Smallfen Lane, both of which slowed the FRBs down a bit more & allowed the Knitting Circle to get further head on Chalk Lane.

Dust was on the lane as it passed by the back of the walled grounds of an old manor like house, the west by northwest lane would turn to northwest as it entered the wooded section, passing by the Brandon Dog Field. After 460 Yards the Keenies now arrived at the next CHK on another elbow in the lane, right by a north bound forestry track.

Still there was no sign of the Knitting Circle up ahead, again this meant the likes of Flying Solo & Diamond Geezer led the rest away off to the north on the Sandy Drove Track, the long Trail Hare would also head up there just to tempt the Keenies 'up the garden path'.

Back to Chalk Lane & the Hare marked the CHK due west, as the Trail would now embark on a couple of long stretches, which were unavoidable with the available footpaths in this region. It would become clear to the observant ones how Chalk Lane gets its name, as in the waterfilled pot holes of smashed ice, the geology was clear to see that it was a thin clay cap on a chalk bed, with white patches exposed at the water level.

Passing Ashley Sawmills, it would be 640 Yards to reach the next CHK, by a footpath southward through to an orchard, more of the FRBs were fooled on to running this footpath before finding a T! Returning to Chalk Lane & the Trai continued on uncapped tracks of deep icy water filled ruts, at least the ice was broken by farm traffic earlier & not the solid sheets of thick ice when the route was reconnoitred only a month earlier.

The track was a lot easier as the Pack could run fairly straight for stretches & not have to dodge all of the deep cold puddles, on the 1100 Yards to the turn in Chalk Lane, the Hash would pass by the first of the sties that were home to a lot of free-range porkers of Limekiln Farm, there was a distinct piggy odour wafting through the air this crisp cold morning.

It would be on the next 1000 Yard leg that the Keenies would catch up with the Knitting Circle. The Hares had utilized a track to the north that led up between the trees to the railway line, this would be a Falsie from the CHK & this would only slightly hold up the Keenies as they began to get away for the rest due to the long sections.

Sally would really enjoy this long old Track, for she could be off lead & much about to her heart content, with plenty of water stops to drink out of along the way. Did she sniff out Austin's woolly hat, that he discarded along the way & was quickly retrieved by Max Factor, saved from the RA's grasp as he marched up behind them. Caroline, Charlotte & Graham were doing well in keeping in with the main Pack.

On the way a group of 'Off-road Motorcyclists' formed an orderly line to one side, as they approached & then passed the long line of Hashers, which was very good of them, something that caught Pepé le Pew & Pebbledash's attention.

After the 'straight as a die' sections of Chalk Lane, the route would now begin to turn slightly one way & then the other, which meant the Knitting Circle could no longer see how far ahead the Keenies were beyond the treelines. It would be nearly 1500 Yards on the 'Hereward Way' that Chalk Lane is a part of, before another CHK was found, this being by another farm track to the railway line, again this was false as the real Trail carried on over the Cut-off Chanel for draining the Fen land.

Hereward The Wake (or The Exile or Outlaw) was an Anglo-Saxon Nobleman who put up resistance during the Norman Conquest, after 1066 AD. He had intimate knowledge of the Fens & used this to his advantage in his guerilla fighting, especially the new Norman Rulers of Ely. He seems to have disappeared after 1072 AD in Exile, some say he may have even head off to Scotland!

The Trail would now turn a corner & the FRBs found another CHK, this one on the bend to the two tracks separate by a tree-line parallel to the (Not so) Little River Ouse, or head south on the track by the edge of the crop fields by the Relief Channel? It was the upper of the double tracks out below Hiss Farm the Dust was spotted on, advancing out to the Lakenheath Road, somehow both were used by the Hash as the markings of flour were on the trees in between the two routes to complete another 750 Yards.

No CHK on the road, just markings to lead up over the level crossing at Lakenheath Station, the Hares decided that they would stick to the oncoming traffic side of the busy road. No other diversions, for the road can be very busy with local Drivers who

think they are partaking in the 'Fast & Furious' franchise, then you have to be even more careful of US Air-personal from Lakenheath, or more likely their (Not so Secret Service) wives, who drive on the wrong side of the road.

The FRBs were well on their way, the Long Trail Hare suddenly heard a beeping behind & looked back to see the level crossing barriers were being lowered, halting the progress of Sludge & My Lil', Pebbledash, Pepé le Pew, TBT OBE, Juices Flowing, Soggy Butt, Paxo & Slug, who had to wait for a freight Train rumble through to excite Kylie.

About 500 Yards for Kylie to awkwardly deal with bulging tracksuit bottoms, moving away beyond the isolated & desolate single-track Railway Station. The Trail would head northward to cross the Little Ouse, via Wilton Bridge, which brought the Hash into Norfolk advertised as 'Nelson's County, leaving Suffolk which is 'Constable's County' behind.

Large arrows pointed the way to the east, to take to a raised bank of grass above the Little Ouse as the Pack made their way below Ouse Bungalow Farm for 650 Yards when the footpath arrived at the first of a series of Sluices gates where the River Ouse passes through an Aqueduct above the Relief Channel below.

Having clambered up the long, green grassy banks, the Trail would turn on a wide access Track for the water companies, here a couple of men were spotted fishing from a narrow-boat before the Hash carried on over to the northwest. On another of the long high raised banks, these no doubt hide a water or drainage system's piping?

The footpath came up to a strange cattle cate, like a large 'Kissing Gate' the large arcing metal barrier is probably used for separating live-stock like the local cattle? This needed to be pulled toward to enter, then to step in to the gap & then the other gate pushed back to come out the other side. Apparently, Ketchup & Parsons Nose pulled, then pushed the gate to scoop up Tent Packer, who was a few steps behind them, to speed his exit along with Slug & Sally.

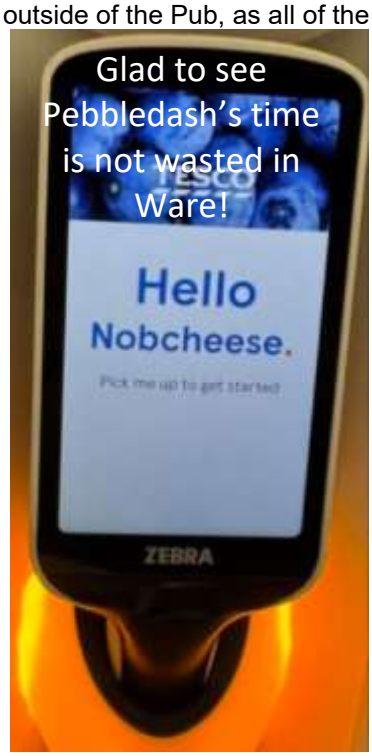
A CHK was found by an old tree-line by-way to the east. Now the two distinct groups of FRBs of Mother, Where's Wally? Flying Solo, Parsons Nose & Moss Key Toe, & Knitting Circle would get further apart, just after Mr X & the few ahead of him had to moved aside to allow three 4x4's to pass by on the water-logged by-way.

On his quest to catch up with Mother, Mr X placed his foot in one icy-cold puddle, deep in one of the two ruts & sunk in the bottom of this was a large broken section of ice, stepping on this Mr X's grip underfoot disappeared. The RA fell over right near end, ending up cold, wet & muddy, something he would pay for in the Circle!

The RA picked himself up & tried fruitlessly to clean off some of the Shiggy, just smearing around his black Hash gillet! He continued & caught Mother on 660 Yards to Nursery Lane, where there was a token CHK before the On Inn was found, around 600 Yards below the low stone wall of St James' Churchyard, that sits a few feet above the lane at Wilton, then over to the Red Lion Pub at Hockwold-cum-Wilton [Steady Pebbledash! – Ed]

Mother was generously straight to the Bar to buy Mr X a medicinal Ale, [Some falling down water for the falling down? – Ed] before they sat down with Mrs Teebs, Milf & Mrs Mallett of the recuperating Knitting Circle, all were really made to feel at home in the lovely old Stone Pub, where they had particularly nice local Stout on, as well as the bottled Stout especially brewed for & named after the Red Lion.

A pile of steaming [Careful Pebbledash! – Ed] of damp Hash boots soon grew outside of the Pub, as all of the Hash arrived in time to have a couple of really nice Pints in a proper, dog friendly, quintessential rustic village Pub, that had a couple of nice open fires going to warm the old Cockles [Steady Pebbledash! – Ed], unless of course you were Flying Solo whose black Gillet had a series of lights & buttons on the front, something akin to Darth Vader's outfit, the coloured lights indicated the heat level the wearer could appreciate from this battery powered, heated top! [Electric Tittens? Was it called a Puppy Warmer? – Ed]



It was good to hear that everyone enjoyed the Trail, which was longer than planned, but the weather was dry & crisp, which helped. Thankfully there were no other fallers, apart from the RA! [Not even TBT OBE? – Ed]

After a couple of excellent Pints, the Pack now enjoyed their Chip Baps. Not only did Austin have his own chips, he also had a toy lion to play with, not sure if this came with the Pub?

Luckily the staff had cooked more than enough, as a few passing Young Farmer types didn't know that the kitchen was closed for regular meals this weekend. Jake the Landlord & his wife Lindsey were on Honeymoon. So, a big thanks to Jake's father, who stepped in to run the Pub & cook the chips, he should have done a good job as he was a Chief Master Sergeant at RAF Mildenhall. Jake & Lindsay took over the Pub only a year or so earlier, after the long-time village Landlord & Landlady retired, they're doing a good job & good luck to them!

After a couple of hours of chilling out, it was time to get the bus. Luckily a few with Canny Cant & Gen 'n' Tonic had gone over to wait patiently at the nearby bus stop, around ten minutes before the allotted time, for the 89 Ominbus arrived

much earlier than its scheduled departure time. A long queue of Hashers then slowed things up for the last to sup up & scuttle over from the Pub to make it in time.

But then there was an unexpected issue with boarding the bus, something that neither of the Hares could have foreseen, as the bus driver explained that its company policy not to allow dogs onboard! Thankfully Sally didn't have to walk all the way back, nor 3D & Slug as Milf would run them back to Brandon with Mrs Mallet & Mrs Teebs.

Diamond Geezer & Caroline were happy to walk back, not that the Hares recommend this as there aren't a lot of footpath along the way into Keeting & then down to Brandon. The last managed to board the single decker bus just in time, entertaining the locals.

The last bus of the day would pass Caroline & Diamond Geezer on the way, but the passengers were now unaware that Caroline was to get some bad news about her mum, who had fallen ill, so she would be heading off later that day, cutting her weekend short.

The Hash were transported back to the Brandon, Mr X pressed the bell for the bus to stop, alighting at the handily placed stop right outside the Brandon House Hotel (Not the Bridge House) right where a Post Office van had been left out all night, Pebbledash questioned on why RAC were later called out as the Post Office used to have their own mechanics back in the day when she was a postie?

There the Circle was held in the back room of the Ram Pub. Having a room to ourselves at the Ram was an added bonus, but a few Civilians did poke their heads around the door to see what was going on, before beating a hasty retreat to the more civilized section of the Pub.

The Circle kicked off with the Hares being rewarded for the Trail, which everyone agreed was a good one, which was a compliment due to it being a long A to B. Then in no particular order:

No Eye Deer for organizing the chaos at the start of the weekend in to something halfway into the normal Hash shenanigans. There were also some back-dated engraved 100 Run Tankards for Flying Solo, Mother & Lemming, though there is still some contention as to whether they are on equal number of Herts Hashes? Both the Harriettes finished before Lemming, which led a chorus of 'Beaten by a Woman!"

Tent Packer also received his engraved 400th Herts Run pewter Hipflask, which came with a bottle of Scotch. Diamond Geezer was out, & complained about only having a half pint, then retracted his comment as the RA went to fill his glass up to the weights & measures standard Pint mark! Our Virgin of Caroline for her first proper Herts Hash Trail.

TBT OBE for not only mentioning Politics, blaming the current Government for everything that was wrong in the Country on the Hash Farcebook Page, which earned him a suspension for a couple of week! But worse was to come, for he posted a reply to one of Lobby Lobster's post about her dog walking, after she uploaded a picture of just the four very handsome pooches in the Arboretum near to Hertford, he tactlessly replied which one is you? TBT OBE grumble "Why do you always pick on me?" [Pretty obvious really? – Ed]

Hot 'N' Spicee was out for leaving her bag behind in the Red Lion, also for lost property was a quality, silky smooth Cashmere Throw that Wanktlers had picked up & he was expecting all of the Harriettes to claim it as theirs!

Paxo was out for his Audience participation at the Adult Panto, when the Panto Dame, Nurse Nannie, took a special liking to him, their conversations throughout the Panto kept the Audience very much entertained. He enjoyed this interaction so much, that he deliberately left his glasses behind in the theatre so he could go back & 'Luvvie it up' with the Dame & Cast back stage the following evening!

Mr X had the final Down-Down for is gilet which had suspiciously gone missing! It was thought that he may have left in the Red Lion, Hockwold-cum-Wilton Careful Pebbledash! – Ed], but he was sure he had it on the Bus to keep warm, but as it was covered in Shiggy after his fall it may have been left to dry. Though he was sure he got it as far as the Ram Inn, it was not to be found in there after a couple of sweeps around. He even made a call to the Red Lion, which also came back in the negative after a search around by the staff.

Remembering the quiet solemnity of Christmas past.

The Hash would have time to scrub up & head over the road for the Secret Santa & then the 'Black Tie' evening Meal where things later resemble an un-broadcast(able) episode of Fawlty Towers with not only TBT OBE's dodgy underlay on the stairs, the Hash now found out that the hotel's Kitchens had no water. That's why breakfast was over at the Ram.

Anyhow, pre-dinner drinks were held in the main room beside the Bar, dinner being held in the lager, adjacent dining room in the Hotel, which was definitely a work in progress.

Then it was realised that the dinner Port had been left in someone's car, even though Kylie had been asked to bring the bottles to table for dinner. At least Austin seemed happy to play with his Dinosaurs as the Secret Santa began, & we had a new Santa this year, in the guise of Parson's Nose.

Women first & Children First! Though Austin didn't seem so keen on the new Secret Santa, hesitant to take his present without Max Factor's encouragement!

Where's Wally? was late getting his Secret Santa Pressie in to Santa's sack, as the old bearded chap in red rummaged around for stitched-up 'suitable pressies for the girls' as he asked if they had been "Naughty, or Nice?"

Santa definitely enjoyed in having the Ladies, one would say he revelled in, sitting upon his knee. He seemed to take his time with each of the Harriettes, he smoother than the late-great Leslie Phillips lathered up with baby-oil!

Though when Charlotte sat on his lap & asked "For a Little One?" he did admit he had one, but not there! In the background, from Pebbledash, there was questioning whether the new Secret Santa had been CRV checked? [Well Santa did sing "A Porno Movie!" song when Milf graced his knee! – Ed]

Pebbledash's turn was remarkable similar to Kenny Everret's Cupid Stunt sketch, without all of her clothes falling off, as she swung her leg up over Santa, 'all in the Best *Possible* Taste!' some thought she was trying to get her leg behind his ear?

Flanders reckoned there was an improvement than the previous Santa [Poor Sludge! – Ed] spending far longer on his knee that when Sludge played the part.

Some wanted My Lil' to dress up as Santa again, but he reckoned his knees weren't up to it now! Even after many had commented on his Santa-like beard was resembling that of Only Fools & Horses' Uncle Albert! There were a lot of mentioning of "During the war!" over the night, & it wasn't directed toward Paxo.

Soon there were jeers, from the long queue of Harriers still awaiting, 'Get on with it!' came a chorus as the silver-tongued Lothario wooed the Harriettes, who did seem to rather enjoy the attention! Hot 'N' Spicee sure took her time!

When it came to the guys getting their pressies, TBT OBE admitted "Not Really!" when he was asked if he had been good in 2024? As for Sludge & My Lil', when it came to their turns, both where careful as they lowered themselves on to Santa's knee, not putting their full weight on it, for they have been in that position themselves & look where it's got them having all of the Pack take turns to sit on them.

Ever one to celebrate National Stereotypes, Wanktlers had packaged up a bottle of Buckfast Abbey, which was steered toward Mr X's direction, talk about a stitch up! Better still was My Lil', who thought he had pulled a good one out of Santa's Sack, but it turned out to be a right plum! We've seen some really good £5 pressies, & some bad but none a sick as the one wrapped by Charlotte or Graham. More of that later - The Hash were soon ready to dine.

There was the usual, formal Piping-in for the Dinner service, resulting in TBT OBEs toes being curled at the sound of the skirl! "Too many men in skirts!" said Pepé le Pew, rather liberating said the RA! It was noticed that Moss Key Toe wore a light blue dinner jacket with dark blue lapels, he resembled a 1950's Pontin's Blue-Coat, or 1930's swing band leader?

TBT OBE's medieval Nightmare - A dog playing a cat-shaped bagpipes from the margins of a Book of Hours made in England c. 1300 shows an upright dog playing the bagpipes (Baltimore, Walters Art Museum, MS W.102, f. 75v).

At least there was plenty of room in the dinning area, but as the Kitchens weren't working in the hotel, where were Terry the Chef & Manuel, was the Turkey in Basil's 1967 Austin Countyman? Was Mr Fawlty thrashing the life out of the little red car?

The food was set up in one corner, rather akin to a 'Chinese all you can eat' Buffet, with everything cooked across the road in the Ram, & all of the dishes of Turkey, Veggies etc were ferried across all by hand, dodging in between the traffic, as were some of the Pints when Abbot was ordered at the Bar.

After Paxo had called out "Women, Pensioners & Kids first! Care was needed as the Crimbo buffet had really red-hot roast spuds on offer [Careful Pebbledash!-Ed] for the first ones to the trough to pile the festive goodies high, perhaps they should invest in an Alan Partridge's 15 Inch plate?

Anyhow, the food was cooked well & enjoyable, it must have been good as some were already at the end of the queue for seconds as the last up for their first

course sorted out their plates! Perhaps, it could have done with more condiments than just cranberry to accompany the meal? But all in all it was good.

Suddenly there was some commotion in the dining room from Juices Flowing, nope there wasn't non-gluten free on her plate, it was Where's Wally?'s chair leg being placed upon her foot & him then sitting on the chair! Our resident paramedic was akin to a Sloth on Temazepam, being less-than-slow on the uptake it was now down to Flying Solo to come the rescue, as she sourced a bag of ice from the Bar for Juices' foot, one thing they did have at the Hotel was very good, crystal-clear Ice.

The RA's Secret Santa, which would have a variety of quality ~~merchandise~~ Tat, that Mr X had gathered & thought appropriate for each of the recipients, here are just a few:

Pebbledash some Pebble-splat bath mats, as well as a bottle opener with 'Pebbledash's Super bottle opener engraved on it, after Pepé made a song & dance about blagging one at the Isca Roman Away Weekend from the new Brewery in Topsham & Exmouth!

Sludge unwrapped Senior Masters Golf Tie, Mother received a 'Morning Sauage' Dachshund Cup [It's all of Ketchups fault, saying she had the gait of a sausage dog! – Ed

Milf a mini-table Tennis game for Milf, not quite pickleball. An Inflatable Beer hand, Beer pick-up sticks & Chocolate Oranges amongst the other gifts, the latter being a particular favourite of Charlotte's & maybe rare in Oz?

Max Factor drinking shot Jenga game, which was soon put to good use as she & Pepé le Pew gave a demonstration with Buckfast Abbey Forfeits in the shot-glasses…..

There was also a Manflu Mug for Guess who? Yes, it was TBT OBE! Diamond Geezer a Welsh Flag mug, so his tea will taste a little sweeter in the morning. DWSS a Mr Grumpy Jig-saw Puzzle. [Hash he finished yet? – Ed]

Tent Packer received a bottle of Ardbeg from the RA, as a thanks for all the things they gifted to new Hash Homes after Mrs Mallet & his 'downsizing'. [Careful Pebbledash! – Ed]

Sis & Fliptop a Tide Clock for their sea-side place in Wells Next to Sea

Mr X than handed out several parcels in one go, heading toward to Fliptop, Paxo, Ketchup, My Lil', Wanktlers, Lemming, Where's Wally? & TBT OBE, with now over excited TBT OBE being specifically told that these could not be opened until the RA said so.

Mr X wanted them all unwrapped at the same time, to revel each had a golf visor, with the Herts Logo & Herts Hash House Harriers on the front but each came with fake hair, in various colours. There were before & after pictures taken, with the follically challenged guys all behind the large Happy 2025 Banner behind them.

Next it was on the long ~~anal~~ annual RA's rambling speech - The 2024 year's events, as read out by the RA:

January
Herts '23 X-mas
February
Gispert Memorial
Chinese New Year [Which Pebbledash reminded Mr X is pronounced Jizzbert! – Ed]
March
Saracens v Quins Rugby at Tottenham's Stadium
June
Italian National Day
Bull Moon 100th Weekend
London Hash Breakfast Run
July
Manchester Anniversary Weekend in Saddleworth
Braughing wheelbarrow Race
Isca Roman Away Weekend
September
Friday 13th Taunton
October
Annual Conker Contest, Paxo champion
Gibraltar Birthday Weekends
Peaky Blinders in Birmingham
November
Day of the Dead
D 'n' B Grandad Birthday Rave
December
Friday 13th Chelmsford
As well as joint Runs & Full Moons
Adult Panto (Oh yes we did!)

Like others struck with the number of mobility scooters in Benidorm, DWSS & No Eye Deer put an order in…

Time to dance the night away, & burn off some of the calories that had just been consumed. It wouldn't be the same without Flying Solo & her fantastic wigs making another appearance, Milf sported the same style that Flying Solo was wearing. There were also another round of face-mats on show, can't beat the old favourites, as is the norm the night became a blur.

For the RA, who enjoys singing to the music [That's to be debated! -Ed], he had a foot in mouth moment, Mr X was soon profusely apologising, for while dancing with Pebbledash he blurted out "Does your Mother know?" to the ABBA

song of the same name, then was struck dumb as he realised that her mother had just recently passed away [Doh! - Ed]

Quickly forgiven, he carried on with the rest as of course there were the usual Hash Anthems to shake your bootie too, getting everyone up on the dancefloor, with the usual Dad-dancing to Break-wind Dancing to Dancing Queen, Delilah & the much anticipated I would Walk (500 Miles) by the Proclaimers, it wouldn't be the same without them after a long day's havering!

Wanktler's Christmas Sweet

Somewhere along the way Mr X had a Sporran disaster, on a much-repaired chain & then there was as tassel went flying across the dancefloor. He also lost his Kilt Pin as well!

But worse Tartan faux-pahs was to be witnessed, with Canny Can't doing squats in his kilt, Mr X said if he tried that there'd be Rocking Rudolf squits, let alone something akin to Sophie Ellis Bextor's one-hit-wonder "Murder on the dance floor!" The Disco did repeat itself with a couple of songs over the night back, which was picked up in the rear atrium [Steady Pebbledash! - Ed]

Now in the wee hours, & after finally feeling his way back, Mr X would now discover what My Lil' had plucked from Santa's Sack, sitting on the end of his bed, Mr X was perplexed as to how on earth a couple of cans of Skippy-piss' [Fosters! – Ed] had ended up in the Room?

Sunday Breakfast, & Mr X had a priority booking for first dibs with his full English, for he was going to head out & set the Trail on his own, in the damp cold mizzle, while other cleared their rooms [Did TBT Take the Panties? – Ed]

Mr X came back with 15 minutes to spare. Here he found TBT OBE was in a quandary, puzzled as to why does Sunday Trail start from outside the Hotel & not the Ram? Mr X simply said it was because that was the side of the High Street the Trail was on! Avoiding the previous Trails on the Ram side of the High Street.

Lemming had knocked his ankle, this had swollen & after the previous day's long Trail, so he had decided he wasn't going on the Recovery Run, yet once everyone was back après Trail, he was soon claiming that he had been to the first CHK point & trying to claim that he was still one Herts Run ahead of Mother, a bone of contention that he wouldn't be left alone. The question of whether he did a Trail was put to the Circle & there was a pretty much resounding 'No!' from the Pack.

So, off the Pack went, heading down the east side of the High Street, a CHK was found before the Little Ouse River, which doesn't seem to be that Little, being fairly wide at this point. There was no Falsie off toward the west beside the river's bank, instead it was straight on, passing by Lidl, then on to the crossroads, here the Taril moved a few feet left to the Crossing at the lights, there arrows directed eastward on the start of the Thetford Road.

The Trail didn't go far as the arrows would follow the curve of Beavor Lane to the south, on the 350 Yards down to the next CHK, the road wiggled with a kink as it became Bury Road before coming to a halt by the Pedestrian Crossing. There was no Trail off to the west or the east, as the FRBs picked up Trail further southward, by this point there was a light mizzle in the air, but nothing too heavy.

500 Yards along the road out of Brandon & the urban area started to become more wooded, being right on the north-western edge of Thetford Forest. A CHK on the sharp junction with Rattler's Road caught a few out, for they didn't expect the Trail to almost double back on this, it would be a short way up Rattler's Road to another CHK by the small Walton Way estate, it was on this 'dead-end back water that the correct Trail was picked up.

After a serpentine stagger down the twisty & turning road the Keenies arrived at a CHK just inside the forest, some were lured away to the east, where Bury Road was, but the Trail would head westward for a mere 70 Yards to find a CHK in the open centre with four options splaying out between four different plantations.

A Short cut was offered up now, to head along the nor-nor-west path among the trees, the Hare was surprised to see that everyone was keen to do the whole Trail, for it was a 'Recovery Run' also with the earlier Falsies the Pack were pretty much all together. So, the Dust would head westward for 300 Yards to a CHK where there were three options off of the wider fire-break track.

There was still some frozen snow on the ground in the exposed areas, but Austin had no worries as he was pushed around in his warm buggy.

The southwest option was wrong, as was the southern track off of that, those who went wrong were called back to join the Knitting Circle on the narrow, more off track path, which after 300 Yards arrived at where a CHK should have been, it had been kicked out within an hour of being set! This was near to the edge of an industrial estate to the west, the path by the fencing caught out Diamond Geezer & Flying Solo.

Pebbledash's Top Tips:
If you're hungover and feel the need to vomit, but can't,
Shove one finger down your throat and the other up your arse,
If this still doesn't work, swap fingers!

The Hare had set the Trail to cut back again. Now heading back to the north-east the Dust would reappear as the Hash made their way up to a CHK toward the apex of this plantation. The Trail would be picked up again on spinney by Sweden Place as the Pack advanced through one of the estates of Brandon, moving on up to a CHK on London Road.

Arrows directed the way south-westward along to the Pedestrian Crossing, where once safely across the Trail continued on to St Peter's Place. At the 'Chalk Talk' the Hare had warned the Hash that he had repurposed some of the previous Days Trail as the Keenies made their way to a CHK at the bottom point of the green grass triangle between the two forks in St Peter's place.

The northward right arm won out & the pack advanced up to St Peter's Approach, which would now turn right & on through the Church Grounds, here the previous day's arrows had been crossed out & the CHK restored as the Pack made their way backward along a part of the long Trail back to the entrance to the Brandon Leisure Centre grounds.

On through the Leisure Centre's ground, complete with the wreck of an abandoned kid's peddle car outside, then on through to the gravel car parks by the local Football Teams to reach the weir, & lock on the Little Ouse River, it was here that the Held CHK/Sweets Stop was found, by the roaring sound of the gurling, rushing water below. The Sweet stop came curtesy of Wanktlers, who brought the sourest of jellies, after stating "he wasnae fetching doon decent soor plooms anymore" as everyone spits them out. Pebbledash wondered if who would spit or swallow!

The Trail would continue by taking the gravel path on the northern bank of the river, this would gentle curve around to the north-east, it was interesting to see the back of the properties across the river, with their small boat houses. After 620 Yards the On Inn was found just before the Pack came out beside The Bridge Hotel that TBT tried to book into! It was here that Parson's Nose showed he was the most observant after the night before, spotting a tramp going through the waste bin near the On Inn, he pointed out that the guy's head band looked like one of the fake hair golf visors.

The Hash moved on a few feet back on to the Ram for the final Circle, which would be a slightly subdued one compared to the previous day, mainly due to many driving home that afternoon but mostly due to the amount drunk over the previous day!

Hash Toast over, then it was down to the Hare being awarded a pint for a sterling effort of going out on his own first thing, in the drizzle, to set the Recovery Trail, all said it was just right for a Sunday morning. Then Mr X turned from recipient to being RA.

Of course no Christmas Circle would be the same without Lemming being called out, as he normally is, as for his 'Sin' being the continuing discussion of whether he or mother had the more runs or both were on the same number, Parsons Nose was rewarded for being the most observant on Trail, spotting the tramp near the end looked like he was wearing a Hert Hash Golf Visor, but with his own scruffy grey hair growing through.

Lemming was called out for he claimed to have made the first CHK, all in order to keep on level terms with Mother on Herts Trails completed, the crowd were not as convinced! Hot 'N' Spicee was also awarded for completing 50 Herts Hash Trails!

No Eye Deer would make a statement that we wouldn't be back to Fawlty Towers the next Year, there are possibilities for alternative & easier Trails, it would just be down to better communications from the hosts. Strangely enough, over the weeks since the majority who went to the weekend actually like the weekend. [Just goes to show how Hashers can deal with just about anything! – Ed]

Finally, there was some 'Lost Property' being returned, by Flying Solo's hand, with Mr X's body-warmer making a most welcome return, though it was noted that it hadn't been dry-cleaned, still covered in now dry Shiggy & he did get it back to the Ram.

Time to head away, My Lil' would now attempt to start his car, for the battery was holding the charge for long & he hadn't tried turning it over all weekend!

Luckily the Hash weren't in the area between 27th Jan to 7th Feb, for between 22:30 & 02:30Hrs there were a series of blackout ops with Helicopters low flying at night, not far away in the Diss area! [No one should ever Diss Diss! – Ed]

Check in from 14.30pm Friday afternoon, parking is available at rear of the property, there is a code to get into the house grounds which will be sent out nearer the time. You can arrive a bit earlier to park and drop off bags but won't be able to access rooms until later. **<u>Rooms ARE ALLOCATED</u> so please check before you unpack your bags.**

Itinerary January 2026 Final Draft (Timings may vary due to weather, alcohol ruptures in the Space/time continuum!)

Friday

17:30 Hrs onwards P-Arrow Marked Friday night pub crawl followed by Wine, cheese and biscuits back at the house. **Ales & Cider are £2, Wine on Friday £1 - Honesty Pot per drink** (There are many places to eat in the town on a pay as you go basis.)

Saturday

09:00Hrs Breakfast

11:00Hrs Circle Up for Saturday trail

13:00Hrs Buffet Lunch out

15:00 1st Trip & 16:30Hrs 2nd Trip Callconnect Buses have been booked for 14 at a time (Pay £3 on board) in High Street Ketton near Florists, or Cabs Back (Taxi Numbers below) to the Garden House to get changed into your glad rags for:

18:00Hrs *Secret Santa & Mother Claus!*

19:00Hrs Evening Black Tie Dinner

Dancing, staggering and drinking late into the night.

Sunday

09:00Hrs Sunday Breakfast then stop faffing about clearing your room

11:00Hrs Circle up – **rooms to be vacated by 11:00Hrs**, bags can be left downstairs whilst we are out

Back to the house for final circle.

Check out by 14:00Hrs.

ACE Cabs: 01780 767676 (Takes dogs)
ABC Taxis: 01780 252525
Skyline Cabs: 01780 250250