

Crapaud HHHH Bike Bash 2015

Going green in Paimpol and Bréhat

THE hares, Fuzz, Twin Peaks and Tinky, promised us virgin territory, and virgin territory was what we got – some of it a boat ride away from mainland France. Yes, the 2015 Crapaud Bike Bash took us to the delightful Ile de Bréhat, that bijou offshore community near the old port of Paimpol.

However, this year's bash will be remembered less for geographical novelty than for hilarity in depth, coupled with an unfortunate parting of the ways when, on the first evening of the tour, Hash Rev Gigolo decided to take a huffy early bath in a hotel that was not ours, followed by a train departure the following morning.

(We could go further into this, but let's not dwell on it. The full story is freely available on the Hash gossip grapevine, though see below for a fraction more detail.)

Meanwhile, back to the manner of the Bash's unfolding from the word go.

Jacko, of course, arrived at the Harbour *un peu en retard* for the Friday a.m. departure, but the crossing to St Malo was plain sailing. Only those



Frisco: 'Remember the old song "Never smile at a crocodile"? Didn't say anything about soixante-neuf, did it?'

with intensively trained livers broached a can or two, while much talk revolved around the size of Jacko's luggage. No, not that luggage – his overnight case, which was big enough to accommodate a family of Gypsies and their horse and cart.

Fortunately, the first cycling phase took us only as far as St Malo's spiffing new civic centre up by the

railway station, where Jacko's superbag and all the other heavy gear was loaded into a coach and the bikes into a van, ably driven by none other than GM Tinky.

The 26-strong contingent was then coached in beer- and wine-lubricated comfort to . . . to? Well, to Lanloup, *un tout petit bourg* somewhat smaller than a half-horse hamlet.

But what the place lacked in horses, it made up for in the shape of an ancient crêperie. There the Bashers were served a bizarre lunch of cold cuts, ratatouille that was almost as cold, crêpes with jam, beer, coffee and, for Ragsby and Co, a thoroughly runcible calvados.

But it was the crêperie's crapper that deserved the big prize. Ornate was

scarcely the word. Easy Rider commented: 'It feels as if I've just had a piss in Santa's grotto.'

Then it was on yer bikes, and the Bashers girded their loins for the afternoon's exertions.

But there weren't too many of those. Bags of It had been looking forward to 100K of sweat, toil and aching gluteii, but the largely coastal pedal to Paimpol was a mere 15 easy clicks, punctuated by a stop at a windmill, where Smuggler rode around in tight circles until dizziness, rather than pride, led to a fall.

Then it was on-on to a drinks stop.

But, *hélas*, the bar was closed – until the owners were summoned from an afternoon nap (their story) and informed that 26 pints were required *sans délais*.

There was some down-down tomfoolery at the bar – which was called La Cabane and appeared to be made largely of driftwood – with Frisco being punished for having his cycling shorts on back to front, Jacko for that early-morning tardiness, Bags of It for losing his bag, and Red Baron for a sin so trivial that few will ever remember what it was.

Illegal should probably have been punished as well for lacerating his leg yet again, but I suppose we now regard that as par for the course.

There should also have been a special down-down for whoever produced the mangled version of 'Allez les verts!' which appeared on the Bash T-shirt.

Having reached Paimpol, we checked in to our hotel, which overlooked the harbour and had more

confusing floors, staircases, levels and lifts than an Escher illustration.

Friday night's meal was taken a couple of hundred yards away from the overnight gaff in a restaurant next to the harbour lock. So, as you might have guessed, it was called L'Ecluse. And it did a fair job of feeding and watering 26 hungry and thirsty Hashers. That said, something had gone amiss in the telephone ordering process. Instead of 12 goat's cheese starters and six oyster platters, we were offered the exact opposite, though a mixture of compromise and a long wait for the missing chunks of *chèvre* meant that everyone was served something.

Spirits were high and all went well until the down-downs, when there was some debate about whether they should be held inside or out. Hares said outside, Hash Rev said inside, Hash Rev did his own thing, as you do with many pints in the belly, but failed to win the attention that his holy role rightly demands. To cut a longish and complicated story short, that led to that early bath and that morning departure down the tracks to St Malo to catch the ferry back to Jersey.

So what do Crapauds do after a slap-up meal and an ample sufficiency of wine? They look for a pub, that's what they do. On this occasion the low backstreet dive that was selected by most of the gang had two dart boards, though dart boards with a difference. To begin with, both had electronic scoring systems – an affront to all pure-blood Anglo-Saxons,



Above: Fuzz enthroned in Santa's grotto Below: Ragsby and a little friend Bottom: Two-stroke with another little friend

who take pride in being able to calculate backwards from 301. Secondly, the boards were sited in such a way that players had to throw their darts past the ears or over the heads of at least half the pub's other patrons. Health and safety, froggy-style, eh? Where was Poocock when you needed him?

Eventually, some enjoyed a good night's sleep. Others, whose rooms overlooked the darts bar, were kept awake by non-Hasher French youfs who had clearly been infected by the Hash values of yore:



party until you drop, then get up an party some more until the sun, or the entire contents of your stomach, come up.

The following morning we were warned to leave our packed bags in our rooms so that they could all be collected by *le pauvre petit mec* who looked after reception, the bar and waited tables in the restaurant. Hashers with more than two brain cells realised that, in all probability, this meant that we would be staying two nights in the same place. And that was just the way it worked out.

But first there was the ordeal of day two on the bikes.

That, however, was after a brief detour. Everyone gathered in front of the hotel in which Gigolo had chosen to spend the night and urged him to re-join the party – alas without result.

The cycle itself lasted all of 50 minutes, an epic pedal which took us as far as the landing stage at L'Arcouest, where we embarked on a flashy tour boat that took us on a tour around Ile de Bréhat before depositing us on that self-same island. (For once,

Jacko managed to make the voyage on the same vessel as everyone else. Remember the Isle of Wight?)

During the tour Whinger was wound up something rotten by Muff Diver, who spun her a yarn about spotting his old chums Henri and Marie waving on the shoreline. 'I haven't seen them since, oh, 1972,' he said, a monstrous porky, which was then elaborated with ridiculous detail, only to be swallowed hook, line and sinker.

Bréhat is a wonderful mini-community, rich in meandering footpaths, tiny clear-water coves, old granite houses and lashings of dog shit. It also has at least one restaurateur who takes two and a half hours to serve a rudimentary meal and wouldn't know *salade Niçoise* if it came up and bit him on the scrotum.

Tant pis, the tardiness of the service allowed everyone to drink deep of beer, red, white and rosé in preparation not only for that *Niçoise sans oeufs, sans anchois, sans tuna*, but also for dehydrated *croque monsieur* and grey *bifteck haché* that looked like a section



Top left: ET Bananarama Top right: Fine example of the Bash dress code Above: Jacko believes in travelling light Below left: Whinger takes a ride on Gigolo's big red throbbing love machine Below: Man with a van – Tinky's pantechnicon



cut from your old auntie's cardigan. Never mind. The chips were first class.

After the meal, several people took to the water, including ET, who said: 'I'm so drunk it's going to be nice.' Excellent words for engraving on a tombstone, eh?

Meantime, Jacko wore his big green fins and Wendolene wore a cozzie that appeared to have been made from grade-one transparent polythene. She should now be addressed as See-through Shirley. (We have the pics: a dollar a peek.)

As forecast by many, after the return ferry trip the peleton was required to retrace its tyre tracks to Paimpol, where, yes, it was back to the first night's hotel. And yes, those packed bags were just where we'd left them.

Still fresh after a Bike Bash day which featured only minimal cycling, Hashers had ample time to change into their Going Green fancy dresses ready for the evening's meal and entertainment. Conveniently, this took us to a private room in the restaurant next to the hotel, but only after a brief parade around Paimpol's byways, providing a spectacle which convinced many a Frenchman of the veracity of an old saying – '*Ils sont fous, les anglais.*'

Commando, in an outfit which suggested that she had stayed overnight in her florist's shop so that vines could grow all over her, won the prize for the best kit, but there was strength in depth this year.

Heidi was some sort of mermaid or water nymph, though she was somewhat lacking in the tail depart-

ment; Red Baron had transformed himself into a green Rambo; Easy Rider invited everyone to hit his balls with a club; Tinky chose some sort of transvestite costume – *comme d'habitude*; Muff Diver wore an off-the-shelf Black Eyed Peas ensemble; Steptoe was a little elf – no change there, then; Ragsby went for a crapaud onesie; ET exposed enough thigh between pants and stocking top to make sure that half the town was on heat.

Meanwhile, even the lass who served our meal entered into the spirit of the occasion by donning a fur waistcoat and her dad's old trilby.

It's fair to say that the meal was *comme ci, comme ça*, but a good time was had by all – even Steptoe, who, having exhausted all his spellbinding anecdotes concerning real ale, fell asleep at the table.

His comatose state meant that he missed some fine stand-up comedy, some of it provided by Vital Statistics, who really should spend less time reading *The Beano*.

The following morning the pack actually managed a reasonably early start, beginning what was to be an unambitious morning's ride through Paimpol's back streets.

On the way out of town Tinky was unable to follow everyone else down a particularly narrow lane – and, to be fair, the van wouldn't have made it either.

But once we were out in the countryside, progress was steady, though Foxy's venerable racing bike suffered a puncture, meaning that he had to retire to the van.



Above: Closed, and no bloody real ale either Below: Don't worry about us. We can make it Bottom: Tinky displays *la dernier cri* in supersize ladies' lingerie





Above: Whinger takes in the scenery – and every word of MD’s bullshit Below: Wendolene enjoys one of her five-a-day Bottom: Fins ain’t what they used to be



Oh, and some of the FRBs took a wrong turning and Red Baron and Easy Rider managed to collide and wrestle each other to the ground.

Beer was demanded mid-morning, but the bar earmarked for the drinks stop appeared to be closed – until, once again, a plea for 20-odd *pressions* rapidly persuaded *la patronne* to rearrange her pre-lunch schedule.

The bar, by the way, was called Le Titanic, so no one asked for ice in their drink.

After the stop, the Hares clearly had a destination in mind for lunch, but they were a bit hazy when it came to getting there. Bags of It was co-opted as a route planner and, ably assisted by Smuggler, he led the Bash down a farm track which was, he asserted, marked on the map as a public path. Public it might have been in theory, but the farmer who blocked it with a wire fence clearly had other ideas.

Steps were therefore retraced and after an epic kilometre or two we reached a remarkable lunch venue, La Roche Jagou, a fine château set high above the deep valley



Heidi – hiding not so much



Honorary crapaud



Red Baron sees the funny side of life



Did you confiscate that spliff, Smuggler?

of Trieux river.

And the lunch did not disappoint. Some delectable veg in filo pastry was followed by chicken in cider and the best far breton ever – and all of it was organic, even the wine. Yes, as the weekend's theme urged, we all went green.

After lunch there was just time for some down-downs (anyone remember anything about them?) and a quick dekho around the château grounds. Then the bikes were loaded into Tinky's van, the Bash mounted the coach, and it was off to St Malo to catch the ferry home.

Your scribe, Muff Diver, recalls little of the coach journey because he slept most of the way, waking only when Illegal treated him to a liberal beer sham-poo and shower – twice. And Illegal might have thought twice about letting sleeping dogs lie when he was forcibly propelled in the direction of



Above: La Roche Jagou and Red Baron Below, from the left: Three green fairies ● Ragsby or is it Kermit ● A little elf with a lot of balls

the in-coach loo by a less than delighted MD, but a truce was rapidly declared and MD took another kip.

All should have been well after an otherwise fairly return trip to St Malo – if you ignore the out-of-tune community singing – but at some

point Red Baron realised that he had left a bag containing his and Com-mando's passports back at the château. *Hélas, bon Dieu et zut alors!*

Fortunately, Condor staff and, eventually, the French border control officers accepted that the er-

rant Bashers were neither asylum seekers nor Isis affiliates and they were allowed to board the boat. At the other end they had Smuggler to speak up for them – a task that he has been obliged to undertake in the past. (Frisco: you know what we're talking





Clockwise from top left: A brace of hares ● Don't ask for ice in your drink ● One woman in a boat ● La Roche Jagou down-down ● Bags of It sees no ships, only hardships ● Fine figure of a Tinky ● Smuggler shows off his physique



Far left: Tinky in drag – again Left: Com-mando's winning creation Above: Easy Rider, moments before adjourning to the 19th hole

about, don't you?)

It might have been the extra day of this year's Bash, it might have been the ample supplies of organic wine, but everyone was quite subdued as the ferry ploughed the briny on its way home. A few more beers were downed, but there was no sing-

song, perhaps because Shiggy had had other fish to fry this year.

But there were down-downs for the Hares, ably conducted by a stand-in Rev, Illegal. All the solemn rituals were observed, but sotto voce, in deference to the feelings of all the other tired travellers making

their way to the Rock.

Once ashore, many headed home, but those with truly heroic livers made their way to the Troubadour at the Weigh-bridge for one final libation – or maybe two. Your scribe was not among that happy band, but he bets that a Hasher who was not

on the Bash, Rampant Rabbit, was there to offer a hearty welcome home.

What constitutes an excellent Bike Bash? After so many different formulae over so many years, who can say? But I reckon that this one was at least a 9.5 out of 10.

Here's to next year!



● If you've not done it, you don't know how hard it is, but Twin Peaks is certainly ready to testify that helping to organise a Bike Bash is a big challenge. Hats off, therefore, to her, to Fuzz and to principal Hare Tinky. Great job, so many thanks to all three of them.

You might in due course hear about the trials of trying to locate an alternative restaurant after one of those booked chose to close without notice a couple of weeks before 26 Bashes were due to chow down on its fare.

Left: Jacko's famous giraffe impression Right: Rude beer shampoo awakening on the coach

