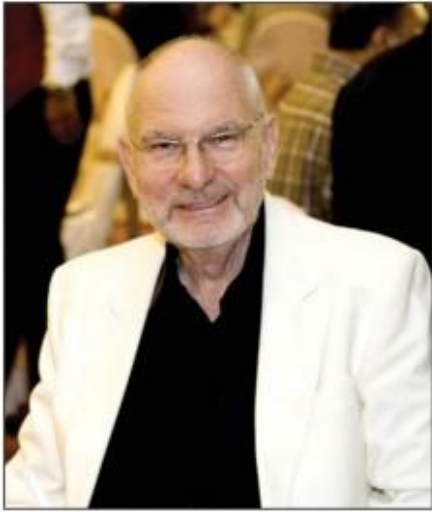


# Doggedly Determined Doer

By SeeFoon Chan-Koppen



Commander Ian Anderson is no ordinary retiree living the simple quiet life with his Ipoh-born wife Meng Wai in Ipoh Garden. He is an iconoclast who has single-handedly built up an impressive collection of artifacts, memorabilia, photos, videos, tin mining equipment and a tremendous archive of Heritage and Social History on the worldwide web to leave a precious legacy for future generations of Ipohites.

A Scotsman, born in UK a few months before the start of World War II and educated until age 16 at Wimbledon College, Ian had a simple childhood governed by shortages of all kinds, post war restrictions and ration books. He remembers a lot about those days of war and put it simply when he said “No matter how young you are, if terrible things happen they stick in your brain. Forever!” One fun thing he has never forgotten is the celebration for VE (Victory in Europe) Day in May 1945

when at the local street party he won the fancy dress competition dressed as a Chinaman. Could that have been fate taking a hand?

At 16, like most of his classmates, he came out into the wide world with a handful of Cambridge ‘O’ Levels and the need to find a future. For in those days only the top 20 per cent or so could go on to University, everybody else had to find a job, join the armed forces, go to a Technical College or take up an apprenticeship. Ian combined two of these choices by joining the Royal Navy as an Artificer Apprentice and emerged 30 years later as a well - travelled and experienced Weapons Engineering Commander.

Early on in this major journey through life he was based in Singapore as a young man and visited Malaya many times, his first visit to Ipoh being in 1962. Returning to Malaysia several times over the following years he seems to have garnered a special feeling for the country and its people, from which Ipoh and Perak benefit today.

Having left the Navy in 1985 Ian worked as a Project Manager in the shipbuilding industry for some five years and when offered a post in Kuala Lumpur he jumped at the chance to rekindle his relationship with the country. After ten years in KL, where apart from the job he took an active part in local charities and organisations, he retired as Managing Director of the British-based company and decided to stay on in Malaysia where he started his own business in partnership with a local friend. At that stage he decided to move to Ipoh to escape the KL traffic jams and escalating prices of accommodation.

Here Ipoh and Perak profited as after a quiet start he was persuaded by a local lady to start saving images and stories about the town he lived in. Thus, thanks to Kinta Properties Group, who provided the funding, Ipoh World Sdn Bhd was born. Consequently since 2004 he has built up a tremendous archive of Heritage and Social History on the ipohWorld website ([www.ipohworld.org](http://www.ipohworld.org)) as well as a reputation for doggedly driving forward no matter what difficulties get in the way. Today he runs his unique project from an office in Tenby Schools, Ipoh and it is they who now provide all the funding to support his passion. “Without Tenby,” Ian says, “*ipohWorld* would have died long ago.”

Despite being an engineer by profession who hated history at school, since he has been in Ipoh he has developed a keen interest in our heritage and history and he firmly believes that knowledge

of the past is vital for future generations. Thus he is the man behind, not only the *ipohWorld* website and the very unusual book, "Ipoh My Home Town", but he has also put on several exhibitions featuring local history, the latest being "A Tin Mining Family" in Falim House, his largest show so far. With free entrance this had entertained more than 12,000 visitors both locals and tourists when it closed on August 11 after a three-month run.

But he is not sitting back on his laurels even now, for he has the burning ambition to see Ipoh have its own permanent heritage gallery as part of the *ipohWorld* facilities. "This will provide much-needed entertainment for tourists in parallel with enhancing our students' knowledge of their roots," he says. He is hopeful that this will happen soon.

Since he moved to Ipoh, Ian, a Permanent Resident, has fully embraced life here, perhaps more so than most of the locals and probably knows his way (shortcuts included) around the city better than most Ipohites! Keeping his finger on the pulse of his adopted home he is often seen traversing around town, with camera in hand.

One high-ranking civil servant once had this to say about Ian, "Here is a man who cares more about Malaysia than most Malaysians." There is no doubt about that!