

Hash House Harriers

The **Hash House Harriers** (abbreviated to **HHH** or **H3**, or referred to simply as **hashing**) is an international group of non-competitive running social clubs. An event organized by a club is known as a **hash** or **hash run**, with participants calling themselves **hashers** or **hares and hounds**.



A run of the Lima Hash House Harriers in [Lunahuana](#), Perú.

History

Hashing originated in December 1938 in Selayang Quarry, [Selangor](#), then in the [Federated Malay States](#) (now Malaysia), when a group of [British](#) colonial officers and expatriates began meeting on Monday evenings to run, in a fashion patterned after the traditional British [paper chase](#) or "hare and hounds", to rid themselves of the excesses of the previous weekend. The original members included Albert Stephen (A.S.) Ignatius "G" Gispert, Cecil Lee, Frederick "Horse" Thomson, Ronald "Torch" Bennett, Eric Galvin, H.M. Doig, and John Woodrow. A. S. Gispert suggested the name "Hash House Harriers" after the [Selangor Club](#) Annex, where several of the original hashers lived and dined, known as the "Hash House".

Hashing died out during World War II shortly after the [Invasion of Malaya](#), but was restarted in 1946 after the war by several of the original group, minus A. S. Gispert, who was killed on 11 February 1942 in the [Japanese invasion of Singapore](#), an event commemorated by many chapters by an annual Gispert Memorial Run.

After World War II, in an attempt to reorganize in the city of Kuala Lumpur, they were informed by the Registrar of Societies that as a "group," they would require a constitution. Apart from the excitement of chasing the hare and finding the trail, harriers reaching the end of the trail would partake of

beer, ginger beer and cigarettes.

The objectives of the Hash House Harriers as recorded on the club registration card dated 1950:

- To promote physical fitness among our members
- To get rid of weekend hangovers
- To acquire a good thirst and to satisfy it in beer
- To persuade the older members that they are not as old as they feel

In 1962, Ian Cumming founded the second chapter in Singapore. The idea spread through the Far East and the South Pacific, Europe, North America, expanding rapidly during the mid-1970s. Cumming was widely credited with bringing hashing to the United States and lived outside of New York City, where he continued to hash until his death on August 21st, 2015.

At present, there are almost two thousand chapters in all parts of the world, with members distributing newsletters, directories, and magazines and organizing regional and world hashing events. As of 2003, there are even two organized chapters operating in Antarctica.

Events

Most chapters gather on a weekly or monthly basis, though some events occur sporadically, e.g., [February 29th](#), [Friday the 13th](#), Typhoon '[T8](#)' or a [full moon](#).

At a hash, one or more members ("hares") lay a trail, which is then followed by the remainder of the group (the "pack" or "hounds"). Sawdust, flour, chalk, and toilet paper are used to mark the trail. The trail periodically ends at a "check" and the pack must find where it begins again; often the trail includes false trails, short cuts, dead ends, back checks, and splits. These features are designed to keep the pack together despite differences in fitness level or running speed, as front-runners are forced to slow down to

find the "true" trail, allowing stragglers to catch up.

Members often describe their group as "a drinking club with a running problem," indicating that the social element of an event is as important, if not more so, than any athleticism involved. Beer remains an integral part of a hash, though the balance between running and drinking differs between chapters, with some groups placing more focus on socialising and others on running.

Generally, hash events are open to the public and require no reservation or membership, but most require a small fee, referred to as "hashcash", to cover the costs incurred, such as food or drink.

The end of a trail is an opportunity to socialise, have a drink and observe any traditions of the individual chapter (see Traditions). When the hash officially ends, many members may continue socialising at an "on-after", "on-down", "on-on-on", "apres", or "hash bash", an event held at a nearby house, pub, or restaurant.

Special events

In addition to regularly scheduled hashes, a chapter may also organize other events or themed runs.

A common special event is the "Red Dress Run", which is held annually by individual chapters. In 1987, a woman by the name of Donna Rhinehart, wearing a red dress, arrived in southern California to visit a friend from her high school years. Shortly thereafter, she found herself transported to Long Beach, where her friend intended to introduce her to the "Hash House Harriers."



The first Red Dress Run in South

One member, noting she was female and America, held in [Chaclacayo](#), Perú.
attired in a red dress, urged that she “just wait in the truck” until her host returned. Feeling goaded, Rhinehart ran into history sporting her red dress and heels.

The following year (August 12, 1988), to commemorate the event, the San Diego Hash House Harriers sent “The Lady In Red” an airline ticket to attend the inaugural Red Dress Run. Hundreds of male and female hashers adorned themselves in red dresses for a spectacle widely covered by California newspapers and TV news. In addressing the crowd, The Lady In Red suggested that Hash House Harriers hold the Red Dress Run annually as an occasion to be used to raise funds for local charities.

The tradition of the Hash House Harriers Red Dress Run quickly spread to every corner of the globe, including Beijing, Montreal, Ho Chi Minh City, Helsinki, Moscow, Tokyo, Washington, DC, Hobart (Australia), and countless other locations. Over the years, the Red Dress Run has been very successful in raising millions of dollars for a wide variety of local charities. The New Orleans Hash House Harriers attracted 7,000 participants to their Red Dress Run in 2010, raising more than \$200,000 for 50 local charities.

Today the Red Dress Run is an integral part of the Hash House Harriers’ heritage and is as iconic as the Royal Selangor Club where the Hash House Harriers was born and as sacred to them as founder A.S. Gispert’s drinking vessel. It’s a tradition born before few organizations turned to running events as a way to raise money and long before anyone ran in a dress of any color.

The Hash House Harriers enjoy common-law protection for the phrase “Red Dress Run” with additional protections in place and still more legal protections pending. The protective measures were taken to prevent dilution of the event's unique appeal necessary for charitable fundraising success.

The Lady in Red died unexpectedly on April 13, 2013, just as the Hash House Harriers were celebrating the 25th anniversary of their Red Dress Run.

Most chapters count the number of runs they have organized and use round figures - run no. 100, 200, 777, 1000, etc. - as an opportunity for arranging a weekend with several runs and nightly celebrations.

Variations

- [Hash House Bikers](#) (Bike hashes or bashes) follow normal hashing traditions with the hare and pack riding [bicycles](#).
- River hashes or snorkel hashes (rashes, splashes, or snatches) follow normal hashing traditions, but take place in an aquatic environment with participants using snorkels, fins, kayaks, floats, and other rafts.
- Snowshoe hashes are much like normal trails, but the hare and hounds are in the snow, on snowshoes. Marking trails with white flour or with colored chalk is impractical on snow, so squirts of colored water may be substituted.
- Hash-a-thon, tour-duh-hash, Hash challenge and tri-hash-thon are special "competitive" events. Hash-a-thons involve multiple trails (normally 4) in 24-hour period totaling up to 26.2 miles (a marathon). Tour-duh-Hash is 7 days of hashing. Hash challenge is a team event (3-4 hashers) who complete a 42 km hash through the Malaysian jungle. Tri-hash-thon is an event consisting of 3 trails, 1 running, 1 swimming/snorkeling/river float, and 1 biking (bash).
- Family hashes welcome children (sometimes called hash house horrors or ankle biters) with soft drinks replacing alcoholic beverages and drinking songs toned down appropriately.
- Pick up hashes - Hashes that follow traditional hashing guidelines minus the pre-selection of a hare. At a pick up hash, the hare is decided randomly at the beginning of the event.
- Disaster Hash [7] - A disaster hash is basically an impromptu hash that can be called by any hash member whenever a disaster occurs. The disaster can be anywhere in the world and can range from an earthquake to a flat tire. The disaster hash differs by two major hash components, the hares and hash names. The hare is chosen on the

spot, given flour, a destination, and a one-minute head start. Whoever catches the hare, becomes the hare. They take the flour and continue along to the destination, this repeats as many times as the hare is caught. Secondly, disaster hashers are given special disaster hash names. All virgins get named at a disaster hash, usually having to do with the disaster in question and the disaster hash name is completely separate to a normal hash.

Trails

Hashing has not strayed far from its roots in Kuala Lumpur. The hare(s) mark their trail with paper, chalk, sawdust, or coloured flour, depending on the environment and weather.

Special marks may be used to indicate a false trail, a backtrack, a shortcut, or a turn. The most commonly used mark is a "check", indicating that hashers will have to search in any direction to find the continuation of the trail. Trails may contain a "beer check", where the pack stops to consume beer, water, or snacks, allowing any stragglers to catch up to the group.

Trails may pass through any sort of terrain and hashers may run through back alleyways, residential areas, city streets, forests, swamps, deep mud ("shiggy") or shopping malls and may climb fences, ford streams, explore storm drains or scale cliffs in their pursuit of the hare.

Signals and terms

Hashers often carry horns or whistles to communicate with each other, in addition to verbal communication. Every hash house employs its own set of trail marks and the names for these marks may vary widely, so newcomers or visitors will have the local markings explained to them before the run at a "chalk talk". The most common term is "on-on," shouted by runners to let others know they are on the right trail. A yell of "RU" (pronounced "are you") is a question to other hashers if they are on trail - it should be responded

with either "On-On" or "Looking".

Sometimes there is a call to "circle up" - this is a call from a leader for the hashers to form a circle, be quiet, and pay attention. Circles are called for the "chalk talk", to give news, or for some ceremony such as to thank the hare for the hash.

Trail Markings

Each group should explain their markings at the start of the trail (see "Chalk Talk" above). Although not universal, there are several marks that are used on most standard running trails. Marks are most often made with flour (the kind used for baking) but other substances may be used such as chalk or colored powders.

Symbol	Meaning
Very common marks	
Arrow	The trail continues in this direction
a spot or small pile	Trail - you are on a path
X or O	Check - You must find the trail continuation from here (there may be some false leads)
Some only slightly less common marks	
ON-IN	The end of the trail
BC	Beer Check (stop for a drink for and wait for the group to reform, then treat like a check). Sometimes you will see a "BN" for "Beer near"
F/YBF	False trail. The spots you have been following end here.... Go back to the last check and find another trail. Short for "Fooled" or "F***ed"/"You've been Fooled"

Rules from group to group may vary.... Some examples of variations: some groups don't use the "F" mark or only use it after 5 or more spots. For some groups an arrow is always true - other treat it as another spot and therefore may be part of a false trail. These rules should be explained in the "chalk

talk".

Trail types

There are two types of trails. "live trails" are laid by hares who are given a [head start](#), while "dead trails" are pre-laid hours or days before the hash begins. Live trails and dead trails are also known as "live hare" and "dead hare" trails, respectively. Live trails are closer to the original "hare and hound" tradition, with the intent of the pack being to catch the hare rather than making it to the end, and are more common in the [United States](#), while the rest of the world tends toward dead trails.

A trail may be "A to A," where the trail returns to the start, or "A to B," where the beginning and end of the trail are widely separated. Some trails are referred to as "A to A₁ (prime)", denoting an ending point that is close to (usually short walking distance), but not the same as the start. There is also "B to A" which the participants are ferried to another location for the run back to the gathering point.

Traditions

Circles

Most hash events end with a group gathering known as the "circle", or less commonly as "religion". Led by chapter leadership, the circle provides a time to socialize, sing [drinking songs](#), recognize individuals, formally name members, or inform the group of pertinent news or upcoming events. Circles may be led by the chapter grandmaster, the group's religious advisor, or by a committee. Impromptu input is welcome and/or solicited.

Down-downs

A "down-down" is a means of punishing, rewarding, or merely recognizing an individual for any action or behaviour according to the customs or whims of the group. Generally, the individual in question is asked to consume

without pause the contents of his or her drinking vessel or risk pouring the remaining contents on his or her cranium. Individuals may be recognized for outstanding service, or for their status as a visitor or newcomer. Down-downs also serve as punishment for misdemeanours real, imagined, or blatantly made up. Such transgressions may include: failing to stop at the beer check, pointing with a finger, or the use of real names. Commonly, hashers who wear new shoes to an event can be required to drink from that shoe.

Many chapters include an ice seat or throne as part of the down-down ceremony. Those who are to consume a down-down sit on a large block of ice while they await the completion of the down-down song. If the offence that resulted in the down-down is particularly egregious, the hasher may be subjected to a long song with many verses.

Hash names

In most chapters, the use of real names during an event is discouraged. Members are typically given a "hash name," usually in deference to a particularly notorious escapade, a personality trait, or their physical appearance. In some chapters the name must be earned - that is, hashers are not named until they've done something outstanding, unusual, or stupid enough to warrant a name. In other chapters the process is more mechanical and hashers are named after completing a certain number of events (5-10 being the most common).

Some chapters focus on "family-friendly" names (for example: Lost My Way); others focus on names filled with innuendo (for example: Salt Lick); and some go out of their way to make the name as bawdy, offensive, or [politically incorrect](#) as possible.

Those hashers who have not been named are generally referred to as "Just (Name)", "No Name (Name)" (e.g., "No Name John") or "No Fucking Hash Name John" (NFHN John) or simply Virgin.

Hashers are not permitted to give themselves nicknames due to the obvious conflict of interest. Hashers who do so are often renamed by the chapter at the earliest opportunity and with a more offensive name. Similarly, hashers who do get named and don't like their name may end up being renamed by their chapter, the members of whom may strive to give the complaining hasher an even more offensive or inappropriate name.

New hashers verbally in pursuit of an obviously offensive or inappropriate name may intentionally be given a weaker name, such as "freckles."

Symbols

The traditional symbol of hashing is the outline of a human foot, or a pair, often including the phrase "On-On". T-shirts are a common symbol of various hash clubs, and events. A large sample is available in the Digital Hash T-shirt Museum

Clothing

Hashers occasionally wear specialized clothing on trail or to the closing circles. Common items include thick, knee high socks, commonly referred to as "Shiggy Socks", kilts, or happi coats, with some kennels offered "earned" clothing such as bibs or sashes. Shiggy socks are worn to protect the shins and knees of the wearer from thorns, mud, branches, or whatever else they run through. The hash has its own tartan for their kilts. Custom happi coats, originating out of Japan, are also commonly seen and made to reflect the local kennel.

International events

There are several international events, where hashers from different groups get together to run and socialize, but the most famous is the biennial [*Interhash*](#), where hashers from around the world gather. The 2006 *Interhash* —[*Chiang Mai*](#), offered supporting runs in Thailand, Myanmar, Laos, Vietnam,

Cambodia, and southwest China.

- 1978 [Hong Kong](#)
- 1980 [Kuala Lumpur](#), Malaysia
- 1982 [Jakarta](#), Indonesia
- 1984 [Sydney](#), Australia
- 1986 [Pattaya](#), Thailand
- 1988 [Bali](#), Indonesia
- 1990 [Manila](#), Philippines
- 1991 [Akita](#), Japan
- 1992 [Phuket](#), Thailand
- 1994 [Rotorua](#), New Zealand
- 1996 [Limassol](#), Cyprus
- 1998 [Kuala Lumpur](#), Malaysia
- 2000 [Tasmania](#), Australia
- 2002 [Goa](#), India
- 2004 [Cardiff](#), Wales
- 2006 [Chiang Mai](#), Thailand
- 2008 [Perth](#), Australia
- 2010 [Kuching](#), Malaysia
- 2012 [Jogjakarta](#), Indonesia
- 2014 [Hainan](#), China
- 2016 [Bali](#), Indonesia

In addition to Interhash, there are also many regional and continental hash events, such as the InterAmericas, InterAfrica, InterGulf, InterScandi, EuroHash and PanAsia. National hash events, or "nash hashes", primarily bring together hashers from one particular nation, although visitors from other countries are actively welcomed.

References

External links

- [Hash House and Hash Heritage](#)
- [World Hash Links](#)
- [A. S. Gispert \(Alberto Esteban Ignacio Gispert\)](#)
- [Red Dress Run information](#)
- [Hash challenge information](#)
- [Harrier Magazine](#)
- ["Beer runners' flour trail a recipe for trouble", *msnbc*, August 25, 2007](#)
- [Gulf Coast Hash House Harriers](#)