

Hashing originated in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, in 1938, 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 Cecil Lee, Frederick "Horse" Thomson, Ronald "Torch" Bennett, Albert Stephen (A.S.) Ignatius "G" Gispert and John Woodrow.

After meeting for some months, they were informed by the Registrar of Societies that as a "group," they would require a Constitution and an official name. ♦A. S. Gispert suggested the name "Hash House Harriers" after the Selangor Club Annex, where the men were billeted, known as the "Hash House" for its notoriously monotonous food. ♦Apart from the excitement of chasing the hare and finding the trail, harriers reaching the end of the trail would be rewarded with beer, ginger beer and cigarettes.

The Constitution of the Hash House Harriers is recorded on a 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

Hashing died out during World War II after the invasion of Malaysia, but was re-started after the war by most of the original group, minus A. S. Gispert, who was killed in the Japanese invasion of Singapore.

Apart from a "one-off" chapter formed on the Italian Riviera, growth of Hashing remained small until 1962, when Ian Cumming founded the second kennel, in Singapore. The idea then spread through the Far East, Europe, Australia, and New Zealand, and North America, booming in popularity during the mid-1970s.

At present, there are almost two thousand kennels 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 kennels operating in Antarctica.