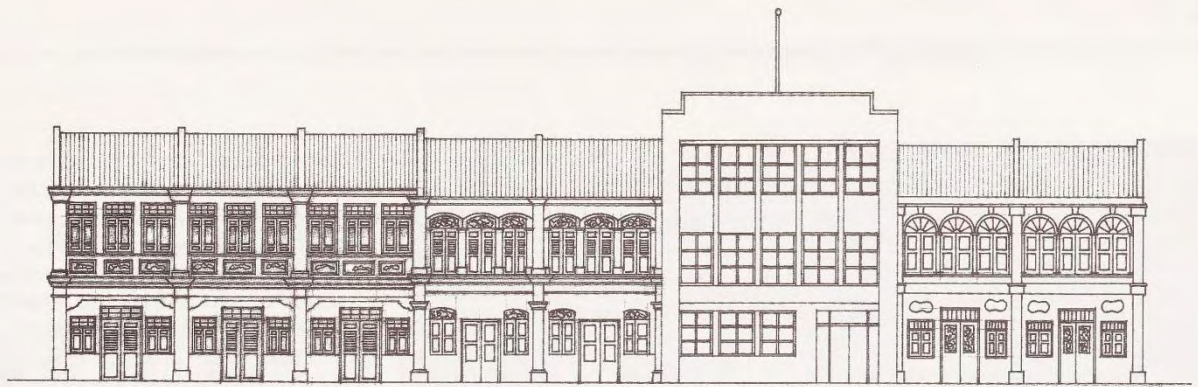




WARISAN

HERITAGE VOICE

IMPROVING THE HERITAGE ENVIRONMENT

The main objectives of the Penang Heritage Trust which was formed in 1986 are to stimulate greater civic concern in the Heritage of Penang - not only in buildings and places but also in our landscape and natural features, in arts and crafts and aspects of social life and history. With such a broad spectrum of concern there is a need for wide support from active members upon whose energies effective action depends. Before we can improve aspects of our heritage, we must begin by identifying and appreciating our legacy in all its richness and in the realities of their present condition. By assiduous research we need to establish the facts and features of this historical legacy; by studying its circumstances in the past and present we can obtain a better understanding of its realities. Many of our heritage buildings have undergone economic decline and have suffered from dereliction and neglect; in certain cases however, they have been successfully maintained and preserved. Before we can make wishful expressions about actions that should be taken we need to establish our priorities

and to embark on pilot projects which can become good examples for further encouragement of heritage activity.

With regard to buildings and environment that deserve conservation and restoration action, many recommendations have in the past been made by civic and professional bodies including the Penang Museum, the Penang Historical Society, the Malayan Nature Society and most recently by the Penang Heritage Trust. In 1972, the Central Area Planning Unit made major proposals on places of historic interest within Georgetown by establishing a network of historical sites and monuments. The Unit also recommended the designation of conservation areas and strategies to channelise new developments like KOMTAR into comprehensive development areas so that the rest of the traditional character of the city can be retained. More recently the Draft Structure Plan of the MPPP has also endorsed the designation of heritage buildings and conservation areas. From these studies it could be seen that Georgetown is a historical city of special significance in Malaysia with a large number of heritage attractions that can be enhanced not only for tourism but also for the civic well-being of the community.

From substantial pictorial evidence available since the 1770s, and from early photographic information we can learn about the heyday of our historic buildings and places. All things being equal, chronology is important and priority should be given to the earliest buildings and precincts, which require urgent conservation action. Amongst these are the traditional kampungs and town house areas, early religious and institutional buildings and historical mansions, some of which date back to the East India Company days, notably Suffolk House and Government House (in the grounds of the Convent, Light Street). Among the great dwellings which are outstanding examples in South-East Asia are the Cheong Fatt Tze Mansion in Leith Street, the Chung Keng Kooi Family Temple in Church Street and Udini House in Glugor. Under Visit Penang Year 1988, the Special Features Committee, with strong participation from the Penang Heritage Trust and the Penang Museum introduced a Heritage Sites Programme to highlight their history beyond the normal touristic information. Under this programme signboards and brochures were produced together with certain environmental improvements for the Great Waterfall, the Burmah Lane

Not to be Taken

Temples, the Rani Dobi Monument, the Sheikh Omar Mausoleum, the Penang Hill sites and vistas and Suffolk House with its proposed heritage park, including the improvement of that stretch of the Sungai Pinang. There are other sites on the recommended list that are open for adoption in the coming years and it is hoped that the Penang Tourist Association and the Tourist Development Corporation and other concerned organisations will provide support to carry on the heritage work.

Beyond identifying the potential for historical and touristic purposes other basic physical actions are of course required to rescue buildings already endangered by dilapidation and neglect, and to bring about their effective re-use under realistic economic conditions. Under private ownership there have been examples of old buildings converted for new use such as offices, night clubs etc. and it is open to the public to judge whether or not these adaptations have been successful. In the case of Cheong Fatt Tze House it has been strongly recommended that it be acquired to become a part of the Penang Museum. Suffolk House has the potential to become a major historical and photographic museum, with the prospect of also serving as the headquarters of the Penang Heritage Trust. There is hopeful news that the Friends of Penang in Adelaide has formed a special committee to support this project.

In the process of modernisation, the future of our physical environment depends on creative talent in the design and planning of new buildings and places. By definition good contemporary design would take into consideration a sensitive relationship and compatibility with existing historical environment. There are however, examples of new buildings which are insensitive even in their relationship with other new adjacent buildings. Even in the kampung, aspects of wanton modernisation is a threat and there is a danger that awareness and appreciation of the traditional architectural and cultural features would be lost. In this area, the Special Features Committee for its 1989 and 1990 programme is proposing to adopt a model kampung to restore the best original features of traditional dwellings and also the village botany and gardens. Such a project will require wider community cooperation and par-

ticipation to establish a continuing impact in the revival of heritage.

It has also been previously suggested that Local Authorities should offer incentives to owners of traditional buildings by granting rebates on assessment where expenses have been incurred in the maintenance and restoration of such buildings. It can be observed that in many urban areas, especially with commercial shop houses, that the spread of unsympathetic remodelling of facade and garish signboards is on the increase. In granting approvals and permits for signboards in general there should be a special effort to encourage better design and to review and control those affecting heritage sites. As a positive action, awards should be given for good signage, and to buildings that have appreciated and maintained appropriate traditional features, while allowing for sensitive modernisation.

Indeed part of the revenue collected from advertising fees could be allocated by Local Authorities to projects to demonstrate good examples and consider awards for good design with particular reference to historical character.

To foster wider interest in the significance of our heritage there should be educational programmes in the form of lectures and live projects that could be initiated and developed in all our schools. The inculcation of heritage values in school children, and efforts by members of the teaching profession will be particularly significant. The Penang Heritage Trust and the Penang Ratepayers Association might also usefully focus attention to civic heritage institutions such as the Penang Library, the Museum and our major natural reserves and botanical institutions. With regard to the Library and the museum, substantial funding for the improvement of the collections and the interior environments are very much needed. With regard to the Waterfall Gardens there is a strong need to restore and upgrade the famous and historical collection of plants, much of which has been depleted since the last war. The Penang Heritage Trust has also urged the Government to bring about State legislation - as has apparently been initiated in Malacca - to designate and control historical buildings within Penang State. It would be particularly important to look for budgetary and

financial means to fund our active heritage programme. Part of this could come from the Local Authorities which should provide relevant grants for heritage and related cultural purposes as in other cities. Apart from contributions from corporate bodies and the public in general the supply of adequate funding is important and among other ways and means that may be considered, we might recommend the establishment of a special public lottery to serve civic and cultural purposes. In conclusion if Penang is to lead not only in its future development but also in maintaining the significance of its past legacy, it should encourage good design and support significant research, educational programmes, and activate the effective restoration and maintenance action of our heritage buildings and environment. Action by Government will undoubtedly be influenced by a strong appeal and support by all those concerned with our heritage.

Contributed by
DATUK LIM CHONG KEAT

HERITAGE DIARY

March 29 1987

The first Annual General Meeting held at the Sarkies Corner of the E & O Hotel was attended by 22 members. The Protem Council was dissolved and a newly elected Council serves for the term 1987-89. The following are Council Members: Datuk Lim Chong Keat, Amy Heah, Nazir Ariff, Tan Yee Noon, Pamela Ong, Donny Chan, Chan Hong Saik, Khoo Boo Chia, Chu Li and A. S. Maniam.

May 24 1987

Hike to Mount Olivia by members of Warisan and friends from the Malayan Nature Society and the Penang Mountaineering Association.

August 22 1987

Visit to the Penang Antique House at Petani Road, a showcase of private collection of glossy nyonya memorabilia including polychromed nyonyaware, embroidery, silver jewellery and a number of Chinese and Colonial furniture.

September 18-20 1987

Visit of Sir Jack and Lady Anne Boles to Penang. Boles was the former Director-General of the British National Trust.

October 13 1987

A clarinet and piano recital by Richard Hosford and Doreen Yeoh organised in association with the British Council to raise funds for the restoration of St. George's Church.

November 7 & 8 1987

The play "Emily of Emerald Hill" written by Stella Kon was performed at the E & O Hotel to a sizeable audience and under the co-sponsorship of the State Chinese (Penang) Association.

January 16 1988

A donation of \$1,000 was presented to the Penang State Museum and Art Gallery to kick off its public appeal for funds to acquire two sets of historical Penang coins.

February 26 1988

Dr. Ivan Polunin, a botanist from Singapore gave an interesting talk cum slide show on the indigenous plants of Malaysia. It was well attended by members and friends of Warisan.

February 28 1988

Another Sunday morning "scramble" up Mount Olivia, 870 feet above sea level, was made by members and friends of Warisan, including Dr. Polunin and seven architecture students from Dumstadt University, Germany.

March 5 1988

The Waterfall in the Botanic Gardens, regarded as one of the two 'lions' of early Penang was launched by the Minister of Culture and Tourism as one of the historical sites of Penang. 'Lion' was a quaint early term used for tourism attraction.

March 25 1988

The second Annual General Meeting was held at the Straits Room of the E & O Hotel. It was attended by 20 members.

July 28 1988

The Burmese Buddhist Temple built in 1803 and the Thai Buddhist Temple built in the 1840s were launched as

heritage sites by Dr. Sak Cheng Lum, Chairman of VISIT PENANG '88.

September 15 1988

The State government imposed Section 4 of Land Acquisition Act on Cheong Fatt Tze Mansion.

October 10 1988

An exhibition of watercolours and sketches by Sir Swettenham and George Giles held at the Golden Sands Hotel was opened by the British High Commissioner. The exhibition sponsored by the Malaysian-British Society and the British Malaysia Society. Concomitantly, a catalogue of the collection co-authored by Datuk Lim Chong Keat and Henry Barlow was also launched.

November 18 1988

A talk on "Suffolk House and the History of Heritage Sites" was given by Datuk Lim Chong Keat to members of the Malaysian-German Society and Warisan at the premises of MGS.

November 27 1988

A Garden Party on the grounds of Suffolk House to inaugurate the fund-raising campaign for its restoration as well as to launch the heritage linear park behind Suffolk House. An event officiated upon by the President of the Penang Municipal Council, Datuk Zainol Abidin; attended by over 400 people and organised in conjunction with VISIT PENANG '88.

November 27 1988

The Memorial of Rhaneé Dhoby at York Close was launched as one of the heritage sites of Penang under VISIT PENANG '88. The edifice, erected prior to 1872, was built on land donated by an Indian lady named Raneé. It is located downstream from Suffolk House on the northern side of the Air Itam River in an area that is called "Dhoby Ghaut" where Indian "dhobbies" or laundrymen have traditionally practised their occupation.

December 2-8 1988

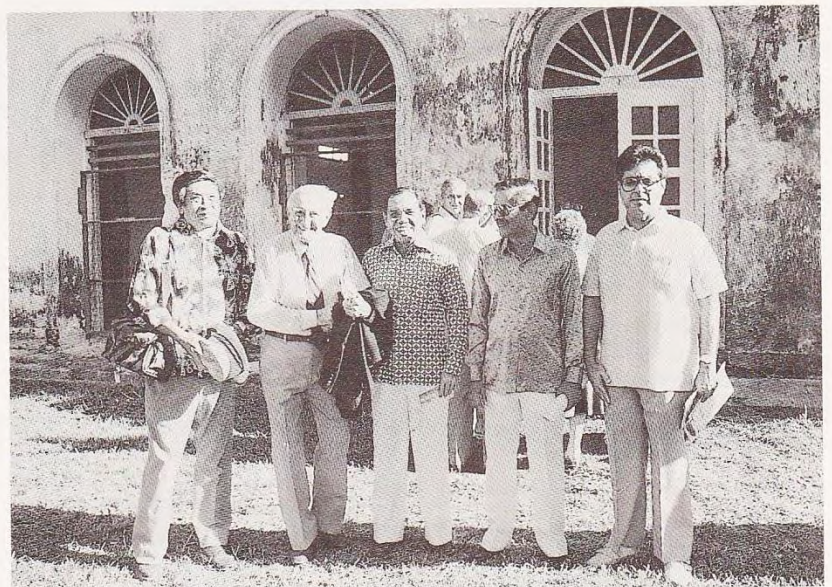
Peranakan Heritage Week organised by the State Chinese (Penang) Association. Warisan members participated in the seminar on Straits Chinese Heritage, Culture Dances and the Peranakan Wedding Procession and Tea Ceremony.

December 3 1988

The launching of Sheikh Omar's Mausoleum as a heritage site in conjunction with VISIT PENANG '88.

December 14 1988

Four sites in Penang Hill were launched as "heritage sites" by the Yang Di-Pertua Negeri. The four sites include Strawberry Hill, Convalescent Bungalow, Halliburton's Hill and the Crag Hotel.



Garden Party at Suffolk House. L-R: Datuk Lim Chong Keat, S. Cunyngham-Brown, Datuk Zainol Abidin, Encik Mochtar Haniff, and Datuk Ahmad Khalid.

January 15 1989

Visit to the palaeolithic workshop in Kota Tampan, Perak. The pieces that were unearthed indicated that this region was inhabited 33,000 years ago and that the people exercised a systematic production of tools.



February 26-27 1989

Conference and Exhibition on "Improving the Visual Environment of Penang" The conference was organised by the Special Features Committee of VISIT PENANG '88 following Warisan's concern about bad signage in George Town and the need for more public awareness of the visual pollution in town. Topics covered at the conference include streetscape, signage, the built environment, parks and gardens and the riverine and coastal environment.

March 9 1989

Talk cum slide presentation by Dr. Siegfried Enders, an architect from Germany on conservation in Penang. Talk was held at the premises of the Malaysian-German Society.

April 8 1989

Talk on "The Conservation and Restoration of Masonry Buildings in the Urban Environment" by Randolph Langerbach, associate professor of architecture from Berkeley University, California, held at the E & O Hotel.

May 16 1989

Launching of a photographic exhibition of the "Habitats of South-east Asia" at the Penang State Museum and Art Gallery.

JOTTINGS FROM MEMBERS AND FRIENDS

In response to the Editor's request for feedback, one of our members, Mrs. June Bennett sent us her jottings of her childhood in Penang in the 1920s and 1930s. The following is the second installment of her article.

E & O HOTEL

I have a postcard photograph taken probably somewhere around 1930 or so. The caption says "Eastern and Oriental Hotel, Penang, The New Wing". It shows the frontage facing the sea. It also shows that there are shutters to each of the windows on the three upper floor, and slatted louvered windows on the rooms on the ground floor. The picture shows that there were no coconut trees along the front then, no swimming pool and no cannons.

had been a fence we would probably have climbed that too. We must have been an awful nuisance to the staff, especially when they were preparing for some function or other to be held outside on the lawns, which happened to be quite often. But I think I have been forgiven; my husband and I come to stay often, and no questions asked. Perhaps they can see that I am not so inclined to climb things, now! It was, however, a great moment for me to see my own grandchildren sitting on those same cannons earlier this year.

On the back of this postcard photograph it reads: "The E & O Hotel Penang. The Gateway to Malaya and the Far East. Three minutes' drive from the Wharves. Dancing: Tuesdays, Saturdays and Mail Days. Orchestral Concert: Every Sunday Evening on the Lawn overlooking the Sea. 902 Feet of Sea Frontage." The "Mail Days" were



EASTERN AND ORIENTAL HOTEL, PENANG, THE NEW WING.

But I happen to know that there were cannons along there somewhere because we used to climb onto them, my brother and I, and in fact climb onto and up anything that happened to be there just asking to be climbed. We used to get chased, too, by the staff and told not to use the E & O Hotel gardens as a playground. But it was all too easy for us to come from our house in Leith Street Ghaut to the E & O Hotel lawns, because we shared the same sea front and wall. There was no fence to divide us. And even if there

really very special days during those years. They were heralded by the appearance of a small Union Jack flag fluttering from the front of all bookstalls; a signal that all the daily newspapers and magazines and comics had arrived from England, a postal service that took at least a month. There was no airmail service then, so letters from home were received with a good deal of excitement. Besides there were hours of quiet reading to look forward to. It was therefore a day calling for some sort of celebration.

I have a clear memory of being allowed to stay up past our usual bedtime to see my parents leave for one of the functions at the E & O Hotel, dressed in all their finery. The best memory I have is of my mother dressed in a lovely pale pink crepe dress with a long row of buttons down her back. She wore her favourite pearls and jewelled tiger-claw broach. My father in white jacket, black evening trousers, cummerbund and bow-tie looked very handsome. Evening dress was always worn for ballroom functions, and Band music on Sundays required a well-dressed appearance. No one seemed to mind dressing up in those days; they quite enjoyed it, I think. It certainly gave them a chance to wear something a little special and different from the very plain clothes they wore during the day. I can almost hear now the music drifting from the hotel down across the lawns to our house. Music and a very romantic setting of tropical moon shining on a constantly moving sea, fallen blossoms sprinkling the lawn under a frangipani tree and a cooling breeze. Fortunately for all of us the moon and sea and cooling breeze have remained in place over the years.

I believe that there was one occasion (there could have been more than just one, of course, certainly one I was told of) when the fun got a little out of hand. There used to be a fountain in the centre of the domed foyer, and the main entrance to the foyer was much wider than it is now. Someone, probably at the witching hour, with a daring induced by a dram too much, drove his car through the main door, did a couple of wheelies (turn) around the fountain and out again to loud cheering.

Things have changed since then, a lot. But it is still a favourite place of ours, and now even for my children and their children.

THE PADANG

The Cricket Club on the padang was a favourite meeting place with friends. While my parents watched cricket, or played bowls on the soft and beautifully kept bowling green on the ground beside the Club, we were taken away to another and more lively corner of the field and kept under the watchful eyes of Amah.



Hawkers at the Padang.

To this corner of the padang people came to take the cool evening air, to meet and talk or to relax after the days' toil. And while some sat and faced the sea in quiet contemplation of the glory of the setting sun others kicked a ball around in a scoreless and friendly game of football. Amahs wandered slowly along the seafront pushing European babies in prams. Little family groups sat and played together. Hawkers came; some carried a pikulan and some pushed a portable stall and settled down to sell their wares. There would be every kind of temptation: Iced coconut drinks, ice-cream, syrup, rice cakes, seaweed jellies, kwe lapis, kacang puteh in a small paper cones, laksa, nests of white puthuayam sprinkled over the grated coconut and palm sugar and wrapped in a banana leaf. Sweet kopi susu, hot kopi hitam, cold tea in glasses, skewered fresh pieces of fruit, and ice-balls; those delicious balls of shaved ice covered in syrups of bright pink, green and yellow. All this and heaven too for a small child- colourful celluloid windmills on sticks, whirling in the wind.

A stroll around the padang and home again at sunset was a frequent pleasure for parents, too. I am bold enough to claim an affinity with the padang. My mother told me in later years that she and my father were taking a midnight walk across it just a few hours before I was born.

I cannot vouch for the accuracy of the incident which I am about to tell you. The story goes: During a visit of a circus to Penang one of the elephants broke loose from his chains, strode over to the Cricket Club at the far end and presented himself at the refreshment tent, which had been set up for some reason or other. He took hold of a de-capped bottle of beer and poured it down his throat. A few more followed the first beer before he was re-claimed and led back to his anchorage, presumably waving his trunk and trumpeting happily. There could be just a grain of truth in this tale because somewhere at some time in the past I have seen a photograph of this elephant drinking from a bottle of beer.

PLEASURES

Sunday mornings for my brother and I were usually given over to going in full Sunday best to Sunday School at Saint George's Church. Full Sunday best for me meant white fancy leather shoes, calf-length socks, frilly silk dress and straw bonnet with ribbons. I loved the dressing up but I do not remember anything that went on during lessons, anymore than I remember anything that went on at school. But I do remember that after Sunday School we would be taken home and changed into shorts and vests and sometimes taken off in our car to spend the day at one of our favourite places, and that was Spring Tide.

At that time the sea was quite a way out and the sands were wide strips of silver dotted with great grey rocks, and the skies were always blue. A raft bobbed about on the water not too far off. The old proprietor of Spring Tide welcomed us cheerfully. Boon Quee (the spelling of his name may not be quite right) seemed elderly even then and he walked with a limp. He had the tastiest and thickest rose syrup ever, and he has the biggest king prawns fried to perfection. And sometimes, if our luck was in, along the beach would come the man selling durian ice-cream in tiny pink biscuit cups that melted in the mouth along with the ice-cream. Sometimes we stayed overnight, or even for a few days. And sometimes friends from Bukit Mertajam, Set Chu and his family, would also be visiting there. Two of his many children, Swee Chung and Swee Moi, were particular friends of ours. It was an idyllic spot. The old house in Spring Tide still stands.

...

Government employees were encouraged to make use of Government bungalows on Penang hill. The SSP had what they called a convalescent bungalow, so on occasions when my parents felt a change of air would do us good they would take advantage of the use of the bungalow and spend a few days there. Half the enjoyment for my brother and me was the ride up the hill in the funicular railway and watching the town dropping away below.

We loved staying in a bungalow jungle-like surroundings, complete with curious and chattering monkeys, and going for long walks around the hill along narrow paths. There were not so many made up roads in those days. The first journey my mother ever made up the hill was by sedan chair. She didn't enjoy the ride, in fact she was too embarrassed at being carried that at the halfway point she got off and refused to go another step. Goodness knows by what means she came down again. The railway was completed soon after that.

...

"Friday Night is Amami Night", so ran the once famous advertisement for hair shampoo. But for my brother, Amah and her little girl, Ah Thye, and Taib, our driver (who also lived with his family in Leith Street Ghaut), and for me Friday

night was Mamee night. A very special treat my parents gave us each week. This favourite place for the Mamee feed was an eating house somewhere along Burma Road. I have not been able to locate it again.



CHRISTMAS

Opposite Chowrastra Market, on the site of the present Police Headquarters in Penang Road, there used to be a large old tree. From its great round trunk its sinewy roots stretched over a wide circle of the ground and met the distance of thickly foliated branches overhead. The shade it gave was deep and cool. Before it stood the Police Club, and in the surrounding grounds there was a playing field, which might also have been used as a drill ground. Police Constable quarters were, I think, on the far side of the grounds. I could be wrong about that. But I remember the tree very well. While parents relaxed in rattan chairs and talked about the latest news from home, we children played games beneath the spreading arms of our friendly tree. One afternoon a violent electrical storm blew up while we were playing our usual games under the tree.

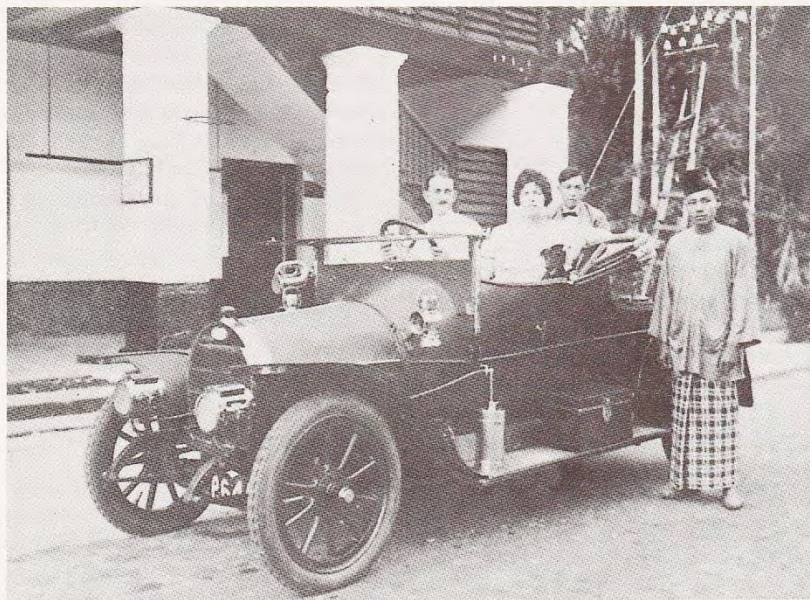
It was really very sudden and there was no rain. We were ushered into the club house. We had not been a moment inside when there was the loudest explosion ever heard. We expected to find the tree gone in a cloud of smoke and fire but it had not. In front of it, however, was a smoking hole in the ground. It has been argued that there is no such thing as a thunderbolt. I am not convinced.

At Christmas time the SSP held their children's party at the Club. It was well organised with games to play and goodies to eat and presents for each child. Wives and mothers worked hard to make it go with a swing. Father Christmas arrived by different means every Christmas. Sometimes he arrived by police can (which left us wondering if he had been especially released for the occasion), once by motorbike, and once even by rickshaw.

MAKAN ANGIN

In Penaga, my father has a beautiful German made car called a "Stoever". It was a two-seater model with a 'dickie' seat at the back and it had spoke wheels. He was justly proud of it. I was not born then, and to the best of my knowledge, was never privileged to ride in it. I know of it only from a very clear photograph taken of my father sitting in the driving seat with his hands ready on the wheel. My mother is beside him with her dog, Pincey, sitting next to her. There are two other admirers with them; the cook who, for some reason is sitting in the dickie seat, and a young Malay boy who might well have been my father's apprentice driver, that is to say, someone who had hopes of being a driver of this car. With a beautiful car like that I have doubts that anyone would have been allowed to drive it except my father! Indeed, it looks a beauty. It has brass covered headlamps, brass fire extinguisher resting on the running board alongside a brass-rimmed tool-box, brass trim around the windshield (the windshield could be regulated to any angle you required), a horn of brass, of course, with a super air-bulb which gave, I'm sure, a dignified honk, and to cap it all two beautiful brass oil side lamps clamped to the brass trimmed bonnet. I still feel that we should have had shares in the Brasso Company. My father would have made a million.

That was a while before my time. The one we had in Penang was an open, canvas-roofed Morris Cowley. The roof, I know, was folded down (manually) to rest across the back of the rear seats and held in place with straps. We generally had the roof down when we went for drives in the cool of the evening. "Makan angin", my mother called these little evening trips. A blowing away of the cobwebs. It was never to anywhere in particular. But sometimes the final stage of the drive would take us past the Police Club in Penang Road. On those occasions my parents would decide to stop at the Club for a "sundowner" with friends before returning home. We children would welcome the stop because it meant that we would be out after darkness fell. And nothing was more exciting than being allowed to play outside in the gathering dusk, chasing fireflies and each other.



The "Stoever"

Of course, there were some disadvantages to having an open car. Especially when it rained. More especially when it rained while we were driving along with the roof down, for there was no automatic mechanism to draw the roof up and over our heads. It was a case of all hands to the plough and unstrapping straps while the driver found a suitable place to stop. He would then get out, tug at the roof and slap it into position and batten it down with the butterfly screws. But

it did not end there. He would then drag out the canvas trimmed mica-side-windows from behind the back seat and arrange them in proper order. Each window had attached to its bottom edge a small metal nob which corresponded with a hole on the top edge of the doors of the car, and studs along the top of the windows to clip onto the canvas roof. You had to know your knobs and studs in this sort of job or you would end up being thoroughly drenched. The speediest operation during a rainfall did not guarantee total dryness. It was always a bit of a damp ride, even at the best of times. In later years, after our transfer to Singapore, and when most people were sporting 'saloon' cars, we still had an open tourer Morris Cowley with a canvas roof.

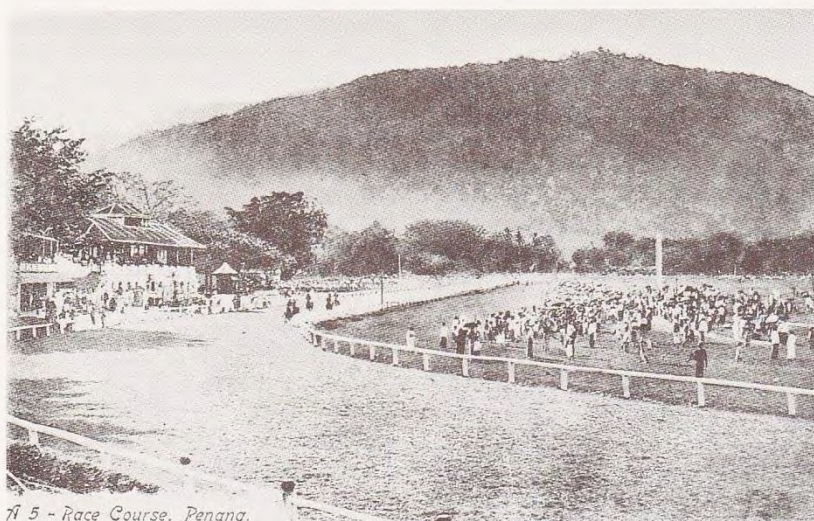
which we children were quick to pick up - and colour vividly. It was, we decided, definitely haunted. On my first drive past this spot many years later, the house has gone. I wondered, in fact, if the house had been there at all, memory does play tricks sometimes. But I have discovered since that there was a house. It had been built by a Chinese gentleman who might have been a bit of a recluse. He had ordered his architect to build a house with underground passages and tunnels and odd rooms below the surface. Before it was quite finished, however, the ground was apparently too waterlogged to withstand the weight. It isn't any wonder then that he abandoned the house. It would have been very damp and unliveable. I must say I was pleased to have my memory of it confirmed, but I like to think that my brother and I had guessed the truth - that it was haunted. Going to the races was a very rare occasion for us as children but I actually do remember being taken to the old Penang Turf Club at least once - or more accurately, to see the races held at the course. There are one or two photographs of the old Turf Club in my family's album showing a long building of colonial style, a high roof, deep eaves and open balcony which is where the grandstand would be. On the ground floor several archways lead into reception rooms, probably a bar and dining area. It looked to be a cool and gracious construction able to cope with a tropical climate without the need for air-conditioning. By far the best sort of building to have in the tropics.

BON VOYAGE

Once upon a time, the P & O liners called at Penang. These were the 'Ranchi', 'Rawalpindi', 'Rajputana', 'Kashmir', 'Chitral', 'Corfu' and 'Cathay', the first one. A second Cathay was built later.

When they came, among those they carried home on leave were one or two of our Police families. Some of the young bachelor Inspectors would be going back to the UK for the first time in three or four years and might even return with a bride. Leave began the day the ship sailed and would be for a period of 6 to 8 months, usually. The occasion would therefore be a wonderful excuse to throw a party and this would be done the night before the ship sailed, usually on board. It was a very convenient arrange-

It was fairly certain that our makan angin rides would take us along the old Northam Road. As a matter of fact it would be difficult to avoid it. Along the old Northam Road, just where there is a turning off to Gurney Drive, there once stood a large house, built in the style of a rich Towkeh's house. It appeared to us be slightly lop-sided and it seemed to sink lower and lower into the ground. The grass and weeds began to creep up, onto and over its walls. The whole place gave out an atmosphere of eeriness



71 5 - Race Course, Penang.

ment that the P & O liners would sometimes spend 2 or 3 days in port stocking-up for the return journey, because this meant that passengers could go on board and get themselves settled-in the day before the ship was due to sail on the early morning tide of the following day. If, perchance it was a late evening sailing then there would be two days spent in having a party! It was useful for other reasons too, of course. It allowed them to settle their outstanding bills, arrange for someone to take over the dog and the servants, and to march out of the quarters leaving the place spick and span, hopefully. In those days there were not so many restrictions about friends going on board to say farewell, at least, they were easily complied with. Even servants came aboard, dreading the parting, and bringing with them fruits and goodies galore as farewell gifts, and usually taking charge of the unpacking and putting things away in drawers in the cabins, and watching lovingly over the children, for it was they who shed the tears and clung to their small charges, vowing to be there again on their return from leave. And they were. And so, eventually, the deck stewards would walk through all the reception rooms calling, "All friends ashore, please - all friends ashore!". The streamers would fly from ship to shore and from shore to ship. People would stand waving endlessly to each other. Finally, the gangway would be drawn away from the ship's side. Then it would move ever so slowly away from the dockside; a tug nudging her astern and

another pulling her from the bow. The streamers still entangled and held tightly by friends at either end would be torn apart and the final link would be broken. a loud ships horn sending the signal that she was at last underway would be heard over all George Town.

We were a mere three minutes from the wharves. It did not take long for my father to drive us home and park the car so that it faced seaward. In the gathering dusk the ship would round the corner from the harbour and come into view. As she made good headway toward the open sea, my father would flash the headlights and watch for the answering blink of torchlight. We hoped our voices would carry across the water accompanied by the noisy honking of our car's bulbhorn. Farewells were not so sad in those days, it seemed. We were always so sure that the parting would be brief. And, happily, they usually were.

MOUNT OLIVIA

One Sunday morning on 28th February 1988, some members and friends of Warisan Pulau Pinang including Dr. Ivan Polunin and seven students from the Department of Architecture, Dumstadt University in Germany hiked up Mt. Olivia, 870 feet above sea-level. The following essay is contributed by the late Mr. Sjovald Cunyngham Brown who accompanied the group on that "scramble".

To tell you something about the reason for its name, I must start by saying that Mount Olivia is called after Stamford Raffles' first wife, Olivia Mariamne Fancourt (nee Devenish).

Thomas Bingley Stamford Raffles, then, was born on 30th. June 1781 at sea, off Jamiaca. His father was Commander of the small West-Indiaman ANNE-Captain Benjamin Raffles by name. When at home they lived at Hammersmith near London; and the young Raffles went to school there, supported to some degree by Benjamin Raffles' friend, Mr. Bingley, until Stamford was 14 at which time Mr. Bingley's money ran out. So he had to leave school and then his father Benjamin Raffles died. A kind uncle called Mr. Hammond - a tea broker in London - found Raffles a job as an office boy in the East India Company's Leadenhall Street Office, where the boy worked under William Brown Ramsay, the Departmental Manager for the next 10 years. Here, he learnt a lot, both of business as well as human nature, until at last his great chance came.

In 1805, John Company was sending out a brand-new and enlarged government for the settlement of Penang Island. The tiny place has suddenly become a full-blown Presidency like Madras, Bengal and Bombay. There was to be a Governor, a Chaplain, an Accountant, a Collector of Revenue and a Chief Secretary - each one of whom was to be supplied with that invaluable work-horse known as an 'Assistant'. Raffles had studied the papers as they came through his hands for filling - and now made up his mind what to do. He put in an application for one of the vacant posts of 'Assistant Secretary'.

Thanks to his ten years of sweated labour on less than £70 - per year and to the fact that the Departmental Head Mr. William Ramsay had seen how

hard and faithfully he had been working all that time - Raffles' application was approved. He got the plum posting of Assistant Secretary to the Chief Secretary and £70 became £1,500 per annum overnight.

Raffles was then 24 years old. Instead of riotously spending this miraculous whirlwind of good fortune, he immediately made the most generous arrangements for the support of his mother and family and within 6 days married a widow ten years his senior called Olivia Mariamne Fancourt. As Stamford wrote in a letter to a cousin in 1814, "When I was about to quit all other ties it was natural that I should secure one bosom friend, one confidante, who would soothe the adverse blasts of misfortune and gladden the sunshine of prosperity."

In this short treatise, I think we may safely skip the long arguments concerning this lady's antecedents. In all probability she was born in Madras, the daughter of George Devenish, the younger brother of William Devenish of Rush Hill, County of Roscommon, Ireland. Her dark and flashing eyes, high-bridged nose, quick spirits and noble bearing particularly remarked upon by Lord Minto, the Governor-General of India in describing her as "The Great Lady" would suggest her being a Parsee by racial background, as such aristocratic beauty is frequently found among that race - of whom there are great numbers in Madras and Bombay. Yet copies of family records of the Devenish family made no mention of her existence; and it appears that even she herself was a trifle ashamed of her parentage in part from India - though she might well have been more ashamed of the attitude of the Devenish family instead.

At this point I am afraid I must touch briefly upon two somewhat similar items, these arising from many people's vicious envy of anyone sufficiently beautiful to arouse this jealous spite.

The first was that in Madras at the age of 24, Olivia was said to have been hastily married to Dr. Fancourt of the East India Company's Medical Service in order to avoid a most serious scandal, as she was alleged to have had an affair with the captain of the ship on the way out from England and to be with child by him. The second chatter of idle tongues was to the effect that after Dr.

Fancourt's death when she was 32 or so she had become the mistress of Mr. William Ramsay of the Company's Leadenhall Office in London and that Raffles had 'bought' his posting to Penang by marrying her and so relieving his former Chief of her presence. People in those days were capable of insinuating the foulest calumnies regarding each other - and the above two scandalous and baseless lies were mere examples of what passed in those days as writ. Olivia and Raffles were in fact deeply in love with each other during the whole of their tragically brief life together.

Shortly after the arrival in Penang of Raffles, Olivia and Raffles' sister Mary Anne arrived with quite a host of newcomers in September 1805. Raffles obtained a lease from the new administration of a small portion of land on the flat area on top of this very hill; and on this, having had it cleared of jungle, they proceeded to build a small but commodious house. The following year, an adjacent hilltop was also leased to accommodate Raffles' sister, Mary Anne, who soon after landing had married Mr. Quentin Dick Thompson, the sub-warehouse keeper and Paymaster of the Penang Establishment. On that adjacent hilltop too another small bungalow was constructed and this hill was subsequently called Mount Saint Mary.

Both sites derived their access from near the foot of the Waterfall in the present Waterfall Garden - and you will easily be able to imagine the splendid potentials of the sites with their magnificent panoramas of the mainland and sea; though both of course are now completely obscured by dense secondary jungle.

It was here, in their lovely and secluded little nest on top of this hill that the Raffles played host to a young assistant surgeon on sickleave from India called John Casper Leyden.

This young fellow had been found by Raffles desperately ill in some low tavern in George Town, "ringing with coarse sailor's oaths and the rattle of the dice-box" as Raffles himself described it. Typical of Raffles, nothing would do but the poor man must be carried home and nursed back to health by Olivia.

Six years older than Raffles, the son of a shepherd and born in the village of

Denholm in the Scottish County of Rox-boroughshire, at 15 years of age John Casper Leyden had been one of the barefoot students of Edinburgh University who had carried in with him on his shoulder a sack of oatmeal from Denholm that would have to last him as his sole subsistence for a whole term of three months. At Edinburgh University he soon astounded his professors by "the portentous mass and diversity of his knowledge and attainments". Fully qualified with a good degree at 18, he (almost incredibly) became the Editor of the then famous 'Scots Magazine' at 22; and accepted the post offered him as Assistant Surgeon on the Madras Establishment in 1803. Leyden, an intellectual giant of enormous physical strength and vitality with lively dark eyes, ruddy complexion, ginger hair, athletic physique and unquenchable enthusiasm forever excitedly in search of new knowledge and new understanding, was all that Raffles had ever longed for to fill the sad gaps in his education. Filled with songs and laughter, poetry and wise sayings announced in seven different languages, Western and Oriental, adept at recounting fact and fable always suffused with warm and pawky Scottish humour, Leyden was the spark that set fire to Raffles' dormant genius - his marvellous and pyrotechnique lifetime's display in the fields of botany, zoology and anthropological research. It was his work in the fields among others that later led Raffles to membership of the Royal Society, to a knighthood, to the founding of the Regents Parks Zoological Gardens and to an immortal name as an administrator who forever changed and purified the course of Britain's Colonial endeavours overseas. "If it had not been for John Leyden," Raffles once wrote, "I would have remained all my life as ignorant as a Hottentot."

Ledyen was totally unaware of social difference in any shape or form; he was capable neither of any sign of difference to those in authority over him nor of arrogance to those below, but loving all human being equally. When Sir John Malcolm, an early Commanding Officer of his once begged him "For God's sake to learn a little English," he immediately replied, "Who? Me? Learn English? NEVER! It was trying to learn that language that has ruined my Scots!"

Today, Mount Olivia is the site of all that remains of a small 'Paradise on Earth.' It is nearly 200 years ago since all this happened, but the 'aura' remains. I am sure that it cannot be disturbed by our respectful interest and understanding of what happened so long ago. Raffles went on to fame, Leyden died in Java ten years later in the arms of Raffles. And Olivia? I do not know. I think she must have died of grief. Her grave is beside John Leyden's in the Buitenzorg (now Bogor) Cemetery, with a fragment of one of Leyden's poems inscribed in marble on her tomb.

But don't go. I hear a little voice crying out "Remember me."

It is Charlotte, Quentin and Mary Anne Thompson's little girl, born up this hill of Mount St. Mary. We may think this all happened such a long time ago - but it is really not very long ago at all. Two long lifetimes can make two long strides in history. She lived on into my own lifetime, did Charlotte as wife of the third Earl Mount Stewart of Ireland; and if I had happened to meet her there would only have been one voice carrying across the years into your ears from 'then' to 'now'. But now we too must take some long strides - so thank you.

Cunyngham-Brown

OBITUARY

"One crowded hour of glorious life is worth an age without a name"

Thomas Osbert Mordaunt

1730-1809

Sjovald Hoseason Cunyngham-Brown, who passed away on 21st. April 1989, aged 83, was a member of the old Malayan Civil Service (MCS). After serving as a magistrate in Singapore and as a controller of labour in Johore, Cunyngham-Brown was caught up in the "Mad Hatter's tea party" (as he described it) of the Japanese invasion of Malaya as an officer in the Malayan RNVF. The extraordinary stories of the war years were recounted by Cunyngham-Brown in an autobiographical account *Crowded Hour* as well as to Charles Allen for the BBC Television series *Tales from the South China Seas*.

Born on 5th. August 1905, Cunyngham-Brown was of Scottish-Shetland descent with a dash of French blood. He was educated at Blundell's and read medicine at Birmingham for two years before abandoning his studies to go to sea. He worked his way to Australia as a deck hand on the square rigger *William Mitchell* and in 1929, he sailed out to the East as an Eastern cadet to join the MCS.

His apprenticeship in the MCS began in George Town before being posted to India as an assistant emigration commissioner in the Madras Presidency, where he became fluent in Telugu. His post-war activities were largely connected with the rehabilitation of Malaya and the resettlement of the Chinese population during the Communist Insurgency in 1948 to 1954. His official service culminated in the administration of George Town as president of its municipal council from 1952 to 1956. Being the last of the MCS officer to hold the post, he played a significant role in the transition to Malayanise the municipal council. Indeed, one of his notable achievements as President was the elevation of the status of George Town to that of a City.

After Independence, he threw in his lot with the country and set up a small spice enterprise in Penang. He used to describe his business as "one of those old perfumed trades where one has to have a bath to get the smell of cloves off one in the evening."

A man of immense charm and erudition who was equally at ease with Cantonese, Malay or Telugu, Cunyngham-Brown continued to play an enthusiastic role in the affairs of Penang - most notably as a local historian as well as Honorary Consul-General of France in Penang and lastly, as a founder member of the Penang Heritage Trust.



A TRIBUTE TO SJOVALD

The Penang Heritage Trust lost a staunch and significant member when Sjovald Cunyngham-Brown passed away. Although he had lived to a ripe old age, he was active to the very end and had in fact taken part in a botanic heritage expedition with some of his friends within the last fortnight of his life. A year or so earlier, after a major operation, he had ascended Mount Olivia with members of the Trust to re-visit the ruins of the house of Stamford Raffles on the hill named after Raffles' first wife.

He had been enthusiastically involved in helping to plan for a special event

related to the Penang Hill Festival, with particular enthusiasm for the heritage sites of Penang Hill, and had imparted valuable insights into many places including Half-Way House and former residence of the Hoganses.

Indeed, I had found Sjovald a treasure house of information on historical aspects of Penang, which I am sure he has shared with many other of his friends. He had worked on two important manuscripts setting down his perceptions of Penang history and a biography of Francis Light which remained to be edited and published. To many of his friends, his earlier biography entitled "Crowded Hour" will be essential reading. Many of his later friends would not have known of his harrowing experience during the war, and other exciting experiences as a young man.

His distinguished career since then is probably better known, but most of us will remember his dignified, gracious and courteous manners and, of course, of his enthusiasm for history and heritage. He was very much a founder member of the Penang Heritage Trust and subscribed to the idea that it should be a distinct body with special local interest. I was particularly grateful that he reinforced this view which I shared against misconceptions that by having a separate Penang body, we were somewhat antagonistic to a national heritage movement, which was clearly not the case as Penang's heritage activities are very much a part of the fabric of overall national interests.

There will be opportunities for his friends in the Penang Heritage Trust to remember him and to commemorate his contributions by enhancing our activities, hopefully with the same sense of enthusiasm, dedication and friendliness.

DATUK LIM CHONG KEAT

JUNE 1989



April 1989. Sjovald, Datuk Kam U Tee and friends from the Public Works Department, Botanic Gardens and Forestry Department at Moniot Road, Penang Hill.

FORTHCOMING ACTIVITIES

3rd ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Date: Saturday, 24 June 1989

Time: 2.30pm.

Venue: Sarkies Corner, E & O Hotel,
Farquhar Street, Penang.

WARISAN

PERSATUAN WARISAN PULAU PINANG
PENANG HERITAGE TRUST
C/O MUZIUM NEGERI PULAU PINANG
JALAN FARQUHAR
10200 PULAU PINANG

