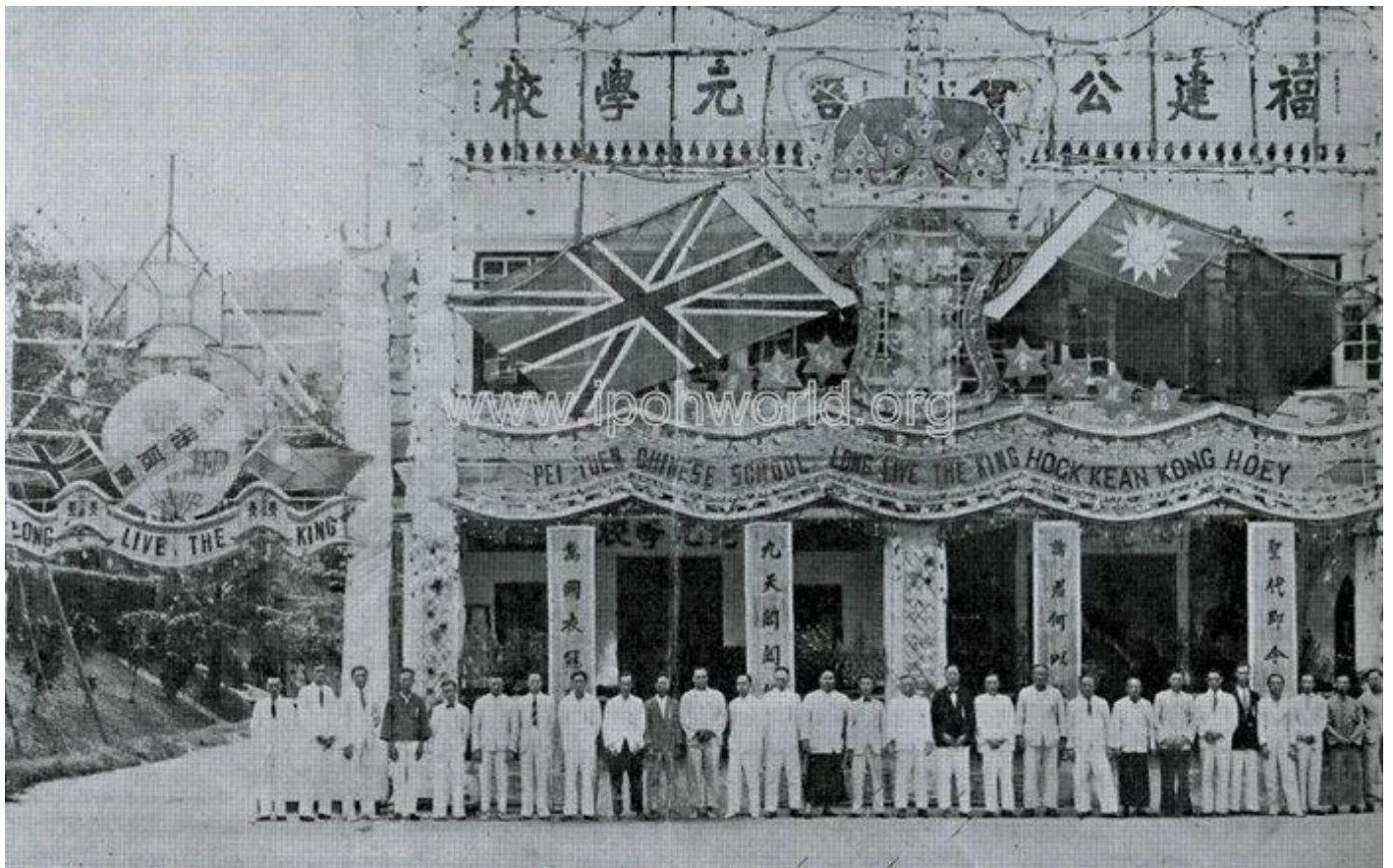


Heritage - It's 1937 And Kampar Celebrates

By Ian Anderson

British Malaya, like all other countries under British rule, took great effort in marking any major event in Britain with parades, decorations and illuminations that turned the whole country into a sea of colour by day and a blaze of light at night. All Government buildings and major private institutions joined in the frenzy of celebration. One such occasion was the Coronation of King George VI, with his Queen, Elizabeth, on May 12, 1937.

Kampar soon entered the fray making preparations long before the big day. Committees were formed, plans were made, and materials gathered.



The decorated Pei Yuan School, 1937

One such organisation was the Kampar Hokkien Association who had originally been instrumental in the founding of the Hokkien School in October 1912. However, due to the confusion caused regarding admission of students, the name was changed to Pei Yuan Chinese School in 1915. To mark the great Coronation celebration, the Association joined hands with the Committee of the Pei Yuan School. Their objective was to have the finest decoration of any in Kampar. And from the photograph, there can be no doubt they succeeded!

In 1912, the school's intake of students had been only 10 students. Classes were held in make-shift premises and teachers were hard to come by. However by 1919, as the school's enrolment increased, a shop lot at 178 Gopeng Road, Kampar was purchased by the Association and the school had a home. Unfortunately, due to a confrontation between the Government and the School's Directors, Pei Yuan School was forced to close in 1921. It remained closed for two long years, reopening in 1923.

Nonetheless, by 1937, the school was running at full throttle, classes were full; there were teachers a-plenty; it was a perfect time to plan a great celebration and what better time than a King's Coronation!

Pei Yuan was not alone, for on the great day, Kampar really let its hair down. It was a grand occasion for the town, with a 1.5 miles (2.4 Km) long lantern procession through the colourful streets, with bands, decorated cars, floats a 100ft-long dragon. To end the day, there was a community fireworks display over the illuminated buildings. It was truly a day to remember.

In 1940, with increased numbers, the school moved to the new building along Jalan Kuala Dipang and in 1941 Secondary classes were started but the Japanese invasion put a temporary end to all the classes. The school reopened in 1946 with only 36 students and like the rest of the Nation, recovery was slow. Despite this, there have been many changes since then, shortage of classrooms on one hand and wonderful additions that include a multi-purpose hall, a new school hall, a new library, a gymnasium and six more laboratories, on the other.

But the most important changes relate to the establishment of Sekolah Menengah Pei Yuan 1958. Then in 1962, Pei Yuan High School was set up for the private students. Thus, three schools co-exist in the same compound.

The photograph shows the Committee Members of the Pei Yuan Chinese School with the Kampar Hokkien Association, outside the school, during the 1937 celebration.

Pei Yuan and the Kampar Hokkien Association have a heritage to be proud of.