

Here Comes The Milo Man

By Ian Anderson

Ipoh World Sdn Bhd was set up in 2004 to record our history, concentrating on Ipoh and the Kina Valley. There has been a lot done in the last 15 years but of course recording history is a never-ending process, nonetheless, we continue to collect information, photographs and artefacts that demonstrate our history. However, some things are just not available at any cost as they have simply disappeared off the face of the earth. Such is the case of the Milo man's tricycle!



Milo, created by an Australian named Thomas Mayne in 1934 was introduced to Malaysia by Nestle in 1950, as a tonic food drink. Their primary marketing efforts were intended to have the tonic drink act as an energy drink for athletes to keep going. Thus the Milo van is often seen dispensing their product at sports areas and other festival sites. The older generations will remember that the Milo van has changed shape several times, the first being on a small three-wheeled truck, popular today as a collectors' model, which was probably the ground-breaking Mazda K360 first produced in 1959.



However, as was often the case, Ipoh was ahead of the world for a vehicle, a three-wheeled Milo tricycle was a familiar sight around Ipoh's streets and particularly at the gates of local schools long before the first Milo van appeared. Yes, Ipoh had a unique way of selling Milo. The mobile Milo can was invented by an entrepreneurial Indian gentleman in the mid 1950s. We

believe he lived in Bunting but kept his tricycle in a shop in Old Town. Wearing a white suit and topi, he would fill up with fresh Milo early in the morning and pedal around on a fixed route every day to catch his customers. His favourite spots were at the gates of schools during the lunch break or at canteen time, when hordes of small children would rush to the gates as he pedaled slowly towards them, clutching their few cents, and shouting out, "Here comes the Milo Man". Unfortunately nobody can remember his name, although he continued his business well into the 1960s, eventually losing out to the petrol driven vans. His Milo was served from a small brass tap at the bottom of the huge can into paper cups stored in the cupboard below the can. Sadly, after the vans took away his business, his original can was left in the backyard of a house in Old Town and simply rusted away.

The tricycle image is of a full-size replica made by ipohWorld's contractor, Y Cheng Thymes, whose Principal remembers the Milo Man outside St Michael's Institution (SMI). We also gathered descriptions and sketches from others who also remember seeing the trike and its driver. As part of the research we contacted Nestle Malaysia and their head office in Switzerland. Neither had any knowledge of such a vehicle. In addition we have searched for original photographs but so far have only found one that shows to top of the driver and a vague outline of the top of the can. Replica or not, our tricycle is certainly unique.

Do you have that photo we need?