

# A British Officer, a Dutch Burgher & a Talented Dane,



A B Hubback, Military Genius



C H LaBrooy, The Family Man

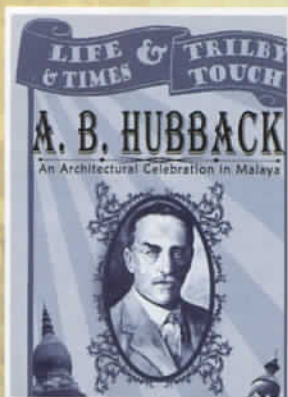


B M Iversen, A Self Portrait

## The Men who Built Ipoh

By Ian Anderson

While it is an over exaggeration to claim that these three architects built Ipoh, they did actually contribute dozens of iconic buildings each to their own distinct style, many of which still stand today. Sadly however some of the most distinctive have suffered the indignity of the demolition hammer or been over-renovated to a level that has destroyed their beauty all in the name of that dreadful word 'Development' which brings us faceless high-rise buildings, crowded streets and traffic jams! Of course we have architects today, but somehow they seem to lack the flamboyance and individuality displayed by those from yesteryears.



From an Architectural Celebration KL 2014

**Arthur Benison Hubback** was born in Liverpool, England, in 1871, was educated at Fettes College, Edinburgh, and then started work for the city architect in Liverpool. However the call of the mysterious East brought him to Malaya in 1895 where he started as a government chief draughtsman in Selangor and worked on the design of Kuala Lumpur's famous Sultan Abdul Samad Building. With the project completed in 1897 he moved into private practice. He returned to government service in 1901 and became Chief Architect of the Federated Malay States (FMS). In this position he is credited as the source of every major government building in Malaya and Hong Kong designed prior to the Great War of 1914/1918. Known as 'Trilby' to his friends, one of his first major successes, for which he is rightly famous, was the Kuala Lumpur train station and the KTM offices opposite. In Ipoh he was the architect for three very significant buildings, the first Anderson School (completed in 1909), The Ipoh Railway Station and the Ipoh Town Hall across the road. Further afield in Perak he also designed the Ubudiah Mosque in Kuala Kangsar and the Tanjong Rambutan Asylum (now the Central Mental Hospital / Hospital Bahagia Ulu Kinta). For his outstanding achievements he was awarded a Fellowship in the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA). Interestingly, the majority of his buildings remain standing today.

Always military minded Hubback also served as a Lieutenant Colonel in the Malay States Volunteer Rifles (MSVR) for many years and had a tremendous interest in the Corps. However just prior to the outbreak of war in 1914 he returned to the United Kingdom to begin his distinguished professional military career where he rose to Brigadier General Arthur Benison Hubback CMG,



Two of Hubback's creations – the Ipoh Railway Station and the Town Hall



The 1st Anderson School, 1909



Ubudiah Mosque, Kuala Kangsar



C H Labrooy and his family in front of Dulcieville



The Labrooy family car – A 1

**Claude Henry Labrooy (CH)**, a Dutch Burgher and one of five brothers, left his home in Ceylon in the late 1800's and found his way to Singapore where he worked in the British Naval Dockyard. Around the turn of the century he moved to the construction of new railways in Malaya [the Federated Malay States Railway (FMSR)]. This was probably when he discovered Ipoh and decided to make his future here, and persuading one brother, H W Labrooy, to join him.

The two brothers soon became established in Ipoh, CH as a prolific architect and developer, HW as engineer and contractor. They married two sisters, who were the daughters of Captain J A Legge. C H married Daisy Legge in India and later brought his sister in law (Ruby) to marry his brother H W in Ipoh. They lived in a small estate built by CH on land now occupied by Ipoh Parade. CH named his home Dulcieville and the access road Dulcieville Lane. After a stint with the Town Board, he entered private practice where he took on major buildings and developments including the Central Police Station and Mosque; much of the Terraced roof courtyard shop houses along the New Town area in 1909, the Freemasonry Lodge in Maxwell Road (Jalan Tun Abdul Razak) in 1911, and the government quarters housing, in the Greentown area (from 1920). He was also involved in developing his own residential areas and land; along LaBrooy Road (Jalan LaBrooy), Idris Gardens (Taman Idris), parts of Tiger Lane (Jalan Sultan Azlan Shah) and Golf Club Road (Jalan Kelab Golf). A member of the congregation of the Elim Church, he built the first Gospel Hall in 1920.

CH, the owner of the first car to be registered in Ipoh (A 1) in 1945, also had nine godowns in the Cherry Park (Taman Cherry) area, and was also the owner of a rubber estate on the outskirts of Ipoh. He later owned the Caxton Press along Belfield Street (Jalan Sultan Yusuf). He passed away in 1958. His family later went on to own and develop the LaBrooy House building on Post Office Road (Jalan Dato' Sagor).



The 1st Masonic Hall



Labrooy's masterpieces – one off Labrooy Road, the other in Greentown



B M Iversen outside his office

**Berthel Michael Iversen** was born in Copenhagen, Denmark in 1906. The seventh and youngest child in the family, he was christened Berthel, after the famous Danish sculptor Berthel Thorvaldsen. With a great passion for drawing, Iversen studied architecture at the Royal Academy in Copenhagen. He was tempted with an offer to explore the Far East by his elder brother Werner, who had been a planter in Malaya since 1918. Ten years later, Iversen did come to Malaya and began his career in two architectural firms before starting his own firm in Ipoh – Iversen, Van Smitteren & Partners – in 1936.

Although many of his creations have been demolished or suffered face-changing renovation, many famous Iversen landmark buildings still stand, among these are the Grandstand at the Ipoh Race Course, four of the numerous cinema halls established by the Shaw Brothers, Jubilee Park, the Mercantile Bank, and the Lam Looking Bazaar. Sadly, the Art-deco Majestic cinema has recently fallen to the cry for development as have many of the outstanding private homes and the Fair Park Estate and shop houses. After setting up his own firm, he went on to design the Ipoh Swimming Club, the MCA Building and the Geological Survey Building (now Muzium Geologi) in Ipoh; the Loke Yew Building in Kuala Lumpur; and the Chinese Swimming Club in Penang. He also designed prefabricated houses and countless "tropical-friendly" private houses for the rich, government buildings, hospitals, schools, radio stations and churches. The list is endless!

In 1950, while recuperating from a kidney operation in Denmark, his design for a post office savings bank in Malaya won him a prize of \$5000. This building was launched in 1954 as the Federal House, in Kuala Lumpur, by the then British High Commissioner Donald MacGillivray. In 1966, Iversen retired and subsequently died of cancer in 1976, in Copenhagen at the age of 70. The Iversen family house (built by Iversen himself) was at No 110, Tambun Road (now demolished). Ruth remembers the sitting room in the house, which had a large desk. It was at this desk that her father would work on his masterpieces while listening to classical music and opera.



The present Masonic Hall



110 Tambun Road, the Iversen family home



Iversen's Cathay Cinema lights up Ipoh's night sky



Another Iversen masterpiece – Ipoh Telekom