



# PHT newsletter

ISSUE No. 79 / MAY TO JULY 2003

**PENANG  
HERITAGE  
TRUST**

**Persatuan  
Warisan  
Pulau  
Pinang**

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**PHT**

## EDITORIAL

Dear members,

We have a bumper issue for you this time around. Much has been happening in the heritage scene in Penang as well as in the country and we have tried our best to keep you informed.

At the end of July the PHT is organising the 'Shared Histories Conference' announced on this page. It has been an off-on affair due to the SARS scare earlier on.

We also bring you site visit reports for Gurney Drive & Callejón General, the Clan Jetties, Kedah House and the Masonic Lodge. This is especially for those who could not join us. Please note that on Pgs 25/26 we list all the sites we have visited over the last 3 and a half years. This is to help us in future planning.

We report on the many exhibitions in George Town - "Precious George Town" by Olga Miksche, "Face to Face" by Tan Yeow Woi & "Tasting Asia" curated by William Harold Wong. Many exciting personalities have also been visiting historic George Town and they have all been greatly enamoured with what we have. Phua Chu Kang, Bharati Mukherjee and Ng Yen Yen are on the list which includes the Sultan of Brunei and Dr Mahathir.

We also bring you PHT's stand on the much publicised & highly controversial issue of Shih Chung School & the proposed columbarium

L.L.Loh-Lim

**SITE VISIT  
FOR JULY 2003  
SEE PAGE 24**

## **Shared Histories, Communities and Cultural Heritage**

### **In Southeast Asia's Western Littoral**

**Wednesday 30 July 2003 - Sunday 3 August 2003**

**Organised by the Penang Heritage Trust**

**Sponsored by SEASREP**

**Convenor: Khoo Salma Nasution**

**Background:** This conference was conceived during The Penang Story - International Conference 2002, organized by the Penang Heritage Trust, when we realized Penang was a sub-regional distribution centre for this area, but lost its significance after the creation of nation-state boundaries. Little is known about the socio-cultural history and cross-cultural links of Southeast-Asia's Western Littoral, and scholars of Myanmar, Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia have never met to discuss this area.

#### **GOALS:**

To organize a conference to bring together scholars and cultural representatives to explore the shared histories, communities and cultural heritage around this sub-region through the presentation of papers, the sharing of reference materials and visual images.

- a) To chart out a preliminary cultural map of the coastal/littoral settlements along the eastern Bay of Bengal and to promote it as a focus area within Southeast Asian Studies

- b) To create a network of scholars and cultural representatives interested in this area
- c) To create a website which contains very brief essays, references and a directory of relevant academic or cultural institutions and also to collect an image bank of relevant visual images pertaining to shared heritage and communities.

#### **FOCUS AREA :**

This project will focus on the geographical area which includes Malaysia (northwest of West Malaysia), Indonesia (northern part of Sumatra), Southern Thailand, Myanmar (coastal). The area in question includes the current Indonesia-Malaysia-Thailand Growth Triangle but extends beyond it to refer to historical ties and networks rather than to present political-administrative boundaries.

#### **SIGNIFICANCE:**

The coastal/littoral settlements along the eastern Bay of Bengal forms the westernmost part of Southeast Asia. They share the following commonalities:

1. Intensive influence from India, not only in ancient times, but up to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century
2. They form the westernmost part of the overseas Chinese trading and distribution networks
3. Formerly mobile indigenous groups – Malays, Sumatrans, Thais, Burmese, orang laut (sea gypsies) etc. are now restricted by nation-state boundaries
4. The coastal/littoral settlements share a number of historical minorities, e.g.
  - Indian chettiars (money-lending clans) which maintain strong ties with India
  - historically 'locked' Eurasian communities
  - indigenized hybridized Baba Nyonya/Straits Chinese/peranakan
  - indigenized hybridized Indian Marican (Muslim)/ Jawi peranakan
  - indigenized hybridized Hadhrami Arabs
  - indigenized hybridized communities like Sam-Sam (Malay & Thai)
  - as well as Thai, Burmese, Sumatran, Malay diasporas in neighbouring lands.



#### **PIONEERING & INNOVATIVE ISSUES:**

This conference will look at approaches to the recovery of history, identity and cultural and historical links that were lost through the divisions of nation-state boundaries. It will promote Southeast Asia's Western Littoral as a fresh area of academic study. It differs from conventional approaches, not only because it attempts transboundary studies, but because it uses the study of community, social history and local history to reconstruct history from the bottom-up. This approach also incorporates the study of material culture, language, folklore, cuisine, dress, and the role of women. The proceedings will be disseminated, and the website will be linked to those of major universities and centres for SEA studies. The conference has the potential to result in collaborations between scholars and institutions in more transboundary studies.

The conference will cater to between 50 and 60 persons. It will NOT be open to the public, only experts in the area and supporting persons will be invited.

SEASREP (South East Asian Studies Regional Exchange Programme) aims to promote Southeast Asian Studies in Southeast East Asia. The programme is jointly funded by the Toyota Foundation and the Japan Foundation Asia Centre.

## A HISTORIC WALK ALONG NORTH BEACH AKA GURNEY DRIVE

Council member, Teresa Capol writes that "It was a bright sunny afternoon when about 50 PHT members gathered in front of No. 1 Pesiaran Gurney for the March site visit. We started off with the historical background of Gurney Drive and how it got its name." It was often referred to in the past as the 'new coast road' as opposed to the 'old' one - the Esplanade. The first motoring enthusiasts of Penang found great joy in being able to have a long stretch of motorway and it became the focal point of the Chap Goh Meh celebrations where the ladies would parade in open topped cars and the gentlemen would stand on the road sides to wave, admire and select.

Teresa noted that North beach was renamed Gurney Drive after Sir Henry Gurney, a former British High Commission, who on his way to Fraser's Hill was ambushed and killed by communists on 5<sup>th</sup> October 1951.

While many buildings have disappeared or been altered beyond recognition, a few classics of the past still stand in isolated splendour. As we

moved along, some of our PHT members participated in sharing their information on Gurney Drive. Ms Jadryn Loo had this to say about Lim Cheng Teik House :

*"Lim Cheng Teik (after whom Medan Lim Cheng Teik was named) was the youngest Municipal Commissioner in the history of Georgetown at the age of 26. Besides the picturesque Limburg on Larut Road, he also owned several other residences around the island. Among them was the Gurney Drive mansion. This mansion is believed to be built before the World War 2. The name of the architect has long been forgotten. But his legacy, the masterpiece he erected for Lim Cheng Teik, stands as one of the showpiece residences in Penang. It was a splendid example of dignity; grace and distinction blending into one building that never failed to please the eye. Unlike Limburg, this sea facing mansion was designed more for quiet living than for ostentation. It was a blend of classical West and whimsical East which reflects the East and West that resided in the English educated Cheng Teik. After Cheng Teik's death, his children continued to stay in this mansion until they decided to enter a joint venture agreement to build a condominium behind the mansion in the mid-90s."*



PHT member and history buff, Mr Lim also added information about the Lim Cheng Teik House and Mr Douglas Fox briefed the members about the incursions of the PORR (Penang Outer Ring Road) on Gurney Drive. There is a current movement to save Gurney Drive from massive land reclamation which would effectively remove the coastal promenade from its current position.

The group then proceeded along Gurney Drive to Uplands School. Uplands itself forms the remaining part of the College General, a 34 acre site dating back to 1808. College General has been in Pulau Tikus from 1808 till 1983 when it was shifted to Mariophile in Tanjung Bungah. It has been known as the College of Martyrs as well as St Joseph's Catholic Major Seminary. In 1977, a section of the seminary was leased to the Uplands International School, perhaps saving it from the demolition that rendered the rest of the College General to rubble to be replaced today by the Gurney Plaza and its condominiums. Mrs Alexis Kerr, PHT member and wife of the Principle of Uplands, Mr Ian Kerr, briefed the group on the history of Uplands. This was followed by tea kindly prepared by the school cafeteria.

John Loh shares with us his impressions of the site:

*"Uplands School today is part of College General, a 34-acre site dating back to 1808 which was built by the French Mission to train priests for the Catholic Churches in Asia. According to Dr Anthony E Sibert in his paper on La Sallian education in Penang presented during the Penang Story, the name College General was apt considering the international make-up of the students from Burma, Cambodia, China, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Laos, Macao, Malaysia, Mexico, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Tongking and Vietnam.*



At the site of Uplands School, the former College General - being briefed by Alexis Kerr [all pictures courtesy Tong]

*A separate building called St Joseph's Novitiate located between Kelawei Road and Gurney Drive was built and established as a 'Training House' for Brothers as well as lay-teachers recruited for missionary schools all over Malaysia and the Far East. Now the building houses Uplands School. Most of the buildings are intact today but are in need of 'correct' repairs. Nevertheless the chapel with its stained windows and original doors is a sight to behold. It is now the venue for the Uplands school library.*

*As for Uplands School itself, there are plans to shift to their own building in the near future, considering the soon-to-expire lease they have with the Church. Buying the present building is out of the question with the 8-figure price tag on the prime location land which the school now occupies. Let's hope the place won't be turned into another shopping mall or skyscraper condominium. With the planned Penang Outer Ring Road (PORR) that will reclaim part of the shore, perhaps the development of the land might not happen?*

*Nevertheless if the PORR receives the green light, what will happen to Gurney Drive - which is an 'essential component of Penang's heritage and (PHT) strongly opposes any development which would interfere with the present sea-front and which may have an adverse impact on the historic port area of George Town.' (as proposed by Mr R K Jones in 6. Other Matters - Minutes of PHT AGM 2002).*

*Another lose-lose situation for heritage conservationists? Only time (and money) will tell. "*



## PHT VISITS THE HISTORIC CLAN JETTIES OF GEORGE TOWN



Mr Lee Hack Teik - our host and guide

[Text by John Loh / Pictures by Loh Lian]

PHT made the Clan Jetties the centre of attention for over 60 enthusiastic members and friends who braved the sweltering heat and humidity.

This time we had the privilege of the honourable Mr Lee Hack Teik, the local State Assemblyman to brief us on the uniqueness of the jetties. From the temples that dot the area with its many Chinese gods that offer protection and blessing. As we walked through the narrow pathways, Mr Lee told us about how the wooden planks needed to be changed every few years because of wear and tear.

According to Dr Chan Lean Heng in her paper 'Rediscovering Historic Communal Sites and Commemorating their Histories the Case of the Clan Jetties' in the Penang Story International Conference 2002, the occupants are descendants from Fukien Province in China, and there are currently eight surviving clusters of residential jetties and seven clans - Tan, Lee, Yeoh, Koay and a mixed clan. There used to be other jetties like Poh Lan, Hup Choon, old Lee and old Ong jetties but they all faded into obscurity with the passing of time and tide (pun not intended!).

Dr Chan, in her paper presented during the Penang Story, wrote that the distinctness of each jetty used to lie in their patriarchal status and one had to have the same surname in order to live there. But today the jetties have become mixed as outsiders with different surnames have come to stay, as well as sons-in-law resulting in a more accommodating environment.



the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is implementing a recycling project'.

Moving along, we reached a nicely kept home at one of the jetties. With the low tide, and the heat causing a sultry waft that was not really inviting, the occupants were nevertheless very big hearted and greeted us with their genuine warmth and even allowed complete strangers (us!) into their homes. Compare this to the clean coldness of the high-rise apartments with grilled doors and alarm systems, and you will understand why despite the shortcomings, the people still want to live here. Perhaps some feng-shui elements are at work here (anyone who knows, do write-in, and we might publish your letter).

It should be mentioned that Penang had commissioned an international heritage consultant to advise the State on its UNESCO submission dossier in 2001. He was concerned about the quality of 'living' heritage until he visited the Clan Jetties. His advice was that the retention of this area was crucial in the State Government's efforts to have George Town included in the UNESCO World Heritage List. It should also be noted that not one occupant expressed any desire to move from the area - only 2 requests were made: better sanitation and fire hydrants.

In the course of the afternoon, we managed to visit Lee Jetty with 35 homes, Chew Jetty with 65, Tan with 18 and Lee with 24. At each, the Clan head was kind enough to brief us on their particular jetty. PHT would once again like to thank YB Mr Lee Hack Teik for giving us so much time and information and also buying the famous jetty prawn fritters for us to sample. Last but not least a big thank you to the people staying at the Clan Jetties for receiving us with open arms and sincerity.



Famous prawn fritters sold every afternoon at Tan Jetty entrance - excellent batter, very fresh shrimps

## SITE VISIT REPORT 25 MAY 2003



The Site Visit to top all site visits - 138 members (the largest turn out ever) turned up to enjoy this very rare privilege of viewing the holiday house of the Kedah Royal family in Penang, Kedah House on Northam Road/Jalan Sultan Ahmad Shah. The property was bought over by the Kedah State Government in the 1970's and 2 buildings now grace the site, one for State Government officials and the original house for members of the Royal family.

Tunku Dato Dr Ismail Jawa, grandson to the last Sultan and nephew to Tunku Abdul Rahman, our beloved first Prime Minister and Prince of Kedah, was our very gracious host.

In the back garden with its sea wall, swaying coconut trees and sultry afternoon breeze and against the backdrop of the magnificent house, Tunku regaled us all with story after story of the goings-on that had taken place in the house - he had photographs and mementoes and fondly recalled his own wedding on the lawns where Tunku Abdul Rahman had 'ronggenged' the night away. He also dispelled rumours of 'ghosts' in the house saying that these had probably had their dubious origins in the fact that various members of the royal family had somehow managed to meet their demise while 'holidaying' in Penang. Since the journey back to Alor Setar was a lengthy one in the past, their bodies were brought to be cleaned and to lie in state at Kedah House in Penang, before beginning their journey home.

The speed possible on the new N-S highway had inadvertently resulted in Kedah royals now only making day trips to Penang and Kedah House being reduced to a place to 'change and have a shower'. Current repair works are being undertaken by the JKR.

PHT life member, Jon Lim, University of Singapore professor and well-known architectural historian, flew in especially for the visit. He briefed members on the architectural style of the house and offers the following contribution for the newsletter :

### KEDAH HOUSE (1935)

*The 'Kedah House' is located next door to the famous 'Homestead' at Kelawei Road and was designed by architect, Charles Geoffrey Boutcher, ARIBA in 1935. The monumental appearance is wrought in solemn Shanghai plaster while the treatment with string*



Tunku Dato Ismail Jewa

[pics courtesy Tong]



*courses makes it look like a stone pile. We note that the facade has a single tower studded with slotted windows and a 'pylon entrance' - functioning like a massive gateway - all favourite compositional elements of Boutcher. The treatment is also evident at 'The Heritage Club' (1934), formerly 'Sentosa' also designed by Boutcher, at Western Road.*

*Kedah House from the sea front, looks like a Georgian villa such as the bow-front portico in a tetra-style. However, the arrangement of capital and ornaments, including timber arches and trellises located upstairs, suggest Arts and Crafts influences.*

*Anglo-Indian sentiment is also reflected by the window shades that look like 'jilmils' from Indian palaces. The plan, likewise is hybrid with a bungalow. An example is that the bedroom suites upstairs have been sandwiched between the front and back verandahs. Boutcher throws in the pylon entrance as noted earlier as an architectural statement when in fact the official entrance by the Sultan is in fact by the side portico.*

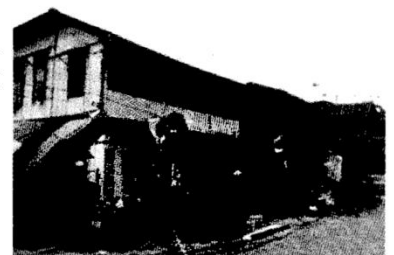
*The above somewhat constitutes the chromosome of Boutcher's architecture. He was trained at the London Central School of Arts and Crafts in 1903 and had a douse of a Beaux-Arts curriculum at the AA in 1904. Obtaining a Diploma of Architecture there, he was active in the Camera, Sketch and Debate Club and had toured France by cycle where he recorded various forms of provincial French architecture. Kedah House is to be 'read' like a metaphor reminding one of ancient Kedah Peak as we yearn across the Penang waters to the Malayan Peninsula.*

Jon Lim May 2003

### And Member Goh Mai Loon wishes to report:

A Thai cast and crew came to Penang on 10<sup>th</sup> June 2003 to film a movie. The director, Nonzee Nimibutr, was enchanted by the great cultural diversity & the large collections of historic houses..

According to Cherdpong, the assistant director of the film 'OK Baytong', "We have been scouting around and found this area (Lebuh Acheh Mesjid Melayu) as perfect for the script, it has the essence of what we are looking for, the house has a character that expresses a typical Penang Malay family, the pillar is unique and we made no changes at all to the original setting of the house" Unquote.



Shouldn't we be proud of our heritage and safeguard whatever we have? Or to degazette the mosque and the buildings within the compound as what our Minister of Culture and Tourism said?

WHAT OPTIONS DO WE HAVE?



**SITE VISIT REPORT 29 JUNE 2003****The Masonic Temple of Penang [John Loh & Loh-Lim reports:]**

87 members and some little ones waited for the mysteries of the infamous "Rumah Hantu" to be revealed to us on the last Sunday of June 2003. Dato Dr. Peter Vanniasingham and Dr. Daljit Singh very kindly welcomed Trust members to Penang's only custom-built Freemasons Lodge.

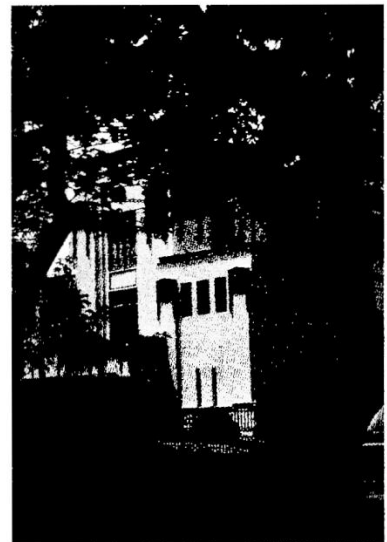
Our gracious hosts ushered us into the cosy bar room where Dato' gave an informative history of the Penang Masonic Temple. Many also perceived it as a Jewish organisation as there are rituals that are an allegory of King Solomon's Temple and the word 'Temple' does suggest a religious place.

In reality it is just one of the several fraternities that existed in Penang such as the Rotary Club and the Lions. In fact one can find Masonic Lodges all over Malaysia, Asia and around the world. The Penang Masonic Temple is based on the Grand Lodge of Scotland and one day might become independent, according to Dato' such as a Grand Lodge in India which is independent from the English, Irish and Scottish Grand Lodges.

The first lodge in Penang was situated in Northam Road aka Jalan Sultan Ahmad Shah where the Old Frees' Association (OFA) now stands. At first the English and Scottish Lodges shared the building but later the English Lodge moved to Gurney Drive

The Penang Masonic Temple was founded in 1906. This particular building houses both the Scottish and English Lodges. In 1927 the foundation stone was laid and two years later the building was consecrated. It was designed by Howard Leicester ARIBA of the firm of Messrs. Craig & Leicester. The land was purchased in 1926 for a sum of \$4,530 ending the long standing dissent between the two lodges in Penang. The building costs approached \$50,000 and the contractor has been recorded as Lee Ghee Sok. The building was used as a stable for horses during the Japanese Occupation and at the end of World War II, it reverted back to its original purpose.

picture courtesy Loh-Lim



picture courtesy Tong

The ground floor of the building houses a bar, a sprung-dance floor hall (which can be rented), a kitchen and two washrooms. Upstairs, there is a robe room, a store room which was once a reading room, and a 'temple' where all the rituals and ceremonies are carried out. The sheer size of the building makes it expensive to maintain and as a result, repairs need to be carried out. The Freemasonry movement will celebrate its centenary in 2006.

According to Dato', the presence of Masonic Lodges in Malaysia was not very well tolerated with the authorities back then but with the passing of time it flourished with many of its members coming from illustrious backgrounds.

At first, there were hardly any Asian members but after Independence, locals were admitted to keep the traditions alive as the British citizens slowly left their host country.

Like all brotherhood fraternities, only gentlemen can become members but ladies are allowed in a number lodges in North America. While appearing somewhat archaic to have this tradition today, we ourselves have to acknowledge our very-male Chinese clan houses in Penang.

Those who wish to join as members can submit their forms to the lodge committee which will then evaluate their applications. One of the criteria to become a member is that one must believe in a Divine Creator. Even though there are certain rituals, masonry is not a religion - members are allowed to practice their own faith. Beside having secret means of identification among freemasons, and other private rituals that are practiced behind closed doors, members frequently band together to do charitable works for the underprivileged. Because of this, there is a strong moral code and fellowship with other freemasons. As with other site visits, PHT would like to offer our sincere appreciation to Dato' Dr Peter Vanniasingham, Dr Darjit Singh and Mr Ian Kerr for giving our members a very informative briefing. And last but not least a big thank to the caretaker who refused to take our small thank-you angpow, saying that it was his job and he was donating it back to PHT.



### John Loh writes us a Short History on Freemasonry

Freemasonry is one of the oldest and largest fraternal orders in the world and is derived from the organised guilds of stone masons who constructed cathedrals and other stately structures throughout Europe during the middle ages.

The skills and architectural expertises of these craftsmen and their commitment to the highest standards of moral and ethical values were much admired, and unlike other classes of people, they were allowed to travel freely from one place to another. Thus, during this period, the word 'Free' was prefixed to the word mason, and these craftsmen, and the generations of masons who followed, were referred to as Freemasons.

When membership in these stone masons' guilds began to decline in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, they began to admit certain outstanding men in society. They were initially considered patrons, and as the years passed by, they became 'accepted masons'. In the late 17<sup>th</sup> century, these accepted masons became a majority, and the older lodges began to emphasize and teach moral philosophy rather than masonry. Nevertheless tools of the stone masons are still used to symbolise their teachings (shown here on the right).

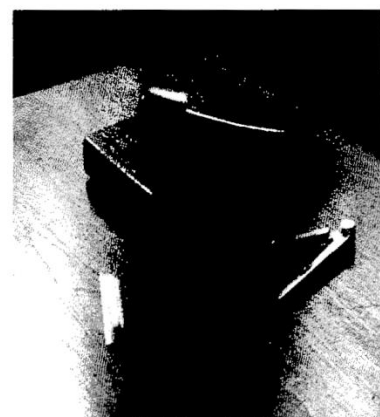
### The Origin of the Grand Lodges

In 1717, four Masonic Lodges in London got together and decided to form a Grand Lodge, and in 1723 they adopted a Constitution. Another three Grand Lodges existed later in England, circa 1700 – 1800. From four, two faded into obscurity leaving two still standing, the Grand Lodge and the Ancient Grand Lodge. These two finally united in 1813 into the present United Grand Lodge of England. Nearby in Ireland, a Grand Lodge was formed in 1725, and similarly in Scotland in 1736.

All other Grand Lodges in the world today are descended from these three lodges.

*Historical references derived from <http://www.calodges.org/no406/>*

*HISTORY.HTM & <http://www.calodges.org/no406/WHATIS.HTM>*



Penang is one of the first urban centres in South East Asia to have operated steam trams, electric trams and trolley buses, according to Ric Francis, Australian tramway expert, at his talk on "Tramways, Trolleybuses and Railways - History of Penang's Municipal Transport" on 23rd April 2003.



The tramways that were used in George Town from the 1880s.

PHT organised this public lecture as well as an earlier one for officers of the Municipal Council. Francis pointed out that trolleybuses were one of the world's sustainable means of public transportation in terms of costs, maintenance & effects to the environment and were still being used in major cities in Europe, China and New Zealand. Francis lauded Penang's proposal to introduce a monorail system but emphasized that it would only be suitable if linked to the city's transportation hub by other means such as trams and buses so that the historical topography of the inner heritage city is not annihilated by the structures to support the monorail.

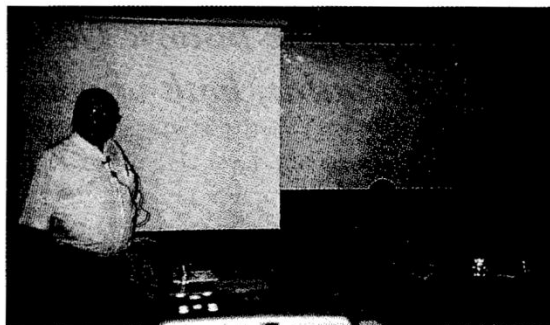
**AND THE LATEST FROM THE STATE, NOT OFF THE PRESS**

## REPORT ON A RECENT WORKSHOP FOR LOW INCOME SINGLE MOTHERS FUNDED BY CIDA

### Single-Mothers' Motivational Workshop 17 May 03.

The project was co-organised with Rumah Nur Daerah Timur Laut. The workshop brought together 60 low-income single mothers. Most of these women were Malay/Muslim women from George Town (Northeast District), and some of them are residents of inner city of George Town. The workshop was opened by Y. Bhg Pn Lee Ean Kee, Chairperson of the Rumah Nur Daerah

Timur Laut and who is also the wife of Member of Parliament YB Chia Kwang Chye. Khoo Salma from PHT, gave a talk entitled, 'Wanita & Kesejahteraan Hidup Di Kota' focusing on heritage, housing conditions and the urban environment and on the role of women in urban governance. The workshop covered a motivational talk, a demonstration on how to make soya bean milk to provide income earning skills and avenues for micro-financing. The participants formed smaller groups, each with a group leader to follow up on the progress. The workshop created good opportunities for participants to network, share ideas and develop new contacts. An evaluation meeting will be organised at a later date.



Ric Francis - PHT organised talk, chaired by VP Ahmad Chik

We are in the midst of discussing the tramway system plans with the EPU - Dr Koh Tsu Koon

MONDAY 7 July 2003

## Local tramcars may soon ply Penang streets

BY DERRICK VINESH

**PENANG:** Modernised and locally manufactured tramcars may soon ply the streets of George Town once a proposal to introduce the island's public transportation system is approved.

Chief Minister Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon said the Economic Planning Unit (EPU) of the Prime Ministers Department was studying the project's viability.

"We are in the midst of discussing the tramway system plans with the EPU at federal level."

"We hope our preliminary discussions would be completed in a few months," he told reporters after opening the Tanjung Gerakan divi-

sion annual general meeting here yesterday.

Dr Koh said the costs, alignment and depots of the tramway system had not been finalised yet, adding that the tramcars would be cheaper than imported models as they would be made in Malaysia.

"The tramway system would be a hybrid model that combines the use of petrol and electricity, mainly to reduce pollution."

"Electric trams that used cables or those that used diesel, back in the 60s, are no longer suitable for our roads," he said.

He noted that the tramway system would be integrated with the existing public bus system as well as the proposed monorail system.

On a different matter, Dr Koh said the Tanjung Gerakan division had set a target of getting 8,000 more votes in the next general election to recapture the Tanjung parliamentary seat from the DAP.

"The 8,000-vote target does not mean we are arrogant. It is merely based on assumptions that every voter who had voted for Barisan at state constituency level in the last general assembly, would this time give the Barisan candidate at parliamentary level a chance," he said.

He urged the division members to redouble their efforts to further convince voters in their area through their service, sincerity and sacrifices.

The Star 7th July 2003



***Recent visitors to historic George Town..besides the Sultan of Brunei & Dr Mahathir, both of whom expressed interest, we have had..***



Pictures courtesy L.Loh

highly popular Singapore comedian, Phua Chu Kang aka Mr Gurmit Singh who was in town to film a promotional piece on Penang financed by the Malaysian High Commission in Singapore. He was at the Sun Yet Sen headquarters in Armenian Street with Khoo Salma and at the Cheong Fatt Tze Mansion with Laurence Loh and Loh-Lim. The story line has PCK and wife Rosie winning a budget trip to Penang. PCK then decides to take a heritage trail by trishaw in George Town. PHT member Goh Mai Loon provided the liaison for the entire filming procedures in Penang. The 30 minute session will be screened in Singapore as part of a series called 'Split Ends' on Tuesday nights.

*Michael Vatikiotis, Editor in Chief of the Far Eastern Economic Review, in Penang on June 13th and 14th to follow up on several previous articles that the FEER has done on the island and the historic city. Besides interviewing the Chief Minister, he meets up with Phua Chu Kang and Laurence Loh, as part of his 'research'. Look out for the Penang write-up soon in FEER.*



Acclaimed writer Bharati Mukherjee was in Penang and held a special afternoon session on June 6th at Ching Lotus Humanist Space where she read some of her works and discussed creative writing with her audience.

Mukherjee, a winner of the US National Book Critics Circle Award (fiction), is currently professor of English at the University of California at Berkeley. She has also taught creative writing at Columbia University, New York University and Queens College. She is also a recipient of the National Endowment for the Arts grant. Mukherjee has led a distinguished writing career since moving to north America from India in 1968. Her fictions include 'The Tiger's Daughter', 'The Middleman and Other Stories', 'Jasmine' and 'The Holder of the World'. Cape Poetics hosted the afternoon and Mukherjee's visit to Penang and her stay at the Cheong Fatt Tze Mansion are part of a Malaysian trip facilitated by the US Embassy. Her writer-husband, Clarke Blaise, of the University of Iowa, accompanied her.





May 31 2003

His Excellency, the High Commissioner of Singapore to Malaysia, Ashok Mirpuri and his wife, Gowrie, on a heritage trail in Penang.

**Syariah Talk 7 May 2003.** Syariah Talk on "Emergence of Waqf Land in Penang and the Possible Role of Beneficiary to Administer Them". The topics included were the introduction of Waqf, types of Waqf (Waqf Land administrator), and the administration of Waqf Land based on Syariah. At the end of the talk, a proposal was suggested that a Waqf Watch be formed to administer Waqf land in Penang.



Speaker : En. Habib Rahman b. S. Mohideen

*A Solo art exhibition by*

*Olga Miksche entitled 'Precious George Town'*

*was held on Friday 16 May 2003 at Ching Lotus Humanist Space officiated by YB Datu' Kee Phaik Cheen*

*Ms Miksche has also donated a painting to PHT to be sold and the proceeds to go towards PHT activities in saving historical George Town.*

#### **LOCAL AGENDA 21 IN PENANG**

A seminar on Local Agenda 21 was held in Penang on 10th May 2003. It was attended by about 100 people including State Assemblymen, City Councillors, heads of Departments and NGO's. Loh-Lim represented PHT.

LA21 came into being after the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 endorsed by more than 178 heads of State and ministers. It comprises 40 chapters relating to ways of achieving sustainable development, including one which calls for local authorities to initiate dialogues with the community to achieve consensus on local action plans.

LA21 is implemented in Malaysia by the Housing and Local Government Ministry with the support of UNDP (United Nations Development Programme) and EPU (the Economic Planning Unit). It involves some 60 local authorities nationwide and has been tried out over the last 2 years.

Dato Dr Teng Hock Nan, State Local Government Committee Chairman, said that "...continuous pro-active measures by the State and its people, Penang can be very successful in its LA21 Project Implementation"

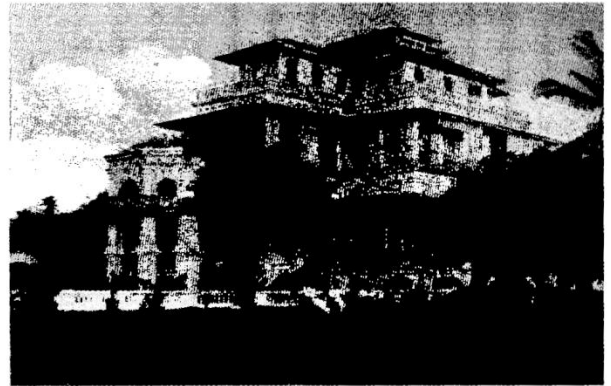
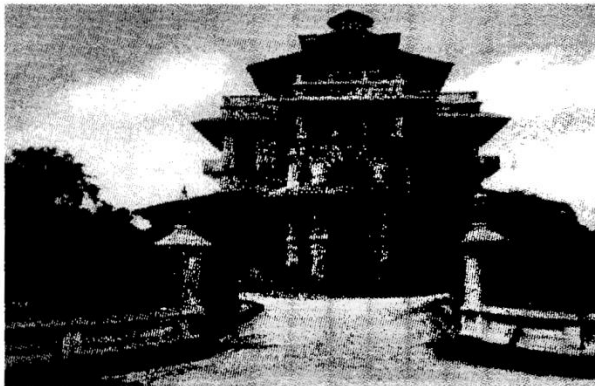
Consultant Mr Lam Kok Liang, said that "a strong partnership among the local councils, community and private sector was vital to ensure that people continue to enjoy the benefits of various government projects". Lam added that LA21 is not a one-off programme but an on-going philosophy.

Editor's note : Some of you may remember that as long as 6 years ago, Penang had already conducted the Sustainable Penang Initiatives with roundtable discussions involving various sections of the community. It was SERI's first project and essentially embraced the main principles of LA21 i.e. consultation, transparency, accountability etc.



### PROPOSED - SHIH CHUNG - THE COLUMBARIUM

*And lest we forget what the original Shih Chung looked like ....*



Enough has been said and written. PHT's position may be summed as follows:

- 1) the columbarium is an unacceptable compromise for such a significant building
- 2) the colubarium would set a bad precedent for other heritage buildings
- 3) the proposed building does not enhance either the original structure nor the surroundings; it dominates, overwhelms and makes a mockery of the heritage building
- 4) Clear heritage guidelines should be put in place by the authorities
- 5) An independent panel of experts should deliberate on applications of this nature
- 6) Shih Chung School should be restored in a Grade 1 Restoration

To remind members, the PHT organised a press conference on Shih Chung School in April 2001. Council member Lim Gaik Siang compiled the following text:

#### **The History of Shih Chung School premises**

This Anglo-Chinese villa was probably built in the 1880s. It was originally the residence of Cheah Tek Soon, a prominent 19<sup>th</sup>. century figure, after whom Tek Soon street was named.

Built before 1893, it was the first four-storey private residence in Penang. It became an important landmark and Transfer Road used to be known as "Tek Soon's house side-street" (Tek Soon Chu Pih Kay) The Northam Road building itself is called Goh Chan Lau or "Five Storey Villa" ( the appearance of an extra storey was created by the jack-roof ) . At the turn of the century, the building was ostentatiously called "The Chinese Residency".

The building was acquired by Tye Kee Yoon in 1908 and served as his residence . Later it was converted into a hotel. The fabulous "Five-Storey Villa " appeared in several old Penang postcards as

*"Bellevue Hotel " and also as Raffles-By-The-Sea". Unfortunately the hotel did not survive, and later, the building was leased to the Government English School.*

*Tye Kee Yoon, together with Leong Fee ( Chinese name is Liang P'I Joo ) and others founded the Shih Chung school . The descendants of Leong Fee established the P'I Jo Girls' School to commemorate their father's public service to Penangites. The school was once located at the upper floor of the " Five-Storey Villa "*

*After the war, the " Five-Storey Villa " stands as unique example of " Sino-Malay-Colonial " architecture, incorporating many local features such as the jack-roofs and balconies. After the war, it was renovated into three-storey building with a jack roof, minus some of the balconies and the curved arcaded front porch.*

*The interiors of the first and second floors are partitioned with gold-leaf wood-carved screens which are unusually large, due to the high ceilings. A magnificent sight presents itself upon entry, for two screens are visible at once through the atrium opening.*

### **Tye Kee Yoon 1849-1919**

*Tye Kee Yoon, a rich local merchant and philanthropist was the fourth Chinese Vice-Consul of Penang (1907-12) and Acting Consul-General of Singapore (1911-12) and philanthropist of Leboh Tye Kee Yoon fame.*

*He had come to Penang in 1873 as a penniless coolie. By dint of hard work, he emerged in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century as the largest individual holder of town property in the state. His most successful enterprise was a drug store called Chop Heng Choon T'ong with branches in Penang, Taiping and Ipoh. He was also continuously interested in various opium, spirit and prawnbroking farms in Perak. He gave handsome donations to hospitals, schools, temples and many other philanthropic establishments among which are the King Edward Memorial Hospital, the Adventist Hospital, the Penang Free School, the Chung Hwa Confucian School, the Shih Chung School and the Kek Lok Si Temple. He was also one of the five leading benefactors to the temple.*

*His son : Tye Phey Yuen succeeded him to be the Consul from 1912-30. He had also rendered valuable services to educational institutions, with the endowment fund called Chung-Yi-T'ang founded by his father.*



[Pictures courtesy Loh-Lim]

Dato Ng Yen Yen (then Dep. Minister of Tourism/now Dep Minister of Finance) with Khoo Boo Chia, curator of the State Museum. She was briefed on the 57 Armenian Street restoration and visited Cheong Fatt Tze Mansion on a heritage tour of George Town

**Restoration works have begun on the 113 year old Hock Teik Cheng Sin Temple at 57 Armenian Street. The temple houses the oldest statue of Tua Peh Kong - the God of Prosperity - in Penang. 4 brotherhood associations in Penang, the Poh Hock Seah, Cheng Hoe Seah, Tong Kheng Seah & Hokkien Kongsis, are involved in the restoration works. Due to past ignorance, the temple had previously undergone 2 incongruous renovations where modern tiles had been installed on walls and floors in a manner totally inappropriate.**

**The 4-phase restoration would involve planning and research, restoration of the temple, gateway and gatehouse & landscaping. It is expected to be completed in 2007.**

**Enquiries & donations : Tan Lye Hock 012-486-0211**



## **GEORGE TOWN ~ ONE DAY TO BE PEDESTRIAN FRIENDLY WITH DISABLED AND ELDERLY ACCESS?**

### ***Working with the Association of Disabled Persons***

PHT & CIDA organized a public talk on '**Accessibility, Legislation and Its Implementation on Building Requirements for Disabled Persons**' by Janett Jimenez-Santos on 2nd July. Janett Jimenez-Santos was born in Mexico and received her bachelor's degree in architecture from Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Mexico. Her thesis subject was 'Fitness for People on a Wheelchair'. She then furthered her studies at Oxford Brookes University with a Masters in Philosophy (also in architecture) in the UK. Upon returning to Mexico, she became a consultant on accessibility for disabled persons for the public and private sectors. Ms Jimenez-Santos also lectures for the Masters programme on accessibility at her alma mater. She is a member of Libre Acceso (a non-profit organisation for disabled people). Janett Jimenez-Santos was in Penang for the training programme for a non-handicapped environment, supported by the United Nations.

Over 40 persons attended including those from organisations like Disabled Society, Cheshire Home, Women's Centre for Change and Spastics Association. Also present were representatives from educational institutions like University Sains Malaysia and Equator Academy of Art. An engineer from the City Council, several architects and a contractor involved in accessibility were also present. From the press, we had the Star, the Sun, New Straits Times, Kwong Wah Yit Poh and Kwong Ming Daily.

During the talk, Ms Jimenez-Santos explained the concept of accessibility was not only for the disabled but also for all (eg the aged, the visually impaired). Examples of good and bad accessibility were shown, and it is hoped that for new projects, sensitivity towards the disabled be shown. As for existing buildings, it is hoped that the accessibility be 'created'.

Even though there are existing guidelines to be followed, implementation and monitoring are not always enforced. More consultative meetings between the public and private sector, and the Disabled Society should be held. The talk ended with a q-&- a session.

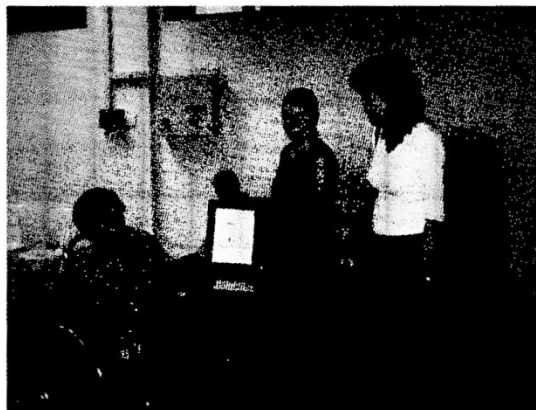
PHT will be having more meetings with disabled groups to discuss issues like accessibility, housing and heritage site accessibility. Meetings with heritage consultants with regards to Armenian and Acheen Street pedestrianization will be held to discuss accessibility. Planning for heritage visits to a few sites is underway. We will also invite relevant officials to give talks to the disabled. All these will culminate in a World Disabled Event in December.



Gurney Drive - pic.courtesy LLA

Tan Kuan Aw presenting his own art work to Janet Santos.

Photo courtesy of Kuan Aw



It should also be noted here that some of the on-going 're-vitalization & up-grading' projects that are currently taking place in the inner city have had consultation with disabled groups. The design of pavements and other public amenities in Little India, Beach Street and Penang Road are all being guided by issues of accessibility. Ramps, rails and crossings have also been installed at Gurney Drive.



## **PENANG HILL - Professor Benedict Anderson would like to share with us, some fascinating stories & discoveries**

*Professor Benedict R O'G Anderson is Aaron L Binenkorb Professor Emeritus in Cornell University. He has been Director of the Southeast Asia Program and the Modern Indonesia Project in Cornell. He has researched and written extensively about modern Southeast Asia. His most well-known publication is Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism (1983). His most recent book is The Spectres of Comparison: Nationalism, Southeast Asia and the World (1998).*

### **Lomond and Gracedieu.**

*My father, James Carew O'Gorman Anderson, died in 1946 when I was nine years old, my brother seven, and my sister three. We grew up knowing he was born in Penang in July 1893, when his father, a military engineer, was stationed there but little more. Children are rarely curious about their parents and grandparents, so it was not till my brother and I were in our sixties that we became interested in the family past. Without much hope of getting any real information, I wrote to Prof. Cheah Boon Keng, Salma Nasution, and Francis (Kok-wah) Loh, one of my favorite former students, asking if there were any records available in Penang which might show the house or hospital where my father was born. All three were very kind in helping, but it was Francis who found in the Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle of July 23, 1893 a one-line notice that Captain F. (Francis) Anderson had been blessed with a son's birth at Lomond. He added that he knew the house well, since he had, in the 1970s, visited the house on several occasions as a friend of the son of the family owning it.*

*The news was too good to be true, so I decided immediately to fly to Penang to see my father's birthplace with my own eyes. Francis took me up Penang Hill to ask for the help of Ahmad Chik, one of Penang's most eminent conservationists, who lives up there in a marvellously restored colonial-era bungalow. The three of us then hiked over to Lomond to have a look and take some photographs. The caretaker told us that the house was largely unchanged, except that the original nipa roof had been replaced by tiles, and the front porch glassed in. But it had been abandoned for over twenty years, and termites had done enormous damage. I was very surprised to find that the inner walls, made of varnished, plaited bamboo, were in quite good condition - perhaps the termites disliked the taste of varnish! The old servants' quarters were still there at the back, while in front was the most spectacular view imaginable of Georgetown, the Channel, and, in the distance, the Peninsula. After a while, we strolled down to 'Little Lomond,' which must originally have been a guest house, with a large open room that may once have been used for billiards. Needless to say, this guesthouse was also in a very dilapidated condition.*



*Grace Dieu  
(pictures courtesy  
Laurence Loh Akitek)*

*What astonished me most was the fact that these houses, so perfectly situated, and so nicely, if simply, constructed, had been allowed to decay so quietly and so completely. Why had they not been restored, either by the owners, or by the government of Penang? And: why had they not been pulled down and replaced by something modern? Ahmad and Francis then explained that Vincent Tan had bought the houses and a large piece of the surrounding land, with a plan to turn the site into the base*

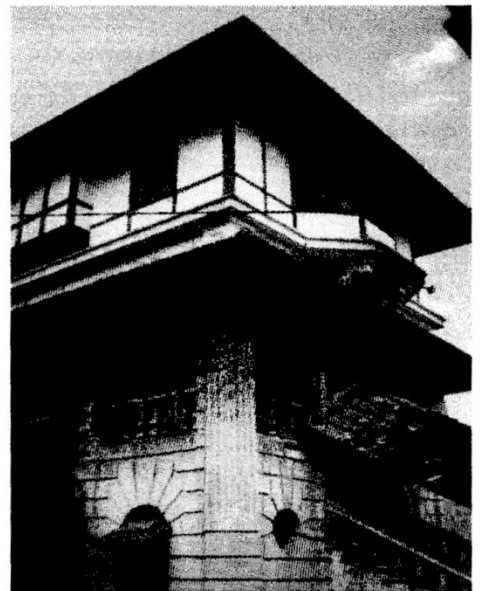
for a huge Penang Hill 'Disneyland' theme park, with cablecar attached. But the uproar of local protest was so strong and loud that Tan had been forced to abandon the project – at least for the time being (reportedly he has not sold the property).

Spurred by Francis's example, I then spent a couple of days at the Universiti Sains' library, poring over faded microfilms of the Pinang Gazette. In London, my sister had already discovered that my grandfather, who was in Penang from (probably) the late spring of 1892 until July 1897, had served as the Deputy Colonial Engineer (the Colonial Engineer was based in Singapore) and was in charge of all works of construction and maintenance carried out in Penang, Province Wellesley and the Dindings. In this capacity, he worked on the reservoir in the Botanical Gardens, which remains very much what it must have been in the 1890s.

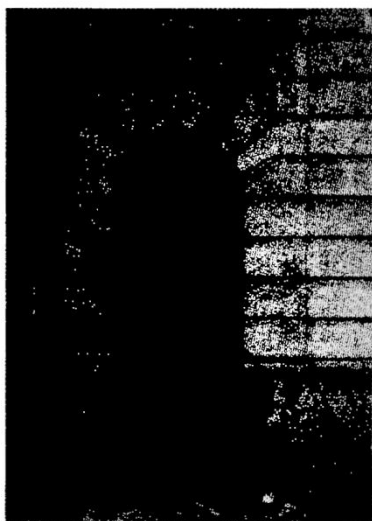
Francis and I now discovered that he was also responsible for re-designing the long delayed Penang Harbour Improvement Scheme. Upon his advice and recommendation, the Straits Settlements Legislative Council in its meeting in July 1897 approved major amendments to the original proposal. Instead of costing 176,000 straits dollars, the new Scheme he proposed would cost almost three times more. The money was spent to improve the on-going construction of the Swettenham Pier (1889-1904), to build the Church Street Ghaut Wharf (1897-98), and on dredging and reclamation works as well (We visited the Swettenham Pier in the port at just the right time, since it is now so dilapidated after 100 years of use, that it is scheduled to be demolished to make way for a modern pier capable of handling container-ships). It turned out also that he was an ex-officio member of the Municipal Commission, and served as acting chairman whenever the Resident was away. The Pinang Gazette printed detailed reports of all the Commission's public meetings, so that from its pages I could read a great deal about what Grandfather did and said, including raising the money for a monument to Francis (another one!) Light. Before returning to duty in England, he acted as Colonial Engineer and was sworn in as a member of the Executive Council of the Straits Settlements.

Then something really amazing happened. Skimming the Gazette's pages for January 1895 – about 18 months after my father was born – I noticed a small advertisement signed by "Captain F. Anderson", saying that he was looking for someone to rent (for three months, starting at the end of January)...Gracedieu. Probably a strange house name for Penang, but for me completely familiar.

In the early 1690s, a Scotsman called Major Alexander Anderson 'acquired' an estate called Gracedieu a few miles away from the city of Waterford, in southeastern Ireland. He was what we would today call a carpet-bagger, a follower of the Protestant King William III, who at the famous Battle of the Boyne (1690) destroyed the last forces of the deposed Catholic James II. Gracedieu must have been part of the loot. In any case, Gracedieu remains to this day in the possession of my second cousins, and when I was a child I visited the big, gloomy, rather ugly house on many occasions. My mother had told us children that my father used to say that his father's line had somehow been cheated out of inheriting the place. So it seemed that Captain Francis Anderson decided resentfully to build his own little Irish Gracedieu on the other side of the globe. A real tropical fantasy!



So we decided to go up Penang Hill again, and with Ahmad Chik's invaluable help, we got permission to have a look. Once again the caretaker was extremely kind and informative. It turned out that my grandfather's fantasy no longer exists – with one striking exception that I will describe below.



*It seems that shortly after the funicular railway was built in 1923, a rich Chinese businessman acquired the property. (My father, who spent most of his life working in China, and was fluent in Chinese, would have been delighted). He then constructed a large Chinese-flavored house behind Gracedieu. This house still stands, uninhabited, and on the wall facing the road there is a large sign, in plaster, reading Grace 1927 Dieu.*

*At some later stage, perhaps in the 1950s, the old Gracedieu was torn down, most likely because it blocked the spectacular view. The caretaker mentioned seeing the huge chimney and stove of the old house, pointed out where it had been located, and even drew for us a groundplan of the whole building. In those days, before Global Warming, nights up on Penang Hill were very cold, he added. In the 1990s a huge new house began to be constructed on the old site, but the owners took a beating in the Asian Financial Crisis, and it remains forlornly halfbuilt and empty.*

*As we were leaving, my eye lit on something strange. On the battered ironwork side-gate was attached an even more battered iron plaque reading: Gr<sup>â</sup>ce-Dieu. The circumflex over the 'a' and the hyphen would have meant nothing to the Chinese business man of 1927, and must have been my grandfather's work. Spelled this French way, the words recall the lost medieval world of the Norman conquerors and settlers of eastern Ireland, who began arriving at the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century. Waterford was a major Norman settlement, and it is quite likely that the estate 'acquired' nearby by the Scottish Alexander Anderson 500 years later, goes back to Norman times. A strange transhistorical doubling of bourgeois snobbery or sentimentality emerges.*

*The interloper Andersons evidently enjoyed the 'class' of the old Norman name, and the perhaps interloper Chinese businessman of 1927 enjoyed the 'class' of the declining imperialist white rulers. I am sure that this is why he kept the old plaque while he or his descendants destroyed my grandfather's fantasy-house. I still hope that somewhere in Penang a photo of this house will eventually be found.*

*Before heading down again to the city, we decided to go up and look at the remains of the Crag Hotel (which opened and flourished in Grandfather's 1890s). Drizzling rain and heavy mist made the abandoned buildings (which after World War II were used for a time as a primary-level 'English' boarding school) seem very ghostly in an English way. My first reaction was, naturally, sadness, and a little anger. Why does the rich city of Penang do nothing about the old hotel, Lomond, and other historic places on the Hill? It won't be many more years before they simply collapse into rubble. My second reaction was odder. The way the buildings are now – on their death bed, so to speak – they breathe history, in a way that no restored building can ever do. Perhaps it is all right that in their indifference the Penang City fathers are unconsciously doing these buildings a favour: not tearing them down, not replacing them with theme parks and contemporary hotels, not museumizing them, just letting them gradually succumb to rain, heat, wind, and termites.*



*Benedict Anderson. Bangkok. June 10, 2003.*

**REMEMBERING THE FRENCH CONNECTION IN PENANG** STAR Tues, 10 June 03

The "French Memories in Malaysia" Exhibition held in Penang in June gave a rare insight into the contributions made by the French pioneers in the development of Malaya. Of special interest to Penang were the many previously unseen photographs of the Sisters of Saint-Maur, part of the Paris Foreign Missions, who were responsible for setting up the Convent Light Street in 1853.

(photo credits Henri Fauconnier)



Sailors, planters, engineers & writers were among the numerous French population who have loved the Malay peninsula, its cultures and people and who have been often forgotten and unknown.

Among the photographers were Henri Fauconnier who won the Goncourt Prize in 1930 for his novel entitled *Malaisie* - the soul of Malaya & engineer Pierre Boulle who wrote *Le Sacrilege Malais* (Sacrilege in Malaya) in 1951. Among the photographic memoirs were those of Jacques de Morgan who drew the first maps of Perak while looking for tin deposits in the late 1800's. His stay and encounters with the local population made him a renowned ethnologist for his work on the *orang asli*

[The Exhibition was a joint effort of the French Embassy, the Department of Museums & Antiquities, Alliance Francaise Penang and USM\_

**CONFERENCE ON HERITAGE & HEALTH TOURISM IN MALACCA JUNE 26-29 2003**

The Malacca State Government hosted the "**Melaka International Tourism Show 2003**" (MITS 2003) at the newly completed Melaka International Trade Centre (MITC), in Ayer Keroh on the outskirts of Malacca city from **June 26 - 29, 2003**.

The event, themed "**Heritage Trails, Health Rejuvenation**", hoped to bring together local, regional, and international experts and tourism trade professionals and provide them with an opportunity to interact, exchange views and expound ideas on the development and future of the industry.

PATA MALAYSIA had been requested to assist in putting together a regional conference on "**Heritage and Health Tourism**" which broadly discussed and exchanged views on the need to conserve and nurture the delicate balance to preserve and protect, and yet be able to develop natural, cultural, and historical heritage for future generations.

At the same time the conference attempted to bring forth and share with its participants, new developments in tourism with emphasis on the fast growing natural, healthy, rejuvenating, physical wellness and medical tourism in the region.

Loh-Lim of PHT and Elizabeth Cardosa, Executive Director of Badan Warisan Malaysia were invited to present papers in the section on Conservation & Restoration of Urban Heritage. On behalf of PHT, Loh-Lim presented a paper on 'The Grassroots Impetus - Private Sector Initiatives in George Town'



# Preserving Penang

## *Heritage Conservation Vs Urban Renewal*

*By Li Min Lim*

When I was growing up in Penang in the 1970's, my family's favourite evening haunt was Gurney Drive, the Malaysian island's main seafront promenade. We'd jog past the Victorian and Straits mansions, dash into the bath-warm sea and dig sweet tiny clams to fry up for later. Then we'd buy coconut kueh, or cakes, from a cycling vendor who'd unpack his bamboo baskets under some casuarinas.

The beach, casuarinas and mansions are still there. But visitors to Gurney Drive will also have to dodge between long lines of honking cars, hawker stalls and polystyrene boxes. The crumbling mansions have been turned into raucous neon-lit restaurants. And the sea is grey and smelly, full of plastic bags and bottles.

Over the last 30 years, Penang has transformed itself from yet another sleepy Malaysian town into a modern metropolis. Unsightly high rises now flank 4-lane highways and tech giants such as Intel and Texas Instruments operate massive semi-conductor plants on Malaysia's 'Silicon Island'.

But some aspects of my childhood Penang still remain, thanks to people like Zakaria Basheer. Mr Basheer, 35, grew up in Kampong Masjid Melayu, a 200-year old village in George Town the island's old center, and he is fighting to preserve it. Kampong Masjid Melayu is not only the country's oldest Malay town settlement, it is also the only intact urban Malay enclave in Malaysia today.

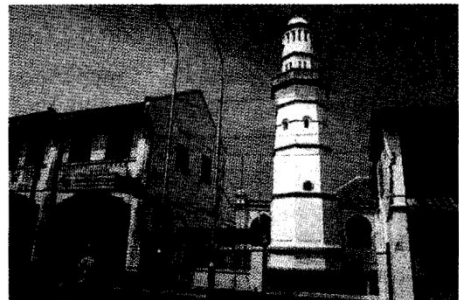
"Things are not what they used to be, but we are trying to keep this neighbourhood alive," Mr Zakaria says. His ancestors house sits in a quiet village around Acheen Street. The area, which was home to the Achenese, Malays, Arabs and Jawi pekans of Malay & Indian descent, was once the scene of a thriving spice bazaar. An example of Penang's polyglot past, Kampong, Kampong Masjid Melayu seems like a strange anachronism in modern Penang: chipped wooden homes cluster around a refurbished cream mosque in a fashion unchanged since the 19th century.

The sense of history and continuity is palpable here "I would like my children's children to live here. But I fear this may not be the case", says an uncle, Mohamed bin Yahya, who lays more dog-eared photos for us to look at on the linoleum floor.

The state council is threatening to bulldoze Kampong Masjid Melayu houses and construct four-story apartments in their place. If this happens, Kampong Masjid Melayu's residents will move out, its tiny community will fracture - and yet another aspect of Malaysia's vernacular will vanish.

Already the holes in its social fabric are showing. Next door, a Bangladeshi girl plays hop scotch in the dirt earth while a group of illegal immigrants sit on their haunches, whiling away the time. "they don't speak Malay. we can't talk to them," says Mohamed, shaking his head, dismayed that not many of the village's original occupants are left. The 1998 arrest and subsequent conviction of former Deputy prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim exposed major fault lines in Malaysian society. This is a country deeply divided by race, now questioning its roots. Tearing down communities like Kampong Masjid Melayu would only make finding common communal threads more difficult.

George Town has been in the running for Unesco World Heritage site status for several years. There is much to protect. Established in 1786 by Sir Francis Light, an English trader with the East India Company, this historic port settlement has Asia's biggest collection of pre-war shophouses totaling some 10,000. Traders from Europe, Asia and Arabia came and settled, creating a rich architectural and cultural heritage.



Today, Muslim mosques, Indian temples and Chinese clan or *kongsi* houses can be found alongside colonial mansions and Straits buildings. Which is why organisations like the Penang Heritage Trust, a conservation group, are fighting hard to keep preservation high in the government agenda. "Penang has an authentic living culture. For the sake of future generations, our human settlements must be maintained" insists Laurence Loh, an architect who bought the Cheong Fatt Tze mansion, along Leith Street, used in the film, 'Indochine

Mr Loh brought in artisans from China and spent US\$2 million restoring it to its former indigo-hued glory. Cheong Fatt Tze, the eponymous home of a 19th century tycoon and Manchu official, is now a museum and a boutique hotel. It won a Unesco conservation award in 2001 as an example of how commerce and conservation can be married successfully.

But conservationists like Mr Loh are a minority in Malaysia. While the government has established a US\$5.6 million Heritage fund, Mr Loh worries that some of its efforts have been misdirected. About 60,000 shophouse residents have been affected by a rent control repeal which jacked rents from 100 rupiahs (US\$26) to 1000 rupiahs 2 years ago. "The atmosphere has changed. I don't see my neighbours anymore because people are moving out," complains a shop house resident.

A walk around George Town reveals why Mr Loh is so upset; the place bursts into life at dusk. Down Armenian Street's shaded five-foot alleyways, old ladies in sarongs are busy at mahjongg; men sit on stools shooting the breeze. Armenian Street is a riotous jumble of *chettiahs* or money lenders, shuttered shops selling stacks of old newspapers and office workers on scooters pattered past elaborately tiled Chinese shop houses in fading pastel pink or green. "If any more occupants are forced out, George Town will just be deserted after nightfall," warns a local resident.

Heritage conservation versus urban renewal is not a tussle unique to Penang. But its rare that the contrasts are so stark. Mr Chang, a shopkeeper who's been in the same premises for 60 years, scoffs at the thought of anyone wanting to live in the old dwellings. 'These buildings are too narrow. You can't do anything with them. Much better to tear them down and build new ones,' he grumbles. His old shop house once sold rattan furniture. Now Mr Cheang sells the latest mobile phones.

Only Vincent, my Indian rickshaw driver for the day, approves of Penang's conservation plans. 'New, modern houses are rubbish. Old houses can be turned into warehouses,' he says. But he adds, "Old is also good for my business, otherwise tourists won't come".

We peddle past peanut sellers on Chulia Street, its gaily painted shop houses turned into backpacker hotels. then we detour into Penang street, famous for its *mamak* Malay-Indian hawker stalls, selling torpedo soup, a bull's penis dish unique to the island. Penang's food is justly famous, and not merely for dishes with unusual bovine body parts. Penangites will happily reel off the island's most celebrated dishes: *asam laksa*, a sour noodle soup, *rojak*, a raw salad dressed with prawn paste, *char koay teow*, fried noodles with egg, beansprouts and cockles.

In the numerous casual surveys, Malaysians regularly cite the country's food and its *mamak* stalls as defining Malaysian culture. Unfortunately its vernacular and buildings are usually forgotten. Sure, having supper at 2 a.m. on Gurney Drive may be the quintessential Malaysian experience. the challenge however, is in realising that this young nation has a rich and complex past. Preserving Penang's beleaguered historic communitiers would be a good start.



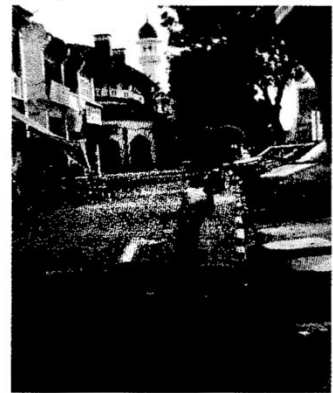
[Ms Lim writes from Hong Kong]

## THE RM6 MILLION PENANG GOLD BAZAAR ON JALAN MESJID KAPITAN KELING

A briefing-cum-dialogue session was held on 31st May 2003 attended by residents, traders, ngo's and MPPP councillors and officers

Issues/ queries/concerns raised from the floor after briefing on project's technical aspects:

- How had the consultants (Malik, Lip & Ass. of K.L.) understood needs of those affected without prior consultation?  
(answer: firm had followed standards used in Putrajaya (?))
- Had the consultants considered the large crowds during Friday prayers?
- Had the consultants considered the disabled in its plans for facilities and access?
- What was the rationale for proposing that old, mature trees be cut down and replaced with shrubs and palms (!!)

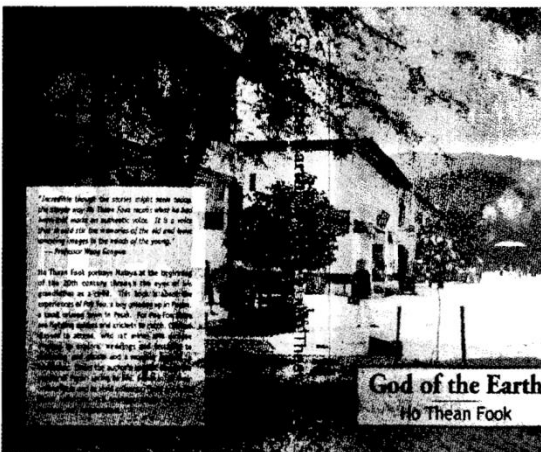


(Before) mature trees & sidewalk

The public awaits the outcome of the dialogue.  
Have any revisions taken place?  
Have stakeholders' needs been incorporated?



Current on-going works



### **GOD OF THE EARTH** by Hoe Thean Fook

This book is about the experiences of a young boy who came from China to stay with his parents in a booming small mining town in Perak called Papan at the beginning of the 20th century. Although it is a work of fiction, it combines oral history and historical facts. The places names and streetscapes described in the book are historically accurate. The book contains many old photos of Papan and its people taken in 1905, showing youth with pigtailed at play, in school and in street festivals. There is even a map depicting Papan in 1900 so that visitors to the current ghost town of Papan can walk the streets and identify the places mentioned in the book.

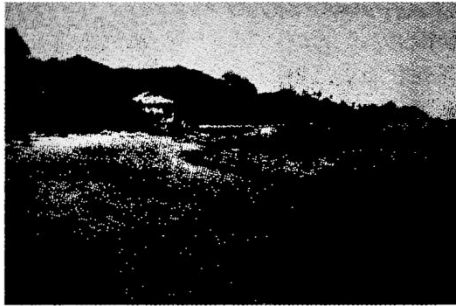
In the Preface, the author introduces his book :

*"I have tried to portray Malaya at the turn of the 19th century as my grandfather saw it. In what I have related I have, therefore, to give an account of the life and times of the period. Since this cannot be done without having persons to speak and act for me, I have resuscitated persons my grandfather had acquainted me with. We were then living in a large solitary bungalow, formerly a Government clinic. My grandfather and I used to sit in a large open piece of airy, grassy lawn beside the building regularly after dinner. He was then retired, too old to work but still too young to die and I was his captive audience."*

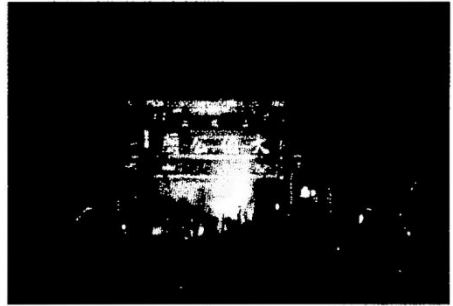
This book will be available soon at the offices of Badan Warisan Malaysia (KL), Penang Heritage Trust (Penang) and Perak Academy (Ipoh) at a selling price of RM\$30.

# Sun. 27th JULY 2003 SITE VISIT

THE SEA PEARL ISLAND TEMPLE - THE 'TUA PEH KONG' (God of Prosperity) TEMPLE AT THE TANJONG TOKONG COAST



Picture 20th C Impressions of Br Malaya

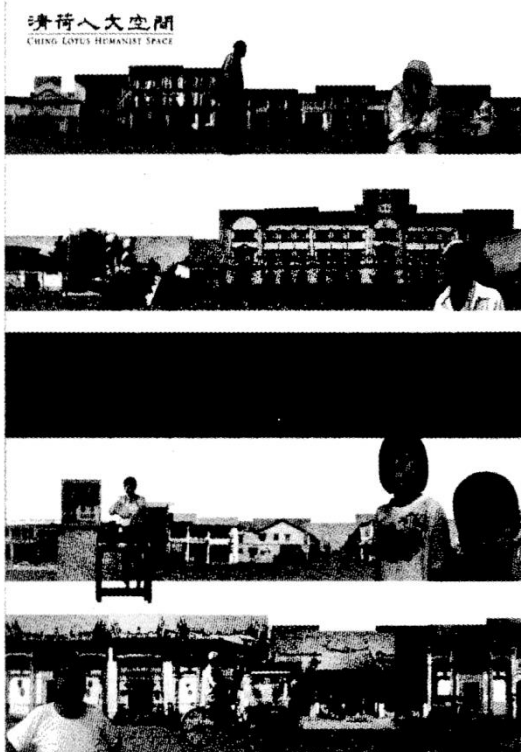


Picture -Pulau Pinang Vol 2 No.1

Purportedly the oldest Tua Peh Kong temple around. The site for the temple certainly dates back to pre-Francis Light days. There are 3 Hakka graves next to the temple within which are interred the remains of the earliest Chinese sailors/settlers to Penang, in the early C18th. This temple (often referred to by Penangites as the Tanjung Tokong crabs temple) is associated with the annual 'chneah hoay' or flame watching ceremony performed during the 14th night of the 1st moon of the lunar year. Members of the Poh Hock Seah (refer page 15 of this newsletter) pray for a prosperous and peaceful year and a geomancer priest will 'read' the rising flames. The annual ceremony is completed with a procession that brings the embers of the flame in an urn back to the Armenian Street Tua Peh Kong temple. A charming Hokkien fishing village still exists as the backdrop to this temple.

We hope to get historian Dr Tan Kim Hong to brief us at the site.

**DIRECTIONS : 3.30 p.m. as usual : DRIVE ALONG TANJUNG TOKONG COASTAL ROAD / FOLLOW THE BEND / TURN RIGHT AT THE TRAFFIC LIGHTS INTO ROAD FOR THE FLATS / FOLLOW THE ROAD TO THE END**



**PHT member Tan Yeow Wooi of Ching Lotus Humanist Space, held an exhibition in June 2003 called 'Face to Face'. It was a special photography collage, with some of the exhibits stretching more than 20 feet in length. He focused on China Street and King Street.**

**Posters and postcards are available at Ching Lotus on China Street**





# ....& A REVIEW OF PHT SITE VISITS 2000, 2001, 2002 TO July 2003

Clan jetty leaders meeting PHT members



This list is being presented below in order to jog memories of old members and to keep new members informed. This should also help us in planning for future visits.

## 2000

	<u>SITE</u>
FEB	Makam Sheik Omar (Ayer Itam)
MARCH	Homestead of Yeap Chor Ee
APRIL	Crag Hotel / Penang Hill
MAY	Chung Keng Kwee Temple
JUNE	Sungai Bakap Kee Estate
JULY	Convent Light Street / Government House
AUGUST AGM	Runnymede Hotel
SEPTEMBER	Loh Lean San quartet/Chung Wah School Union & Jewish cemetery
OCTOBER	120 Armenian Street
NOVEMBER	Cheong Fatt Tze Mansion

## GUIDE / HOST

Salma / Zakiah
Laurence Loh / Dato Steven Yeap
Ahmad Chik
Owen Chung
Dato Kee Phaik Cheen
Dilys Yap, Loh-Lim, Nuns
PHT Council / P.G.Lim
Lohs / Goh Mai Loon
Himanshu Bhatt
Salma
Loh-Lim

## 2001

	<u>SITE</u>
JANUARY	The Kongsí Enclave -Khoo,Cheah, Tan & surrounding area
FEBRUARY	Nattakutai Temple/ Waterfall hilltop temple
MARCH	Francis Light Cemetery / E & O
APRIL	Sikh Gurdwara Temple
MAY	Penang Buddhist Association, Anson Rd
JUNE	Balik Pulau Convent /100 Main Road / D.O.'s residences
JULY	Fort Cornwallis
SEPTEMBER/AGM	Leong Yin Kean Mansion (32)
SEPTEMBER	Suffolk House (1)
OCTOBER	Suffolk House (2)
NOVEMBER	King Street Clan Houses

## GUIDE / HOST

Laurence Loh / Cheah & Tan Kongsí Committees / Tan Lye Hoe
Dr Narayanan / Dr Ramanathan
Teresa Capol / EGO duty manager
Kuldip Singh & Committee Master Chan
Josephine Choo, Balik Pulau District Officer
Najmuddin, Dr Ghafar Council, Loh-Lim
Laurence Loh, Ahmad Chik, Loh-Lim
Laurence Loh, Ahmad Chik, Loh-Lim Goh Mai Loon

## 2002

	<u>SITE</u>
JANUARY	Botanical Gardens /PBA reservoir
MARCH	Beach St / Lum Choon / Cheng Hoe Seah
APRIL	Boon San Tong Khoo Kongsí-Victoria Street
MAY	Teow Chew Ass /Nagore Shrine/ Bomba Chulia Street
JUNE	Western Rd Cemetery
JUNE	Mariophile /the Fr Charles Reutens collection

## GUIDE / HOST

Mr Lim Boon Tiong / Ahmad Chik
Salma/Dr Tan Chong Guan
Tan yeow Wooi/Tan Lye Hoe
Khoo Khay Hock/Lim Gaik Siang
Teow Chew Assoc.Committee/ Gaik Siang / Salma
Dr Justin Corfield
Lionel & Raymond

2002SITEGUIDE /HOST

JULY	Kampong Masjid Melayu	Che'gu Baharuddin / community
AUGUST	Batu Feringghi Aqueduct/Guillemard Reservoir	Dato Lee Yow Ching
SEPTEMBER/AGM	Armenian St restoration projects	Yap Chin Chau/Salma/Dr Tan
OCTOBER	Kek Lok Si -private rooms, sutras	Rev Zheng Ming/Goh Mai Loon
NOVEMBER	Penang War Museum Batu Maung	Site entrepreneur / Harold Speldewinde of Veterans Assoc.

2003SITEGUIDE /HOST

JANUARY	Seri Mutiara the Residency	Laurence Loh /Loh-Lim
FEBRUARY	Penang Hill Bel Retiro Crag Hotel	Ahmad Chik /Robert Raymer / Mrs Danielsof uplands School
MARCH	Gurney Drive / uplands School	Teresa Capol / Alexis Kerr
APRIL	The Clan Jetties	YB Lee Hack Teik/jetty leaders
MAY	Kedah House	Tengku Ismail Jawa/Dr Jon Lim
JUNE	The Masonic Lodge	Dato Dr P.Vannaisingham/Dr Daljit Singh

WE LOOK FORWARD TO IDEAS AND SUGGESTIONS FROM MEMBERS FOR FUTURE VISITS. BEING PLANNED ARE : ST ANNE'S & CERUK TEKUN / LIM CHENG TEIK HOUSE / YEOH KONGSI / BUJANG VALLEY & MERBOK

=====

**'Tasting Asia' An Installation Exhibition  
2-28 June 2003 at the State Art Gallery as  
part of the YTL-Arts Festival.**

An excerpt from Prof.Leung's poem for  
Malaysia's *Nasi Lemak*

*Never feeling hungry after eating  
Never feeling sad*

*Fewer and fewer people grow rice in the fields*

*The city develops different tastes  
Yet rice always neutralizes our pain*

*The city develops different melancholies  
Rice has become the fragment we lost*

*Fewer and fewer people sow seeds in Spring  
Harvest in Autumn*

*Never feeling grief after eating  
Never feeling wrath*



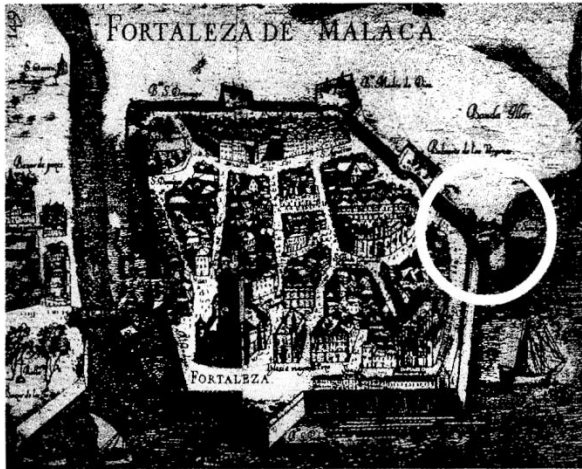
For those of you who missed this very unusual installation exhibition, it was an experimental collaboration between fine artists, graphic designers and a well-known HK poet, Professor Leung Ping-kwan, reflecting on Asian attitudes to food. A typical national dish was selected for each Asian country which then inspired the 3-dimensional conceptual pieces by the artists and make-believe packaging by the graphic designers. The exhibition in Penang was curated by William Harald-Wong.

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIND IN MALACCA

..what could be considered Malaysia's most exciting archaeological discovery in recent times. 'Bastion Santiago' one of the ancient Portuguese watch towers on the Malacca Fort has been uncovered almost intact.

Development works (for shopping malls & resorts) at Dataran Pahlawan (the Esplanade) have uncovered the entire watch tower with curved laterite slabs and extended walls, complete with barnacles and oyster shells at the lower levels.

Jabatan Museums and Antiquities intends to 'follow the wall' as far as it is intact. In the meantime, this is what Malacca authorities have to say:



De Manuel de Facia y Sousa 'Fortaleza de Malaca'  
Engraving Lisbon 1666-1675 (R.Curtis, K.L.)

## Malacca sees tourism possibility in old tower

**MALACCA:** A pedestrian path will be built leading tourists to the remnants of Santiago Bastion, making it a "can't-be-missed" site for tourists, said Chief Minister Datuk Seri Mohd Ali Rustam.

"The findings will further promote tourism," he told reporters after attending the Festa San Pedro at the Portuguese Settlement in Ujong Pasir on Sunday night.

Mohd Ali said the state government, Melaka Museum Corporation, the city council and the Department of Museums and Antiquities would preserve Santiago Bastion, one of the ancient Portuguese watch towers discovered recently.

"The preservation will complement the existing proposed Padang Pahlawan Development by Tempamas Sdn Bhd and become a new tourist attraction," he said.

When asked to comment on the move by several Portuguese appealing to the state government to stop work on Dataran Pahlawan to save

the heritage of Santiago Bastion, Mohd Ali said: "They do not know what they are talking about."

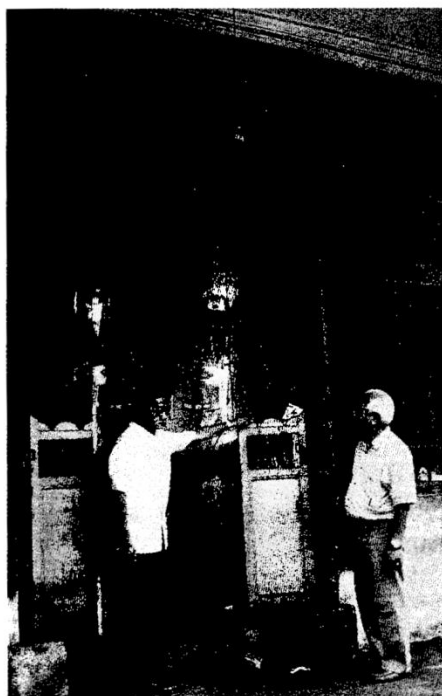
Former Kota Melaka MP Lim Guan Eng and DAP member Martin Theseira had started a signature campaign to put a stop work order on the project, claiming that if left untouched the find could secure a Unesco World Heritage listing.

The project by Tempamas, which was given an 89-year lease to build souvenir stalls, restaurants and parking lots at Dataran Pahlawan, would not affect the archaeological find, said Mohd Ali.

"What Tempamas needs to do is to modify one of its staircase leading to the souvenir stalls which is near to the Santiago Bastion," he said.

Michael Low, managing director of Tempamas, said the staircase was being redesigned to accommodate the discovery. "The historical find will help generate more activities in this area," he said. The project will be completed by the end of 2004.

The Star 29th June 2003



## Old Ancestral House in Rope Walk left to rot

If any of you have walked down Rope Walk recently (behind the police quarters) you might have noticed yet another sad, old house. This one however is the ancestral home of the Meng Yeng Soo Association. Built towards the end of the 19th century, the building has been left to deteriorate as most of the trustees of the association have passed away. The designated caretaker had not been paid for a time and he decided to resign more than 10 years ago. The house has since been used by drug addicts who pose a fire threat.

The building is historically valuable, elaborately styled and structurally quite unique. It would be appear to be worth saving if an appropriate means could be found.

The Star 5 May 2003

The PHT has one of the lowest NGO subscriptions -RM3 a month - but we DO depend on them to keep going.

So, if you enjoy the site visits & the newsletter, if you appreciate the projects that have been conducted, if you share in the vision for George Town and if you believe that PHT is doing a good job, but that a lot more needs to be done...

### **DON'T FORGET**

to pay up your subscriptions

Admission : RM550

Annual subs: RM36

Overseas postal surcharge [Please NOTE]

RM14 annually for Asia, Australia, N.Z.

[RM36 + RM14]

RM 24 annually for rest of the world

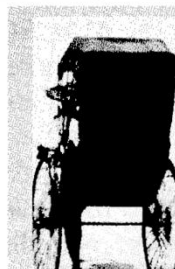
[RM24 + RM36]

You can also pay by CREDIT CARD. Please e-mail the office for the credit card form [phttrust@pc.jaring.my](mailto:phttrust@pc.jaring.my)

### **PENANG HERITAGE TRUST COUNCIL**

TERM SEPTEMBER 2001 - 2003

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Immediate Past President :	Dato Nazir Arif
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	Mr Ang Peng Hai
Council Members :	Ms Loh-Lim Lin Lee
	Ms Teresa Capol
	Ms Lim Gaik Siang
	Dr. Tan Chong Guan
	Mr Kim Wong
	Mr Teoh Poh Huat



### **PHT TOURS**

**Tuesday**  
Little India, Spice Trail

**Wednesday**  
Heritage Trail 2 &  
Cheong Fatt Tze

**Thursday**  
Street of Harmony &  
Historical Enclave.

These last about 3 hours .Special customized trails may also be arranged :

- Traditional Foods Trail
- Sun -Yet Sun Trail
- Traditional Trades Trail
- Muslim Heritage Trail etc.

Special rates may also be arranged for Government officials, V.I.P. visitors, students and those on official business

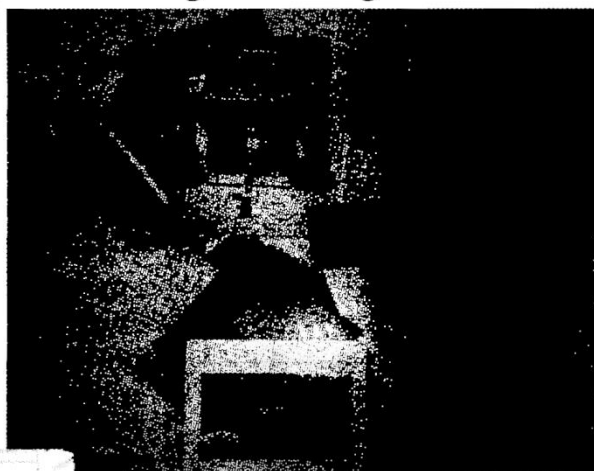
CONTACT MAGDALINE AT PHT FOR MORE INFORMATION: 2642631



We also have new t-shirts & key chains for sale, drop by the office for interesting items and gifts



Some of the items for sale at PHT office



Mag & friends