

Nostalgia: Kledang Hill In The 1950s

By Ian Anderson

Kledang Hill has been in the news lately because of the dramatic clearing of its trees and this has caused much bad humour from all walks of life, as to the people of Perak, Kledang Hill is a treasure, despite its overuse as a hiking/trekking area every day. But very few years ago it was a wonderful place to get some fresh air and for those who enjoyed walking, to get the best aerial view of Ipoh from the peak.

Taking a step back to the 1950s, one would enter the foot of the hill via Pike Street, first passing by the old cemetery, the Sikh Dairy Farmers and their Bullock Carts and the glimmering mining pools. From there, one could walk up the metalled road to reach the telecommunication towers, some 808m above sea level. Once there, it was time to enjoy the view of the town shimmering in the haze of heat rising from the below. Then, for the foolhardy, one could race down the road and take a quick dip in the deep and cool mining pools with their dangerous steps and slippery sides. I am sure many ACS students will remember this Saturday morning outing, "Up the hill".



ACS go “Up the hill”, one Saturday Morning in 1952

But step back even further when the towers were first built; the road was simply loose gravel and cut, ‘zig-zag’, into the hillside. Sharp and steep corners were common as you drove up the hill, passing two waterfalls on the way. At that time only Government, four-wheel drive vehicles, were allowed on the road, mainly Police and Military. There were guards at the bottom to prevent entry and the towers themselves were fenced and guarded by armed soldiers.

But what about the hill before all this activity of cutting roads and building fences? Let us step back to a few more years when the area was almost untouched, what was it like then? Obviously, it was nature at its best. The trees, the wildlife, the flora and fauna were free of disturbance by human hand (and feet). It was original Malaya at its best! But there was one man who discovered its natural beauty in the early 1900s; his name was Jack Jennings, editor of Ipoh’s first newspaper, “The Times of Malaya”.

JAS Jennings and his wife Freda built a cottage at the Kledang Hill Station and named it “Rosedale”. This was their idyllic ‘getaway’ for weekends and holidays after they were married and before they built their “Rose Cottage” retreat in the Cameron Highlands. From Rosedale,

they would travel down to Menglembu in their two-wheeled horse cart, so much nicer than today's four-wheeled, air-conditioned automobiles!



Jennings at "Rosedale in 1911. The groom stands at the horses head

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