

Heritage - An Ipoh Centenarian Still Going Strong

By Ian Anderson

The idea of a Chinese recreation club began when Dr K.T. Khong came down to Ipoh from Penang, in 1912, and set up his medical clinic, 'The Kinta Dispensary', in Tatlock Street. In Penang, he had been a leading member and one of the best cricketers of the Penang Recreation Club. His idea that Ipoh should have a similar club idea fell on fertile ground and at a meeting, attended by some of Ipoh's top Chinese, it was agreed that a club, The Chinese Recreation Club, should be formed with Eu Tong Sen as President.



PCRC Soccer Team c1951

Initial committee members were Dr Khong, Chung Thye Phin and Foo Choo Choon. The meeting was reported by Jack Jennings in the Times of Malaya on December 10, 1912. Jack, as editor of the Times of Malaya and a patron of the new recreation club, being keen on sports and sportsmanship, encouraged the club members to hold a soccer tournament – offering the 'Times of Malaya Cup' to the league champions.

The club was formally instituted in 1913, under the guidance of the committee, with Eu Tong Sen as Patron, Chung Thye Phin as President and Dr Khong as Honorary Secretary.

In the early days, the club was particularly strong on the cricket field with Dr Khong and Chung Ah Ming (grandson of Kapitan Chung Keng Kwee) who also played for Perak state. Dr Khong and Chung Ah Ming also formed a formidable doubles tennis pair with the latter also holding his own as the club's singles tennis champion. Their prowess was reported in the Times of Malaya on December 28, 1914, as:

“The Perak Chinese Recreation Club sent its first pair, consisting of Dr Khong Kam Tak and Mr Chung Ah Ming, to Singapore to play tennis against Mr Tan Ni Yan and Mr Tan Chong Kei of the Straits Chinese Recreation Club, Singapore on the latter's ground last Saturday. The best of five sets wins. A large crowd was at the Railway Station to see the pair off, and many accompanied them to Singapore.”



Ten years later the doubles pair became Perak Tennis Doubles Champions in the inaugural competition first held in 1924 and held their position as champions for many years.

Dr Khong went on to play tennis for the Federated Malay States and continued to win prizes even as a veteran. Incidentally, he was also one of the best Asian golfers in Malaya at the time.

The first clubhouse was on Brewster Road, close to the Jubilee Park site as we know it today. It was a simple affair as were most of the early clubhouses, but despite having wealthy sponsors, the club had no grounds of its own. Members were forced to use the public recreation grounds on Brewster Road. Eventually, in the 1930s the club was forced to make way for the Jubilee Park premises and moved to their present site at Lorong Chung Thye Phin. They have been there for more than 80 years.