History of the Hash House harriers

The first Hash House Harrier group was formed in Malaya (now Malaysia) in 1938 by a group of Expats led by AS Gispert, (G) ,who were resident at the Royal Selangor Club in Kuala Lumpur (pic below)



The aims of the group were to
. Promote physical fitness
. Banish weekend lethargy
. Work up a good thirst and satisfy it with beer
. Enable older members to feel young again.

Original members were mainly British, Australian and Kiwi business, civil service and military ex-pats stationed in Kuala Lumpur. Many stayed at the Selangor Club where the dining room was referred to as the Hash House due to its boring, basic food. Today’s Selangor Club is home to The Mother Hash, and a must-enjoy watering hole for all Hashers visiting or living in Kuala Lumpur. An everything-you want-to-know history of Hashing is the subject of Hare of the Dog, by Stu The Colonel Lloyd.  Hashing was put on hold during WWII and Japanese occupation of the Malayan peninsula. The Hash was re-formed in 1946, with new clubs established in Italy (1947), Singapore (1962), Kuching (1963-by our own

**A Peek Into The Past And How The Name Came About
An Interview With Cecil Lee, an Original Hash Founder Member by Fu Chee Cheng**

Fu Chee Cheng, commonly referred to as Fuch, is a long time hasher having joined the Mother Hash and Petaling H3 in 1978, before which he joined the Petaling Jaya H3 and the Petaling Jaya Harriettes in 1977. “I so enjoyed hashing that I ran four times a week until I was assigned to Shell Centre, London, in 1979, for two years. Then I kept running there with the London H3, the Surrey H3 and occasionally the Cambridge H3.”

Through the London H3, he was introduced to Cecil Lee and Eric Galvin, founders of the Hash House Harriers (HHH) in 1938, who played pivotal roles in its management pre-WW2 and its revival postwar. Fuch says that they were happy to meet a hasher from Malaysia where they had spent some 30 years of their lives before retiring back to their home country. Over the two years they became quite good friends and inevitably talked about hashing in Malaysia and this stirred up a curiosity of the history of the Hash in Fuch.  In an interview with Cecil in London in May 1981, which is on video, Cecil revealed how the HHH got its name. Cecil mentioned that Gispert, or G as he was known to all, was principal in its foundation. G was an English Chartered Accountant with Evatt and Co. (subsequently after changes known as Pricewaterhouse Coopers). He was a roly poly, jovial person and a typical specimen of the Raj, according to Cecil

Some 10 of them lived in the Selangor Club Chambers which had a dining room on the ground floor and
rooms on the first floor. The residents referred to it as the Hash House, hash being a slang word for food. Cecil admitted that the food was actually very good. There already were a few paper chase groups running in parts of the country but there is no record of their frequency and they never survived for long. G was working in Malacca and ran with the Springgit Harriers and when he came to KL, he decided that he would form a Hash group assisted by another resident, Bennet (Torch Bennet) as he was quite an enthusiast himself. Sometime late in 1938, 9 Harriers were in the Hash House and it was proposed a formal name be adopted.

***G came up with the name. This was stated by Cecil in the interview. He said it was a jocular allusion to the Mess (bachelor’s hostel) they lived and it was alliterative (words with a rhythm). “There are many other versions (as to the origin of the name), but this is the correct one”, said Cecil.***

**Despite the deep interest that G had for the HHH, he was not exactly the perfect athlete. Cecil explained that he lagged behind and in one situation when the pack was caught in a falsie, he ended up being the first! He was very excited to have his moment!!!**

They used to run around KL and Maxwell Road came to his mind where the jungle started.

They would drink beer mixed with ginger beer and ice out of the old time tin bath tubs. He even recalled they ran once a week but initially on a Friday. Runs would be kept to about 1.5 hours after which they would stand around talking and drinking after the run. The running was interrupted by the World War Two, but when they returned around March 1946, they restarted it.

You can also download the full interview with Cecil Lee from YouTube with the URL

Part 1 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OJ_yQApBW-s>

Part 2 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VGXfMBKJuks>

While 10 of them were the original group of runners, Bennet missed the day when it was named as he was away on leave. Which is why, the 9 are known as the founding members.

These are:
1. A.S. Gispert – G
2. Cecil Lee
3. Frederick ‘Horse’ Thomson
4. Eric Galvin
5. M.C. Hay
6. Arthur Westrop
7. Morris Edgar
8. John Barret
9. Harry Doig

 The original Royal Selangor Club where the first Hash House Harrier group was formed in 1938 was demolished in the 1990s to make way for a new motorway however a new building was constructed nearby and today houses interesting memorabilia from those early days.

 