

## HISTORY OF THE HASH HOUSE HARRIERS' GENEALOGY PROJECT

Bill Panton, known more affectionately as 'Tumbling Bill', conceived the Hash Genealogy project in the early 1990's. To understand how this came about, it is necessary to take a brief look at Bill's Hashing history...

Bill was first posted from United Kingdom to Kuala Lumpur in 1953, and was billeted in the bachelor's quarters behind the Selangor Club, known colloquially as the 'Hash House'. He was naturally invited to run with the Hash House Harriers, amongst whom was Cecil Lee, one of the original founders of the HHH in 1938. At that time, it was the only HHH group in the world. In the group photo of the 1959 [AGM](#). Bill can be seen sitting at the feet of founder member Cecil Lee.

From 1962 onward, there was a slow expansion of the Hashing movement, starting with Ian Cumming moving to Singapore and founding the Singapore HHH. This was followed by more HHH chapters being founded in peninsular Malaysia, Sabah, Sarawak and Brunei so that 10 hash chapters celebrated the 'Mother' chapter's 1,000<sup>th</sup> post war run in March 1965. Most of their founders were well known to Bill Panton who, on moving to the World Bank in 1972, fathered Washington DC HHH.

The expansion of 'Hashdom' was beginning to accelerate and by the time Bill visited KL in June 1973 for the 1,500<sup>th</sup> run of the Kuala Lumpur Hash House Harriers, there were around 60 Hash Chapters in existence. Of these, some 36 Hash Chapters were represented and Bill was able to catch up with many a kindred spirit.

When Bill retired to Kuala Lumpur from the World Bank in 1992 after running with many more hash chapters during his frequent travels, he knew that the world of 'hashing' had exploded and realised that all the Hash Chapters were related to the original 'Mother' Hash chapter in Kuala Lumpur. The Hash 'Family Tree', which became a major project for Bill's retirement, was born!

Sometime in early 1994, Mike Lyons found Bill Panton with a large sheet of white paper laid on a glass topped table on his balcony, with a pencil, ruler and eraser, busy adding new hash chapters to an enormous family tree and constantly rubbing out and adding connecting lines to various hash chapters. It was obviously much too cumbersome by hand, so Mike introduced some early technology and transferred the data to a genealogy programme on his Apple laptop. Subsequent weekly sessions with Bill brought it all up to date. Whilst some of the data was extracted from Tim Hughes' vast store of data in his HHH Handbooks, particularly the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary edition, Bill also was sending out 'snail mail' enquiries (which later became 'email' as he joined the technology revolution!)

Bill Panton was forever on the lookout for more information, visiting Hash Chapters on his frequent travels and attending Hash events such as Interhash and Pan Asia Hash, all with the intent of growing a sturdy Hash Family Tree.

For the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Hash House Harriers at Interhash 98 in Kuala Lumpur, the first publication of the Hash Family tree was offered to the Hashing world. It showed the relationship of some 1,100 Hash chapters to the original 'Mother' Hash in Kuala Lumpur. This Family Tree was published on 28 contiguous A4 pages which were printed in landscape format. This was almost 6m in length but folded neatly 'concertina' fashion. Copies of this first publication were available for purchase at Interhash '98.

At the same time, and aware that making these data available for wider consumption would be problematic, Bill enlisted the aid of Neil Campbell to adapt the genealogy data to a more widely visible format. Neil set up a simple Microsoft Excel Database and developed a suite of Visual Basic Macros to abstract, transform and format the data and their relationships into a very lengthy worksheet. This

was then printed directly to a HP DesignJet plotter in 'A0' continuous roll for display in the Merdeka Stadium at Interhash '98. The display generated considerable Interest, and lead to a flood of information being received from all over the Hash World. A later copy of this chart is still on display in the 'Hash Room' of the Royal Selangor Club in Kuala Lumpur.

A consensus was reached at the Interhash '98 GM's meeting to publish a directory of active Hash Chapters at subsequent Interhash events. These Directories were based on information provided by the Webmasters responsible for the Regional Hash websites that were beginning to emerge. There are many relatively stable Regional Hash websites that focus on Hashing affairs in their neighbourhoods, and it is from these where data are abstracted to provide a periodic snapshot of Hashing at the time of Directory publication. The Interhash 2002 Hash Directory also included the basic Hash Genealogy information for each Hash Chapter, together with an invitation for the hashing world to provide any missing information or correct any anomalies in the published data. This approach proved very effective in getting the wider hashing world to contribute to the Hash Genealogy project.

Another outcome of Interhash '98 was the formation of the 'Hash Heritage Foundation'. A HHF website was established and Stewart Forbes developed an online version of the Hash Genealogy in October 2006. All Hash Genealogy data available at that time were laboriously loaded into Stewart's Apple Macintosh. Leister Productions' 'Reunion' family tree software was used to generate a multitude of individual, linked web pages which then could be viewed 'on demand' from almost anywhere in the world. This on-line system required substantial support to maintain and develop, and was eventually abandoned when Stewart was appointed to a more demanding role with the Malaysian External Trade Development Association.

Although Neil moved back to UK in 2001, his frequent travels to Malaysia ensured his continuing involvement in the genealogy project. Bill acquired more and more data, but still retained his preference for working with 'hard copy'. Neil continued to edit and produce the 'A0' roll charts which became a familiar feature of Interhash during the 'noughties'. Bill was an equally familiar feature, sat in front of these increasingly long (and increasingly undecipherable) displays, diligently collecting more information. It soon became evident that to print and display what had become a very large, broad family tree was an almost impossible task and so it was decided to abandon the printed version and concentrate instead on developing an on-line, searchable version. The last updated version to be displayed at Interhash was at Perth in 2008.



*Bill & Neil at Interhash 2004  
Cardiff*



*The family tree on display at  
Cardiff*

Neil experimented with various forms of web presentation with an early candidate being a flash / java-based utility developed by Moritz Stefaner, but the strict formatting requirements of the underlying data was insecure and made updating difficult. The next stage of development involved a more simple xml structure, but relied upon AJAX / PHP to deliver content using the popular YAML css framework. Finally, a more robust structure has been determined, based upon a 'mysql' database and powered by the 'Yii2' framework. This will enable secure updating and editing by remote hosts.

At the time of writing (January 2016) the last Hash Genealogy Scroll in hard copy sits in a canister in Neil's apartment in Kuala Lumpur, awaiting completion of the Heritage Foundation's 'Hash House' at Bukit Kiara. It will finally be displayed there as a tribute to Bill Panton's Herculean effort during his days of very active Hashing and the vast number of friends he has made throughout the world as a result. The Hashing world salutes the tremendous effort that Bill has made during his long Hash Genealogy career.

The World Hash Directory for Interhash 2002 included the minimal Hash Genealogy information, Date of Birth, Mother and Father for active Hashes at that time. This inclusion highlighted where critical pieces of Hash Genealogy were missing and was accompanied by a plea to the hashing community to research their chapters' genealogy and amend or add to the Hash Genealogy story by forwarding information to the current hash genealogist.

World Hash Directories at subsequent Interhash events continued to include an abbreviated Hash Genealogy for each Hash Chapter to encourage the discovery and reporting of missing or incorrect data relating to their evolution.

A plea to the worldwide hashing fraternity for all to become genealogists continues. By researching your chapter's history and forwarding any relevant information, no matter how seemingly insignificant will help contribute to this worthwhile project. Please use the Genealogy Data Form, available from the Hash Heritage website, to help establish a robust and accurate family tree so that future generations of hashers can understand how they came to be so crazy!! Any information you can provide should be forwarded to us using the contact page of the website.