



PHT newsletter

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**PENANG
HERITAGE
TRUST**

*Persatuan
Warisan
Pulau
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PHT

EDITORIAL

Penang Heritage Trust has always been associated with saving old buildings. However, we realise that more is at stake with the Repeal of Rent Control -- cultural diversity, traditional communities, our city of living culture. On August 24, PHT Council Members got together to envision PHT's direction for the next few years. We came up with five new strategies and priorities:

1. Youth & Heritage
2. Strengthening Traditional Communities through women & children
3. Inner City Revitalization
4. Urban Governance
5. World Heritage Nomination

Even as revitalization efforts are becoming more urgent, PHT is getting a new burst of energy with two new staff. William Chow, Program & Resource Manager and Sujatha d/o Athimulam, Project Officer. Our PHT newsletter has been totally revamped and refined with a new look created by William, who now does all our desktop publishing work. Sujatha is compiling a list of vacant properties and conducting street surveys for the Endangered Trades project, headed by Loh-Lim Lin Lee. Teresa Capol is launching a new programme 'Inner City Trails of George Town' offering three different PHT heritage tours a week. Priscilla has been talking to retailers to offer PHT members attractive discounts.

The last month, the PHT office has been abuzz with young people, with Mimie Kardina and Indra Tjakradharma from Badan Warisan Sumatra, Chong Li Mei who is working with Dr Nadargiah on the Japanese funded-project on culture and sustainable urban development; while Roslin bt. Mohd Hanifa, President of Kelab Belia Warisan has also kept PHT's junior members active. Now Peter Weik and his co-researcher Diana Dochnahl, German students on ASA scholarship funded by the Carl Duisberg Society, are coming on board for the next three months.

With so many projects going on at once, yes, we still need more volunteers. We beseech you, ask not what PHT can do for you, but what you can do for PHT and for Penang.

Khoo Salma Nasution

EXCLUSIVE GUIDED HERITAGE SITE VISITS

Site Visit #8

SUNDAY, 24 September 2000, 3.00 P.M.

**The Straits Eclectic Loh Leong San Quartet &
Chung Hua School Union, Jalan Burma;
The Jewish Cemetery, Jalan Zainal Abidin**

*O*n Sunday 24th September, our planned site visit will involve a very rare opening of a private dwelling to Trust members, followed by a visit to a haunted building and a short walk to a historically significant but little known cemetery.

Please gather at 3.30 pm as usual at the Loh Leong San quartet, a collection of 4 magnificently maintained Straits Eclectic town houses in Burma Road (painted green) directly facing the Rex cinema. After the Loh Leong San visit, we will walk two blocks down to visit pay a visit to the Chung Hua School Union, which is reputed to be haunted by a woman who died during childbirth. She puts in an appearance at midnight, but is normally benign, unless someone speaks disrespectfully of her, so you have to watch what you say during our site visit!

We will then cross over to neighbouring Yahudi Road (now called Jalan Zainal Abidin) and visit the only Jewish Cemetery in the State (we believe even in the country). Since logistics do not make serving tea feasible, perhaps we can go to a local coffee shop after the enlightening visit to the cemetery.



Loh Leong San's family residence

SITE VISIT REPORTS

Convent Light Street (July 30, Site visit # 6)

For those of you who were not with us at the Convent in July, you missed one of the most comprehensive site visits, certainly the one covering the most grounds. From classrooms in the 18th Century Government House to Francis Light's well, the English Garden, the prisoners' writings-on-the-wall, the Beach, Coomb's bell, the hushed and awesome chapel with its stained glass and vaulted ceilings, the orphans house and the public well, we wandered till late evening.

Dilys is to be heartily congratulated on her totally focussed research, the depth and quality of her study into the history of the Convent, the personalities involved over the years, its amusing episodes, its growth and changes. She invited one of her interviewees who had been at the Convent first as an orphan then as a nun, to join us and to address the gathering. (Thank you, Mr Yap for loaning Dilys to us, you've been incredibly patient).



PHT members at the Convent Light Street site visit

Earl Grey and cucumber and egg sandwiches were consumed in Government House and Loh-Lim (ex-Convent Light Street) led the group around the inspiring restoration works at different buildings in the grounds. What a pleasure to be educated in such splendidly historical surroundings and with such a magnificent display of commitment to our past.

Runnymede By-The-Sea on a Balmy and Breezy Sunday Afternoon. (August 27, Site visit #7)

One of the most agreeable and convivial site visits so far. Just driving into the grounds of the Runnymede produced a total removal from the busy buzz of Georgetown, it was like entering another dimension of our past. The spread of elegant and gracious buildings, the subdued tranquility and the manicured lawns with their palms and sprinkling of flowering bouganvillea. Many remarked on the continuous sea-breeze that made the afternoon extremely pleasant.

The AGM proceeded with no hitches, it was non-election year yet the pull of Runnymede saw participation by 107 members, the highest turn-out ever in the 15-year history of the PHT. It also brought very welcome old members and members such as the esteemed and highly respected P.G.Lim, Malaysia's first woman ambassador to the United Nations and certainly a

legend in her own time. She congratulated PHT on its achievements and told us how much she enjoyed the newsletter before proceeding to regale us with recollections of her dancing days at the Runnymede in her tailor-made fitting cheongsams ("we had a new one made for every party")

Certificates of appreciation were presented to our numerous volunteers and helpers, without whom PHT would not be able to function. After a superb tea, Dilys Yap then presented yet another well-researched piece of sleuthing on Raffles and the building of his bungalow, Runnymede. The gathering was also fascinated with glimpses of the indiscretions of the day between Mrs Olivia Raffles and her admir-

Upcoming Attraction!



Graceful curve at Lebuah Armenian

Site visit #9
Dr Sun Yat Sen Base,
Armenian Street
29 October 2000, 3.30 P.M.

Have tea with Salma & Lubis in the house where the Penang Conference was held and where the Kuong Wah Jit Poh was founded in 1910.

ers. We then strolled through the grounds and the main function rooms and ended the evening with a spectacular display of flat-land trick cycling by the boys of the Kelab Belia Warisan on the badminton court.

NOTE: Upon going through the finances of the PHT during the AGM, it was decided by a popular show of hands that the very successful site visits should continue next year and that there should be a minimal charge to cover tea. A donation box will also be put out at the visits.



View of Runnymede facing the sea

SIR STAMFORD RAFFLES AND THE HISTORY OF RUNNYMEDE

Researched and compiled by Dilys Yap

Thomas Stamford Raffles was born in 1781, to Captain Benjamin Raffles and his wife Anne and in 1793 was sent as a boarder to the Mansion House Boarding school in Hammersmith, London. He joined the East India Company in London as a temporary clerk in 1795.

Raffles became Assistant Secretary to the new Governor of Penang in March 1805 and married Olivia Marianne Fancourt. He met her when she went to the East India House to petition for a pension from her deceased husband Jacob C. Fancourt, who was - before his death, an assistant surgeon in Madras. The Raffleses arrived in Penang in September 1805, together with Raffle's sister Mary Anne. They were housed, on arrival, in the Government Guest House until Olivia found a wooden, attap-roofed bungalow at the foot of what was to be known as Mount Olivia (Mount Erskine). In 1807, Raffles commissioned a new home to be built at North Beach.

Penang became known as an excellent place to recuperate from illnesses. An old friend of Raffles, John Casper Leydon stayed with the Raffleses after his illness. He fell in love with Olivia. When he left Penang, he wrote long letters to her. In a letter to John Leyden on 3rd. August 1808, Olivia wrote: - "Mr. R. is building a pretty brick house on the beach, which I hope will be finished in eight to ten weeks." This is the only known letter from Olivia to have survived and it is kept in the National Library of Scotland.

THE PRINCE OF WALES GAZETTE dated 4th. January 1809 writes: - "The north beach will, ere long, assume a very handsome appearance, when the several elegant villas, now building, are finished. The new buildings commence with Runnymede, the property of Mr. Raffles and adjoining are the grounds of Mr. Hobson, Mr. Robinson, Mr. Erskine, Captain Douglas, Mr. Pearson and Mr. Lawrence, on which houses are erected."

D. C. Boulger states in his book; "The Life of Sir Stamford Raffles", that Raffles paid a sum of 330 pounds a year in rent for it. This leaves a question as to whether Raffles actually paid for the building or whether he rented it from another person.

The new house was named *Runnymede* after the English field on which King John of England signed the Magna Carta. It was a single storey building with louvered wooden window shutters, carved balconies, deep cool eaves and large, relatively open living spaces within. During their stay in *Runnymede*, Raffle's two younger sisters joined them, adding to the gaiety of the many evening functions.

Raffles was moved to Malacca in 1811. *Runnymede* was advertised in the PRINCE OF WALES GAZETTE - for sale. In C. E. Wurtzberg's book; "Raffles of the Eastern Isles" it was stated: - "Runnymede survived as a house in Northam Road up to September 1901, when the roof caught fire and the house was burned to the ground." Some of the surrounding buildings were renovated and Runnymede was converted into a hotel to compete with The E & O Hotel. W. Foster and H. Parker - two Scotsmen - managed the Runnymede Hotel.

In 1923, THE BRITISH MALAYA MAGAZINE commented: - "The Runnymede Hotel has come right to the front in the last few years; and from its merits in regard to service and appointments, the hotel is one of that select number which the tourist or visitor retains in his recollection for its individuality and unobtrusive comfort".

There were four buildings making up the whole of Runnymede. A few rooms were laid out as private flats with separate entrances from Northam Road. Every hotel room had fans, running water and electric light. A large, airy seafront wing was built in the 1930's, which is the three storied building we see today. The first and second floors were guestrooms and the ground floor housed the huge ballroom.

In 1935, *Runnymede* boasted of a post office as well as a telegraph office. Services offered by the *Runnymede Hotel* included a hairdresser, book stall, reading room, billiard room, railway ticketing office and a fleet of cars with chauffeurs. Cocktail dances were held every Monday, Wednesday and Friday, with dinner dances on Thursday and Saturday. Dinner was served on the lawns, (weather permitting). The well known lawyer P.G. Lim remembers attending dinner dances at the Runnymede in her early years and always had a new evening dress for the occasion. Dress was formal for the evenings with long dress for ladies and black tie for the men. Runnymede Hotel management took over the Crag Hotel on Penang Hill, and to celebrate the 1935 Silver Jubilee of King George V and Queen Mary, the front page of the PINANG GAZETTE ran a full-page advertisement with a photograph of the hotel taken from the air.

The British Navy took over the hotel in 1940, to house fleeing Europeans. After the war, the British Military occupied the buildings and in 1951 the Choong Lye Hock Estate sold *Runnymede* for \$1.5 million to the British Government for continued military occupation. With Malaysia's Independence in 1957, the British sold the Runnymede for a token sum of \$1.00 and the buildings

became a government rest house and recreation centre called "Wisma Persekutuan". Parents of a friend, recalled staying in *Runnymede Hotel* on their journey back to England - in 1963. Her mother was most upset that, with all the fresh vegetables in the markets, they were served baked beans as "the Vegetable of the Day" for their evening meal.

In 1986, the Malaysian Military moved into the premises. The main building is now used as an officer's mess and exhibition area, with their living quarters in the floors above.

The public can and do, rent the ballroom for wedding and dinner parties. ■

Bibliography

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- *Pulau Penang Magazine - Millionaires Row* by Khoo Salma, 1991.
- *Restless Warrior* by Richard Mann published by Gateway Books, 1993.
- *The Honourable Company* by John Keay published by Harper Collins, 1993.
- *Streets of George Town* written and published by Khoo Su Nin, 1993.
- *The Life of Sir Stamford Raffles* by D.C. Boulger published by The Peppin Press, 1999.

NOTE: This special write-up on the history of Runnymede is a précis prepared by Dilys herself. The full-version is available from the PHT library, upon request.



Attend this talk!

'Strategies for Economic Revitalisation for George Town Inner City after the Repeal of Rent Control'

Speaker:

Khoo Salma Nasution

Panelists:

Jimmy Lim & others

Date: 10 October 2000

Time: 8.00 pm

Venue: 100 Cintra Street

For further information
contact Ms. Joe
Tel: 2643581



100 Cintra Street, Penang

LETTERS/EMAILS

*An Open Letter to the President and Council of the
Majlis Perbandaraan Pulau Pinang (MPPP)*

Hammer Driven Piling In Historic George Town Still?

The Penang Heritage Trust is deeply concerned that hammer driven piling is still being permitted by the Local Authorities within the historic enclaves in George Town, in particular on sites adjacent to century-old buildings which sit on shallow strip footings or frail mangrove piles and have load-bearing walls.

The ramifications are foregone conclusions, as highlighted in several high-profile incidences e.g. the Bengali Mosque, the Cheong Fatt Tze Mansion in Leith Street and the historic Convent in Ipoh, as well as 380 pre-war houses affected by water-table changes in the earthworks of the Prangin Mall:

- Severe cracking of structural brickwalls, architraves, lintels & tiles.
- Uneven subsidence and upheaval of the ground as constant vibration & displacement of earth occurs.
- Dislodgement of roof, wall & floor tiles
- Traditional built-in windows and doors are forced out of alignment, rendering them uncloseable.
- Noise and dust pollution.
- Traffic congestion due to narrow streets blocked by equipment for pile drivers and cranes.

Some current examples of concern:

- *Noise and dust pollution.* The recent collapse of a pre-war building in Beach Street due to new earthworks in an adjoining site **causing a worker's death**
- *Noise and dust pollution.* The hammer driven piling currently taking place in King Street, the Kongsí street, site of many significant heritage buildings
- *Noise and dust pollution.* The submission of plans for a multi-storey extension of yet another hotel directly behind the Cheong Fatt Tze Mansion
- *Noise and dust pollution.* The on-going earthworks at several other sites deep within the historic zones

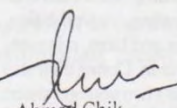
stressed the importance of taking adequate measures to preserve the value of a heritage site. The State Government of Malacca has stepped in to stop new building works in the historic core of Malacca. If George Town is to succeed in its application for Cultural World Heritage Listing, the State & Local Governments MUST be seen to be pro-actively enforcing its existing laws, as provided for under the Streets, Drainage & Building Act, for protection of adjoining properties.

On 16 December 1996, the President of the Penang Island Municipal Council (MPPP), Dr Teng Hock Nan announced that the Council would be very cautious in approving earthworks in the inner city with a view to protecting adjoining sites, that developers would be required to specify their piling methods and that bore-piling was recommended. We have not allowed them to use the hammer-piling system for development within Georgetown or other densely residential areas as the works might affect existing houses" He also said that this policy had been in effect since August 1996. The public wishes to know if the Council and the State has now reversed this policy and why.

We urge the Council to show its commitment to the historic city and to enforce its existing laws and guidelines. Imposing height & design guidelines for new structures within the inner city (respecting and harmonizing with neighbouring historic building) are completely futile without ensuring that damage and loss are not caused upon those neighbouring buildings. Applying for World Heritage Listing is futile with such scant respect for the buildings and people within the heritage site.

If we wish to reap the profits from the value of a World Heritage Site we have to ensure that the site is protected by laws, by enforcement of those laws and by pro-active measures and vigilant commitment.

The Director-General of *UNESCO* in the August 4, 2000 announcement of Malaysia's first natural World Heritage Site,


Ahmad Chik
Vice-President, PHT

Email from Dan Martin, a Museum Technologist from Canada. Can someone reply to him, please?

Subject: Historic Archaeology

Hello!

My name is Dan Martin, I visited Penang this last February and saw a copy of a book about the historic architecture of Penang. I found it quite fascinating and enjoyed George Town much more because of it.

I am currently working as a Museum Technologist at Fort Vancouver National Park, a reconstructed Hudson Bay Company outpost from the early part of the 19th century.

I was particularly struck with the parallels between the British commercial presence in Penang and the North-West America. Has any Historic Archaeology been done in Penang? Is there any local interest in early 19th century material culture in George Town?

The museum where I work has an extensive archaeological collection excavated from the workers' village associated with the Fort. This group of workers was amazingly diverse. Would the collection, or my experience with these artifacts be helpful to someone's research there?

Daniel Martin
Email: julijay@aol.com
Dated: 3 July 2000

PHT forwarded this email to Dr. Adi Taha of the National Museum, who in turn has referred it to Mr. Najmudeen Kader, attached to Najcom Sdn Bhd, which is currently undertaking conservation and archaeological works at Fort Cornwallis in Penang. Mr. Najmudeen (who is a PHT member), is pursuing matters pertaining to the conservation of 17th & 18th century forts built by the British. He is keen to understand further the parallels between Forts constructed in Penang and NW America and has replied to Mr. Daniel Martin.

ANNOUNCEMENTS



Restoration of Suffolk House to Begin Soon

In a significant gesture the Penang State Government has given almost RM 500,000 for the restoration of Suffolk House. The amount - about 20% of the total required is insufficient to restore the entire building, but is enough to begin two important steps: the restoration of the roof thus stopping further rain damage and re-invigoration of a dispirited PHT team.

Many people know that Francis Light built Suffolk House (though some dispute this), and who can forget the lovely, if slightly romanticised, painting by Robert Smith? But few know that it was the Residency of the early governors; the subject of a sordid scandal perpetrated by some of the leading figures of the day; that Lord Minto and Raffles visited it (when the founding of Singapore was discussed and the decision to save what is left of Malacca's *A Famosa* probably made). Or that early trial plantings of pepper, nutmegs and cloves were carried out within the Estate. These later became important commercial crops in Penang.

Even less well-known is its cultural significance. It is the only Anglo-Indian 'garden house' left in Malaysia. According to Frank Campbell of Deakin University, it displays architectural techniques and use of materials which merged with Malay and other traditions to form some of the characteristic architecture of Malaysia, Singapore, Australia and beyond. This is so culturally important that it cannot be overstressed.

The campaign to restore Suffolk House began 39 years ago. It was a long uphill battle involving the State Government, the MPPP, the Methodist Church, Dato' Lim Chong Keat and the PHT that was beset by many false promises, disappointments and failures. A typical occasion was 1993, when the PHT raised nearly RM80,000 from the British High Commission, the State Government of South Australia (through SACON) and French plantation company SOCFIN. In a mood of wild optimism, the whole lot was spent on preventive measures to slow down the advancement of decay. As events proved, it all came to naught and more than just money was lost in that sorry exercise in futility.

Nevertheless there is now genuine cause for optimism. The State Government has demonstrated its support in a very meaningful and practical way. The JKR has appointed well-known Penang architect Laurence Loh; design work has begun and the actual restoration work of the roof will start in September, for completion by early next year.

And what will the PHT do now? Encouraged and rejuvenated it will renew the campaign to increase public awareness and raise funds for this treasure of a building. There is a lot of hard work ahead and as much disappointment again, probably.

'Once more to the breach dear friends, once more...'

Ahmad Chik
Vice-President, PHT

Calling Penangites & friends
wherever you are ...



The Penang File

<http://members.xoom.com/penangfile>

Brings you:

- News of Penang & its concerns
- Stories of its Culture & Heritage
- Essence of Baba/Nyonya life

In this issue ...

A deafening silence is a cause for alarm (COMMENT); we lament the destruction of an old market (CONCERNS); Ong and friends record nights spent in a police lock-up (NEWS); Yeo Hoe Koon introduces artists who made art history (PEOPLE); Ghulam-Sawar Yousof looks at the production of the Butterfly Lovers (HERITAGE); in CONCORDANCE there is more from Raymond Kivok's collection of Baba sayings; Lim Kean Siew discusses the case of tearful politicians (BOOK REVIEW); and at PAGE11 there is a naming of birds by Tye Keat Eam.

Issue 7, year 2000

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FEATURE ARTICLE

The following article is an abstract of a talk given to the "Perhimpunan Pelajar-Pelajar Indonesia Kawasan Utara (PPI-KU) at USM. Abdur-Razzaq Lubis is the Malaysian representative of Sumatra Heritage Trust.

THE INDONESIANS IN PENANG, 1786-2000

by Abdur-Razzaq Lubis

Long before the founding of the British settlement on Penang island by the East India Company in 1786, there were already inhabitants on the island and these included people from the "Indonesian" archipelago. Some years before the arrival of Captain Francis Light, the founder of the British trading post in Penang, three brothers connected to the Menangkabau (West Sumatra province today) royal family, came to Penang to make their fortune. The trio sought and obtained permission from the Sultan of Kedah, Ahmad Tajuddin, himself of Menangkabau origin, to settle on the island. At the time, Penang was part of Kedah, and Kedah was a vassal state of Siam. The three brothers in order of seniority were Nakhoda Bayan, Nakhoda Itan and Nakhoda Kechil. Between them, they controlled Bayan Lepas, Balik Pulau, Glugor, and the site of present day George Town.

Nakhoda Itan opened up a settlement at Batu Uban and founded the Batu Uban Mosque, the oldest in Penang. To this day, Nakhoda Itan's grave is considered a Kramat. A descendant of Nakhoda Itan, Aziz Ishak, became Malaysia's first Agriculture Minister while his brother Yusuf Ishak became the first President of Singapore. Nakhoda Kechil helped to clear Jelutong, the site where the Jelutong Mosque, Jelutong Road, stands today. With the help of the "Malays" and the Menangkabau, Light built a stockade of Nibong that became known as Fort Cornwallis.

A prominent Minang historical figure who migrated to Penang in the early part of the 20th century was Syekh Tahir Jaluluddin, a modernist and nationalist reformist Islamist (Kaum Muda). Syekh Tahir Jaluluddin is the father of the present Governor of Penang, Tun Hamdan Syekh Tahir.

The majority of Indonesian migrants in the early days of Penang were the Acehnese.

Light wooed Tunku Syed Hussain, an Acehnese Arab, to move to Penang to help spur the island's economic growth. Syed Hussain claimed to be the grandson of Sultan Jamal Syah of Aceh, (1703-26), who married the daughter of a Queen of Aceh.

Around about the same time, another Arab family, the Basheer from the clan (Qabilah) of Badridzwan and Bafadzal, arrived in Penang from Aceh. This family produce generations of Islamic teachers, missionaries (da'wa), the propagators/practitioners of the Naqshabandiah tariqa (spiritual path) and held the much coveted position of Qadi and Mufti. Until the early 19th century, the Arab emigration to Penang was drawn primarily from Aceh, and this first wave settled around Acheen Street (Lebuh Acheh today). In the early part of the 19th century, the Acehnese and the Bugis people from Celebes (Sulawesi) used Sungai Pinang as a means of transport. The Acehnese built the Masjid Lama Sungei Pinang, Jelutong Road.

The southern part of George Town, the capital of Penang, was alienated to and/or acquired by Syed Hussain. This part of the town was named Acheen Street after its Acehnese settlers. Syed Hussain took up residence, built his mosque and was eventually laid to rest in this quarter. Syed Hussain emerged as the leader of the Arab and Acehnese trading community in Penang, through his wealth and philanthropic contributions.

Syed Hussain founded the Acheen Street Mosque, which still stands today, in 1808. During the Aceh War of the 1870s, the Acheen Street Mosque became one of the focal points in the resistance against the Dutch, with prayers performed there for the success of the Acehnese struggle. The Acheen Street Mosque is the oldest mosque in George Town (the local name for the city is Tanjung). Chinese Muslim influence in

the architecture is reflected in the swallow-tail ridge roof. Of the 69 mosques in Penang, seven had Indonesian founders.

The four-storey building at the junction of Beach Street (Lebuh Pantai today) and Acheen Street, was later known as "Gedong Aceh." Owned by Syed Hussain, the "Gedong Aceh" served as a kind of marketplace for spices from Aceh. The godown was the first high-rise landmark in George Town and is still popularly referred to as "Rumah Tinggi" to this day.

In April 1873, the Dutch attacked Aceh. Prominent Penang personalities like Syed Mohamed Alatas, the leader of the Muslim secret society called *Bendara Merah* (Red Flag), smuggled arms to the Acehnese resistance. His bungalow has been restored by the authorities and is now the Heritage Centre Penang. Acehnese exiles in Penang formed the Council of Eight (*Dewan Delapan*) to champion the Acehnese cause.

Penang has since the early 19th century became the transit point for Hajj pilgrimage. The famed *Tengku Tjhik di Tiro*, who was the most aggressive in the fight against the Dutch, left for the holy lands from Penang in 1850s. Before the Arabs took over the Hajj business, the management of the pilgrims was in the hands of one Pak Ma'sum Mendeleng (Mandailing).

The pilgrim agents or "pilgrim brokers" were called "Sheikh Haji". There were Sheikh Haji for the Talu, Rao (they are called Rawa in Malaysia), Kerinchi, Minangs and others. The Shaikh Haji business in Lebuh Acheh survived up to the 1970s until the kapal haji was replaced by kapal terbang (pesawat), and the management of pilgrims were taken over by Tabung Haji (The Pilgrimage Board).

Slaves from Nias, Bali, Java, Toba, Karo and elsewhere from the archipelago were sold in Penang and in the main were bought by wealthy Chinese merchants. They became the ancestors of the Baba and Nyonyas (Cina Peranakan). Chinese and Indian (Tamil) coolies were brought into the Dutch plantations in East Sumatra from Penang. Chong Ah Fie of Medan and Cheong Fatt Tze of Penang were related, as is the case with many of the Cina Peranakan in Penang with the Cina Peranakan in Medan. The



View of Gelugor, Pulau Pinang at the turn of the 19th century

present Chief Minister of Penang, Tan Sri Dr. Koh Tsu Koon himself grew up and was educated in Medan.

One of Malaya's (as Malaysia was called then) best known novelist before WWII, was Ahmad Rashid Talu, whose novel "Iakah Salmah?" was the first novel with a local setting and was considered the best Malay novel before the war. Many of his literary work was published by printing press owned by Rawa (Rao) publishers, who came to dominate the publishing scene from the 1920s. The most well-known in the modern period was Haji Yusuf Rawa, the former President of Parti Islam SeMalaysia (PAS), which now governs the state of Kelantan and Terengganu.

Many of the leading journalists in Penang and Perak before the war were trained in the Medan press. Many were political refugees and migrants. Foremost amongst them were Halaloeidin Hamzah (a Mandailing), Kamaluddin Nasution, Mohd. Samin Thayeb (a leader of Sarekat Islam in Sumatra), Mohd. Amin Nayan (a Tamil Muslim convert) and many others. To prevent detection by Dutch agents, Halaloeidin Hamzah, changed his name to Ahmad Noor Abdul Shukoor. In Medan, he wrote for *Pewarta Deli* and *Kompas*. Similarly Kamaluddin Nasution changed his name to Abdul Rahman Abdul Rahim. In Sumatra, he was partisan in the *Sumpah Pemuda* that initiated the struggle for Indonesian independence.

The famous Indonesian nationalist, Tan Malaka, dressed as a Chinese sought ref-

uge with Mohd. Samin at his shop in Chulia Street before boarding Samin's ship for Belawan.

Sastrawan Negara, Dato' Abdullah Hussain, one of Malaysia's best-loved writers was very much involved in the fight for Indonesian independence in Aceh in the 1940s. Dato' Abdullah is a friend of the legendary film director and actor, P. Ramlee whose real name was Teuku Zakaria bin Teuku Nyak Putih, a second generation Acehnese. In 1995, Abdullah with three of his Malaysian compatriots were given recognition for their contribution to the Indonesian cause as special guests of the Indonesian government in the 50 year celebration of Indonesian independence.

All these only goes to show that there has been and will always be historical and cultural heritage relationships between Indonesia and Malaysia in general, and between Sumatra and peninsula (West) Malaysia in particular. Indeed the Indonesia-Malaysia-Thailand Growth Triangle (IMT-GT) covering Aceh, North Sumatra and West Sumatra in Indonesia, the southern states of Thailand and the northern states of peninsula Malaysia can be a means of building linkages between people to people through their common legacy. ■

NOTE: The article above features some highlights from a longer article written for the Straits Muslims book project, coordinated by the director-general (ketua pengarah) of AKASS (Akademi Sosial Sains Malaysia), Prof. Wazir Jahan Karim, who is also PHT council member.

FROM THE INTERNET

One More Heritage Building in Kuala Lumpur Destroyed

by M.G.G. Pillai <pillai@mgg.pc.my>

First, the Malaysian Chinese Association and the Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia, partners in the National Front coalition, acquiesced in turning more than a hundred acres of Chinese, Japanese, Christian, Singalese, Hindu cemetery land in the heart of Kuala Lumpur into shopping malls and office blocks. Next, the MCA oversees the destruction of one of the oldest Chinese temples, beside its headquarters in Jalan Ampang. And it raised not a beep. This time the destruction is overseen by its temple committee. I came upon it by accident this afternoon, as I walked past the demolished site to get to my car parked in the Ming Court Vistana Hotel opposite. The site of the temple is surrounded by a twenty foot construction wall, with the old entrance still visible, but peering through the partly open side-door, I got the shock of my life: The Kun Yam Thong Buddhist temple, built more than a century ago and one which the architect, Mr Hisham Albakri, described in a guide to notable buildings in Kuala Lumpur, which he published in the late 1970s, as his prime candidate for preservation, is now rubble. The notice outside says the site is to be renovated, not rebuilt, over the old building. The Nombor Rujukan Pelan as stated in the cryptic message outside it is BP E990037. I telephoned several in the Chinese community. None had heard about it. It looks the custodians of the temple felt that an old temple should not exist amidst new skyscrapers, certainly not within sight of the Petronas Towers and the complex of new buildings surrounding it. There is a painting of the new temple as it would look, but nowhere does it say the old temple would first be destroyed.

Yet when the Development & Commercial Bank, now the RHB Bank, built its headquarters, now that of Tan Sri Tajuddin Ramli's business empire, just behind the temple, one express condition was that building must blend with the temple in front, which should not be touched. Such concern amongst officials, usually Malay, was what saved numerous nineteenth century build-

ings from twentieth century disfiguration. The Anglican St Mary's cathedral beside the Royal Selangor Club and Dataran Merdeka wanted to remodel its front, but was not allowed to, in the early 1980s, because the Muzium Negara objected, insisting that the national heritage would be defaced. Today, the civil servant works hand in hand with politicians and developers to destroy such heritages handed down to us. It began in the early 1980s, when rather than retain the beautiful wooden house of such distinction as the Prime Minister's official residence, it was gutted and a new monstrosity built over it, where he does live any more, not after his Istana Rakyat is built in Putra Jaya. No one shed a tear then, except those interested in the heritage of our forefathers. From then, every thing had a price, and had to be destroyed in the name of progress. When the LRT was being built, one official suggestion, quickly disabused, was to disfigure the Sri Mariamman Temple in Jalan Bandar, another religious building more than a century old. But Hindu temples also get disfigured: Look at the Sri Kandaswamy Temple in Brickfields, built in the waning years of the nineteenth century, but recently completely rebuilt.

This destruction of national heritage sites is not only in Kuala Lumpur. The Malacca government wanted to turn the five-centuries-old Bukit China, arguable the oldest Chinese cemetery outside of China, turned into shopping malls and housing estates. That could not have been possible if the MCA representatives in the state administration had objected to it. They did not, but the resultant public outcry put paid to that. As has happened to the redevelopment of the main Chinese cemetery in Kuala Lumpur. The redevelopment of Jonkers street in Malacca raises hackles, but the character of that original Dutch-built street of Chinese merchants from the 17th century is about to disappear for ever. In Ipoh and Penang, the systematic destruction of old building, in the name of progress, is a fact of life. The government targets Chinese structures for demolition, knowing full well that the MCA

and Gerakan would go along with any such proposals. It is angry that the public, whose only duty in their view is to elect them regularly into office and then shut up until the next general elections, have different ideas. They do not want their heritage buildings destroyed, whatever the economic cost. And rise in protest. The silence of the MCA and Gerakan lambs is only to be expected. The MCA has declared war on the Malaysian Indian Congress and its leader, Dato' Seri S. Samy Vellu, for his opposition to the redevelopment of the Sungei Besi cemetery. The MCA is angered that he went against a cabinet directive, at which he was present.

Nevertheless, it is important now the MCA leaders should inform Malaysians, not just the Chinese, why it allowed the Kun Yam Thong Buddhist temple, outside its own headquarters, to be destroyed. It would not, unless the Chinese community raise a hue and cry, as over the Sungei Besi and Bukit China cemetery re-development, and the MCA told to put their money where their mouth is. One cannot be selective about preserving our heritage, if some can be allowed to be destroyed, wilfully as the Kun Yam Thong temple is, and none cares a damn. A heritage is a heritage or not at all. At present, officials willingly allow heritage buildings to be destroyed. What angers me is no one, certainly none in the Chinese community, raised a hue and cry over its destruction. Or are we being told that national heritage buildings can be destroyed if the custodians want it, as in this instance? What is frightening about the destruction is that Mr Hisham did not know, neither did the society that exists to protect these heritage buildings. They know now, but it is too late. ■

NOTE: If you found this article interesting and would like to read others of a similar nature, visit the Sang Kancil website at <<http://www.malaysia.net/lists/sangkancil>> If you wish, you may subscribe to the Sang Kancil mailing list or if you have questions or comments about this article, you may email MGG Pillai directly at the following address <pillai@mgg.pc.my>



Is there a conspiracy to stop people from admiring our heritage buildings? Is there a conspiracy to stop tourist guides from giving walking heritage tours instead of bus tours? If you would love to take a walk (or cycle) through the historic city but fear getting run down by motorized traffic, read on...

Getting There

by A. Rahman Paul Barter

<sustran@po.jaring.my>

Is there a plot to eliminate pedestrians? Is there a macabre conspiracy bent on preventing Malaysians from walking anywhere? Would this shadowy group stoop to killing off the few brave pedestrians who fail to take their hints? Does this cabal of evil plotters consider walking to be un-Malaysian? There is disturbing evidence in our streets. Of course, official policy is actually to encourage walking. The anti-walking conspiracy must be a very devious one.

Picture if you will a brainstorming session of Central Branch of the secret Prevention of Walking Society (POWS). "Hey what if we could persuade pedestrians to risk their skins and walk on the roadway instead of on the footpath? No problem! Just make the footpaths difficult to walk on. How about some land mines? No stupid. That's much too obvious, lah! Ooh I have an idea! Make the footpaths about a foot higher than the street so that every time there is a driveway or corner those pesky pedestrians will have to step down and up. Ha ha, good one! And put lots of obstacles in their way. How about a few phone booths, big poles, bits of wire sticking out of the ground, hawkers stalls, and stuff. Hey look at that taxi rank there.. we should put a big metal fence around it so pedestrians have to squeeze between it and that open drain! Looks like we already stole the drain covers, good work team! Hee hee we're really getting somewhere now, there is no way anyone in a wheelchair could get through there!"

Visualise the impatient chair ticking off the members as they examine their detailed street maps. "You idiots, look at that intersection. Why is there still a pedestrian phase on those traffic lights? Build a pedestrian bridge lah! You know, a jejantas. Why should a few useless pe-

destrians stop the traffic? What's that you say at the back? They keep crossing on the ground even when there is a jejantas? Hah! Then padan muka when they get hit by a lorry! And a few police "saman" will send them the right message - what are they doing walking anyway? Would pedestrians still get across this street too easily? Hmm.. how about a nice big fence in the median strip? A good hurdle to make things more interesting as they dash across. Come to think of it. Don't even build the jejantas. Just remove the lights, build the fence, turn the street into a highway and then only promise to build the pedestrian bridge in a few years time. he he."

Someone else calls out that vehicles travelling at 30 km/h or less have less than a 5% chance of killing a pedestrian even if they hit one. So a special note goes on the whiteboard "make sure motor vehicles always go as fast as possible" and "Persuade police to enforce speed limits only on big highways where there are no pedestrians." The conspirators also decide that the young should never even get into the habit of walking anywhere. Traffic around schools must be made as chaotic and dangerous as possible so that parents fear to let their children walk to school.

As the session continues the whiteboard fills with more and more ideas on how to discourage or slaughter all those annoying pedestrians. One conspirator points out that it would be too obvious if they eliminated all pedestrian lights and pedestrian phases in traffic lights. Better to put in some pedestrian lights but make sure they usually don't work. And how about pedestrian lights that turn on and off at random even when no-one presses the button, so motorists and walkers both start ignoring them completely. One plotter even suggests a few token pedestrian zones in the city but then adds the sly twist that there must be no shade trees in



the pedestrian areas, just little palm trees designed especially to give NO shade at all. Nothing like a blast of tropical mid-day sun to empty the pavement of pattering feet.

OK, let's get back to reality now... OF COURSE THERE IS NO CONSPIRACY to inflict genocide on people who use their feet or wheelchairs to move around. What a ridiculous idea. For a start, we are all pedestrians sometimes. Most trips involve at least some walking even if only to lurch from the parking lot to the office or house. A plot against pedestrians would be a plot against all of us.

In fact, I should point out that there are SOME excellent efforts being made here and there in Kuala Lumpur and other municipalities around the country to make things a little easier and safer for pedestrians. These worthy efforts do offer some hope that Malaysia's pedestrians can soon be taken off the endangered species list. The fanciful conspiracy theory above is obviously way over the top!

But then again, how do YOU explain all those obstacle-riddled footpaths, pedestrian bridges, faulty pedestrian lights and all those little non-shady palm trees? ■

NOTE: A. Rahman Paul Barter is a researcher and writer on urban transport in Asia. He has lived in Kuala Lumpur since 1994. GETTING THERE is a regular column about transport issues in Malaysia. Visit <www.malaysiakini.com/sustran> or <www.geocities.com/sustranet> for more details on SUSTRAN (Sustainable Transport Action Network) and the Malaysian Transport discussion group.

Doors of Penang...

*Faded gilt of Chinese Characters,
Well-carved, craftsman unknown.*

*Silent pair of sentinels,
Keep watch on all.*

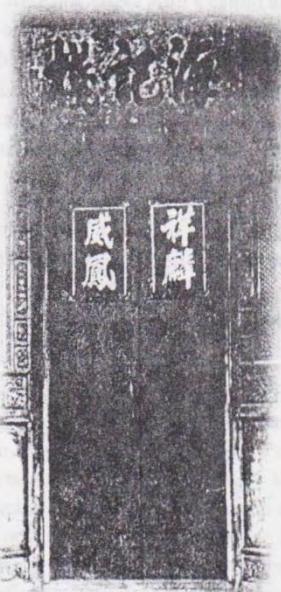
*Tiny holes of ventilation,
Sleep in the morning light.*

*Fragile lattice, beautiful sight,
Keep secrets out of sight.*

*Standing tall, majestic in height,
Silent sentinels both day & night.*

*Before long these time-worn gates,
Detached from their base in haste,
By one whose haste is waste!*

by Raymond Kwok



BOOKS



About the author:

Catherine Blaikie grew up in the mountainous, brown, tussocky country of New Zealand's South Island where her father grew sheep on those rugged hills. The life at that time was remote, simple and quiet. By the time she went to boarding school at age 12 the mystical stark beauty of the land had woven itself deep into her psyche and there it remains to this day, ever nourishing, ever silent, ever home.

Her first stay in Malaya was in 1961-62 when she came with her husband Norman and baby daughter Shayne to live in Seremban. Norman was part of a group of New Zealand surveyors under the Colombo Plan Scheme seconded to the Malayan Government to assist in opening up land for development.

Having never been out of the rather isolated world of New Zealand the culture shock was enormous and the experience invaluable for a love of Malaya and its people was born. In fact her second daughter, Virginia was born in the old Seremban Hospital. On that particular night all the staff were women. The air was soft and warm and the atmosphere relaxed, an atmosphere of women deeply

Shimmerings

A delightful collection of poems, sculptures and paintings by Catherine Blaikie. Essentially, poems on issues with which women are familiar, but the author hopes that men too, will find some affinity with the writing.

Book available at PHT Office & Sopo Mulya for RM 15.00 per copy

knowing and understanding the profound experience of childbirth. The nurses brown eyes smiled with rejoicing into Catherine's blue ones as a tiny baby girl was born. A far cry from the birth of her other two children in New Zealand.

Moving to Australia in 1967 with her husband and now three children the years flew by in a haze of family, study, work and exhaustion. Fifteen years ago she resigned from her job as a Social Worker to lead a quieter contemplative life of meditation, painting and writing as a way understanding herself of understanding her world to find her true path in life.

"Shimmerings", a collection of her poems, sculptures and paintings is a small glimpse into that vast ocean of exploration, the world of one woman's sensuality, intuition and spirituality. The poems were all written in Penang. Some explore Catherine's observations of Penang Life, others celebrate the beauty of the Malaysian countryside.

Catherine Blaikie currently resides in Penang with her husband Norman, a Professor of Sociology at Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM).

Seminar on

REVIVING HISTORY -- HERITAGE/CULTURAL REVITALISATION

*Jointly organised by the Penang Heritage Trust,
with the co-operation of the State Education Department.*

Date: Sat., 30 Sep 2000
Time: 8.30 am - 12.30 pm
Venue: Wisma Penyayang
(Caring Complex)
Participant Fee:
RM 10.00 per person

The seminar is open to history teachers (Forms 3-6) and teachers interested in heritage. For further information, please contact:

Ms. Priscilla, Tel: 2642631

Penang Food Odyssey

is your passport to your favourite Hawker food, meals, flavours, tastes, aromas, snacks and other mouth-watering pleasures within George Town and without. Illustrated with colour pencil drawings, it takes you -- via a spirited commentary so that you might visualise the food and almost taste it -- to 35 Locations. To revive tastebuds until you visit Penang again, find also a glossary of Local Ingredients and Food Products; Twelve Recipes for you to experiment on at home and an Index to help you locate your favourite food immediately! The author and illustrator spent their childhood in Penang. As a tribute to the island's distinct food culture, they embarked on this book and thereupon on their own food odyssey.



The book is available for RM35 at PHT's office, Cheong Fatt Tze Mansion and at Sopo Mulya.

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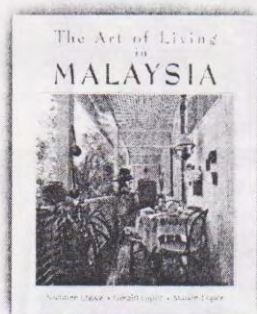
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is a lush coffee table book by Nicoline Lopez, Gerald Lopez and Manon Lopez. Full of rich colour pictures, the book costs RM 220.00 and covers an extensive range of interiors throughout Malaysia.

Available at PHT office.

Selected Nature Trails of Penang Island

The MNS Penang Branch hopes that this book will encourage more people to take up trekking both for pleasure and for health. This book will help assure that trekking is safe and fun in Penang.

Nature hiking is a simple way of spending leisure hours alone or in the company of kindred spirits. It is a pastime that can be pursued by everyone and is not restricted to age groups. It is also a pastime for the young, the middle-aged and the old. It has been noted that indeed the

older group is more attracted to hiking these days.

However, exercise should not be the sole aim. Trekking through the forests and to hilltops can be very satisfying and instructive if one combines it with a study of nature. With rapid development taking place, there is a real danger that our natural heritage could be destroyed. If left unchecked, this would have extreme adverse repercussions on our disappearing endangered flora and fauna.

This book, with its illustrative descriptions of interesting plants and animals found along the nature trails, helps to remind Penangites of the natural heritage we still have.



*Available at PHT office
for RM 15 per copy*

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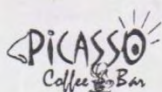


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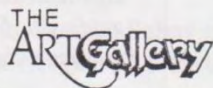
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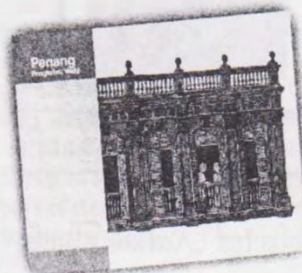
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PENANG HERITAGE TRUST
Persatuan Warisan Pulau Pinang

PHT

Family legacy of public service

● FROM PAGE ONE

with the Khaw estates, Lai Huat's plantation thrived and he later manufactured brown sugar to become one of the prominent sugar manufacturers in then Province Wellesley (now known as Seberang Prai) in the 1860s.

Lai Huat, a Teochew from a village in the Teng Hai district near Swatow, China, founded Sungai Bakap for his descendants - he had six sons and two daughters.

He built the family's residence according to popular Chinese style, giving it an ancestral hall and living quarters for his six sons.

"A geomancer was sent from Swatow to be the feng shui consultant as well as supervisor, and special craftsmen and all building materials also came from Swatow," said Phaik Cheen.

The ancestral hall was named Beng Kim Hong but locals refer to it as kongsi, while the entire complex was called Lak Keng Choo or six houses. (There are in other accounts, 18 two-storey houses divided into six sections for the sons).

"There are adjoining doors to the Lak Keng Choo and one could walk all the way from one end to the other like a longhouse," said Phaik Cheen.

And what about the two daughters?

Well, they were each given a big house on both ends of Sungai Bakap's main road, so the Kee family's presence would be "felt" as you enter or exit the town!

In front of the hall or kongsi and separated by an open courtyard is the lobby where guests are served tea.

The lobby has two rooms on the side, one used as an administrative room and the other as a "classroom" to conduct Chinese education for the Kee and town's children.

One of the most unusual findings in the building is the set of large wooden screens inscribed with 500 words pertaining to the "maxim of good home management" by Zhu Bo Lu.

A glance at a number of old family pictures showed that the wooden screens were well-employed as a "photo backdrop", and if one recalls, several scenes from the French production "Indochine".

Our shoes making a clickety-clack on the square red terracotta tiles, we walked around for a closer look at the numerous family pictures, put up all over the buildings specially for the Trust's visit.

They were fascinating especially when the women were wearing elaborate Chinese or Nyonya dresses.

Lai Huat affixed several measures to keep the family home intact after his death, including decreeing that the family premises were to be "free from all rents" (although the family members had to bear repair costs), establishing a family trust known as Kee Poh Huat kongsi and bequeathing property to the kongsi for maintenance of land and buildings.



BLAST FROM THE PAST...
a painting of Kee Lai Huat (above) in Mandarin robe hangs in the ancestral hall while stepping into the Kee clanhouse through the traditional doors framed with granite (left) is almost like travelling back into the 19th century.

At one point in time, the Kee family owned more than 30 houses in Sungai Bakap, the local market and cinema hall in addition to rubber estates, coconut plantations, and other property throughout the country.

It is learnt that Lai Huat, who died at 58, wrote in his will six months before he died that his sons were not allowed to gamble, smoke (opium), contract venereal disease or break any law and the wrongdoer would get a reduced family grant.

Apparently a thrifty man, he also left specific instructions that the family should not be too extravagant on funeral expenses but be guided by discretion and calculation.

After he died, his widow became the matriarch of the family, until the ripe old age of 91.

Phaik Cheen highlighted another family legacy - that of public service.

One of the many plaques of Chinese writings placed throughout the complex carried the saying, wei gou wei ming (for country, for the people).

Lai Huat served in the Penang Chinese Advisory Board before

his death, and three of his sons - Tek Thye, Tek Kooi and Tek Phang - also served on the board and each was made a Justice of the Peace (JP).

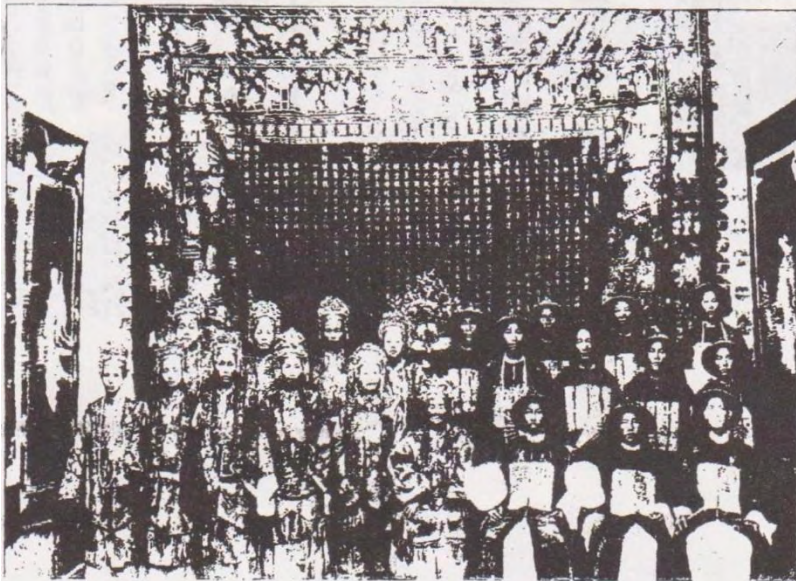
Hup Kim, the eldest son of Tek Leng, also served the people, while another of Lai Huat's grandsons, Hup Keng served as a Kedah state executive councillor from 1948 to 1950.

The list also covers Hup Hor, who was an unofficial member of the Settlement Council of Penang from 1948 to 1955.

Yang Chin, Hup Hor's son, a former Penang state executive councillor (1959 to 1969) was the seventh JP in the family line.

And now, women are also getting in the scene, as evidenced by Phaik Cheen who has served in Penang's state legislative assembly for four terms and is currently the state Tourism, Culture, Arts and Women Development Committee chairman.

"My great grandfather must have done something right for four generations of Kees to have been able to carry on his tradition of public service and duty," said Phaik Cheen.



The town that Kee founded

By CHEAH UI-HOON

THE instructions to find the Kee ancestral home in Sungai Bakap, Nibong Tebal, were simple: "There is only one main road in Sungai Bakap and the house is on the right. You won't miss it."

True enough, the quintessentially Chinese-style house with its granite walls and pillars was easily distinguishable from the timber-cum-concrete terrace houses flanking both sides of Sungai Bakap's narrow main road.

The house, styled after Manchu China's great mansions, was built by the progenitor, Kee Lai Huat (1834 - 1892), of the well-known Kee clan in Penang.

It stood a culture apart from the Straits-Chinese architecture in this small town which still retains a "19 khong khong" (1900) look.

"Although Lai Huat landed in Tambun when he was 19, he did not come as an indentured labourer and moreover, he was educated, so he managed to land a job as a clerk," said Datuk Kee Phaik Cheen, Lai Huat's great-granddaughter, from the line of his fifth son.

Phaik Cheen, who is also Batu Uban state assemblyman, was giving a briefing on the family's history to Penang Heritage Trust members who made a site visit recently.

We sat in the airy ancestral hall, in front of three elaborately carved and gilded family altars where ancestral tablets are kept.

Tablets for Lai Huat, his wife Bee Gaik, and their six sons and spouses stand in the central altar.

The altar on the left is for Lai Huat's grandchildren, while the altar on the right is reserved for family members from the fourth generation onwards.

Phaik Cheen weaved a fine story about Lai Huat's enterprises in Sungai Bakap, describing how he had been hired by the prominent Kapitan Khaw Loh Hup of Bukit Tambun.

"Loh Hup took a liking to Lai Huat, who married Loh's only daughter, Bee Gaik, also known



HERITAGE BUILDINGS ... Phaik Cheen (hand raised, above) briefing Penang Heritage Trust members on the Kee family ancestral house in Sungai Bakap. Below shows 'Lak Keng Choe' row of 18 two-storey houses that had been divided into sections for Lai Huat's sons. - STARpX by K. T. GOH

as Bee Neoh. This was the start of the Khaw-Kee connection stretching from Bukit Tambun to Jawi," she said.

As she unravelled the family history, we admired the imposing paintings of Lai Huat and Bee Gaik in full Manchurian regalia which hung, facing each other, on both walls in the ancestral hall.

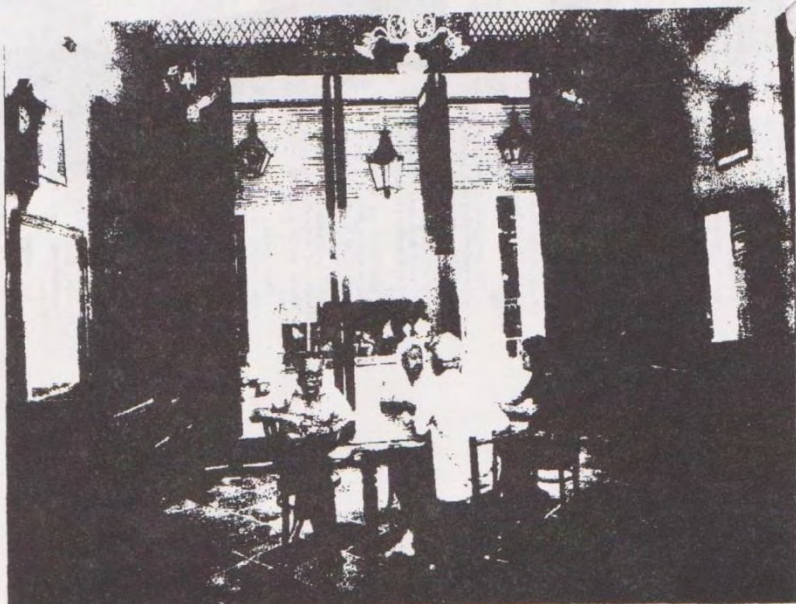
Paintings of Lai Huat's parents were also hung up on the walls, depicted in Manchurian dresses.

Lai Huat subsequently bought 400ha of swampland from a Frenchman, called his plantation Valdor (locally called Wah Thor) and drained it to cultivate sugarcane.

Drawing on his experience



● TURN TO PAGE FOUR



MEETING PLACE ... the lobby of the Kee clanhouse provides a place to hold meetings and afternoon chats.

Proposed RM1.2m Khek building to house archive

By CHOONG KWEE KIM

PENANG: The 61-year-old Khek Association building in Burmah Road will be rebuilt into a three-storey building with its original 1939 facade intact.

The building will also feature an archive to keep records of the Hakka clan's contribution to the development of Penang that predated the arrival of Capt Francis Light in 1786.

Association president Cheah See Kian said the clan, whose ancestors pioneered an organised system here before the British, needed a new archive as the previous library was destroyed in a 1989 fire.

"Since all the rare collection of reference books on the clan were destroyed in the fire, we will now have to resource materials and re-

search the clan's contributions to Penang for the new archive," Cheah said.

Situated opposite the former Rex theatre, the building, on a 12,000 sq ft site, used to house the Hanyu Departmental Store on the ground floor before it was razed. It is now leased to a carpark operator.

The RM1.2mil rebuilding project, delayed due to two aborted joint-venture attempts and the economic slowdown, was expected to take off by year end or early next year.

Cheah, a historian and former editor-in-chief of the defunct Sing Pin Jit Poh, said historical records showed that immigrants from the Ching dynasty had already brought culture and civilisation here some 40 years before Light's arrival.

"The earliest historical ev-



HISTORICAL INTEREST . . . Cheah showing the site of the association's proposed rebuilding project, which also plans to keep its 1939 facade intact.

idence available showed that three pioneer Hakka god-brothers, Chang Li, Chiu Chou Chin and Ma Foo Choon, came in 1745 and had organised the settlement community here.

"They also brought in construction and metalwork skills and settled at Tanjung Tokong fishing village."

Since the immigrants came here to seek a new livelihood in harmony with the indigenous people, Cheah said the pace of development brought in by the settlers was slow.

"Unlike the Chinese, the British came here to conquer, so the rapid development that they brought in

made it appear as if the British had founded Penang and civilised it," Cheah said.

He added that Chief Minister Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon had suggested that local historians conduct a research and write about life here before the arrival of Light.

Move to end paying 'kopi duit' for wakaf property

By SIRA HABIBU

PENANG: Certain buildings sitting on wakaf land are fetching high kopi duit (coffee money) where interested tenants pay as much as RM50,000 to secure such units located in prime locations.

The somewhat prevalent practice of giving the under-the-counter table-money has sparked calls to the religious authorities to check the growing practice.

Unesco Leap (Local Efforts Asia Pacific) Community Participation in Waqf Revitalisation site manager Abdur-Razzaq Lubis said such practices, which were prevalent in former rent-controlled set-ups, should be prohibited on wakaf properties.

"It is high time this issue is cleared up as it is haram to pay kopi duit when transferring tenancy, especially when it involves wakaf properties which belongs to Allah," he said in an interview.

An arbitration tribunal should be set up to help former tenants claim "some form of compensation" from the new tenant for renovation works already done on the properties.

"Such an open process is crucial to check irregularities concerning wakaf tenancy," he said.

As many residential and commercial wakaf premises in prime areas of George Town were up for grabs following the State Religious Department's move to give priority to Muslim tenants, he said there should be an open process to check irregularities as well as elements of "cronyism."

He said the council should look into allocating social housings for the elderly tenants who could not afford the new rent.

The main function of wakaf was to provide social security for the poor as provided for under the Islamic law, he said, adding that the welfare of the elderly, widows, orphans and the handicapped must be taken care of.

Deputy Chief Minister Datuk Dr Hilmi Yahaya who took over the council president's post on Saturday, said he would thoroughly investigate the kopi duit allegation and urged complainants to report to him immediately.

"Such a practice cannot be tolerated. I will get to the bottom of this," he said.

Council planning affordable homes on wakaf land

By DERRICK VINESH

PENANG: The State Islamic Religious Council will soon build low-cost and low medium-cost houses on pockets of wakaf land located within the inner city of George Town.

Deputy Chief Minister Datuk Dr Hilmi Yahaya said the development was expected to take off once its plans were approved by the relevant authorities.

"It has been the state government's aspiration to retain the identity of George Town's inner city enclave by reducing the displacement of its original inhabitants.

"The repeal of the Rent Control Act as well as rapid industrial development on

the island, may force the Malay community, including Indian Muslims, to move out to the outskirts.

"The council's proposal to build affordable houses on wakaf land is one way to retain the rich cultural heritage of the Muslim community in George Town," he told reporters after opening the Iman Society's Maulidur Rasul celebrations yesterday.

He said the project would abide by George Town's heritage development guidelines which disallowed the construction of buildings above five-storey.

Dr Hilmi, who is also State Islamic Religious Affairs Committee chairman, said the council also had plans to

open small stalls on wakaf land near mosque premises in George Town for petty trading.

Earlier, in his speech, Dr Hilmi said he did not want to see George Town turn "quiet" without the presence of Indian Muslims, should they move out due to escalating land costs and rental.

"The Malay community must find ways to remain commercially competitive as well as socially united to avoid the possibility of being displaced from George Town," he said.

He also urged all 14 Indian Muslim associations in Penang to form an umbrella body to voice their problems and views collectively for effective solutions.

STAR, Monday August 28, 2000

Heritage of Malacca not in safe hands

STAR
Tuesday
4 Sept 2000

THE heritage of Malacca is clearly not in safe hands and we would like to express a deep disappointment with the Malacca Museums Corp's (PERZIM) failure to carry out its role.

A recent incident which involved the demolition of shophouses and a Straits Chinese home on Jonker Street clearly demonstrates a disregard for Malacca's heritage amid an absence of policies and guidelines which would otherwise protect it.

Around the world, we have seen good examples of how city councils, local communities, property owners and businesses commit themselves to the implementation of programmes designed to protect and conserve their heritage.

After all, these form a common world heritage for future generations.

In allowing the careless destruction of historic buildings, is Malacca not demonstrating a level of irresponsibility that might harm her bid for Unesco World Heritage status?

We have returned regularly to Malaysia and increasingly see the country's precious heritage of buildings being destroyed.

This latest incident confirms that those given the task of protecting the historic city are not motivated by the right interests.

They should therefore be replaced by those who can fulfil this duty with the right degree of commitment and honesty.

LYDIA LIM,
London.

New Straits Times

TUESDAY, AUGUST 15, 2000

9

CM ticks off Malacca Museums Corporation

MALACCA, Mon. — Chief Minister Datuk Wira Mohd Ali Rustam today criticised the Malacca Museums Corporation for not using the RM500,000 Restoration Fund for Old Buildings.

Following this, he directed the corporation to plan various restoration projects which would see the fund being used.

"The State Government discovered that the fund was never used for restoration projects despite the presence of old buildings.

"There are several old buildings and tombs like that of Hang Jebat and Hang Kasturi located at Jalan Hang Jebat. The fund could have

been used to restore and maintain these structures.

"The fund can also be used to restore several pre-war buildings in Bandar Hilir and other attractions in Tanjung Toan."

Mohd Ali told this to reporters after launching an exhibition today.

Also present were the director-general of the Museums and Antiquities Department, Datuk Dr Kamarul Baharin Buyong, and the corporation's general manager, Datuk Abdul Karim Abdul Wahab.

In his speech, Mohd Ali said Malacca was the third most popular destination for tourists after Kuala Lumpur and Penang.

The Sun Thursday August 3, 2000

Commercial project along Jonker Street to be revised

By MARTIN CARVALHO

Three buildings in Jonker Street lost for good

STAR,
Tuesday Aug 28
2000

MALACCA, Wed: The developer of the proposed commercial project along the famed Jonker Street here is required to rebuild the 18th century Dutch homes "exactly as they were before" and submit a revised plan of the whole project before it can continue work.

Malacca Museum Corp (Perzim) managing-director Datuk Karim Abdul Wahab said the developer must rebuild the demolished houses according to the actual architectural design while limiting the height of the proposed building.

"The stop-work order slapped on the developer by the state government was made following the state government's act to get Malacca listed under Unesco's World Heritage Site.

"We are preparing a working paper with regards to the state's proposal to gazette the area as a heritage zone under the Preservation and Conservation Enactment 1966," he added.

Chief Minister Datuk Wira Ali Rustam had on Saturday issued the stop-work order following the demolition of the 16th century Dutch houses although the proposed project had received approval from the local council and Perzim.

"I am aware that approval had been given but the demolition of one of the homes is not what we had in mind," Ali had said.

Malacca and Penang had recently submitted a joint proposal to Unesco's World Heritage Council which meets later this year to deliberate on the matter.

Malaysian Heritage Trust member Josephine Chua said the move by the state to prohibit the random destruction of "heritage" homes would help Malacca retain its old charm for tourism.

"It is the right thing to do as the loss of heritage could hamper the state's effort to get Malacca listed on the World Heritage List," she added.

She also said that Jonker Street and Heeren Street fall within the "Grade One sensitive zone" under the state's structural development plan following recommendations contained in a study carried out by the Malaysian Heritage Trust some years ago.

MANY Singaporeans have their roots in Malacca, my family and I among them.

The Straits Chinese culture of the historical town is our link with a part of our heritage which we continue to value deeply.

This is all the more important and necessary in an environment such as that of Singapore where, in the recent past, ambitious but often unsympathetic developments systematically destroyed the city's built-heritage.

During one of my regular visits to Malacca, I saw the destruction of three buildings in Jonker Street.

Newspaper reports stated the demolitions were approved by the City Council.

Nothing could possibly justify the demolition and the eviction of businesses which occupied them — two of which were traditional trades that I clearly recall.

The shoemaker, Wah Aik, was one to which I had often brought foreign guests who delighted in the craft of bound-feet shoemaking and recognised it as an essential element of Malacca's rich, diverse heritage.

As an architect working on the precious remaining few heritage enclaves that have survived the course of development in Singapore, I have often envied the wealth of historical buildings, however humble, that still dominate Malacca's old town.

While much attention is given

to the grander baba-nonya houses, it is the more modest buildings from the Dutch period which offer a tenuous link with earlier times.

How shocking it was, then, to see two such structures recklessly destroyed.

Has Malacca forgotten how to value its past?

I wonder if Malacca has abandoned its bid for Unesco's World Heritage Listing, given the disrespect it shows for and apparent lack of interest it has in its historical fabric.

I hope it will not be too late when Malacca's authorities realise the lessons they might have learnt from the mistakes Singapore has made.

CHEAH BOO KHENG,
Singapore.



RICH CULTURE ... 'Beach Street in the '70s' by Ooi (left) and 'Khoo Kongsi' by Goh (below) are among the pieces that depict the rich past of Penang.



PENANG'S streets and historical buildings are the physical evidence of the diverse people who have participated in the city's growth.

Conservation efforts are hence urgently needed to allow this rich past to contribute to the future, because the streets and their memories, belong to the children of Penang.

With the repeal of the Rent Control Act, more people are moving away from the inner city and much of the traditional culture and way of life are likely to disappear.

Realising this, the Penang Heritage Trust (PHT) and 70 artists pooled their resources recently to come out with the *Old World Charm* ... *In Modern Living* art exhibition at the State Art Gallery in Dewan Sri Pinang.

Organising chairman Dr Tan Chong Guan said the exhibition was to create

Lure of isle's old world charm

greater public awareness and interest in the cultural heritage of Penang.

"The 86 paintings were a tribute to the rapidly vanishing monuments which once collectively characterised Penang as a culture-rich destination," he said.

The result, he said, was a rare portrayal of Penang as an intensely colourful and vivacious locale.

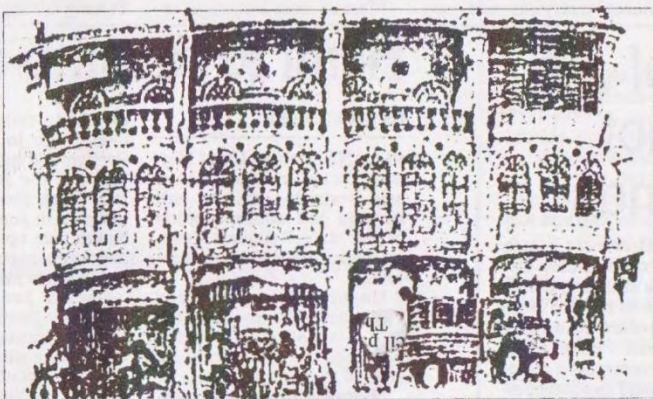
Among the heavyweights from the local art scene who participated in the exhibition were Australian-based John Lee Joo For, 86-year-old Datuk Chuah Thean Teng, Tan Chiang Kiong, Tan Choon Ghee, Chong Hon Fatt, Yee Mook Sin, Khoo Cheang Jin, Loo Hooi Nam, 76-year-old Wong Siew Inn and Koay Soo Kau.

Interesting pieces include *Indian Store Beside an*

Old Building (Ong Choon Hoo), *Khoo Kongsi* (Goh Chu Hiang), *Beach Street in the '70s* (Ooi Aik Cheong), *Fishing Village in Twilight* (Ang Swee Hin), *Old Shophouses Along Campbell Street* (Lee Eng Beng), *White Door* (Choy Kim Hong), *Happy Full Moon* (Jade Beh), *Yesterday & Tomorrow* (Teoh Siew Choo) and *The Old House in Leith Street* (Loo Win).

PHT chairman Dr Choong Sim Poy said artists played an active role in creating an awareness of our living cultural heritage through their works, especially by immortalising them on canvas.

The 10-day exhibition which ended yesterday was opened by Penang deputy Chief Minister Datuk Dr Hilmi Yahaya.



POPULAR PLACE ... 'Old Shophouses Along Campbell Street' by Lee shows the way of life of the local people.

Hilmi to revamp admin of Religious Council

By SIRA HABIBU

PENANG: Deputy Chief Minister Datuk Dr Hilmi Yahaya said yesterday that he will revamp the administration of the state Religious Council, which he will head from today.

He pledged to rectify any weaknesses to ensure efficient management of the council, including matters related to enforcement.

"Because of lack of manpower, the enforcement division is weak. We plan to appoint more officers on contract basis," he said.

Hilmi is replacing former Deputy Chief Minister Datuk Seri Mohd Shariff Haji Omar as the new council president.

The state executive coun-

cil had recommended a month ago to the Yang di-Pertuan Agong to appoint Dr Hilmi to the post for a two-year term. Shariff took over the post in June 1998 but he had to give up the post as he had been appointed Deputy Agriculture Minister.

Unesco Leap (Local Efforts Asia Pacific) Community Participation in Waqf Revitalisation site manager Abdur-Razzaq Lubis said the religious authorities should look into decentralising the management of wakaf properties to check irregularities pertaining to wakaf tenancy.

"At the moment, the management of wakaf properties is very centralised. The power seem to be concentrated in the hands of one or two people in the council."

With the mass eviction of former tenants following the repeal of the Rent Control Act, Abdur-Razzaq said clear guidelines should be drawn up to reflect transparency and to check elements of "cronyism" in choosing the new tenants.

Abdur-Razzaq said Islamic governance should be reintroduced in managing the wakaf land, adding that even non-Muslims who pay taxes were entitled to protection, welfare and security.

"Social housing should be identified for senior citizens, especially those who have been staying in wakaf premises. The welfare of orphans and widows as well as facilities for the handicapped should also be taken care of," he said.



Dr Hilmi ... 'we plan to appoint more enforcement officers'

Pat on the back for CLS folk

STAR, Wednesday August 30, 2000



THE BEST ... (from left) Mohamed, Chan and Lim chatting with top Form Five student and head prefect Teh Yee Wah.

By HWA MEI SHEN

PENANG: The Convent Light Street community has received a pat on the back from the state Education Department for not only promoting education but also restoring the school's historic buildings.

Its deputy director Mohamed Alias said yesterday convents throughout the country had an outstanding history and tradition of contributing to education.

"This is a fact that we cannot deny and Convent Light Street is no exception," he said at the school's speech day and mental development project exhibition.

Mohamed noted also that the school, founded in 1852, had taken the initiative to restore its buildings.

He said the present condition of the school reflected the commitment of the management as well as the support of staff, parents, society and the alum-

ni association.

"This is the sort of example we need so that present students will uphold the tradition of helping their school in future," he said.

He also paid tribute to principal Chan Gaik Nghoh for her significant contributions not only to the convent but schools where she had served previously.

In her speech, special guest-of-honour Datuk P.G. Lim, an alumna and the country's first woman ambassador to the United Nations in 1971, said students now had ample opportunities to contribute to nation-building.

"There is no impediment to women rising to the highest positions in whatever spheres they choose to go into (today)," she said.

However, she added that women should not concentrate solely on climbing the corporate ladder but should place equal emphasis on nurturing strong family values.

Strive to be truly effective, schools told

PENANG: Schools must look beyond being merely efficient and focus on becoming truly effective, said the state Education Department.

Its deputy director Haji Mohamed Alias said while schools had generally proved to be very efficient, they were not effective enough.

"A pre-requisite of

effectiveness is efficiency but efficiency alone does not make one effective.

"To be effective we must set targets and goals and work towards achieving them fully," he said yesterday at the Convent Light Street speech day-mental development project exhibition.

Mohamed said indicators of efficiency included

the ability to accomplish tasks on schedule, record and retrieve information needed, respond rapidly to requests, utilise limited resources in a purposeful manner and deliver information fast in the classroom.

According to him, it was not difficult to be efficient but becoming effective took effort, courage and

sacrifices.

Schools, he added, were good at defining problems but not effective in overcoming them.

"Everyone should have an equal chance of at least achieving the same minimum standards set. At the moment, however, we have high flyers but also students unable to achieve those minimum stan-

dards," he said.

He said schools should place greater stress on teamwork to achieve their goals.

"We want teachers, students and parents to develop the culture of working together to solve problems faced by a school. If we can do that, we will be successful," he said.

STAR, Friday Aug. 18, 2000

Group: Draft plan lacks details

By HWA MEI SHEN

PENANG: The Penang Municipal Council has come under heavy fire for failing to come up with concrete and innovative ideas on traffic management in the draft structure plan.

Penang Ratepayers Association president Datuk Eddy Choong yesterday rapped the council for the lack of specific details on traffic planning in the draft.

Details, he said, should be

in the structure plan so that the local plans could build on them.

"I fail to comprehend the council's planning procedure. It's my understanding that what is not in the structure plan cannot be put into local plans," he said.

Council planning officer Maimunah Mohd Shah said on Wednesday that the structure plan only specified a "broad strategy" on managing traffic, with details to be included in the local

plans.

Responding to this, a traffic planner who declined to be named said the draft was very weak.

"It's a very conventional plan with lots of general statements. A plan for the 21st century should be more than that. There should be clear, well thought-out ideas useful for the private sector and government agencies in their planning," he said.

He said the draft did not look at emerging issues, re-

flected no commitment to sustainable transport and land use problems.

While the plan had very detailed recommendations on land use, these were not linked to any discussion in the section on transport, he said.

"A structure plan should set out the whole policy and strategy and address the larger issues. Without a broad framework, there will be uneven application at the local level," he said.

The draft, he added, made no attempt to look at trans-

port problems as an outcome

of land use problems.

According to him, the plan failed to look at the question of who was to be responsible for transport in Penang.

"The technical capacity of the council to manage these matters has not been ad-

ressed," he said.

Sustainable Transport Environment for Penang problem secretary Raphael Surin said the structure plan should make adequate provisions for a sustainable transport system.

"We cannot let this opportunity pass by without addressing the burning issue of a lack of public transportation in Penang," he said.

Long-term plans for the state, he added, should also be clearly stated.

RM500,000 to restore Garden House to its former glory

By CHOONG KWEE KIM

PENANG: The Leong Yin Kean heritage mansion along the Jalan Sultan Ahmad Shah's *Milennaries Row* will be restored to its former glory under a RM500,000 project to turn it into an office building.

The Italian-style mansion known as "George Town Garden House" that was built in 1926, changed ownership after the 1980s and fell into a state of neglect until restoration work started in May by its present corporate owner represented by businessman Datuk Nazir Ariff.

Nazir, who had businesses in property, retail and manufacturing, said the first floor of the restored building would be converted into his companies' corporate headquarters.

"The ground floor might be used as a private art gallery

while the servants' quarters at the back could be leased out to a theme-restaurant operator," he said in an interview yesterday.

He said the two-and-a-half storey mansion sprawled over a 0.4ha piece of land, was structurally sound but the roof and yardwork were damaged by termites.

"We had to tear down many brick and wooden partitions that were not in the original design," said Nazir who is also Escay Holdings Berhad chief executive officer.

The building was previously rented out by its former owner to several companies as commercial space while the back portion was occupied by some 30 families.

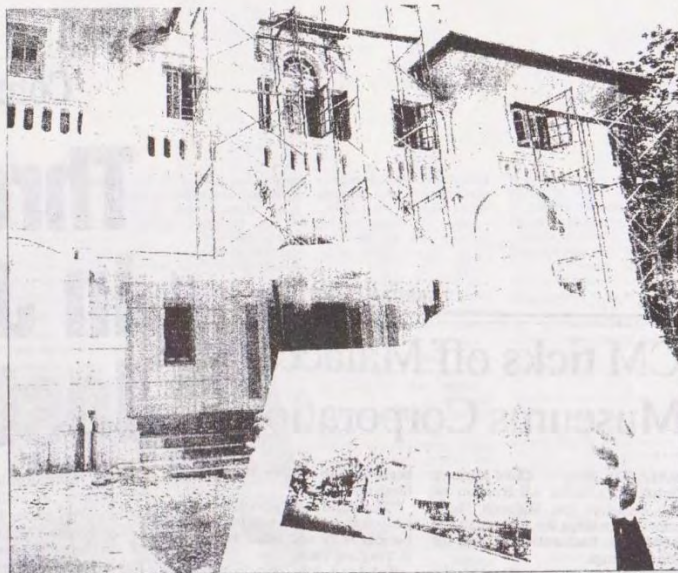
The building, already 30% restored with the roof repaired and the walls cleaned, is scheduled to be ready by October.

A check by *The Star* yesterday showed that beneath all the layers of grime were beautiful floral mosaic on the floor and facade, Italian marble, stained glass windows and teak stairs in good condition.

The building was the "fancy of a young man who fell in love with Italy," according to Khoo Su Nin in her book "Streets of George Town Penang."

The mansion's owner, Leong Yin Kean, who was son of tin-miner Leong Fee, was a Cambridge student and owned two other country homes in Penang Hill called *Tosari* and *Lausanne*.

The Leong Yin Kean mansion, designed by architect Charles Miller, was built for a quarter of a million Straits Dollars and after his death, was occupied by his two daughters until the early 1980s.



HERITAGE GEM ... Nazir in front of the mansion with an artist's impression of the restored building.

Concern over allowing hammer-piling system

PENANG: The Penang Heritage Trust is upset that the Penang Municipal Council is still allowing hammer-driven piling in the historic enclaves within George Town.

Its vice-president Ahmad Chik said on Tuesday this was contrary to a statement by former council president Dr Teng Hock Nan in Dec 1996 that it had not allowed

such piling methods in the inner city.

"We want to know whether this policy has been reversed and the reason why," he said in a statement.

Ahmad said the hammer-driven piling was being undertaken in King Street and Kongsi Street where there were many heritage buildings.

He said there were fears that such a piling method would be the norm if the council gave the green light to a developer who had submitted plans for another hotel expansion project behind historic Cheong Fatt Tze Mansion in Lebuh Leith.

Ahmad said the protection of heritage sites was impor-

tant, especially if George Town were to succeed in its application to be listed as a World Heritage Site.

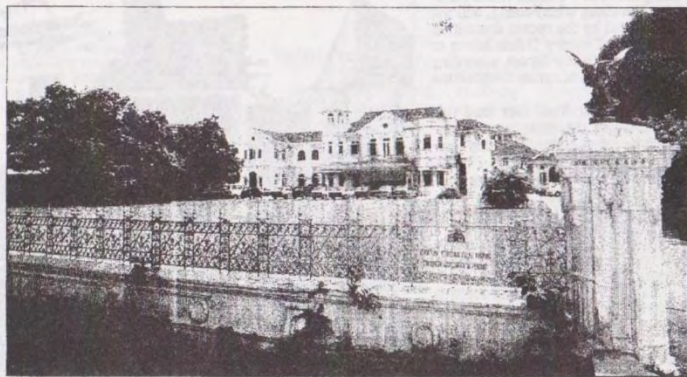
He said the council must protect heritage sites by enforcing the law and taking proactive measures if "we wish to reap the profits from the value of a World Heritage Site."

Dr Teng was quoted in a

newspaper report that the council would be cautious in approving earthworks in the inner city with a view to protect adjoining buildings.

He was quoted as saying that developers would be required to specify their piling methods and that bore-piling was recommended.

S.M. K. K. K.



Developer offers to sell heritage mansion to govt

By LIM AI LEE

PENANG: A developer here has offered to sell or lease his family's heritage mansion (left) to the state to be developed into a commercially viable heritage project.

Penang Housing Developers Association adviser Datuk Eddy Choong said yesterday he was prepared to offer a discount on the market price if the state government agreed to buy up the property.

The building at Jalan Macalister is one of Penang's grandest mansions built at the turn of the 20th century and has been with Choong's family for five generations. It has been identified by the state authorities as a heritage

building.

Sprawled over a 1ha site in George Town, the building is now rented out to the Consumers Association of Penang, whose lease expires at end of this year. The market price for land in the prime area is about RM200psf.

The colonial styled mansion can be easily identified from the four eagle statues - symbols of good fortune - sitting atop the pillars on the gates at the entrance.

Choong, who is also Penang Ratepayers' Association president, said he decided to offer the property to the state government following its decision to designate about 160ha in the city for conservation.

"A state exco member of-

ferred to get a Singaporean to buy the building several years ago for heritage development but my family has no intention of selling our property to foreigners," he said.

"The state government has always said that heritage buildings will be very valuable in time.

"It should take up the challenge and show the people that heritage development can be a viable project and reap good returns. The building can even be turned into a museum or other tourist attraction," he said.

Alternatively, Choong said he was willing to go into a joint-venture with the state government to restore the property and make it commercially viable.

Tale of the frolicking stone lions

By Yong Cheek Yoon
He is a freelance journalist and a writer.

KONG Hock Keong (KHK), popularly known as Kuan Yin Teng (Kuan Yin temple) by the Chinese community, is 200 years old this year.

It can proudly claim that it is the oldest temple on the island, a claim that can be substantiated by a relic in the form of a smoke-blackened plaque hung above the main altar.

Although millions of devotees and visitors have thronged the main prayer hall over the years, few ever knew about the plaque that was mentioned in the former Acting Senior Chinese Affairs Officer Wong Choon San (1910-1970)'s book *A Gallery of Chinese Kapitan's*.

The plaque is inscribed with the date 1799 and the words "Pin Long Su (Penang Island) Kapitan (Kapitan) Wai Ch'in Ming", who is believed to be the Kapitan Cina of Kedah.

The rank of "kapitan" was introduced by the British during their occupation of Malaysia. Usually, a prominent person from an ethnic community would be elected the kapitan and entrusted with the responsibility of resolving problems arising from that particular community.

Besides the plaque, there is a foundation inscription dated 1799. One of the main donors listed was Wai who donated 200 Spanish dollars. The total cost for building the temple was 3,700 Spanish dollars.

The temple's central hall is the oldest part of the complex, the rear hall, inner courtyard and the monks' quarters on the right side of the main hall was added on during a major renovation in 1821.

The land on which the temple was built was donated by the East India Company during the tenure of Lieutenant Governor Sir George Leith and is the first Chinese temple to be granted such land.

The temple, which was constructed in traditional Chinese architectural style at the junction of Stewart Lane and Pitt Street (now Jalan Masjid Kapitan Keling), was dedicated to the worship of Kuan Inn and Mazu.

It was mistakenly marked on a 1907 map as a "Chinese church" (Chinese church).

The name KHK is actually derived from the names of the two provinces in China where the majority of immigrants hail - Kong Fu (Guangdong) and Hokkien (Fujian).

The temple was chosen to be built on a "gentle knoll overlooking a coastal terrain," as a local historian Dr Ong Seng Huat put it.

The "coastal terrain" is of course, now, Lebuh Pantai. The *temple's* *temple* was thought very important, as observed by historian J.H. Coomaraswamy in 1851. "The Chinese, therefore, endeavored to buy up the ground in Beach Street facing the temple, so as to keep it free of buildings."

With the temple commanding an excellent *feng shui*, the two stone lions presented in 1829 standing in the temple's compound

The oldest temple in Penang had such excellent *feng shui* that its two guardian stone lions were said to come to life at night. But their 'magic' was broken when the British built the railway station, now Wisma Kastam

was said to come to life at night and frolic on the beach. The "magic" was broken when the British constructed the railway building (which now houses the Customs and Excise Duty Department) with a high clock tower in 1907.

Ong explained: "The Chinese suspected the building with a clocktower was actually a 'dirty trick' used by the British to weaken the Chinese's political power in Penang."

The story of the frolicking stone lions had since become a local legend in the Chinese community.

Officially, the first Chinese community established after Captain Francis Light's arrival was around China Street, hence its name.

Since the temple was a combined effort of both communities, many community disputes were settled there.

Evidence of such arbitration can be found in the three-volume Penang Riots (1967) inquiry reports that mentioned representatives from the feuding secret societies - Hokkien-based Kien Tek and Cantonese-based Ghee Hin - challenging each other to swear by slaughtering white cockerels at the temple.

It was also involved in settling many other feuds including those of the Larat Wars (1872-1874).

Sometime in the 1880s, the Penang Chinese Town Hall was established and the role of "arbitrator" was taken over by the hall.



The magic has gone ... the stone lions still guard the entrance to the temple but they no longer frolic at night.



The building that did it all ... the former railway building, now Wisma Kastam, was said to have disrupted the excellent *feng shui* of Kong Hock Keong.

Pedal feats of Flatland cyclists

Star Weekly Friday July 26, 2000

By CHOONG KWEE KIM

WITH both feet balanced on the rear wheel axle peg of his BMX Flatland bicycle, Redza Rahman lifted the front wheel and spun around in well-controlled pirouettes.

While still in spinning motion, one foot swiftly shifted to the spinal frame of the bicycle and the other quickly crossed the raised front wheel before coming to rest on the pedal.

He twirled around in this position for several rounds before "landing" the front wheel with aplomb without falling off the machine.

It was this perfect co-ordination of limbs and machine in the much feared "pedal time-machine" feat which made the 20-year-old Penangite the champion in the recent national Adidas Salomon Aggro Challenge held at Sungai Wang Plaza, Kuala Lumpur.

But such mastery did not come without a price.

In the quest for perfection, Redza had cracked his knee caps at least four times.

"The worst injury put me out of action for three months," said Redza who developed a liking for the acrobatic sport since he got his first BMX bicycle when he was a little boy.

He modified the bicycle and practised doing acrobatic stunts at the service road near his terrace-house in Sungai Dua, Taski Glugor.

"I developed my own stunts and also learned to modify some of the techniques I gathered from videos on the sport," he said.

He was also inspired by magazines featuring cyclists in acrobatic poses.

He explained that Flatland, involving "ground riding," was only one aspect of the BMX's numerous sports that include the likes of Ramp, Vert, Half Pipe, Dirt Jump,



SYNCHRONISED STUNT . . . (from left) Mohd Sholehuddin, Redza and two other club members displaying their skills using the Flatland BMX bicycles at the Light Street carpark.

Street, and Race which required specific bicycle features.

Redza, a professional Flatland cyclist, now heads the *Roda Warisan* sub-section of *Kelab Belia Warisan Pulau Pinang*.

Four members of the club took part in the Adidas challenge with two in the beginners category and the next two in the expert category.

Redza emerged champion in the expert category while Mohd Sholehuddin Muslim, 18, who is better known as Pak Gu, was fourth in the same category.

Redza won a trip to Langkawi and Adidas voucher among other prizes.

The club's patron Datuk Nazri Aziz said youths should be encouraged to take up the sport so they would not *lepak* (idle away) in shopping complexes.

Club advisor Khoo Salma Nasution said the state government or sports council should sponsor local talents like Redza so that he could keep representing the state.



TOUGH RIDERS . . . Redza (right) and Mohd Sholehuddin are champion and fourth placed winner respectively in the expert category of the Adidas Salomon Aggro Challenge.

She said sports companies in other states had offered to sponsor Redza but he had declined as he wanted to represent Penang.

Club president Rosafiah Mohd Hanimah said *Roda Warisan* sub-section of the club was set up early this year

and has 10 members.

Established to promote heritage awareness, the club has other sections for cultural and sports activities like football,

sepak takraw and carrom.

Those interested in joining its activities can call 2645659.

'Malacca can still make heritage list'

By VANITHA NADARAJ

MALACCA: Malacca's chances of being listed as a Unesco World Heritage Site along with Penang, will not be affected by the recent demolition of an 18th Century Dutch house at the historic Jonker Street, according to the Malacca Museum Corporation (Perzim).

Its architect Rosli Nor said this was because the cities were applying to be listed under the living heritage category.

He said the World Heritage Convention also allowed changes to facades to be made to buildings which were dilapidated.

Rosli said Malacca applied for listing together with Penang as former Straits Settlement towns.

"As a living heritage, the focus is on living activities such the usage of old temples, and surviving crafts, and is solely confined to monuments and buildings as in the case of the ancient cities of Ayuthya and Sokkothai," he said.

Rosli, who is preparing a dossier to be submitted for the listing, said the demolished building in Jonker Street was in the part of town which allowed for renovation and rebuilding work, provided the frontage and courtyard was restored to its original structure, and the height of the building was not more than three storeys or 12m.

The demolished house was one of three units which were to be rebuilt into a four-storey hotel.

Last Saturday, Chief Minister Datuk Wira Mohamed Ali Rustam issued a stop-work order on the project because of the destruction of the frontage and structure.

Conservation architect Lim Huck Chin, however, insisted that the demolition of the house would erode the chances for the Unesco listing.

"The explanation given by Perzim



THERE'S STILL HOPE ... the vacant lot is where the 18th century Dutch house used to be in Jonker Street, Malacca.



is unacceptable and its viewpoint of heritage conservation is too simplistic.

"The building where these living activities are conducted and the activities themselves cannot be separated because the building is part of the cultural heritage," he said.

He added that when a building was demolished, cultural elements like the woodwork and tiles would also be lost.



PHT'S STATEMENT ON THE HERITAGE GUIDELINES

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Presented by
Ms. Khoo Salma Nasution
at the **Penang Heritage Guidelines Briefing**
held at Auditorium C, Level 5, Komtar
on 16 & 18 August 2000

George Town, Penang, reflects a historic meeting point of civilization, a traditional human settlement of great cultural diversity which is being nominated for World Heritage. Its conservation is of crucial to Penang's identity and cultural vibrancy as well as the future of Malaysia's value-added cultural, educational, tourism, commercial and services industries. Under threat from insensitive developments, with rapid loss of communities, trades and treasures due to the Repeal of Rent Control, historic George Town is now in grave danger of sustaining irreversible changes. The Penang Heritage Trust proposes a stand for urban conservation and living culture which will safeguard its immense value to past, present and future generations.

- 1) Our historic centre, the source of Penang's creativity and regeneration, should be conceived as an egg -- the core conservation zone as a golden egg yolk which should not be pricked, and the buffer zone which is the egg white that protects the yolk. For the purposes of the Local Plan, the historic centre of Penang should be defined as the cape of George Town bounded by Prangin Ditch (Jalan Dr. Lim Chwee Leong) and Penang Road, with a buffer zone bounded indicatively by Transfer Road and including Zone One. For the purpose of World Heritage nomination, we accept the slightly reduced area as proposed.
- 2) Within the egg yolk, maximum conservation and historical integrity is imperative, with an active process to renew the infrastructure and restore the urban fabric. Sympathetic infill should only be allowed only on already vacant lots, using similar scale, materials, street front articulation and roof pitch. The two-storey urban scale should be maintained, while allowing a maximum of three storeys only, the vision being to restore a homogenous roofscape of two to three storey terracotta tile roofs which gives taller historic public building and religious landmarks their due prominence. Within the buffer zone, the conservation of heritage buildings and a characteristic street front should be maintained, while permitting three to five storey infill.

- 3) *We demand* that proactive measures should be taken to revitalize our heritage, through several coordinated integrated plans that will improve quality of life and productivity, for the people of Penang, especially for the inner city communities, for ethnic, cultural or religious minorities, and for women, the disabled, the elderly, the youth, children:
- a plan for renewal of infrastructure, transport and amenities that will solve flooding, drainage and waste problems, improve public safety and bring traffic-calming to the city and improve public transport, pedestrian, cycling and disabled access;
 - a green plan that will increase open spaces, tree corridors and urban biodiversity;
 - a community plan that will help retain existing communities, rapidly increase social housing stock and activate the regeneration of community facilities and amenities, especially markets;
 - a cultural plan that will optimise cultural and civic venues in historic settings and encourage the flourishing of traditional and contemporary cultural activities;
 - an economic revitalization plan that helps to keep endangered trades, supports the continuity and cultural development of traditional economic activities, and guides the introduction of compatible and creative new activities, while strengthening internal and external linkages. These plans should be undertaken with full community participation, from analysis and prioritization of issues to planning, design and implementation.
- 4) *We urge* the adoption of the above concepts, their translation into policy statements, heritage guidelines and physical plans to be incorporated into the Local Plan. We also urge the prompt delivery and gazetting of the Local Plan which is essential to the legal protection of our priceless heritage.
- 5) Finally, in the light of continuing lack of enforcement against illegal demolitions, destruction and defacement of heritage, we urge that the Penang State Government introduce strong protective legislation in the form of a Conservation Enactment, to be tabled before and approved by the State Legislative Assembly. PHT also hereby submits technical comments about the *Draft Design Guidelines for Heritage Development in the Inner City of George Town*.

METHODOLOGY

According to intentional methodology, there should be two maps for the purposes of conservation and development control -- the first map showing all existing heritage which is also reflected in the inventory. This map only changes to reflect the unfortunate loss of heritage through destruction and demolition. -- the second map showing the proposed building conservation, development control and urban design guidelines. This map can be reviewed and changed according to the public support for, and state commitment to, historic conservation, as well as technical and professional understanding of standards and requirements for conservation areas which are constantly being refined and upgraded. It is extremely misleading to designate "infill" areas when most of the them are actually REDEVELOPMENT of historic properties, not infill on vacant lots between historic properties. Therefore we demand, that the second map show very clearly which are the historic properties which have been proposed for

demolition. -- furthermore, we recommend that a third map should also be compiled for purposes of TRANSPARENCY, showing properties for which building permission or planning permission have been sought and those where permission have been given, and making public information about the property owners, landowners and developers involved, so that the public will have a clear understanding of the current development pressures on the historic areas.

CONSERVATION ISSUES

We question the criteria used for the heritage guidelines in which the following areas of outstanding historic significance have been "written off" in terms of heritage by designating them for Infill.

- **Zone 1**, only about 37% of units have been zoned for conservation, the rest are for redevelopment.
- **Zone 2**, 62% of units zoned for conservation, and 38% zoned for redevelopment, unfortunately this will destroy the historical character of Chulia Street, which is so important to the budget tourism industry .
- **Zone 3** which is the grid planned by Francis Light, only about 59% of units are marked for conservation, the rest for redevelopment, then how can this be the oldest quarter and the starting point of the urban history of George Town? We suspect a bias against the older, first generation brick buildings dating from early 19th century, which are more modest and squat but highly important historically. A charming street like Che Eam Lane will be totally destroyed.
- **Zone 4**, about 57% of units marked for conservation. The figure is misleading as in most cases, only the fronts are conserved, so that area for redevelopment is more like 80%. While it may be reasonable to allow redevelopment of large areas behind the building fronts, still a selection of the more characteristic historic warehouses and alleyways should be conserved in total.
- **Zone 5**, where 71% will be conserved. Unfortunately, this will destroy the historic approach to the commercial centre along the narrow and slightly winding Beach Street, for which it is necessary to conserve both sides of Beach Street.
- **Zone 6**, only 35% is marked for conservation, the rest for redevelopment.

In total, approximately only 50% of existing historic buildings are actually proposed for conservation. Because the purple colour for Infill IIA is very close to the red and pink for Conservation, a misleading impression is given about what is zoned for conservation and what is zoned for redevelopment. The area would seem much less, if we take out the places of worship and government-owned public buildings and open spaces.

Such an uneven conservation policy will result in inequitable restrictions, and property owners will justifiably question, why restrictions on my property while a property of similar cultural significance down the street is not restricted? Please refer to the paper on rent control repeal by Mani Usilappan, Deputy Director-General of the Federal Valuation Department, given during Rent Control Repeal seminar organised by Henry Butcher in February 1999, which argues that for conservation not to affect owners unequally and to benefit everyone equitably, conservation guidelines should be applied evenly over given historic areas.

OTHER TECHNICAL ISSUES

- Zone One is left out of the World Heritage nomination area, while no design guidelines are shown for "Zone Seven" encompassing the northern coastal area. There is also no plan for the eastern waterfront buffer, where highrise redevelopment is taking place at an alarming rate.
- The boundaries of zones do not take cognizance of property boundaries and ownership, so for example, some properties are subject to two different zones (see zone 3 and 4) or only half of the eastside Beach Street properties are in Zone 5 and 1.
- Infill Development I and Zone 4, where it says height of new building should not exceed the height of adjacent building or in the case of Zone 4 more than 20.0 M, the number of storeys is not indicated and this has implications for alignment of facades.
- Maps should use black and white symbols not colour so that they can be photocopiable in black and white for wider distribution.
- The plans are drawn on out-of-date maps based on municipal surveys of 1970s not updated since the 1980s.