

Jalan Travers a mix of old buildings and modern skyscrapers



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COMMUNITY

Friday, 10 Oct 2014 12:00 AM MYT



Lorong Travers and Jalan Bukit Travers try to retain some extent of tranquility behind the busy Jalan Travers. It is said that the streetscape of these two roads have remained unchanged for more than 40 years.

Jalan Travers pays tribute to a doctor, with his belief in justice for all, who changed the lives of leprosy patients in Malaya.

The road is only a short stretch linking Jalan Bangsar, Jalan Damansara and Jalan Tun Sambas, so the Travers police station must have played a part in helping motorists remember where J

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Overshadowing the road alongside the new premises of the Travers police station is the cluster of skyscrapers comprising offices, hotels, residences and shopping centres surrounding the KL Sentral transportation hub.

While these skyscrapers paint a picture of aggressive modernisation, several historic buildings are located only a stone's throw away such as the National Museum, Majestic Hotel and KTMB building.

Also hidden behind the busy Jalan Travers is Lorong Travers and Jalan Bukit Travers, which are lined with old bungalows and lush greenery all the way up to Federal Hill.



The hustle and bustle of the old Star office in Jalan Travers.

Before the Travers name was used, it was part of the Damansara Road named after the Damansara River.

Dr Ernest Aston Otho Travers was the person who restored hope and dignity to leprosy patients by suggesting the building of the Sungai Buloh leprosy settlement.



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According to the book *Doctors Extraordinaire* by Ho Tak Ming, Dr Travers was posted in Sungei Ujong (the former name of Seremban) as Residency Surgeon in 1887, while serving as Acting Protector of Indian Immigrants and Acting Magistrate concurrently.

He was made Residency Surgeon of Selangor in 1891 and the State Surgeon in 1897.

He also started the Selangor Journal with two partners in 1892 and was known to have liked big-game hunting.



Dr Ernest Aston Otho Travers.

Throughout his many years in Malaya, he was respected by both the European and Asian communities for his charitable efforts.

He treated his patients fairly regardless of their background, often providing free service to the poor.

He was also a force behind the Samaritan Society, which provided nursing care to the sick for only \$1 a day.

Attorney and founder of the *Malay Mail*, JHM Robson of Jalan Robson fame, had described Dr Travers as such: "It is hardly likely that any other European will ever occupy quite the same position in the general life of Kuala Lumpur as Travers did when in the Service and afterwards when in private practice."

Dr Travers left for England several years after his retirement but returned to Malaya after World War I.

Travers turned his attention to the care of leprosy patients late in his career in 1922 when he became the medical officer in charge of the leper asylum in Setapak.

The place was only meant for patients suffering of leprosy that was incurable at that time.

Many tried to run away and those who could not escape, relied on government-supplied opium to numb their pain.

As such, Dr Travers proposed to the British government to build a more humane leprosarium at Sungai Buloh, a peaceful place that was then called Valley of Hope.

Said to be the second largest leprosarium in the world, the settlement was officially opened on Aug 16, 1930.

Jalan Travers was also the location of *The Star's* first office in Kuala Lumpur.

The newspaper went national in 1976 with the setting up



Construction continues along Jalan Travers without any sign of slowing down.

of a small office there.

And when the company moved out of Jalan Travers to Petaling Jaya in 1981, it also marked the end of the days of typewriters and teleprinters.



An aerial view of Kuala Lumpur in the 1950s. In the foreground are the Sulaiman Building on the left and Majestic Hotel on the right.

Brickfields Community Society pro-tem secretary Dr Christopher Nicholas, whose grandparents' house was in Lorong Travers, shared that things had remained almost unchanged for decades in that hidden part of Jalan Travers.

“The houses have been here for over 40 years, I think only a few of them were rebuilt.

“They were mostly bungalow lots bought by civil servants, as opposed to the government quarters in Federal Hill where the roads were named after the

different states of Malaysia,” he said.

He said the official city residence of the sultans of Perak and Negri Sembilan were also shielded behind the Travers police station.



Travers Police Station is the landmark of Jalan Travers.

“There’s still a small jungle between Lorong Travers and the police station but it is slowly disappearing, we used to see many species of animals there,” he said.

“Given its location, many people are eyeing this area for development.

“Some residents had moved out as there’s little upgrade to the basic amenities in the area.

“With that, we wonder what’s going to happen to this hidden part of Jalan Travers, especially with all the

government quarters,” he said.

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