

I REMEMBER WHEN



Matthew Wong started his boxing career at Jubilee Park.

Jubilee Park captured many hearts

IPOH AMUSEMENT PARK: The only entertainment centre for families in Ipoh in the 1960s and '70s was packed to the brim every night, writes Raja Khalidatul Asrin

WHEN one reminisces about Ipoh, it would not be complete without mentioning Jubilee Park.

Those who grew up in the 1960s and 1970s in the state capital will remember Jubilee Park as the only entertainment hub suitable for families.

Schoolboys would spend their pocket money on games every weekend, while those with spare change would be at the cabaret.

What is the story behind this park, initially known as Ipoh Amusement Park, that captured the hearts of the people of that era?

Originally, it was an open piece of land and was used in 1931 as an entertainment spot to raise money for China's flood victims.

The land was bought by Archibald Russell. Later, it was sold to Runme Shaw of Shaw Brothers

who built a park around the existing buildings and renamed it Jubilee Park.

When Ipoh Amusement Park opened its doors, there was a grand theatre, Chinese Concert Hall and cabaret.

After it was renamed, there were added attractions, such as a concert hall and large wooden carousel, on the ground floor.

There were also dodgem cars, bicycle rides and a ferris wheel for the kids. The park was full every night.

When *New Sunday Times* visited the park and surrounding areas recently, it was a pale shadow of what it used to be.

A barber shop next to the entrance is all that is left now.

"I have been a barber here for 43 years," said Shanmugam Perumal.

He said an entrance fee of 20 sen

was charged when the park opened.

"When electronic games were brought in, the place was packed with young adults and boys on weekends."

Shanmugam said Jubilee Park prospered, thanks to two cinemas and a cabaret on the top floor.

"Business started to slow down in the 1980s when people stopped patronising the cinemas at the park, with the opening of cineplexes.

"The cabaret was considered passé.

"In 1984, when shopping malls started to mushroom in the city, the park began to lose its appeal and later closed down."

Matthew Wong, a 70-year-old security guard at the park, said he started his boxing career at Jubilee Park.

"I was 22 then," he said as he

Shanmugam Perumal has been a barber for 43 years.



The barber shop is the only surviving feature of Jubilee Park. Pix by Supian Ahmad



Visitors to the park were charged an entrance fee of 20 sen.

proudly showed us an old picture of himself.

"I had the best time of my life at the park."

Although the park still belongs to the Shaw family, it is unkempt and neglected.

There is a snooker joint and one of the cinemas has been turned into a karaoke centre.

But, the park has lost its 1960s charm. All that remains are memories of the good old days.