

The origins of the Hash House Harriers

Dear Tim,

 H H H

World Hash - Harrier International

Very many thanks to you for sending me the Harrier International World Hash Handbook 1986/87 and the first three issues of Harrier International. What a magnificent production the Handbook is.

This is only a short note as I have written you quite a long letter and sent you some photographs and these are on their way to you by surface mail. With every good wish

Oh-oh- Sincerely,

Member (non-running) of Tamar Valley
H³

Frank Woodward

This summer Mr Woodward saw one of the children living in the village of Belstone in Devon wearing a Hash House Harriers tee-shirt. On enquiring where he got it, the child told him that his father had sent it to him from Java where he was working as an engineer.

A friend of Mr Woodward's also recently came across a Hash House Harriers Club running on the South Downs and Mr Woodward himself is delighted to hear that such a club has started up in Guernsey.

He writes: "The Hash House Harriers were founded by G.Gispert, a charter-
-ed accountant, in Kuala Lumpur, Malaya, in or about the month of December, 1938. Other founded members were 'Horse' Thompson, of Malayan Posts and Telegraphs; Eric Galvin of the Malay Mail; Morris Edgar, a solicitor; Cecil Lee of Harrisons and Crosfield; John Barrett, an accountant, and several others.

"The founder members, all bachelors, lived in the Selangor Club Chambers which were residential rooms above the club restaurant and they had their meals in the restaurant.

"I left Guernsey - my father lived at Dalswinton, Les Hubits - in January 1939 and arrived in Kuala Lumpur about mid-February, 1939. I had been booked into the Selangor Club Chambers by my boss.

"At my first breakfast, I was invited to join the Hash House Harriers and as I had been a cross-country runner at school, I was delighted to accept. I took part in the sixth or seventh run of the club since it was founded.

"Enquiring the reason for the curious name of this 'hare and hounds' club, I was informed that 'Hash House' was the name by which the Selangor Club Chambers was known to its residents though, in fact, the food was not at all bad. The yarn about the Chinese Cafe and its proprietor pedalling after the runners with his bicycle loaded with beer has had some circulating but is, I am afraid, a myth!

"In those good old days, most of us Hash House members had Malay car drivers - eyees - and the procedure on the weekly run days was for the two 'hares' to go in a car with their haversacks full of torn-up paper and the boot of their car loaded up with a large galvanised tin bath packed with ice, bottled beer and ginger beer, to a pre-arranged starting point and then set off to lay the paper trails. The beer and ginger beer were provided by the 'hares' each week at their own expense. The club never had any funds as such and administration was minimal.

"When the 'hares' had set off, their driver waited until the 'hounds' arrived in their cars and, when all had started, the 'hares' driver led the other Malay drivers in their cars to the finishing point of the run, of which he had previously been informed by the 'hares'. After numerous false trails had been investigated the 'hounds' eventually arrived at the finishing point where the 'hares' would have already started on the beer and ginger beer. Shandies were found to be much more refreshing than beer by itself.

"The trails ran through rubber plantations, tin tailings and rough country, very rarely on roads.

"After the war, 'Torch' Bennett, who was in the same firm of accountants as the founder, was largely responsible for roping in all the old pre-war Hash House Harriers who had returned to Malaya and re-starting the weekly runs in about June, 1946. I remember I was a 'Joint Master' of the H.H.H. one year.

"Most of the pre-war members had married before returning to Malaya and our long-suffering wives were firmly told that the weekly runs took precedence over all other social engagements. The wives found this difficult at first but they found that they could do nothing about it and soon became inured to this strange form of madness in their husbands.

"After the war not many members of the H.H.H. had car drivers, especially the newcomers who had come to Malaya for the first time after the war, and we had perforce to make the starting and finishing points of the runs at the same place; otherwise the routine was exactly as before.

NEVER CAUGHT

"I remember a post war member, Wyatt-Smith, who was a Cambridge running blue, and I were 'hares' together quite often and we were always determined never to be caught. It would have been a loss of face! In fact,

CECIL LEE

"G"



"TORCH"

I cannot actually remember the 'hares' ever being caught by the 'hounds'. I think they were too keen to get to the beer!

"The H.H.H. weekly runs continued during the Malayan emergency when the Communist terrorists were attacking rubber plantations and ambushing cars and, after I left Malaya in 1953, I was told by friends there, with whom I continued to correspond, that the two 'hares' on one occasion (when the run was in the CHERAS area, an area of scrubland outside Kuala Lumpur) came across a 'bandit' sentry who fortunately did not hear or spot them.

"They immediately turned back along the trail and were able to warn the other runners. They then sped on to a police post known to one of them and reported the whereabouts of the sentry. The police contacted the army who sent out a patrol and wiped out a small bandit camp and captured some of the terrorists. The 'hares' got a substantial reward, enough to enable each of them to buy a new car! I am told that the hounds were offended when the 'hares' would not share the 'blood money'!

"I am so glad to hear that the Hash House Harriers clubs are spreading round the world, a fact of which I was quite unaware until very recently.

Frank Woodward