

Heritage: Ipoh's Green Lungs

Ipoh has changed dramatically over the last 20 years I have lived here. Wonderful old trees have been cut down and in most cases not replaced. The green area in the centre of town has been replaced by concrete and glass buildings, decorative gardens have disappeared and as everybody knows, the limestone hills and their ancient caves continue to be turned into gravel, thus destroying the natural habitat of our flora and fauna specific to our area. Doesn't anyone in authority understand that all this destruction not only takes away our natural heritage but damages our vital ecosystem? Vandalism of Mother Nature can never be reversed. Surely it is time to take a deep breath and look at what we are doing to Ipoh.

Nonetheless, there is still some good news. Fortunately, at least for the foreseeable future, the developers and their murderous machines have not touched our three recreation parks.



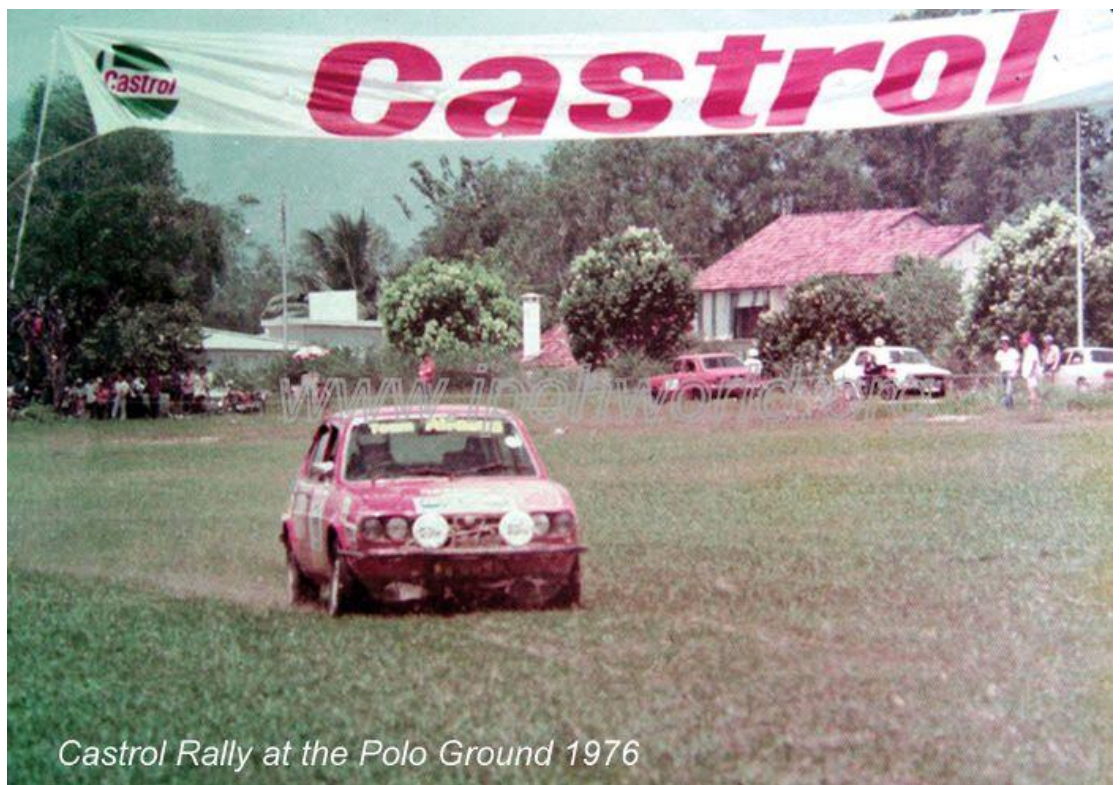
Darma Raja (D.R.) Seenivasagam Park is along what used to be called Anderson Lane in the days when Anderson Road and the Lane together formed the longest street in Ipoh. The park was set up as Coronation Park in 1953 to commemorate the Coronation of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. It was renamed in the late 1960s in honour of D.R. Seenivasagam, a prominent lawyer turned opposition politician who, with his brother, S.P., founded the People's Progressive Party (PPP). The party had a runaway victory in 1959 when they won all the Ipoh seats. Today the popular park features sports fields, mature trees, ponds and a well-kept Japanese Garden. It is a very popular place for all manner of exercise and well used by people of all ages.

There is another island of ecological pleasure just off the Tambun Road. Locally we know it as the Polo Ground, which during the British intervention in Malaya was exactly what it was. However, in the 1970s the park was reincarnated as a Motor Sports Rallying venue, driven (sic) by the Royal Perak Motor Club whose roots stem from 1907 and the Perak Motor Union. Subsequently, it became a recreation park, named after Sultan Abdul Aziz.

Today the park is an ideal place for exercise with plenty of green space for Tai Qi, Qi Gong and more. Then there is the walking/jogging track around the perimeter, where in the early morning there are hundreds of participants of all ages. Senior citizens with walking sticks are common and, believe it or not, from time to

time you will even see a senior citizen on a Zimmer. That's real dedication! The late Sultan Azlan Shah walked the track every morning he was in Ipoh.

Finally, there is a stage for the fittest to lead us in Zumba, Aerobics and other forms of torture for creaking bones and protesting muscles.



Last but not least we have Gunung Lang. This is a vast green area of around 30 hectares, primarily bordered by limestone hills. For centuries it was untouched and nature at its best, but in 2000 it was developed into a new recreation park. All the entertainment features are man-made and include a cascading waterfall, a 2km boardwalk over the swamp and lookout towers. Additional facilities a children's playground, a campsite and a mini zoo. It is a popular place at weekends.

To conclude this brief run around our parks, I am not suggesting that anyone is about to take these facilities away, but as pressure on development land grows and high rise buildings creep ever closer to the Polo Ground there is always that risk. So, citizens of Ipoh, keep a watchful eye as these are not only our green lungs, they are our heritage.