

In the Spotlight – Setting the Record Straight

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Over the years, I have seen many historical references made about the founding and early days of the Hash House Harriers. John Duncan, Mike Lyons, and a few others drafted up accounts that circulated widely in the 1970s and 80s, and unfortunately still do right up to the present day. They were best effort assumptions made on the limited amount of information that these early historians had on hand. Fear not, even [Mother Hash](#) still gets it wrong on some facts.

In the 1980s, Tim ‘Magic’ Hughes undertook a massive effort of researching, and discovered better and more detailed information. Magic published the quintessential book on hashing titled **“On-On!” 1938-1988, A Golden Jubilee**. This book dispelled many of the earlier accounts that had been circulating. Continuing to update and research, he was the chief authority on the early history of the HHH up until his untimely passing in 1998.

Likewise, William ‘Tumbling Bill’ Panton collected and cataloged the existence of hash clubs all over the world for about 40 years, beginning in the 1970s. Assisted by a few tech savvy hashers, the whole listing of clubs has been placed online as the [HHH Genealogy Project](#).

Other hash historians produced very informative publications, including [ZipPy](#), [Flying Booger](#), and Amnesia, that continued to refine the information and publish it for the benefit of hashers worldwide. Shakesprick originally set up and maintained a website called Hashapedia, but is now repackaging all that collected history, and more, and publishes an excellent [On On – A History Magazine of the Hash House Harriers](#). This magazine is dedicated to showcasing various accounts of history of club’s actions in more recent times, primarily over the past 50 years, when hashing began to seriously spread out to each continent.

I have been reading all of these historical accounts over the past 4 decades, and have always been intrigued by the details. After retiring from the military, I started to get more serious about digging into all the documents I could find, and have spent the past decade reading, researching, and writing about [the origins](#), as well as other details of [hashing around the world](#). So, without further ado, I would like to dispel many of the false accounts of HHH history.

1. ***Gispert, and the other founders were British military officers posted to Kuala Lumpur. Another version is they were officer living in military barracks.*** – **FALSE:** Actually, they were British expats, working in Kuala Lumpur at the time. The only one that specifically had any military affiliation was Gispert, both he and ‘Torch’ Bennet worked together for Evatt & Co as accountants. Many of the founders did live in the club chambers, that were part of the Royal Selangor Club, but these were not military barracks. Gispert participated in weekly Monday evening drills as an officer in the Selangor Battalion of the Federated Malay States, but this was only a unit for volunteers.
2. ***Gispert was an Australian.*** – **FALSE:** This mistake was derived from the report that Gispert returned to KL from Australia when the Japanese invaded the Malay peninsula in

1941. While all of that is true, the fact is, Gispert was only on leave with his wife and his 4-year-old son, Simon. They lived at 28 Circular Road, after his wife and son moved to KL. Wife and son had recently joined him from their home back in the UK. Prior to that, he lived in the Selangor Club Chambers. Evatt & Co paid a small stipend for family members, but his wife and son were unable to join him in KL due to company policy, restricting family members until the employee had worked abroad for at least 10 years. Gispert reach the 10-year mark sometime around 1940/41.

3. ***The Hash House Harriers, founded in 1938, was a totally new concept.*** – **FALSE:** There were actually several Harrier clubs in SE Asia in the 1920s and 30s, with reports of similar type paperchase and party reported. 'Horse' Thomson claimed that hash type activity had occurred with the Springgit, Malacca, and Johor Bahru Harrier clubs, as far back as 1932. There was even a Kuala Lumpur Harriers club that was popular in the 1920s and early 30s, and likely did as well.
4. ***The Bordighera H3, in Italy, was the second ever HHH club.*** – **FALSE:** This hoax persisted for over 20 years, before a [series of events](#) occurred, that brought its downfall. Reported as being founded in 1947, by former war prisoners that had served in SE Asia, and hashed before the war, the Bordighera H3 ran in the Italian Riviera for over a decade. Amnesia's very [detailed analysis](#) determined that none of the individuals mentioned ever existed, confirming this to be a major hash hoax perpetrated as a gag by Robert "Bwana" Walker. Bwana never admitted it, or refuted Amnesia's research, but has now unfortunately passed on. So, his secret has passed on with him.
5. ***Hong Kong hasher Phil Kirkland coined the term: "If you've half a mind to join the hash, that's all you'll need" in 1978.*** – **FALSE:** I have to admit, that even Magic got this one wrong. In his Golden Jubilee book, he cited an article in the Los Angeles Times, which obviously also got it wrong. I recalled Flying Booger mentioning something about this, so looked up [his article](#), which refuted, but did not clear up the mystery. And neither will I, but what I do know is . . . While reviewing a stack of old hash books, I found that very statement on page 2 of the [Melbourne H3 100th Run Magazine](#). That hash took place on 24 March 1974. There is no specific attribution, but is thrown out as if it were a common statement of the day. Now, if it was Phil Kirkland who was throwing that statement around in the early 1970s, it may have some credence, but as of this moment, the phrase will remain unattributed.
6. ***Monday is the traditional hash day.*** – **FALSE:** Originally, the hash met on Friday nights, as Gispert participated with the Federated Malay States Volunteers on Monday evenings. This may rub some the wrong way, but I am going make the statement that Mother Hash really ended in Dec 1941. Several accounts state that hashing resumed in 1946, founded by some of the earlier participants, primarily 'Torch' Bennett got things going again. Torch put in a claim for the lost hash mugs, a tin bath and two old bags and received a small sum. Run No. 1 was a trot around the race-course in August, 1946. It was not until after the rebirth club reached 1000 runs, on 12 March 1966, when they

collectively decided to add the initial 117 runs from the original Hash House Harriers club.

7. ***The original 1938 charter of the Hash House Harriers.*** – **FALSE:** The [original charter](#) mentioned on many websites, was written in 1950, by Irish accountant, Frank D. “Don” Kennedy. Don was the On-sec for the Hash House Harriers at the time. According to the ‘Black Book’, Don did not become a member of the Hash until 1949, and according to Magic, the club registration process was all conducted after WWII.

The problem with writing an article like this, much like those mentioned above, is other new details being uncovered that refute or otherwise provide new details. None of this is an attempt to fault any of the early historians. This is simply an effort to set the record straight, with the best information on hand . . . but with the vast number of old websites still floating around on the internet, these false histories will live on for many more years. In time, some other hash historian may dig up new sources that refute what I have stated above, and I am all for that. On On.