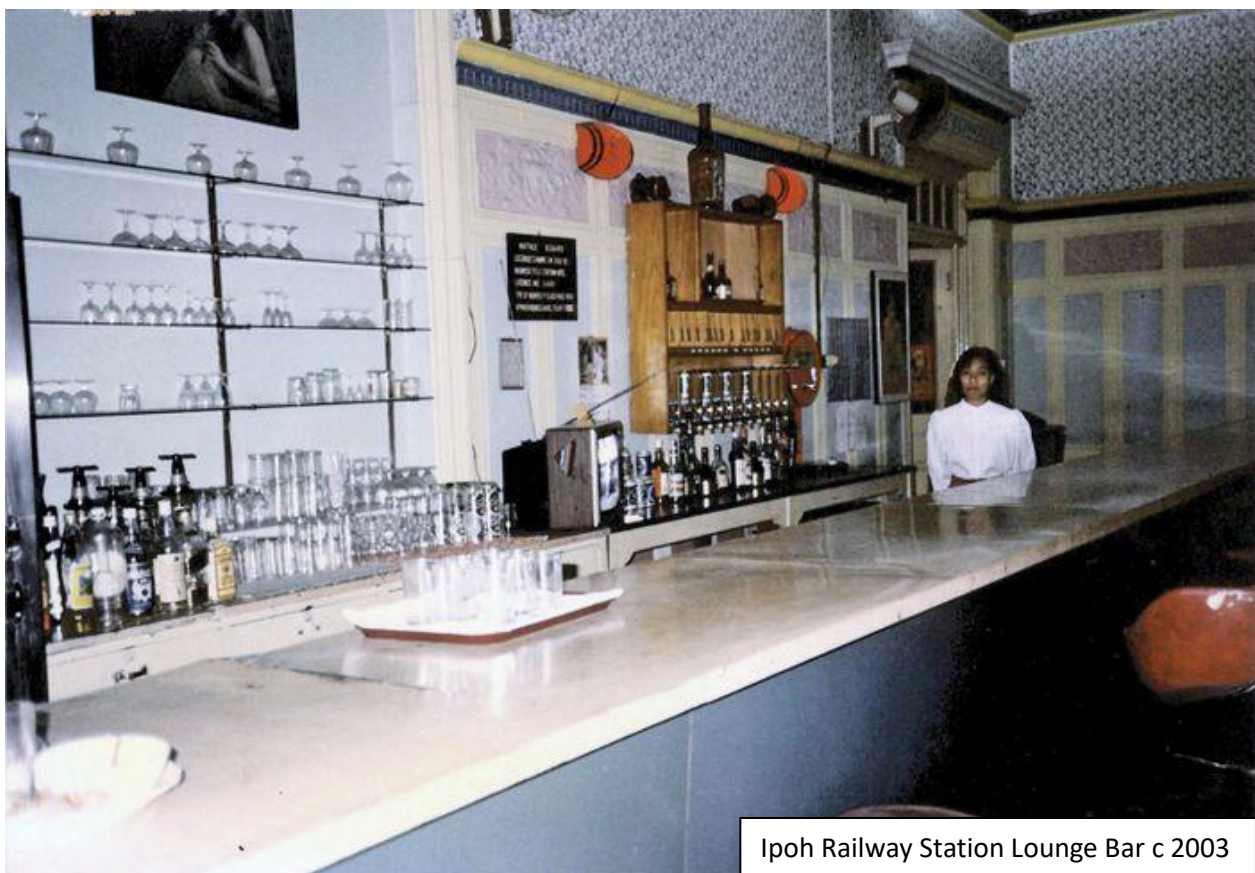


Nostalgia Lets Go On A Pub Crawl

Over the years, Ipoh has fostered many pubs, but none lasted for too long, apart from the FMS Bar that held the record as the oldest pub in Malaysia until a new team threw away the heritage and turned the premises into a squeaky clean and very modern restaurant, despite the lip service to antiquity with some collectable pieces on the wall and a few sticks of antique furniture. But what of the others, for apart from the Sinhalese bar and the Scotch Pub the remainder have simply disappeared.



Let us start at the obvious place, Ipoh's Railway Station. Here, there used to be a cosy little bar, simply known as The Station Bar. It was tucked away on the ground floor of the Station hotel and it was the perfect place for a visitor to relax while waiting for the train. Sadly it was closed a few years ago, leaving our 'Taj Mahal'; with no decent place for the traveller to rest awhile and enjoy a refreshing, cold drink – not necessarily alcoholic. A short walk up Station Road would take you to the Miners' Arms, founded in 1978. Very much a pub first and a restaurant second they served food on small wooden dulangs. It was a friendly place with a pleasant atmosphere, but it slowly faded away. I wonder why!

Apart from these two very traditional 'British-style' pubs, another great place for a beer was the local movie theatres, as, in traditional British style, all theatres had a bar. One bar of special note was the one in the Ruby Theatre. This was adjacent to the \$1 seats frequented by Europeans and Commonwealth soldiers. The photograph, taken in 1958, shows three uniformed cinema usherettes sitting with a friend at the Ruby bar, presumably between shows.



Usherettes at the Ruby Theatre Bar, 1958

Sitting second from the left is Tsang Gaik Lian, part of the famous Beef Noodle family of Ipoh. The date on the calendar is the 18th of October. Above it is a notice that reads "Approved for the use of

Her Majesty's Forces" A wide range of alcoholic drinks were available here, including Carlsberg and Anchor beer and Grants Whisky. Other liquor and cigars are also stocked behind the bar.

For a cheaper drink, the military could always go to their club in Ashby Road. Known as the NAAFI (Navy, Army and Air Force Institute) it served duty-free alcohol and good cheap food. While on the subject of Clubs, we must not forget the 'White Man's Clubs' like the Ipoh Club. These all had a comfortable, well-stocked bar in which to relax after a day on the Plantation or the Tin Mine. These bars still exist but the clientele is now mostly local.

In this round-up of drinking establishments of the past, let us not forget the hotels, restaurants and cafes where you could always get a beer. Do you remember the Olympic Inn, The Golden Jubilee Night Club, The Green Fern, Café Niko, Café Rendezvous, (Eastern Hotel and the Chicago Coffee House? They all served drinks in the good old days of the 60s – when a bottle of anchor cost \$1.40. Eat your heart out, people!