

The moment that links Kirkby and Malaysia forever

The town made worldwide headlines in the 1950s following the historic announcement

ECHO (liverpoolecho.co.uk)

24 DECEMBER 2017

By Connor Dunn

In 1956 the Malaysian Government first announced to the world that Malaysia would become an independent nation - while on a visit to Kirkby.

The announcement which secured **Kirkby's** small place in Malaysian history was made at the Malayan Teacher Training College (MTTC), a centre set up in the town following World War II and called so due to the country previously being called Malaya.

The college stood in the area now called Granbourne Chase and was originally used by the Liverpool Corporation as a teacher training college **until 1951**.

It was set up due to a shortage of teachers in Britain at the end of World War II and the Government establishing temporary colleges in different parts of the country.

After the war there was also an urgent need for English teachers in Malaysia.

This shortage of educators prompted an offer to be sent to all British colonies to help and upon receiving their responses the then Government of the Federation of Malaya decided to use the facilities in Kirkby Fields as a teachers' training college.

The former munition workers' barracks site was handed over to the Malaya Teachers' Training College in 1952, which was based there until its closure 10 years later.

During that time the college trained more than 1,300 young Malaysians to teach in schools in their homeland.

And on February 7, 1956, following a delegation in London over Malaysia's future the previous day, the first ever public announcement that Malaysia was going to be independent was made in the main hall of the Kirkby College by then Chief Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman, who later became the country's first prime minister.

The following day the MTTC made international headlines after the announcement and the council say there are plans for a plaque to commemorate the college on the green, which marks the centre of the original college site.

In August this year, 60 years after the announcement, 38 former-students now based in Malaysia and other parts of the world returned to Knowsley to commemorate the anniversary of Malaysia's independence.

As part of the special trip the delegation visited the site where the MTTC once stood and unveiled a permanent information panel remembering the fascinating history of the site.

Dato V.L. Kandan, who attended the college, officially unveiled the information panel.

He said: "Only those who have gone through the portals of this unique institution can understand the emotional attachment we former students have for Kirkby and the treasured, timeless bond of friendship we have for the place.

"It was the one and only Teachers' Training College in the world to be set up in a foreign land to train teachers for a country that was yet to attain independence. It was not only unique it was phenomenal!"

Knowsley Council cabinet member Shelley Powell added: "It has been wonderful to bring together the people from both sides of this fascinating story sixty years after it first began."

© 2017 Trinity Mirror Merseyside

Source: <http://www.liverpoolecho.co.uk/news/nostalgia/moment-links-kirkby-malaysia-forever-14071739>