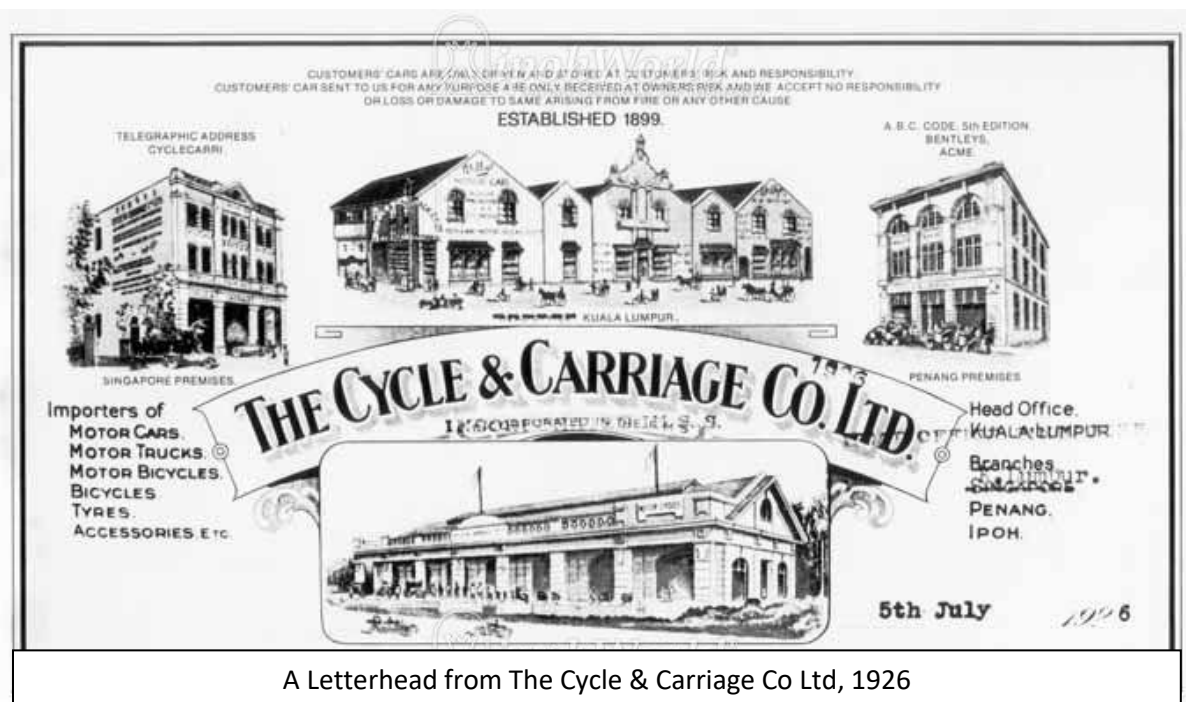


# Nostalgia - Yeoh Ghim Khoon, Transport Entrepreneur

There was a time when Ipoh was said to be the town with more Mercedes cars than anywhere else in Malaya. Whether this is accurate, nobody knows, but there is no doubt that Ipoh had more than its fair share and they all came from that famous old company Cycle and Carriage, opened on Brewster Road in 1906. The company closed down in Ipoh in 1930, a victim of the world depression.



With the depression over, Cycle and Carriage rose again in Ipoh, through an agency in Silibin owned by Yeoh Ghim Khoon. He was the eldest son of Yeoh Khuan Joo, born into the Yeoh, Lim, Chew family group in 1903. He called his company Ipoh Motors (a car dealership and workshop), which after the war, took over the old Cycle and Carriage building. Here he was the local agent for a number of other makes, including Fiat and Renault, but while Italy and France lying in post-war ruins, he took on Plymouth, Hudson, Fargo, Willys and other American makes as these were more available.

In the early days, the Mercedes was owned by the richest towkays, most of whom made their fortunes from the tin mines in the Kinta Valley. Outside this



ring of Tin Barons, there were no luxuries like family cars and the options to travel were few – the Gharry, the Rickshaw or the Omnibus! The bus has a long history in Ipoh, which started when a Japanese businessman opened pony bus service between Ipoh and Batu Gajah in 1893. The carriage was drawn by two ponies. Next came the first motor bus service, started by Yeop Abdul Rani Idris in 1910. Based on a single bus it ran from the corner of Hugh Low Street and Laxamana Road to Gopeng. This was a great innovation for the travelling public. Then, in 1913, C.F.F. Wearne started a service, driving his own bus from Belfield Street to Gopeng. He also built up a fleet of cars from his premises in Kenion Street, Ipoh, and then teamed up with his brother to start a chain of garages.

The idea of buses grew quickly and soon there were many different companies operating around Ipoh making it possible to travel to most of the towns in Perak. However, as most of these were independent operators, with only one or two vehicles and there was no coordination and as everyone vied for the most profitable routes, the public suffered.



Ipoh Omnibus Company c1970

Thus, in 1937, the British administration reorganised the public transportation industry for the first time. The Ipoh companies were consolidated; Ipoh Internal Transport, Kinta Omnibus, General Omnibus, Reliance, Omnibus and Century Omnibus were to be under one flag – the Ipoh Internal Transport Company. Control of the new company was awarded to Yeoh Ghim Khoon. It is said that he was chosen as he was English educated and was already

involved in business dealings in Ipoh. His company subsequently formed a subsidiary, the Ipoh Omnibus Company, around 1960, when the Bumiputra participation laws were introduced. Today we have Perak Transit.

So where did these wonderful old vehicles go? All we have today are memories.