

Flooded Out In Malaysia - 2001

It poured, the streets were turned into canals and yet the second XL tour of Malaysia between October 22 and November 7 was a hugely enjoyable experience for the thirty-six members, their wives and partners.

Ignoring fears about flying on a date so close to the aftermath of September 11, tour manager Ron Hart said: "We didn't hear any reports to advise us not to go and so we went." Japanese tour operators cancelled nearly all their tours to Malaysia and the number of Jap visitors dropped to a trickle. Few Americans risked it either.

But the XL encountered no problems ...except the early arrival of the autumnal monsoon season. The hospitality received was exceptional and the Malaysians proved to be extremely friendly and warm hearted. They love English football, particularly David Beckham and Michael Owen. When our matches were rained off, our members had plenty of Premiership matches to watch live.

The five star skyscraper hotel in Kuala Lumpur was almost in the shadow of the world's tallest constructions, the two beautiful towers of the Petronas towers. KL is one of the most exciting capitals in the world and the architecture is awesome.

Only one match of our scheduled six managed to finish, a narrow defeat in the rain. The first game was abandoned when the XL were chasing a daunting 265-6 and the third was cut short. A fourth was abbreviated into a 25 over slog with no runs counting runs on the flooded side of the pitch and the other two were totally washed out. But the groups putting improved enormously and the men were shamed by Mrs Joyce Jarvis, who won the major tournament.

October 22 - Only thirty minutes late, we have an unimpeded trip on a Malaysian Airline Boeing 747-400 with a 75% occupancy, which is comforting. As often on these tours, Gordon Potter temporarily collapsed on arrival. "But I'm ready for action," he reported the next day. October 23 - According to Ron Hart, the Shangri La Hotel group is rated third in the world by a national newspaper and it is difficult to argue. A six-course buffet in the coffee shop, including sixteen desserts, cost £9 including drinks. Robbie Barker celebrated his 60th birthday by winning the pool competition.

October 24 - We were struck with the cleanliness and order of the city. Littering, throwing down chewing gum and eating and drinking in public incurs an instant £100 fine. Take note Ken Livingstone.

There was an unexpected pleasure: H.R.H. Tunku Imran Ibni Tuanku Ja'Alfar known as "Peter", son of the King, invited the whole party to have drinks followed by dinner at the Royal Selangor Club. Those on his table were impressed with his wit, his friendliness and his range of conversation. He is a great guy. He is President of almost everything including the Malaysian Cricket Association. One of his achievements was being on the winning side between his school, King's of Canterbury, and XL many years ago.



Another punishing flight for
XL Treasurer Tim Woodcock and
his wife Marion



Flood stops play!

October 25 – Unfortunately a match against a strong Malaysian U19 was aborted by the rain. The boys reached 265-6 in their 40 overs mainly by aiming for sixes. That provided for extra practice for the XL veterans who dropped thirteen catches. Is that a XL record? XL were 44-0 after 12 overs, primed to... well, it might have been a glorious victory.

October 26 - Malaysian dance night with Gordon Potter celebrating his 70th birthday.

October 27 - Back at the Royal Selangor Club ground the XL lose by two wickets with just 14 balls left between two thunderstorms. RSC skipper Ian Syer, who is half Malay and was educated at Dover College, saw his side through to victory in the dark.

October 28 - A 40 mile trek through torrential rain ended with worrying news, the well-appointed Kolej Tuanku Ja'Far ground was flooded. But within an hour the game started on an artificial pitch and helped by seven catches (is that a XL record?), three of them from Man of the Tour Ron Helyar, Silver State CC were dismissed for 173. XL were steaming towards victory when the familiar 4 p.m. downpour occurred and the match ended with XL in a winning position at 83-1.

The coach carrying the ladies on a cultural tour broke down and five different types of transport were called into action. XL member Patrick Briggs, headmaster of the nearby English public school, welcomed the group to his beautiful home for drinks. Looking around his library, we discovered two books, one by Stephen Fry, the absentee from the recent XL dinner, and the other by Ted Dexter, who actually did appear at the dinner!

October 29 - Our manager, Mr. Ron, known to the locals, qualified for a record fine after ordering a 12.30 departure to the airport for a 2.35 flight at KL's magnificent airport, one of the wonders of the world. When the first stragglers arrived at the check in at 1.55 they were told the flight was closed, not exactly a surprise in view of the worldwide security situation. Panic stations as the group broke into a trot pushing their trolleys!

In the rush experienced traveller Barry Smith discovered his bag had disappeared. Miraculously, the aircraft left on time. As it hit the tarmac, it bumped up and down like a bucking horse. Safely arrived in Penang, an island of the same size as the Isle of Wight with a population of 1.2m, the intrepid party was met with the daily torrential, this time at 4.10 pm, for a change.

October 30 – The game against Penang Cricket Association was called off after several inches of rain but the tour manager insisted on a 25 over knockabout, a version of the Eton game. He claimed victory, as he would.

October 31 - Free day. Cloud, no rain. No cricket.

November 1 - Ditto. No cricket. Mr Ron and several of the senior members were entertained to dinner by Mr Jaspur Gil Singh at his Indian restaurant. He proved a wonderful host!



Lightning strikes at the Royal Selangor Club

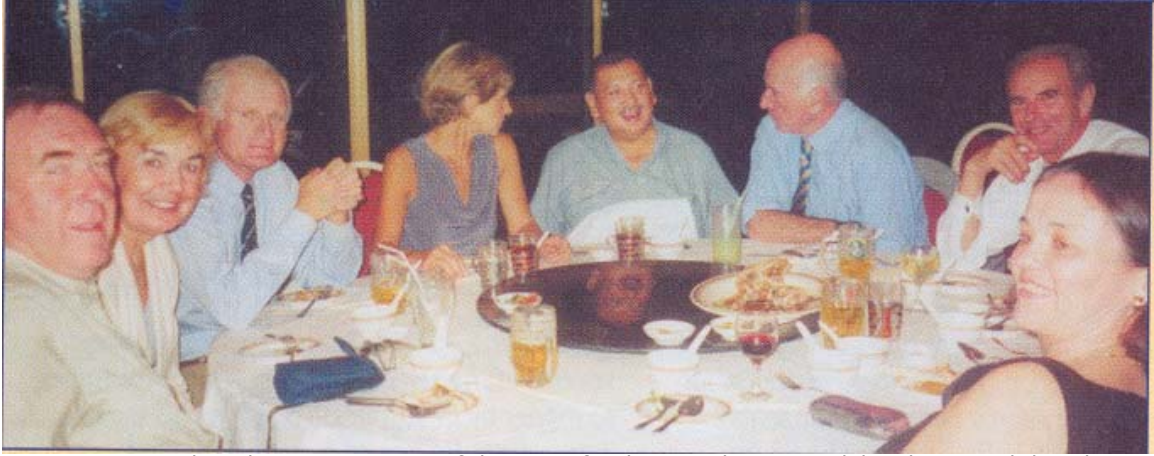
November 4 – Lousy day. Match called off after valiant attempts by Penang Sports Club skipper Muroli Verasammy to talk the organisers into bringing in a helicopter. "It happened once, a long time ago," he said wistfully. So it was back to the putting green.

November 5 - It was one of the outstanding tour dinners of the club's history with music supplied by the Ronettes. The fines, totalling £570 from 86 fines, more than trebled the previous record from the 2000 Australian tour. Overwhelmed by the prevailing feeling of generosity, the three winners of the cricket sweep, Geoff Richards, Ron Helyar and John Huntley, donated most of their winnings to the MCA Development Fund headed by the Prince.

November 6 - As the plane took off, thunder and lightning illuminated the sky and there was enough turbulence to make us wonder whether the 1812 Symphony was about to start up. The consensus was that Mr Ron had done a great job in keeping up spirits and turning it into a great tour. He never lost his perpetual smile.



Penang Sports Club flooded again!



Prince Imran Khan, known Peter, son of the King of Malaysia in between Edelgard Hart and the Editor