

# Education

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## A trip down Kirkby's memory lane

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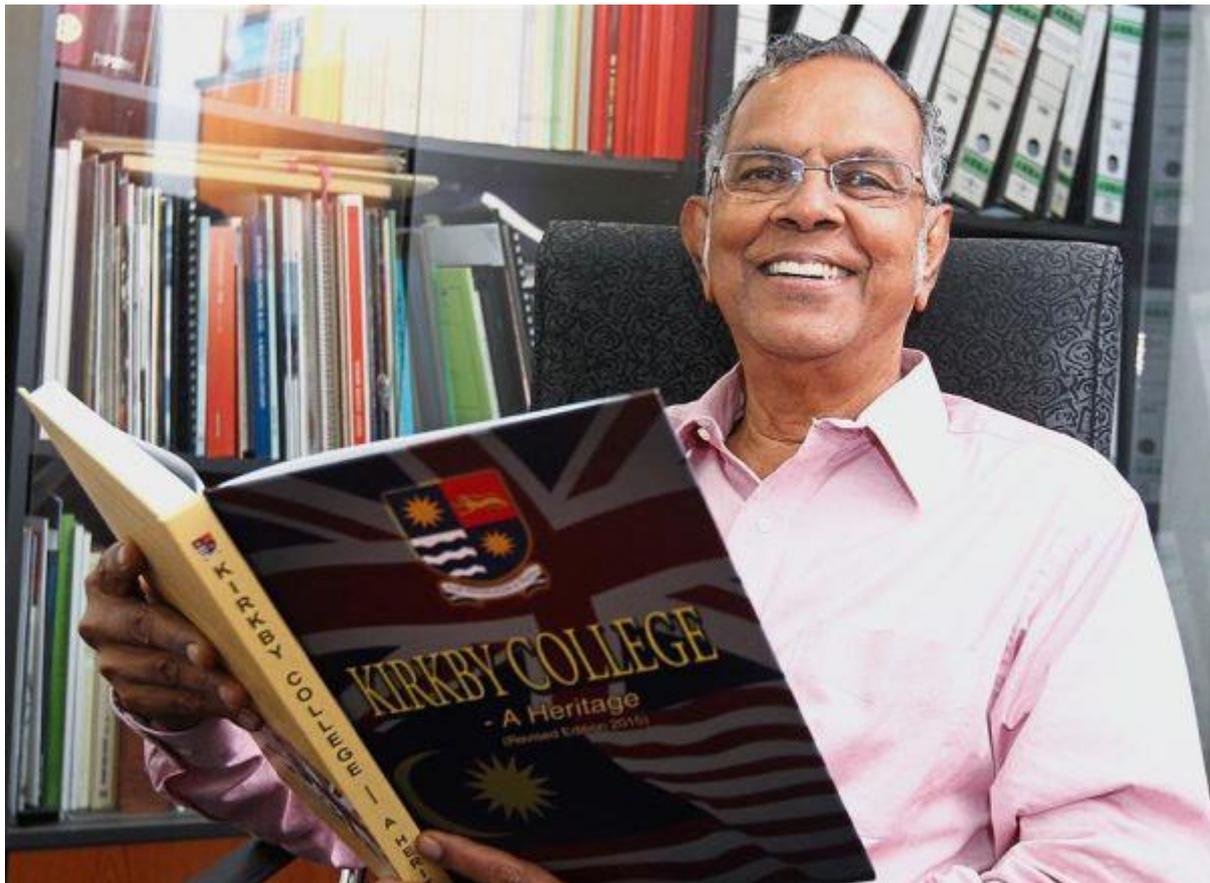


**Tunku Abdul Rahman made the first announcement of Malaya's impending independence in the Kirkby College assembly hall on Feb 7, 1956.** — Photos from Kirkby College-A Heritage (Revised Edition 2015) used with permission from Malayan Teachers' Training College Kirkby alumni president Datuk V.L Kandan

**A group of former teachers will travel to England to mark the spot where the Malayan Teachers' Training College, Kirkby, Liverpool once stood.**

THIS Merdeka, a group of former teachers will travel to England to mark the spot where the Malaysian Teachers' Training College (MTTC) Kirkby, Liverpool once stood.

MTTC Kirkby alumni from Malaysia, along with those who now reside in Britain, Australia, Canada and Singapore will walk down memory lane on that summer's day.



*Kandan says they are planning to place a plaque to commemorate the college at the park in Granborne Chase, Kirkby, where the main hall was once located.*

Joining the Kirkbyites will be several children of former MTTC Kirkby lecturers and well wishers including officials from the Knowsley Council who are facilitating the event.

The former World War Two munition workers barracks, which served as the College for 1,900 Malaysians from 1952 to 1962 is long gone.

MTTC Kirkby alumni president Datuk V.L Kandan said they are planning to place a plaque to commemorate the college at the park in Granborne Chase, Kirkby, where the MTTC main hall was once located.



***Snow covered the grounds of the college, which was home to 1,900 teachers from 1952 to 1962.***

He said the Aug 31 ceremony, which will coincide with the 60th anniversary of Malaya's independence, was specially chosen.

“Coincidentally, the first ever public announcement that Malaya 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),” said Kandan who was present at the historic occasion.

MTTC Kirkby made headlines in both Britain and Malaya on Feb 8, 1956 following Tunku's visit a day before.

The conference on the future of Malaya had been concluded on Feb 6 and Tunku along with his delegation to London arrived at the college at noon the following day.



*The entrance to the Malayan Teachers' College in Kirkby, located in the suburbs of Liverpool, which is now long gone.*

According to an extract of an account of the day's event by then senior English lecturer Alexander Walker in "Kirkby College-A Heritage", following an enthusiastic welcome by students in bright colourful national costumes and battery of cameras, Tunku was escorted into the Quiet Room.

After a Malayan style lunch he was led to the hall where 300 students were waiting.

When it was time for him to address them, Tunku asked the crowd to join him in giving the new greeting: "Merdeka!", which was enthusiastically repeated three times.

According to "Kirkby College-A Heritage", Tunku disclosed the outcome of the constitutional talks with Britain to obtain self government and independence had gone on well with all outstanding issues settled amicably.



*The refurbished military cargo plane which took the second batch of students to London.*

Kandan said the idea for Kirkbyites to mark the area for posterity was mooted during an alumni reunion back in 2005.

But the plan seemed impossible, he said, because Kirkbyites who had returned said the place had been converted into a housing estate and was unrecognisable.

Undaunted, Kandan said, some alumni were asked to look at how it could be done.

“We knew then, it was going to be a tremendously difficult and expensive task,” he said. He said the project required getting planning permission and council approval in a foreign country and cooperation from local residents.

Fast forward to 2015, during his first visit back to Kirkby since leaving in 1957, Kandan had a chance encounter with a local community history librarian who would be instrumental in making their plan a reality.

“I walked to the news vendor with my grandson who saw a small notice from the Archive Resource for Knowsley (ARK) who were looking for information about Kirkby Village for their records, in particular about the MTTC,” he said.

Kandan said they rushed to the local library and got in touch with Lin Rice who had two boxes of MTTC paraphernalia including a group photo of his 1955 to 1957 batch mates and him.

Rice agreed to cooperate to help the alumni and to get the necessary approvals, he said.

“I told her we nearly gave up the idea because of insurmountable difficulties.

“She offered to get funding from the heritage lottery fund. It has now become a collaborative effort,” he said.

Kandan said they received the green light for the project last year and about 30 Kirkbyites “all septuagenarians, octogenarians and some nonagenarians, will be attending the ceremony”.



*The College Choral Assembly was one of the activities.*

What's planned for the day, he said, is an oral and video recording of their reminiscences of MTTC at the Kirkby Library before they proceed to Granborne Chase for the ceremony at 5pm.

“Then we adjourn for a typical Kirkby College high tea of 60 years ago,” he said.

For more information, Kandan can be reached at 03 2027 2876 or by e-mail: [kandan@shearndelamore.com](mailto:kandan@shearndelamore.com).

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