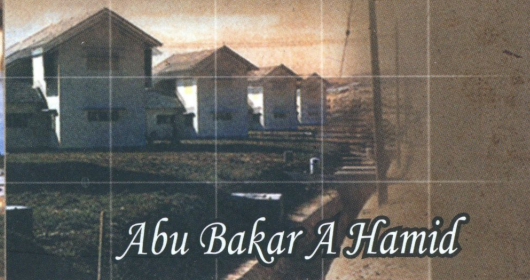


The University at Pantai Valley

Glimpses *of the past*



Abu Bakar A Hamid

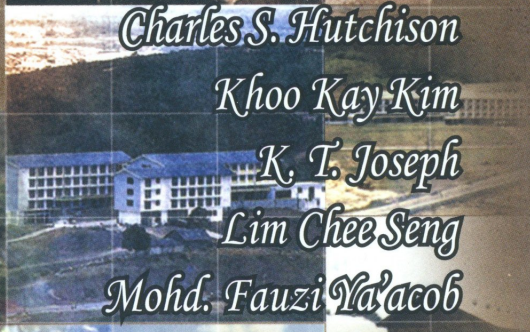
Charles S. Hutchison

Khoo Kay Kim

K. T. Joseph

Lim Chee Seng

Mohd. Fauzi Ya'acob



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The University at Pantai Valley

*Glimpses
of the past*

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MENTRI PELAJARAN

17hb May, 1962

Saya sangat berbesar hati kerana saya telah di-minta untuk menulis di-dalam buku Chenderamata ini bagi memperingati hari istiadat melantek Chancellor Universiti Malaya yang pertama. Universiti2 di-lain2 negeri. Tetapi dengan usaha ahli2 pendidik kita maka Universiti ini se-hari makin besar pengaruh-nya di-kalangan ra'yat. Mulai daripada tahun ini Universiti Malaya telah di-jadikan sa-buah Universiti Kebangsaan yang mempunyai otonomi-nya sendiri dan dengan perlantikan Yang Teramat Mulia Tengku Abdul Rahman Putra sa-bagai Chancellor-nya yang pertama, dapat-lah Universiti kita bergerak dengan lebih giat lagi untuk mengisi segala kekurangan2 yang maseh terdapat. Di-dalam Ranchangan Lima Tahun Yang Kedua Kerajaan telah pun menguntokkan wang sa-banyak tiga puluh empat juta ringgit bagi memperalatkan-nya supaya menjadi sa-buah Universiti modern dan lengkap.

Sa-bagaimana kita sekalian sedia ma'alum, sa-buah Universiti itu bukan-lah hanya sa-nya mengadongi pekrangan yang indah dan bangunan2 yang besar, tetapi juga ia-nya harus di-isi dengan mahasiswa yang berkelayakan dan Maha-Guru2 yang terkenal dengan pimpinan Yang Teramat Mulia Tengku Abdul Rahman, saya perchaya chita2 kebangsaan kita akan dapat terchapai di-dalam tempoh yang se-sengkat2-nya. Saya juga dapati mahasiswa2 lepasan daripada Universiti Malaya tidak-lah angkoh dan sombong dan kebanyakan daripada mereka itu insaf bahawa segala 'ilmu pengetahuan yang mereka dapati daripada Universiti itu haarus di-gunakan untuk kepentingan Negara dan ra'yat. Perasaan ini sedang di-tanam dan di-usahakan oleh mahasiswa2 itu sendiri di-dalam pergerakan mereka se-hari2. Kita sa-bagai suatu bangsa yang Merdeka dan berdaulat jangan-lah hendak-nya meniru2 perbuatan orang lain tetapi harus mempunyai keperibadian bangsa kita sendiri, jangan-lah seperti umang2 yang menyangka sarong siput yang di-tumpanginya itu ada-lah hak milek mereka sendiri.

Saya sendiri merasa dengan kegiatan dan hemah pemuda2 kita untuk menuntu 'ilmu, tambahan pula mereka juga mempunyai kelayakan yang chukup dan kalau-lah keadaan yang sa-umpama ini berpanjangan terpaksa-lah sa-buah lagi Universiti Kolej di-dirikan.

Kepada mahasiswa2 yang berjaya saya mengambil peluang ini menguchapkan sa-tinggi2 tahni'ah semoga kejayaan mereka akan menjadi pendorong bagi pemuda2 kita yang lain.



(ABDUL RAHMAN PUTRA HAJI TERAMAT)
Menteri Pelajaran.

The University at Pantai Valley

Glimpses of the past

Editors

*Abu Bakar A Hamid
K.T. Joseph*



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Manager
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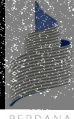


*"Seorang dari istana berkelakuan seperti orang istana itu perkara biasa.
Seorang rakyat biasa berkelakuan seolah-olah dia orang istana itu luar biasa.
Seorang dari istana berkelakuan seperti rakyat biasa itulah*

Profesor DiRaja Ungku A. Aziz."

Vice-Chancellor 1968-1988

Abu Bakar A Hamid



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Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra Alhaj (Cambridge), first Chancellor of the University of Malaya, Pantai Valley with Professor Sir Alexander Oppenheim (Oxford), first Vice-Chancellor and Dr Francis Morsing (Oxford), Esquire Bedell at the convocation of 1962.



Royal Professor Ungku A. Aziz and Prof. Dato' Dr. Hashim Yaacob after the delivery of Sri Perdana Inaugural Lecture by the latter. It was after this inaugural lecture that Prof. Dato' Dr. Hashim Yaacob commissioned the writing of the *Glimpses of the Past*.

FOREWORD

The book "Glimpses of the Past" dedicated to Royal Professor Ungku A. Aziz is a personal record of six contributors, four of whom are Emeritus Professors with two other senior professors of the University of Malaya. Their personal experiences, anecdotes and opinions are theirs alone and do not necessarily represent the University of Malaya.

I should like to congratulate all of them for their efforts in bringing to life some of the characters and historical figures that laid the foundation of this great university. Much of what has been written will not be found in any official documents and the university is therefore grateful to have had the perspectives of the six authors. The story begins with CS Hutchison's "Looking Back" where he brings to life the early beginnings of Geology in Singapore and the subsequent shift to Kuala Lumpur. This is followed by Khoo Kay Kim's "From Bukit Timah to Lembah Pantai". Fauzi Yaacob writes about his student days in the sixties and comments about his life as a young lecturer. Abu Bakar Hamid then traces the early days of Malay Studies; his travelogue is entitled "From Malay Studies to Media Studies".

Lim Chee Seng looks at English in the University of Malaya. The piece of the last contributor, K. T. Joseph is entitled "Higher Education in the University of Malaya and Elsewhere during the last Five Decades." It is a highly personal piece of writing on the early days in Agriculture and in Geography, as well as on events in the Senate. He also provides a prescription that might help to put back the University of Malaya on the world map.

Professor Dato' Dr. Hashim Yaacob
Vice-Chancellor 2003-2006



The meeting of minds which decided to complete and publish the Glimpses of the Past. *From left to right:* Professor Emeritus Tan Sri Dato' Dr. Khoo Kay Kim, Professor Emeritus Datuk Abu Bakar Hamid, Professor Dato' Dr. Hashim Yaacob and Professor Emeritus Dr. K.T. Joseph.

PREFACE

This book, commissioned by the then Vice-Chancellor Professor Dato' Hashim Yaacob in 2006, we hope, will give the public glimpses of the past with particular reference to the early beginnings of the University of Malaya in Kuala Lumpur. The six authors of this volume of essays are all senior members of the University fraternity: four of them are Emeritus Professors and the other two are currently holders of professorships in the University. Much of what has been written will not be found in previous documents and to this extent, the experiences and reminiscences will be a valuable record of events past. It is hoped that the younger generation of Malaysians will read this volume of essays and come to appreciate a significant part of our nation's history.

The decade of the sixties, referred to by many, as that glorious decade when Pantai Valley became renowned throughout the academic world was because we brought together some of the best scholars from many parts of the globe to this University.

Since 1990 there were changes, marked changes culminating in the loss of recognition of the University's medical degree, a telling blow indeed - when one considers the GMC's generous evaluation of the first batch of our medical graduates. The redeeming feature at the time was that our Dental Faculty obtained recognition from the Dental Council of Great Britain. It should also be recorded that during the decade of the nineties, the academic culture, nurtured since the beginnings of the University was severely eroded and in its place, bureaucracy and patronage took centre stage.

In more recent times strong measures to impose the more irrelevant aspects of the culture of the "Corporate World" superimposed with the worst aspects of bureaucracy is inhibiting the progress of our University. Added to the above problems there is not only unnecessary directives by the Ministry of Higher Education but restrictions imposed by the Public Services Department. Cumulatively, this has led to a serious lowering of standards in the quality of academic staff as well as of our graduates. It was freedom

from central government control that resulted in American Universities claiming 11 of the top 20 slots in the Global Rankings of Universities in 2005. This is also because these top Universities benefit from large endowments and are free of political interference.

In late 2005, Royal Professor Ungku Aziz spoke of the need to clean up the "Augean Stables". In referring to Greek mythology he was politely drawing attention to the need to rectify matters. Benchmarking must be based on quality and be carried out by those scholars who have distinguished themselves in the past and not merely on procedures developed for the running of factories. There are now over 260 Professorial staff (as at 2006) in the University of Malaya; of which a significant number, would never have been considered Professorial material by the standards of yester-year. In the past, Professorships were all competed for as the chairs were advertised. Benchmarking should be the basis for extension of service at both the level of Professor as well as Associate Professor. Staff should be sent to the finest establishments in the world in their respective fields for their doctorates. Steps such as these are necessary and need to be urgently implemented.

This volume of essays is affectionately dedicated to Royal Professor Ungku A Aziz (Vice-Chancellor from 1968 to 1988) for his part in keeping to the early traditions of the University under very challenging circumstances and for his abiding interest in rural poverty. As the architect of "*Tabung Haji*" (The Pilgrims Welfare Fund), Ungku Aziz would have been a worthy candidate for the Nobel Peace Prize.

Editors

CONTRIBUTORS

Abu Bakar Hamid, is a graduate of the foremost University in Indonesia, namely Universitas Indonesia in Malay/ Indonesian Studies in Jakarta. He has been both Visiting Professor as well as External Examiner for the world's most prestigious Departments of Malay/ Indonesian Studies including SOAS, London; Australian National University and in the USA. He has had considerable experience in University administration having served as Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic Affairs) as well as Acting Vice-Chancellor, University of Malaya. He was also former Chairman of Bernama and was awarded with a Federal Datukship. He is now the Emeritus Professor of Creative and Descriptive Writing in the University of Malaya.

Charles S. Hutchison, is a world authority on the Geology of Southeast Asia having published six books and numerous scholarly articles on the subject. He is the author of *Geological Evolution of Southeast Asia* 1980. He is now Emeritus Professor of Applied Geology in the University of Malaya.

Khoo Kay Kim, is a distinguished authority of Malaysian Historiography having published numerous scholarly books, among them, *The Western Malay States, 1850-1873* and *Malay Society: Transformation and Democratization* as well as numerous articles in learned Journals inter alia "The Western Scholar and the Study of Asia" in W E Wilmont(ed), *Scholarship and Society in Southeast Asia*, New Zealand Asia Studies, Occasional Papers Vol. 2., 1979 and "Sino-Malay Relations in Peninsular Malaysia before 1942" *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 1981 He was President of the Malaysia Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society in 1991 and has been an External Assessor in History to several universities. He was recently conferred a Tan Sriship. He is currently Emeritus Professor of Malaysian History at the University of Malaya.

K.T. Joseph, is a graduate of the Universities of Western Australia, Adelaide and of Reading in the United Kingdom. He is currently Emeritus Professor of Land Use Studies, in the Department of Geography in the University of Malaya, formerly foundation Head of the Soils, Water and Engineering Division of the Malaysian Agricultural Research and Development Institute.

Lim Chee Seng, is a professor in the Department of English, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences. He served as the International Chairman of the Association for Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies (1997-1999) and is serving on the Executive Committee of the International Shakespeare Association (1995-2011) which is based in Stratford-upon-Avon.

Mohd. Fauzi Ya'acob, is Professor in the Department of Anthropology and Sociology, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at the University of Malaya. He is a home grown product of the University of Malaya at Pantai Valley having obtained all his degrees - BA Honours, MA and Ph.D degrees from this university. He has been respectively, student, tutor, assistant lecturer, lecturer Associate Professor and Professor and has held administrative posts such as Head of Department, Dean and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Student Affairs). His area of expertise is Malay Entrepreneurs and Small Businesses.

LOOKING BACK

Charles S. Hutchison

University of Malaya in Singapore: 1957 – 1960

The Department of Geology had recently been established and Dr. Charles S. Pichamuthu appointed from Bangalore to be the inaugural professor. The university advertised the second academic position in the Times of London that I read while working in an oil company in Trinidad. I applied and received back an offer of assistant lectureship from the registrar Mr. Lewis, which I accepted. The registrar explained that there was some urgency for my services. So it was that I sailed on the s.s. *Reina Del Mar* from Port of Spain to England, thence by the s.s. *Canton* to Singapore. The Suez Canal was closed and the voyage took the long route via Dakar and Cape Town. In those days the regular mode of travel was first class P. & O. (or equivalent) for commercial air travel was yet in its infancy. It was an exciting memorable time, two weeks to England, and a further five weeks to Singapore; the rules allowing half salary during the travel.

I was met on the ship by Professor Pichamuthu, and he brought along the whole department — Tengku Ismail, the laboratory assistant, and Anthony Henry, the departmental secretary. I had a feeling of being welcomed into a family, and that is what the department and the university became to me. We shared my final breakfast on the s. s. *Canton*, and leaving the security of the ship, drove into downtown Singapore, along Orchard Road, then Nassim Road to my new home — the Dalvey Road Mess at number 5.

Dalvey Road Mess

The University Messes — the other was Wolverton Mess — were a great institution of the university during its days in Singapore. They

were for unmarried academic staff and for the temporary accommodation of visiting external examiners.

Dalvey Road Mess was a tall two-storey colonial-style building, set on a hill in about an acre of grassy garden and approached by a long winding road leading up from tree-lined Dalvey Road. The ground floor was dominated by a palatial dining room, leading into a sitting room, and a short covered entrance stairs led down onto a loop of the driveway. The three upstairs bedrooms were allocated to individual staff members, and each had a private bathroom. There were also two bedrooms downstairs. The rules were that the residents paid a set monthly fee for full board and laundry. However, it was possible to reduce this by opting out of any of the set meals with previous notice. It was also possible to order additional meals for invited guests.

The Mess was well maintained by two Hainanese professional amahs, dressed in white starched smock and black silk trousers, and a cook 'boy', who went shopping every day on his bicycle, wearing khaki shorts and a solar topee. The chief amah had tightly combed hair plaited into a queue and flashing gold teeth. The staff inhabited an outhouse at the back, and there was also a garage at the far end of the driveway loop.

The great benefit of the Mess was that academic staff was freed from domestic duties and friendships were readily established between different departments and faculties. I enjoyed the company of the other residents and have maintained contact with some even to the present. Staff who stayed there were Len Young and Mary Turnbull, both from the History Department and both were transferred to Kuala Lumpur before ending their careers at the University of Hong Kong. Michael Swift stayed there before joining the Malay Studies department in Kuala Lumpur and eventually ending up at Monash University in Melbourne. Ivan Polunin of the medical faculty stayed on in Singapore but became better known for his wonderful photography and his books and films on the trees and animals of Malaysia. Ivan was my neighbour upstairs. He had rather loud Hi-Fi equipment and edited his own sound tracks for his films and radio programmes. I was particularly annoyed by his repeated playing of his recordings of Kurdish folk songs that he had made. He did, however, produce fine quality material sold to the British and Australian Broadcasting Corporations. George Lowe transferred to the Engineering Faculty in Kuala Lumpur and I occasionally still see him because he lives in Petaling Jaya. George, a New Zealander, found Singapore too cold and was always switching off the Mess fans against our wishes.

There were also others who stayed briefly in the region — Dennis Keane of the English Department and Roger Smart, a South African mathematician. Jean Gray from the university hospital later married the former Chief Minister David Marshall, who frequently attended functions in the university. Tim Whitmore frequently came for lunch. He was connected with the botanical gardens and then moved to the Forest Research Institute in Kuala Lumpur. He ended his career as Professor of Geography at Cambridge University and is known for his book on the palm trees of Malaysia. Dai Davies of the Law Department came to live in the upstairs back bedroom. He would quietly drink on his own, but had the unsociable habit of peeing out of his balcony.

On a recent nostalgic visit to Dalvey Road, it was sad to see both of the university Messes demolished and the junction between Dalvey and Nassim roads realigned but the campus is otherwise largely intact.

Wolverton Mess

This wonderful “Hansel and Gretel” kind of house occupied a strategic setting at the end of Nassim road, near Cluny Road and the Botanical Gardens. It was the social centre of the university. I had many friends who lived there — Tony Berry of Zoology, who later transferred to Kuala Lumpur before leaving for Stirling University. David Bassett was in the History Department, and transferred briefly to Kuala Lumpur before going to Hull. Frank Coiffi of the Department of Philosophy was thin as a rake and had a reputation for living on cakes and ice cream. He carried around with him an airline shoulder bag containing the sum total of his worldly possessions. Bernard Brown was one of the early members of the Law Faculty. He, Tony, David and I would frequent the nightclubs and girly bars of Singapore. Our favourite was ‘Bill Bailey’s Place’ (the Coconut Grove), on a side street behind the Cold Storage on Orchard Road. It was the home of Bill and Mrs. Bailey but also a bar and social centre. Bill was reputed to be of “Where have you gone Bill Bailey” fame. The Coconut Grove has also sadly gone from modern Singapore

Wolverton Mess was the University social centre. Cyril Parkinson, of *Parkinson’s Law* fame, frequently visited the mess. He had written his law and published it as episodes in the *Spectator* magazine, largely based on his careful observation of the University of Malaya administration, but the world took little notice. Later he compiled the whole into a book and obtained a well-known illustrator. The book made him famous overnight. I well remember when his book

first appeared; Cyril sat at a desk in the City Book shop on Collyer Quay autographing the sold copies that were few because he was not yet well known. Once the book hit the American market, he was invited on a paid lecture tour, and never returned to Singapore. He then retired to the Channel Islands.

The Worlds

Singapore had two of these entertainment parks— Great World and New World. Sadly, these extremely well frequented entertainment parks have passed into history. Both had taxi-dancing halls in which the girls sat around the dance floor. You picked a partner for that dance and presented her with the purchased ticket. Kuala Lumpur also had a similar entertainment park— Bukit Bintang Park, now also sadly gone. There was also the well-frequented Great Eastern taxi-dancing hall, with two entrances, one by a Bailey bridge from Ampang and the other off Campbell Road. I used to go to the Great Eastern with Alistair Lamb of History and Cyril Skinner of Malay Studies.

The Singapore Badminton Hall was located within the New World Park, and I used to accompany Dennis Keane on Saturday nights to the professional wrestling, especially to watch our hero King Kong. He was so large that he occupied two seats in the plane on the way up to perform in the Bukit Bintang Park. The hall in the Bukit Bintang Park was also famous for striptease shows. The main attraction was Rose Chan, Malaysia's queen of striptease.

Dato Sir Alexander Oppenheim

Oppie, as he was known to friends, was the Vice-Chancellor during my time in Singapore. He was also a distinguished mathematician. He had been professor of mathematics at Raffles College. He was a lance bombardier in the Singapore Reserve Army when the Japanese captured the island in 1942. His wife and young daughter escaped, but he was captured and held in Changi Camp, where under extreme difficulty, he and some other academics established a rudimentary 'POW University' of which he was elected by fellow prisoners to the post of Head of Mathematics and Dean. He later survived the great hardship of the Thailand-Burma railway. Upon the surrender of the Japanese, Oppie returned to Raffles College and was involved in the planning of the University of Malaya. He became Dean of Arts and acting Vice-Chancellor. In 1957, he became Vice-Chancellor of the University of Malaya.

The University of Malaya had been given land in Johore Bharu on which to set up a university to serve both Singapore and the Federation of Malaya. However, the Carr-Saunders Report recommended that the university be split into two — a campus in Pantai Valley to be known as the *University of Malaya in Kuala Lumpur*, and the existing campus on Bukit Timah Road to be renamed the *University of Malaya in Singapore*.

Oppie was appointed overall Vice-Chancellor and commuted between the two campuses. In Singapore, he continued to live in the on-campus Vice Chancellor's house; while in Kuala Lumpur he lived in a chalet in the Lake Gardens that existed between the Museum and the Majestic Hotel. He was knighted in 1961 and awarded a Dato'ship in 1962. By the time he retired in 1965, he was living in the Vice-Chancellor's House on the hill within the Pantai Valley Campus. By that time, the universities had severed ties. The Pantai Valley Campus became the University of Malaya, while the Bukit Timah Campus became the National University of Singapore, soon afterwards to move permanently to Kent Ridge. He retired to a Visiting Professorship of Mathematics at Reading University. He continued his academic career in Ghana and Nigeria from 1968 until 1977, and died in 1997 at the ripe age of 93 in Henley-on-Thames.

Other Staff Remembered

Beda Lim was of course well known as one of the library staff. He transferred to Kuala Lumpur, served under Mr Plumb, and eventually became the Librarian. He appeared by name in the book *Snake Wine* by Patrick Anderson. Beda was an intellectual and read a large number of the books in the library.

Robert Ho of the Geography Department was a frequent visitor to the Geology Department and he often went out with Pichamuthu and me to look at interesting outcrops around Singapore. The three of us went farther afield one weekend as far as Mersing to have a look at the interesting outcrops on the rocky headlands near the resthouse. As a result of this, a student field trip was organized to Mersing. This time I was accompanied by Tony Leow and Samba Gowda. Robert Ho was later appointed to the Chair of Geography in Pantai Valley. He gave an inaugural address in which he said that "in the tropics winter fell at night". Indeed the Malaysian meteorological annual reports always contained a category 'number of nights with temperature < 68° F [20° C]'. I well remember that students used to walk to their 9 am classes wearing woollen sweaters. The newly opened

Subang Airport frequently had to remain closed until the morning ground fog burned off. Regretfully pollution has put an end to all this.

Dr. Zaki Badawi was in the Malay Studies Department and transferred to Kuala Lumpur. He continued his academic career in London and is reputed to have become the Head of the Muslim Council.

Professor Sheridan was the inaugural Professor of Law. I used to meet him regularly at lunch time walking along Dalvey Estate reading a newspaper on his way home to his Dalvey Road flat. He used to refuse a lift saying that his walk home was his only regular exercise.

There was a young American couple living in the flats near Wolverton Mess. I frequently talked to the wife as she walked her 'baby' in a perambulator. Her 'baby' was a young gibbon that she dressed with short trousers. She used to bite it when it misbehaved; as she told me it was the appropriate gibbon way of teaching a baby.

Ann Johnson, who later became Professor of Botany in Kuala Lumpur, and her husband Johnny Johnson of the Zoology Department used to give the most memorable parties in their house near Cluny Road. A regular guest at these events was Rosalie, a nymphomaniac of widespread repute. She used to disappear with unattached male guests into any convenient cupboard. Once on an outing to the Kota Tinggi waterfall, Rosalie was surrounded and pursued by a number of young expatriate men. It was the nearest equivalent to a bitch on heat attracting all the males from the neighbourhood.

Richard Guy was the head of the Mathematics Department. I well remember one evening a group of friends participated in a treasure hunt from his house. One item listed was the number plates of Oppenheim's official car. I went with Len Raynor and Tony Berry to the Vice Chancellor's house. While I misled the Sikh jaga to another part of the campus, my two friends removed the number plates from the car in the driveway. Richard was extremely surprised when presented with the trophy and had an interesting time returning them to Oppie the next morning. The Vice-Chancellor, however, had a great sense of humour and enjoyed the prank.

One evening Tony Berry and I, both in our early twenties, were walking along Beach Road from Raffles Hotel. We both wore short sleeved shirts. A British military police Land Rover stopped beside us and the two military police requested to see out identification. They suspected us of being British other ranks, off duty and improperly dressed without a tie. Anyway this upper part of Beach Road was out of bounds because it led to the Seventh Storey night club. We refused. They continued to follow us and we had fun pretending to be other ranks. They then approached us with the request that we accompany them to the nearest civil police station.

We again refused and in frustration they drove off. This incident taught us that military police have no authority over anyone until he identifies himself as military. Had we genuinely been young other ranks playing the fool, the repercussions would have been serious.

Bugis Street

Sadly the present day Bugis Street is nothing but a shopping alley of no character. But in my Singapore days I used to frequent it with my friends Tony Berry and Bernard Brown. We were first introduced to the real nature of the street by Tony Price, a lecturer in the English Department who had made a study of the people who worked there. We sat at a table brought out in front of a bar, ordered beer and enjoyed the free entertainment. Unfortunately you could not trust the beer of Bugis Street; it was commonly diluted with Chinese tea even within an unopened bottle. The entertainment was the 'girls' that plied their trade along the street. Tony Price knew them all by name. They would briefly join us at our table. In conversation you quickly learned that these often beautiful 'girls' were all transvestites. This was the character of Bugis Street. We used to watch one of the 'girls' making a deal with a young British or American off-duty sailor. The deal struck; off they would go in a trishaw for an evening of pleasure or surprise. You could also eat at the stalls along the side street from Bugis Street.

An Expedition to Kelantan

During the first university vacation, I undertook an expedition to Kota Bharu with my two friends Mary Turnbull and Len Young, who also brought along his friend Cathy. None of the major roads along the east coast were sealed. The unsurfaced laterite roads were hard on my *Vauxhall Wyvern* and the numerous ferries played havoc on the underside of the car. There were long frustrating queues for ferries because of the rules of priority. Frequently night fell while still in a queue and we retraced our route to the nearest resthouse. Our expedition took us on the mining company narrow gauge railways from Kuantan to the tin mine of Sungai Lembing and from Kuala Rompin to the iron mine of Bukit Besi. Accommodation at the mines was arranged in the company guest houses. My former school and university friend David Slater lived near Kota Bharu at Pengkalan Chepa, but he was on field work when we visited. He was a geologist for the Malaysian Geological Survey.

Because the roads in Kelantan, Trengganu and Pahang were of poor quality, and because there were numerous difficult ferries to negotiate, the university and government scheme of travel allowances allowed a much greater mileage allowance in these states. Although my car was new, I had to have a new exhaust pipe fitted in Kuantan on the way back. The ferries were regularly used by heavy logging lorries and the on-off ramps were not particularly friendly to private cars.

The Geology Department

The Geology Department was a converted dwelling house at 5 Dalvey Estate, set on a grassy bluff overlooking one of the Residential Halls. It was convenient for Pichamuthu who walked daily along a paved footpath from his nearby flat. I was allocated a small box-room on the first floor, with only a small table fan to circulate the air. The doors were Shanghai-style swing type, so a visitor could look over the top before entering. The louvered windows were kept permanently open. However the heat in the afternoons was oppressive and I regularly dozed off. There were only two air-conditioned rooms in the building—the professor's room and the photographic darkroom that led off the small lecture room across from my box-room. I moved my Swift microscope into the darkroom and did progressively more of my research work there. I could readily do this because Pichamuthu had put me in charge of departmental photography.

The classes were small. I can particularly remember Jaafar bin Ahmad, who later joined the Malaysian Geological Survey and then the Malaysian Mining Corporation. There was also S. Balasingham who became a lecturer at the University Sains in Penang. One afternoon while I was conducting a practical class on morphological crystallography, a swarm of wasps flew through the open window and began to build a nest on the open louvered window frame. We abandoned the class, and the Estates Office took two or three days to puzzle out how to remove it safely.

My first colleague assistant lecturer to be appointed was Tony Leow, a Singaporean who had studied in the University of Western Australia. Then came Sambe S. Gowda, a graduate of Andhra University. Gowda must have been the world's worst driver. He bought a new *Ford Anglia*. Tony or I frequently had a phone call for urgent help; Gowda had driven off the road into a drain. He would also call us to change a tyre.

The University Campus was used by the Japanese soldiers as their headquarters during the occupation. The Geology Department

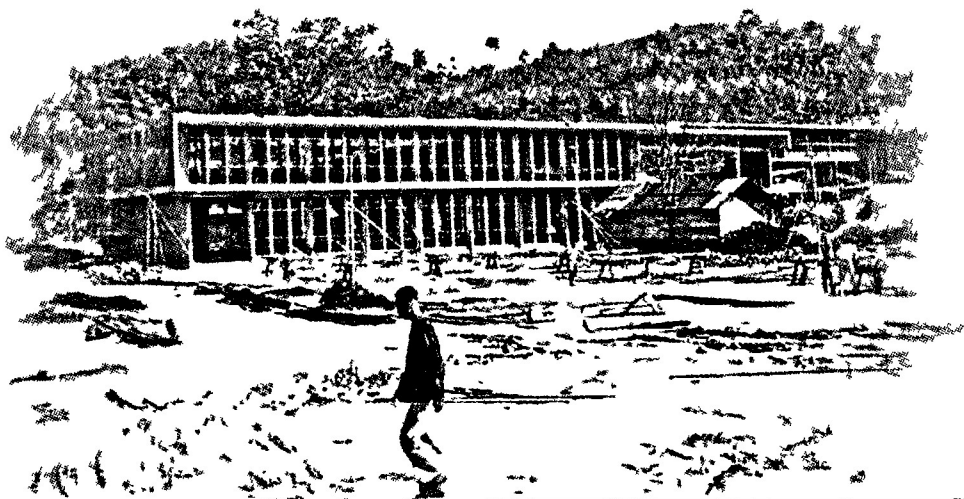


Photo 1.1. First Geology/Mathematics Department under construction.
Source: *Warta Geologi*, Vol. 29, No.2, Mar-Apr 2003.

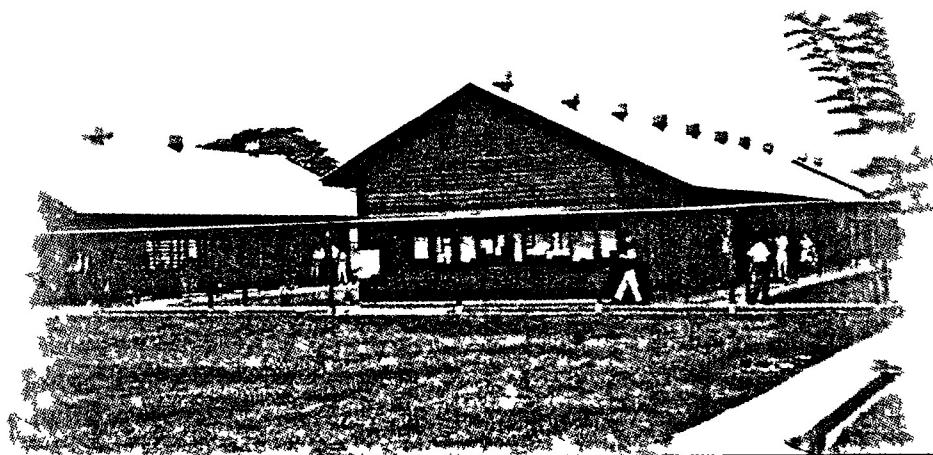


Photo 1.2. First Kuala Lumpur Geology Department at the Technical College, Gurney Road.
Source: *Warta Geologi*, Vol. 29, No.2, Mar-Apr 2003.

was reputed to be haunted by a number of Japanese soldiers who were killed there. I used to go in at nights to do my photography but never experienced any supernatural events.

The university had rather liberal leave conditions. Academic staff could be absent for the long vacation but had to return a week before term began. The names of terms were quite ridiculous for Singapore — Michaelmas, Easter and Trinity, lifted from Oxford University. Expatriate staff were paid a first class P & O (or equivalent) fare every second long vacation to his appointed home. Sabbatical leave, consisting of a complete academic year plus adjacent long vacations, was allocated to the approved place of study after every four years of service.

Pichamuthu went on home leave to India, leaving Gowda as acting head. Unknown to Leow and me, he had instructed Gowda to convert one of the downstairs rooms into an air-conditioned microscope laboratory. Gowda had it air-conditioned and claimed it as his own room. Upon return, Pichamuthu was extremely upset and actually never spoke to Gowda again. Somehow, without my agreement, I was appointed as the interpreter. Pichamuthu would say to me “tell him to vacate that room”. I knew that the ‘him’ referred to Gowda, who would likewise instruct me to pass on a message to Pichamuthu. This dreadful situation persisted even after the department was transferred to Pantai Valley. Needless to say Pichamuthu did not recommend Gowda for contract renewal and he left for Nigeria after three years with the university.

Transition to Kuala Lumpur 1959–1960

Gowda was transferred to Kuala Lumpur earlier than the other staff to initiate the new first year B.Sc. as well as third year geology for engineers. For the purpose of transfer, each staff member was allocated a lorry to carry personal effects. Gowda, of course, never knew much of what was going on. He filled his lorry with all the university furniture from his Dunearn Road house. I do not know if the University of Malaya in Kuala Lumpur sent the furniture back to Singapore. The first courses were given in temporary wooden huts in the grounds of the Technical College in Gurney Road. The first library was set up in an adjacent building —the permanent buildings in Pantai Valley were yet under construction. Beda Lim told me that he lived in the library and installed his camp bed between the stacks. One morning Pichamuthu came into my office in a state of agitation. He was pointing to an article in the Straits Times, headed “Professor Gowda leads an

expedition to the Batu Arang coal mine". "He's done it again to me!" said Pichamuthu. As usual in conversation with me, 'he' meant Gowda.

Pichamuthu later transferred to Kuala Lumpur. Before doing so he bought a new *Morris Ambassador*, because that was the only car also constructed in India, and he intended to bring it with him upon retirement. He employed a syce and Professor and Mrs Pichamuthu set out for the drive to Kuala Lumpur. He absolutely abhorred fast driving, and during the journey sat in the front seat constantly monitoring that 35 miles per hour was never exceeded. They did not make it through one of the many towns before night curfew was imposed. So the journey took two days. His syce resigned upon arrival in Kuala Lumpur. Upon his return to India, Pichamuthu wrote to say he regretted buying the new car because it was a newer model than was then assembled in India and spares were not available.

The First Convocation in Kuala Lumpur

The staff in Singapore had received an invitation to the first degree-giving convocation to be held in 1959 at the Chin Woo stadium in Kuala Lumpur. Accompanied by three friends Ian McLean, Roger Smart and Dennis Keane, I drove my *Vauxhall Wyvern* to Kuala Lumpur, leaving before dawn. We arrived early. The Chin Woo was not exactly an appropriate venue for an academic ceremony. It is a swimming club. I sat on a side concrete bench very close to the first Yang di Pertuan Agong. After the ceremony, there was a tea party held around the open air swimming pool. The high table was occupied by such VIPs as the Yang di Pertuan Agong and the Permaisuri Agong, Sir Alexander Oppenheim, and Frederick Mason, who was the principal of the Pantai Valley Campus. That night we all crowded into a house rented by the university at the far end of Jalan Tanjong in Petaling Jaya. This new satellite town was a complete desert; all natural vegetation had been bulldozed. Mathematician Roger Wicks, who was temporarily on loan to Kuala Lumpur, was our host. Soon thereafter he returned to Singapore.

Next morning my History friend Alistair Lamb took me to the newly opened Merlin Hotel (now the Concorde). I was introduced to the well known Malaysian writer Han Suyin, who was a doctor at the Johore Bharu hospital and was married to Leon Comber of the Special Branch. Meeting Han Suyin was of great significance to me, for I saw the film of her book "Love is a many splendoured thing" in Fyzabad, Trinidad, and it gave me a thirst for the 'mysterious' Orient. Later I recommended her to Senate for an honorary degree but my

The decade of the sixties, referred to by many, as that glorious decade when Pantai Valley became renowned throughout the academic world was because we brought together some of the best scholars from many parts of the globe to this University.

