

PHT *newsletter*

PENANG HERITAGE TRUST • PERSATUAN WARISAN PULAU PINANG

c/o 11 Free School Road, 11600 Penang, Malaysia • Tel/Fax: 04 - 281 3187

Number 30

August 1996

HERITAGE SKILLS WORKSHOP - I

An Introductory Course
on roof tiling, roof insulation
rainwater goods and maintenance

organised by
The Heritage Centre Penang

conducted by
Mr Didier Repellin
(conservation architect)
Mr Alain Bourgeois
(master roofer)
French Heritage Experts

Date: **24 & 25 August 1996**
Time: **9.30 am – 4.30 pm**
Venue: **Syed Alatas Mansion**
128 Armenian Street, Penang

Objectives:

- To train participants with the basic knowledge in building conservation, particularly in roof restoration, insulation and rainwater goods.
- To expose participants to various tools and machines (including rolling, bending and shearing machines).
- To understand other aspects of restoring roofs, including temporary protection, roof tiling and building maintenance.
- To disseminate principles, techniques and other approaches appropriate to the conservation of heritage buildings.

Registration Fee:
RM50/- (excluding meals and accommodation)

For further information please contact:
The Heritage Centre Penang
128 Armenian Street, 10200 Penang
Tel: 04 - 261 6606, Fax: 04 - 261 6605

HERITAGE SKILLS WORKSHOP - II

A Professional Training Course

organised by
The Heritage Centre Penang

conducted by
Mr Didier Repellin
(Conservation architect)
Mr Alain Bourgeois
(master roofer)
French Heritage Experts

Date: **24 & 25 August 1996**
(Introduction to the Course)
26 August – 27 September 1996
(Practical Training)
Time: **9.30 am – 4.30 pm**
Venue: **Syed Alatas Mansion**
128 Armenian Street, Penang

Objectives

To give participants a month long hands-on experience in the various aspects of restoring and conserving heritage buildings.

Who Will Benefit

- **Contractors** who wish to improve their skills in conservation work, thereby enabling them to upgrade their construction team and enhancing their eligibility for getting restoration projects.
- **Building professionals** including architects, engineers, quantity surveyors, technicians and conservationists who have to work with historic buildings.
- **Craftsmen and builders** who wish to upgrade their technical skills in roof restoration.
- **Local authorities and government officials**, especially those responsible for maintaining or developing heritage buildings and sites.

Registration Fee:
RM1000/- (excluding meals and accommodation)

For further information please contact:
The Heritage Centre Penang
128 Armenian Street, 10200 Penang
Tel: 04 - 261 6606, Fax: 04 - 261 6605

"Better Living and the Existence of Historic Areas"

**5th International Symposium of
Asia and West Pacific Network for
Urban Conservation (AWPNUC)**

**28 September - 1 October 1996
Yogyakarta, Java, Indonesia**

AWPNUC

The Asia and West Pacific Network for Urban Conservation was founded in 1991. Its purpose is to allow heritage groups in the region to exchange ideas and information about urban conservation. The Penang Heritage Trust is a founder member of the organization. AWPNUC symposiums are held annually. The first one was held in Penang, Malaysia (1991), the second in Adelaide, Australia (1992), the third in Hanoi, Vietnam (1994), and the fourth in Nara, Japan (1995).

Symposium Venue

Yogyakarta, Indonesia, like so many other ancient Asian cities, is now undergoing transformation. Founded by Sultan Hamengku Buwono I in 1755, it was once the court center of the Mataram Kingdom. Yogyakarta is perceived by the Javanese as still the heart of their unique traditional culture.

Aim of Symposium

The chief aim of the symposium and workshop is to study the three interrelated issues influencing the management of urban conservation: (1) The legal and institutional framework for conservation zones; (2) Community involvement and participation; and (3) The role of the private sector.

Contact for further information

PHT members who would like to attend the symposium should get in touch with:

The 5th AWPNUC Symposium Organizing Committee, Slamet Sudibyo (Chairman), T Yoyok Wahyu Subroto (Secretary), Tel: (62-274) 580095, 902320, 902322, Fax: (62-274) 580854.

New Members

We welcome the following as new members of the Penang Heritage Trust. They can take part in any of its activities.

Ordinary members

Chris Utterback Mai Palmer Eileen Oakes



Talk and Slide Show

Penang: Historical, Architectural, and Cultural Significance

by *Loh-Lim Lin Lee*

Tuesday 27 August '96

3.00 pm

**Rasa Sayang Resort (Bintang Room 1)
Batu Ferringhi**

Ms Loh-Lim, a Penang Heritage Trust Council member, is the inspiration behind the restoration of the famous Cheong Fatt Tze mansion, one of only 3 of its kind outside China.

The talk is organized specially for the guests of Rasa Sayang Resort. PHT members who would like to attend it should contact Stephanie Lee, the hotel's Communications Executive, tel: 8811811.

Coffee, Tea, and cookies will be served



Talk and Slide Show

Baba & Nyonya Ceremonies & Artefacts

by *Michael Cheah*

Friday 6 September '96

8.00 pm

INTEC College, Leith Street

Mr Michael Cheah, a fifth-generation Baba, is an antiques collector and dealer specializing in Straits Chinese Culture and artefacts. He has produced and directed many Nyonya and Baba fashion shows, held exhibitions at the beach hotels and shopping centres, and given talk and slide shows to various societies.

He is presently renting out Nyonya & Baba costumes to organizations and private individuals for wedding photographs, cultural performances, and heritage night parties.

Light refreshments will be served.

SUN Thursday 25 July 1996

Hotel given green light to start piling

By Himanshu Bhatt

Penang, Wed: The Penang Island Municipal Council (MPPP) has approved the commencement of piling works for a controversial 39-storey hotel at the site of the demolished heritage-listed Hotel Metropole.

An MPPP official today confirmed that the developer, Leader Universal Holdings Bhd, was issued permission to commence piling and to build a diaphragm wall on July 5.

However, the MPPP has yet to issue the building permit for the project, located along the famed "Millionaires' Row" of Jalan

Sultan Ahmad Shah.

The approval may well signify the end of a lengthy battle by heritage activists to rebuild the turn-of-the-century Hotel Metropole, once known as Nova Scotia, which was demolished illegally on Christmas Day 1993.

The demolition had taken place even though the building was classified as Category 2 on the MPPP's conservation list on Oct 28, 1993.

It is understood that the landowner, Dolphin Square Sdn Bhd, plans to incorporate a replica of Metropole's facade in the ground floor air-conditioned lobby.

Dolphin Square had ear-

lier this year been slapped with the maximum RM 50,000 fine. The Penang Heritage Trust (PHT) labelled the sum as "peanuts" - for demolishing a heritage building.

In an instant response to the approval, a PHT spokesperson today criticised the MPPP for disregarding the court's view of the demolition as a severe offence.

"The MPPP must be strong and fair. The developer should be made to rebuild the old building instead of allowing an alien profit-making project at the site," the spokesperson said.

"What kind of Penang are we living in when its

government effectively rewards its citizens for violating the law?"

DAP state chairman Teoh Teik Huat condemned the approval as a "mockery" of the government's claim that it wants to preserve the state's heritage.

"The issue of rebuilding Hotel Metropole was a case-study of whether the government is serious in its desire to prevent developers from destroying our heritage buildings," he said.

Despite repeated calls from *Sun*, Leader Universal officials could not be contacted for comments. On two occasions, the line was cut without any explanation.

SUN 7 AUGUST 1996

Disturbing message from council on heritage buildings

The Penang Island Municipal Council's decision to give the go-ahead to piling work for a 39-storey complex on the site of the demolished Hotel Metropole in Penang is most disgraceful.

The developer was fined the maximum of RM 50,000 for demolishing the century-old hotel. Now he stands to profit many times over.

Given such a situation, where the fine is a paltry sum when compared to the potential profit, what's there to stop others from doing the same?

As the preservation of our heritage is a matter of public policy, what sort of policy is the council practising? Where is the law which says plans submitted by developers, even if they meet the technical requirements, cannot be rejected by the authorities for the preservation of our heritage?

What kind of message is the council giving to other developers as regard heritage buildings?

Ravinder Singh,
Sungai Petani

STAR 8 August 1996

Fire damages closed hotel

PENANG: A section of the 111-year-old E & O Hotel, closed for 18-month restoration work, caught fire early yesterday.

Several beams and a part of the hotel's roof, which were being preserved, were destroyed in the fire at 12.05am.

Six firemen from the Jalan Pantai fire department led by chief firemen Loh Chee Eng brought the fire under control within five minutes.

Loh said initial investigations had revealed parts of the hotel had caught fire as a result of the illegal burning of wood near the building.

He said that open burning in the hotel grounds was an offence.

E & O Bhd managing director Terry Tham Ka Hoon had recently said that the RM60 million restoration programme which began in April, would involve preserving the 46 existing suites overlooking the pool, the Dome, and the original facade of the Anchor Bar, Coffee House, and the 1885 Grill.

When the hotel reopens in August 1997, it would boast of 99 suites, three presidential suites and a basement car park with 288 parking lots.

Hotel fails in bid to suspend injunction

By K. KASTURI DEWI

PENANG: The High Court dismissed with costs an application by Hotel Continental to suspend an injunction requiring it to stop piling works near the Cheong Fatt Tze mansion in Leith Street.

The injunction was granted to the owner of the 19th century mansion by a High Court here on May 15 on grounds that piling works for the extension of Hotel Continental had caused cracks on the mansion.

Hotel Continental was restrained from continuing with piling works on its 20-storey project in Penang Road, parallel to Leith Street.

It was also restrained from continuing to cause any vibration or nuisance pending use of an alternative piling system that would prevent further damage to the mansion.

On July 4, Hotel Continental obtained a *ex parte* order to suspend the injunction and piling works resumed on July 14. But the Court of Appeal discharged the *ex parte* or-

der on July 23.

In his affidavit, Tan Chong Keng, a shareholder and director of the mansion, represented by J.A. Yeoh and Daphney Choy, said the hotel's application was an abuse of the process of the court.

"Any stay of the injunction would have severe and damaging repercussions. The conduct of the defendants to date only shows bad faith and disregard for our rights and interest," he said.

He said piling works resumed on July 14, further aggravating the damage by causing fresh cracks and other cracks to widen.

Mr Justice Vincent Ng said if a stay of the injunction was allowed, it would enable Hotel Continental to resume and complete piling works, which would render the pending appeal redundant.

He added the defendants were not totally helpless as the injunction gave them the liberty to satisfy the court that there was a safe alternative piling system.

Of hammer-driven piles

By CHEAH UI-HOON

THE Penang Municipal Council should immediately review its policy regarding the use of hammer-driven piles in the city as they pose danger to neighbouring, especially those classified as heritage buildings.

In a statement to the press recently, Penang Heritage Trust council member Ahmad Chik said the council exercise to list buildings for heritage conservation would be pointless if it did not take action to save the buildings from structural damage.

"Today, the Hardwicke mansion, a historic and architecturally significant building classified to be preserved by the council, is near ruins as a result of piling and other building works around it," Ahmad said.

The Trust had met earlier with the council and brought to its attention that the building at Jalan Sultan Ahmad Shah-Jalan Pangkor junction was in danger of deteriorating beyond repair.

"We would like to know what further action, if any, the council has taken to save Hardwicke which it has so positively identified as a heritage building," the statement added.

The Trust, Ahmad said, feels that the council must take positive steps to prevent damage to listed buildings, damages brought about either deliberately or through carelessness.

"This is especially when the building, as in the case of Hardwicke, belongs to the developers who are not going to bring a suit against themselves," the statement said.

Ahmad said other heritage buildings along Jalan Sultan Ahmad Shah such as Runnymede, Shih Chung School and Soon-

stead, as well as the Lim Cheng Teik mansion in Jalan Gurney, will soon have development next to them.

"The situation merits an urgent response, a change of policy on piling systems, from the council," he said.

When contacted, council president Dr Teng Hock Nan said the council had recently imposed the rule for non-hammer driven piling to be used in projects which are near heritage buildings and housing estates.

"We have decided to make it one of the conditions, because we have seen the destruction to heritage buildings like Cheong Fatt Tze and Hardwicke," he said.

When asked if there was a specific by-law for this, Dr Teng said:

"Developers could be made to comply through conditions in the building approval."



Ahmad... 'Trust feels council must take positive steps to prevent damage to listed buildings'

Stop piling works order stands

The Star
24 July
1996

KUALA LUMPUR: The Court of Appeal discharged yesterday an *ex parte* order to suspend a High Court injunction stopping piling works near the Cheong Fatt Tze mansion in Penang.

The effect of the court decision was that the injunction granted by a Penang High Court on May 15 would remain.

The injunction was granted to the owner of the 19th century Cheong Fatt Tze mansion in Leith Street on grounds that the piling works for the extension of Hotel Contin-

ental caused cracks on the mansion.

The injunction restrains Hotel Continental Sdn Bhd and their servants or agents from continuing with the piling works on its 20-storey project in Penang Road which is parallel to Leith Street. It also restrains them from continuing to cause any vibration or nuisance pending use of an alternative system of piling that would prevent further damage to the mansion.

Court Appeal president Tan Sri Lamin

Yunus, sitting with Mr Justice Datuk M. Shankar and Datuk Ahmad Fairuz Sheikh Abdul Halim discharged yesterday the *ex parte* order granted on July 4 to Hotel Continental.

In an affidavit, Tan Chong Kheng, a shareholder and director of the Cheong Fatt Tze mansion Sdn Bhd, said the mansion was now exposed to irreparable damage after piling works had commenced on July 14.

He said his solicitors were served with the July 4 *ex parte* order only on

July 15. He said the *ex parte* order was intended for no reason other than to enable the piling work and other building work to be continued.

In an affidavit, Loh Boon Choon @ Loh Loo Teong, managing director of Hotel Continental, said the alleged damage were a few minor cracks on the mansion.

He said the High Court injunction would cause the construction project to come to a halt and delay by the injunction might lead to the whole project being abandoned.

The Star
10 August
1996

The STAR August 1996



HERITAGE BUILDING ... Aerial view of the mansion (left) which is adjacent to the former Metropole Hotel (right)

Trust: Building interiors should be conserved, too

By SIRA HABIBU

PENANG: The Penang Heritage Trust has urged the municipal council to impose stringent guidelines to ensure the interiors of historical and heritage buildings is conserved as well as the exteriors.

Its vice-president Dr Choong Sim Pøey said at present the council only had guidelines for exterior preservations.

"For such buildings, the council should consult the experts for advice before giving the nod to refurbishing works," he told *The Star* yesterday.

Dr Choong had a dialogue session with the council and the developer of the E & O hotel recently to discuss the antique interior fixtures of the 111-year-old hotel which was sold off.

The session was held following a protest to the stripping off of doors, windows, bathroom sinks, urinals, floor tiles, and even staircases for sale.

Dr Choong said the outcome of the dialogue was quite promising as the council had agreed to consider the proposal and the developers do seem to have a high degree of awareness towards such

conservation.

"The developers claim that certain items were inadvertently taken out due to lack of supervision," said Dr Choong.

Dr Choong said the trust also advised the council to be more transparent when making decisions involving historical and heritage building so that the public would be aware of it and could voice their opinions.

"In most cases, the public would not be aware until the building was torn down," he said adding that public opinions should be taken into consideration.

Conservationists concerned over fate of Soonstead

By LIM AI LEE

PENANG: Conservationists here have expressed concern over the fate of yet another heritage building along Millionaires Row located at adjacent to the former Metropole Hotel.

The presence of a mobile crane in the grounds of Soonstead is giving them cause to fear that the mansion might suffer the same fate as the Metropole Hotel which had been reduced to rubble two years ago.

A check with the Penang Municipal Council showed that its planning department had not approved any plan to develop the Soonstead site.

The mansion, left vacant for over 10 years, is classified as a Category 1 heritage building by the council. Planning guidelines forbid demolition, alteration, or extension of buildings other than works necessary for restoration and maintenance for Category 1 buildings.

Penang Heritage Trust secretary Khoo Salma Nasution questioned whether the council was doing anything to protect Soonstead, adding that the high fencing erected in recent weeks had kept the mansion from public view.

Khoo said the Trust

had hoped that the mansion could be restored and turned into a Straits Chinese Museum as it was in fairly good condition.

Originally known as Northam Lodge, the Straits eclectic mansion was built in 1910 by a prominent Teochew businessman Heah Swee Lee and later renamed Soonstead when the property landed with the Soon family. It was sold to the late tycoon Tan Sri Loh Boon Siew in the early 1980s.

An aerial view of the property by *The Star* photographer

H. N. Leong showed that two zinc fencing had been erected, one surrounding the mansion and the other, the sprawling grounds.

The garden, previously overgrown with weeds, had been cleared and an excavator was seen carrying out some earthwork at the right side of the building. On the other side of the fence, more extensive earthwork was being carried out at the site of the former Metropole Hotel.

The Star had reported in March that the council had approved a 39-storey building on the site of the Metropole Hotel, which would include the reconstruction of the building's original facade.

Penang Hill Plan gets council's nod

PENANG, Sat. — The Penang Island Municipal Council has approved the draft plan of the Penang Hill Local Plan, drawn up by the council's Town and Country Planning department.

Its president Dr Teng Hock Nan said the plan was tabled during the full council meeting and unanimously approved yesterday.

Although the draft plan had been approved, Dr Teng said the council would not reveal it to the public yet.

"We are forwarding it to the State Planning Committee for comments before exhibiting the plans to the public.

"This is only a draft plan. We can always withdraw this plan if the State Planning Committee does not approve it," he said.

Dr Teng said the council would display the plan for 30 days after getting com-

ments from the State Planning Committee.

The Penang Hill Local Plan, which took five years to be completed, proposes for the hill to be promoted for its "interesting and appealing cultural history" and eco-tourism.

The hill covers a total area of 464.14ha including the area within the Penang Hill gazetted town limit.

The plan also includes the areas in the vicinity of the Lowe Station, South View, Tiger Hill and Fern Hill and part of the water catchment area.

Penang Hill has been identified as an area with special characteristics in terms of flora, topography and heritage and the plan specifies that any development must be carefully planned to preserve these features.

The State Government had requested the Town

and Country Planning Department to draw up guidelines to ensure a balanced and systematic development of Penang Hill.

This followed the submission of a comprehensive plan to develop the hill by a private consortium, Bukit Pinang Leisure Sdn Bhd in 1989, which subsequently drew widespread public protest.

Two Environmental Impact Assessment reports submitted by the consortium were also rejected by the Department of Environment in May 1991 and January 1992 respectively.

Besides the Penang Hill Local Plan, Dr Teng said the council was also looking at four other plans.

They are the Tanjung Tokong, Tanjung Bungah, Batu Ferringhi and Teluk Bahang Local Plans.

"The draft plans are almost ready now," he said.

Council 'yes' to project draws protest

By LIM AI LEE

PENANG: Conservationists here are appalled that the Penang Municipal Council has approved a nine-storey building at the state's pilot conservation area in George Town's inner city, next to the historical Syed Alatas Mansion.

Penang Heritage Trust secretary Khoo Salma Nasution said yesterday the project approval had contradicted the state's efforts to revitalise the Acheen Street-Armenian Street enclave as a central cultural heritage area.

The high-rise building, to be developed on the site of a car-park located at the Acheen Street junc-

tion would spoil the cityscape by changing the skyline of the historical precinct, she said.

Khoo also expressed concern that the Syed Alatas Mansion, restored at about RM1 million under the state's pilot restoration project, would be affected by piling work as it was located less than 10 metres from the proposed project site.

Other buildings in the historical enclave include the Mesjid Acheh built in 1808, Khoo Kongsi built at the turn of the century and the grandest clan temple in the country, the Yap Kongs and the Cheah Kongs.

Khoo claimed that the project was approved by

the council last year without seeking comments from owners of neighbouring property or advice from heritage experts.

She said the council should have imposed stricter guidelines for conservation areas and allowed only "sympathetic development." Guidelines should also include height control.

She added that the state government had applied for funds under the Seventh Malaysia to turn Acheen Street and Armenian Street into 'for pedestrians only' streets, adding that approving high-rise projects would only worsen traffic in the area.