



PHT

Newsletter

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Support Conservation Efforts in Your Community!

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**PENANG
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PHT

Editorial - HERITAGE CROSSROADS

A thought-provoking article by a returning daughter of Penang has drawn attention to the need for a partnership between heritage activists and developers in Penang. Writing in a leading English-language daily on 27th March Judy Cheng-Hopkins, a senior UN official who was the key participant in a PHT fund-raising dinner last month, called for "a grand alliance" instead of "an antagonistic relationship" between developers and conservationists. The aim was to exploit what she described as Penang's comparative advantages for the sake of its citizens "through more and better tourism products." While Penang might no longer enjoy the comparative advantage of cheap, quality labour in the region, she maintained that tourism will only grow and Penang has it all to attract quality tourists. Four years after the UNESCO recognition, she said, "we are...at a crossroads." She continued, "We may find out too late that we took the wrong course." The choice is between "a bustling, prosperous planned city, with architecturally aesthetic buildings and charming heritage quarters" or "a haphazardly put-together city, with a lot of the charm of its heritage replaced by random buildings, incongruously placed here and there."

Sadly, demolition of heritage buildings in Penang continues apace, both inside the George Town World Heritage core and buffer zones and beyond. We publish in this Newsletter the full text of Councillor Lim Mah Hui's intervention on this issue in a recent full council meeting of the MPPP. While announcements such as that by the Chief Minister advocating the preservation of the former Cable & Wireless building on the MACC property or by the State government granting heritage status to Tanjong Tokong fishing village are heartening, Penang needs a clear-cut policy on heritage preservation and restoration rather than ad hoc pronouncements however welcome they may be on an individual basis. A State heritage preservation policy would be in the interests of everyone -- property owners, developers, city planners, government officials, non-government or

organisations and the general public. The policy would provide guidelines and impose appropriate sanctions for violations, such as illegal demolitions.

Meanwhile, how long must George Town's World Heritage Listing be held hostage to the activities of an agricultural industry within the confines of the city? When are the State and Municipal authorities going to act on the decision of the Federal Cabinet to remove the inappropriate breeding of swiftlets and farming of birds' nests in George Town? Since the three-year deadline for the prohibition and removal of swiftlet breeding farms from the UNESCO World Heritage Sites of George Town and Malacca was announced by the Federal Government and endorsed by the Penang State Government to take effect from 1st January 2011, more than a year has passed and no action has been taken. Failure to implement the decision to remove swiftlet farms is not simply a problem of delay. Lack of enforcement has increased the swiftlet population while encouraging swiftlet farmers to continue and expand their operations without fear of official sanction.

Pending the development of a State heritage preservation policy the Penang Heritage Trust will continue its advocacy and is marking its 25th anniversary with the publication of a list of the ten most endangered heritage sites. Not all these sites are in the George Town core or buffer zones. All of them, however, are integral to Penang's heritage and historic identity.

Editor



PRESERVATION AND DESTRUCTION IN PENANG'S DEVELOPMENT

Speech by Councillor Dr. Lim Mah Hui at Full Council Meeting of MPPP, 24th February 2012

In the past 12 months, we have painfully witnessed the demolition of several historic buildings, some illegally. The latest victim is a mansion at 177 Jalan Macalister, opposite Loh Guan Lye Specialist Centre.

First, I would like to request the Council to provide data on all the historically, architecturally and/or culturally significant buildings that have been demolished last year and this year, or for which demolition was approved since 2008.

Let me mention a few of these buildings that were torn down. The beautiful mansion of Khaw Bian Cheng (son of Khaw Sim Bee) at Pykett Avenue, two historic bungalows on Burma Lane, one of them once occupied by a former Prime Minister of Thailand, Phraya Manopakorn Nititada (1884-1948) and two bungalows along Brook Road. Khaw Bian Cheng's mansion was torn down without permit. In the case of the Burma Lane and Brook Road residences, two of three buildings in each location were torn down and only one building in each location was left standing. This is not preservation. This is architectural and historical mutilation. It is like cutting off one limb and preserving the other limb.



Prime Minister Phraya Mano sought refuge in Penang Island when the military launched a coup in Thailand in 1932. He lived in Penang for several years and passed away here 1948. Mano Road in Pulau Tikus is named after him. In many ways, his history is similar to that of Dr. Sun Yet Sun, who also took refuge in Penang during his struggle for Chinese independence. We are fortunate to maintain the heritage and history of Dr Sun in terms of a museum and the house where he spoke and launched his fund raising campaign. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said for celebrating the history of Prime Minister Phraya Mano in Penang. The houses in which he once stayed have been demolished and an important part of the history of the Thai Malaysians in Penang has been destroyed in the pursuit of profit but under the rationale of "development".

The present attitude is that only houses in the heritage zone, or those that are designated heritage, are protected. We need to take a more holistic view of heritage. One reason Penang was awarded the World Heritage status is because of the large stock of pre-war houses in the island. It is myopic to only preserve the buildings in the core heritage zone and wantonly destroy important buildings in the buffer zones and other parts of the city. Tourists come to Penang to experience the whole city, not just the heritage zone.

Many Japanese and European visitors have commented to me their disappointment at the demolition of beautiful buildings. The building of 30-storey apartments surrounding a heritage building is not preservation; it is suffocation of heritage sites.

It is convenient to justify what is happening in the name of development. As I said last year, we must be more thoughtful. We must ask the following questions:

- What kind of development do we want?
- Is it development that destroys our heritage and culture?
- Is it sustainable development?
- Is it green development or development that aggravates climate change?
- Who benefits most from this development?
- Who loses out in this process?
- Is it development for the top 1% or development for the 99%?

Development must be located within a vision. What is the vision for Penang's development? Perhaps the best way to concretize this vision is to ask ourselves what is the "model" city that best approximates our vision? I am not suggesting we copy blindly another city. But what I am suggesting is we learn from and choose what are the best characteristics to suit our own situation.

I have heard from some people and policy makers they would like Penang to model itself after Singapore and Hong Kong. Both are densely populated international financial centres in the world. Are they appropriate for Penang? Might it not be more appropriate to look at a combination of Kyoto, a heritage city, and Xiamen, a city with similar characteristics in size, geography (hills and sea), and services (education, high tech and former trading ports) as models.

Let me say something about Singapore. There is much that can be said for Singapore – it is a clean, safe and a well-planned city with a good public transportation system. These are some of the positive lessons we can draw from it. But we can also learn some negative lessons from it, of which I mention two. First, Singapore in the early days of development demolished many of its traditional houses and buildings (not necessarily heritage). They have since learned it was a mistake and are now taking pains to preserve them.

We should not repeat the same mistake. Second, in their quest to make Singapore an international city, the government has swung to the extreme so that many of its local citizens are left behind in this "development" process. Despite Singapore having the best public housing schemes in the world, many of its young population feel they cannot afford housing or find good jobs. The dissatisfaction is so great that it cost the PAP government many seats in the Parliament. This could also happen to Penang if more and more middle and lower class citizens feel they are left behind in this frenzy of property development.

Finally, allow me to suggest that for the moment we should impose a moratorium on granting approval for demolition of all buildings in the island that were built before 1962 (more than 50 years old) and have architectural value. The present list of protected buildings should be immediately made available, and a technical committee made up of qualified professionals, civil society and input from other relevant bodies be established to study this matter immediately.



Heritage Destroyed, No.9 Brook Road

MERCHANDISE



*Heritage Trees Of Penang,
Simon Gardner, Pindar Sidisunthorn &
Lai Ee May RM100*

ON A WING AND A PRAYER: REGULATING THE SWIFTLET NESTING INDUSTRY

A recent announcement from the Veterinary Services Department that a bill is going to be tabled in Parliament next year to regulate the highly lucrative birds-nest industry, one which is said to be worth RM4-5 billion a year. This bill is expected to oversee the industry and provides for a penalty of up to RM100,000 and/or jail for failure to comply with the standards and regulations.

Apart from arguing that the maximum penalty is a drop in the ocean given the sizeable profits the industry boasts of reaping, as is evident from the trade statistics on the birds-nest export between Malaysia and the Republic of China, one would expect that news will quell the grave concerns over potential health risks from the proliferation of urban swiftlet farms. This could also be interpreted as alleviating other concerns over the conversion of heritage buildings including traditional shophouses, into damp and dark caves fit for the habitation of these birds.

However, that, in my view, is taking retrofitting an old building for new use a little too far.

In Malacca, a Swiftlets Ecology Discovery Centre has opened to the public at No 77 Heeren Street, in the heart of Malacca UNESCO World Heritage Site. Heeren Street, is where historically, the town wealthiest merchant elite resided, and until only a couple of decades ago was THE enviable place of residence of the homely Straits Chinese.

No 77 has a very prominent frontage on Heeren Street, as it spans the equivalent of three shophouses. Now used as a bird nest house, its ground floor has an exhibition dedicated to educating the public on the benefits of the industry, which includes the use of old buildings for the farming of birds-nests. It is reported to have been restored at a princely sum of RM4million, and is held up as an exemplar of how this industry also helps the conservation cause. Coincidentally, No 8 Heeren Street was restored by Badan Warisan Malaysia and is now a heritage and visitor centre.

I am however not sure how, by any stretch of the imagination, anyone would say this is a good fit for a building which was once the ancestral home of Seet Kee Ann (1862-1924), wealthy planter, leader of Malacca-Hokkien community, member of the Municipal Commission from 1895, Justice of the Peace from 1901, philanthropist, community leader and Trustee of

the Cheng Hoon Teng temple, the oldest extant Chinese temple in the country (Lim, H.C. & Jorge, F., **Malacca: Voices from the Street**, 2005).

For short-term, albeit huge gain, how can the long term struggle to embed heritage as a key component of our nation foundation, its past, its present and its future, win?

Arguments from both advocates as well as detractors of the industry have been broadcast in the local media for the past few years. Any comment or statement made by one party is countered by the opposing party, and this is in turn rebutted.

One could speculate that this forthcoming bill is to address the accusation of a lack of commitment of government and local authorities to tackle the issues raised by both sides of the argument. Was it a coincidence that the announcement of this future legislation appeared only after the potential threat to the profitability of the industry from China freezing all bird nest imports from Malaysia following issues of the products containing high levels of nitrite? The prospects for continued trade appear to be positive. Will this further pose a greater threat to heritage buildings?

The conversion of heritage buildings into birds-nest houses affects not just the physical integrity of these buildings, but also the intangible values of the area. Birds-nest proponents argue that many of these heritage buildings are already in a state of neglect, not fit for human habitation and that this is an important source of new economic activity and therefore should be supported. Leaving aside the question of whether or not the conversion of use for this purpose is, or is not, licensed, we still need to address the poser of whether this potential financial gain for a few, outstrips the price we pay for the loss of our traditional neighbourhoods and lifestyle.

In 2009, the Malaysian Department of Standards produced the food Animal Husbandry Practice Edible-Birdnest Swiftlet Ranching and it Premises with input from a host of local and federal agencies and organisations, and representation from various birds-nest associations. Noticeably missing was representation from the cultural and heritage sectors. Apart from stating the obvious that while the economic values will have been addressed, other heritage values have been neglected what remains unclear is how or if these

Standards are being enforced and the level of monitoring to ensure compliance.

The question that the nation is looking forward for an answer to is what is of more value? Do heritage buildings in old towns and neighbourhoods have more value when they are populated with people and their economic, social and cultural activities, or when they are infested with swiftlets producing large quantities of highly lucrative birds-nests?

Tun Ahmad Sarji bin Abdul Hamid
President
Badan Warisan Malaysia
November 2011

MEDIA COVERAGE

10 NATION The Star, FRIDAY 13 APRIL 2012

Concerns over conservation

Joint panel to monitor and hasten process of gazettement heritage village

By CAVINA LIM
cavina@thestar.com.my

GEORGE TOWN: A joint action committee of Tanjung Tokong (JATI) has been formed to oversee the gazettement of Kampung Tanjung Tokong as a heritage village.

The committee will comprise an advisory panel of experts on Malay and Muslim heritage, including members of a local religious congregation, non-governmental organisations, political representatives and local social activists.

JATI chairman Datuk Dr Wazir Jahan Karim said a stalemate had arisen in the legal process to gazette the heritage status since the earlier verbal declaration.

"JATI is formed to monitor and speed up the process of making the village a heritage zone. It is laid out in the Dossier on the Conservation of Tanjung Tokong as prepared by the Academy of Socio-Economic Research and Analysis (Asera) in 2010.

"The heritage Bill is yet to be gazetted and hence, Tanjung Tokong as a heritage village is not official. We are now afraid that UDA Holdings Bhd will continue to develop the area.

"We hope that the state government will exercise political will to gazette some portions of Tanjung Tokong as Malay Heritage Village," she told a press conference yesterday.

Dr Wazir Jahan who is also Intersocietal and Scientific Sdn Bhd (INAS) executive director said among the portions which they hope to conserve are the village itself, Jalan Tanjung Tokong Lama, the Tuan Guru Mosque, a cemetery, the surrounding hills, and the night and morning markets.

Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng had on Nov 3, last year, announced the reclassification of Kampung Tanjung Tokong by declaring the oldest Malay village in Penang as a heritage.

It was reported that UDA Holdings was



Watchful eye: Dr Wazir Jahan and Mohd Salleh studying a map of the proposed heritage zone in Kampung Tanjung Tokong at the press conference yesterday.

given a 99-year lease of the land on May 30, 1974, to build low and medium-cost flats, apartments, condominiums and commercial buildings with a gross sale value of between RM800mil and RM1bil.

Tanjung Tokong Residents' Association chairman Mohd Salleh Yahya stressed the importance of preserving the 320-year-old village as a Malay heritage zone.

"We are not against development but we do not want to destroy any traditional traits that the village has to offer," he said.

There are some 250 houses remaining in the village after families from 60 houses moved out.

About 100 houses remain in the older areas of Tanjung Tokong.

An UDA Holdings Bhd spokesperson when contacted, said that development would continue as long as the area had not been gazetted as a heritage site.

Group seeks heritage status for Batu Uban

UNIQUE HISTORY: 'First Malay settlement in Penang should be shared with the world'

AUDREY DERMAWAN
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THE Penang Malay History and Civilisation Association will submit an application to the Heritage Commissioner to nominate the Batu Uban settlement as a national heritage by early next week. Its president, Roslan Saadon, said the association was gathering facts to support its case for the Batu Uban settlement to be declared a national heritage.

"This will be our priority and we have started making the necessary arrangements.

"We hope the state government will also support our noble cause. After all, we are doing this not for ourselves but the state and its people," he told the *New Straits Times*.

Under the National Heritage Act 2005, anyone can nominate any building or item as a national heritage.

However, in the case of Batu Uban, the state government's consent is needed as the settlement sits on state land.

The entire process, from nomination until the okay by the Her-

itage Commissioner, will take about six months.

In that time, the Heritage Commissioner can act if there is any threat to the said building or item.

"We don't want to see Batu Uban go down in history as merely being the earliest (Malay) settlement in the state, even before the British came. We are proud of this fact and we want to promote Batu Uban to the world."

State executive councillor in-charge of religious matters, Abdul Malik Abdul Kasim said the state government was open to discussion with the association.

"We are willing to discuss with Roslan and his team on how best to handle the matter."

It was reported that part of Batu Uban is set to be destroyed should a high-rise residential project in the area be approved.

The news has sent shivers down the spines of residents, who want to preserve the settlement as a living heritage at all cost.

Building plans obtained by residents showed that 61 houses would be demolished to make way for the high-end condominium project and low-cost flats. There are nearly 200 houses in the area.

SUMMARY OF RECENT MEETINGS, SHORT REPORTS & RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Meeting on Swiftlets in World Heritage Cities of Melaka & George Town. Kuala Lumpur, 29th December 2012

Chair: YBHG Professor Emeritus Datin Paduka Zuraina Majid, Ketua Pengarah Jabatan Warisan Negara (JWN – National Heritage Department)

Attended by PHT Council members Rebecca Wilkinson & Haji Hassan

JWN stated that any building with alterations made for swiftlet rearing, whether viable, successful or unsuccessful, should be added to the list of swiftlet houses in the UNESCO zones. This provides a clearer figure how many buildings need to be restored. Badan Warisan disagreed with the figure (only 22) given by Melaka and noted that Melaka had only recorded swiftlet houses deemed successful or viable. It did not include houses altered for swiftlet farming. In both Melaka and George Town, swiftlet houses are operating with no licenses.

State and NGOs agreed to re-count all houses that appear to have characteristics and renovations necessary for swiftlet breeding. All addresses would be checked and investigated by authorities.

Veterinary Department & Wildlife Department will co-ordinate with State authorities to implement specific mechanisms for removal of swiftlet houses.

Penang State (Mr Oon Lai Kuan) confirmed negotiations with the swiftlet associations and that a figure had been agreed upon to legalize the farms. The Associations had proposed setting up a fund. Mr Oon said that the Associations agreed to move out only if JWN or UNESCO made that decision. Datin Zuraina said there was 'no logic' in this kind of negotiation and that, UNESCO or not, Cabinet was the overriding power, "no excuses"; the swiftlet houses have to move out by end 2013.

Mr Oon confirmed Penang State agreement to the 1GP (Garis Panduan - Guide Lines for Swiftlet Farming Industry); the swiftlet houses have to move out. MPPP (Cik Noorhanis Bt Noordin) confirmed a 4-phase plan. Veterinary Department (Penang) made it very clear that MPPP has not been co-ordinating with them.

Melaka State has taken responsibility for the co-ordination of its removal plan. Mr Oon expressed reluctance for Penang State to take on this responsibility

but agreed eventually that State would co-ordinate with MPPP & GTWHI. All parties would do the implementation. GTWHI would be the bridge for information between State & JWN.

It was agreed that all parties would go back, re-tally the numbers and cross-check. The next meeting would be scheduled for sometime in February.

2. Meeting called by State Secretariat (SUK) on Swiftlet Industry in World Heritage Site.

KOMTAR, 19th January 2012

Chair: Oon Lai Kuan, SUK

Attended by: Janet Pillai, Sheau Fung, Rebecca Wilkinson, GTWHI (Hijas), MPPP lawyers, Licensing Department, Cik Hanis (MPPP), Veterinary Department,

Agreement that there is discrepancy in number of swiftlet houses in the GT UNESCO zones. 173 houses were identified in April 2011 by PHT & other NGO's. MPPP has a total of 128. There is no plan prepared for closures or removals. Cik Hanis (MPPP) stated that procedures are unclear & would not commit to any plan. MPPP is awaiting direction. Licensing Department confirmed it had stopped issuing compound fines to all illegal swiftlet houses as it was awaiting instructions from State. After "moratorium" at end 2009, Licensing Department stopped all action against illegal swiftlet houses & is awaiting instruction from the State. Licensing Department confirmed that all swiftlet houses in George Town are illegal.

PHT suggested that the plan should start with basic actions and enforcement such as removing metal grills that have sectioned off the 5-foot ways around swiftlet houses and removing tweeters. This would show that the removal plan was in action & send a message to the swiftlet house owners that the plan is being implemented. When questioned by PHT, Cik Hanis noted that there is a notice procedure, e.g., notice to enter can be given. After 24 hours, if no reply, a police report is made with a notice to force entry. To enforce this procedure would take 2 to 3 days.

MPPP lawyers clarified that house owners can be taken to court. MPPP lawyers have suggested a strategy on how to approach the removal using the power of law.

Veterinary Department stated that it is unprepared for the influx of young birds. There are no incubators. They have agreed that breeding times of the swiftlets must be monitored & removals co-ordinated with the end of the breeding seasons. The actual process of the closure of the swiftlet houses was discussed & strategies need to be made clearer.

Mr Oon reconfirmed that State negotiated with ASNI & the swiftlet house operators to reach a “win-win solution”. State had agreed swiftlet house operators could remain with payment of a fee. However, operators agreed that if JWN or UNESCO said they had to move from UNESCO zones then they would do so. State had in effect given the operators ‘hope’. State has yet to inform the swiftlet associations about the JWN decision. It should proceed immediately with plans to remove the swiftlet houses.

PHT questioned the ‘win-win solution’ & said that the State decision not to inform may aggravate the swiftlet operators further. PHT questioned the lack of information & publicity regarding the JWN directive. State claimed the decision has to be made by Exco & was waiting for confirmation of the figures. PHT reminded all parties that the figures have to include all houses renovated for swiftlet rearing. PHT cautioned that figures may not be precise because swiftlet farmers were disguising their buildings.

PHT drew attention to the growing numbers of swiftlet houses operating in the greater George Town area. No regulations have been implemented despite acceptance of the 1GP by Penang State. No authority is regulating or monitoring this exploding industry in Penang. PHT cautioned State to be mindful of bird flu and other health issues and asked about contingency plans. There is currently no contingency plan.

3. George Town, 25th January 2012

PHT Council member Rebecca Wilkinson joined reps from GTWHI, MPPP (including Planning Department) on a walk along Pitt Street, Muda Lane, Lorong Stewart, Love Lane, Lorong Chee Em & China Street. The purpose was to agree on which buildings identified by NGOs in April 2011 were indeed swiftlet houses. Planning Department had issued notices and inspected a few on Pitt Street and stated they had been closed down. These officials were surprised, however, that the swiftlet houses had resumed business. The Planning Department representative said notices would be

issued to all those buildings where renovations had taken place.

4. George Town, 31st January 2012

Inspection of some listed swiftlet houses by GTWHI, MPPP & enforcement officers, including No 29A & B China Street which was delisted by PHT in the April survey and inspected several times by MPPP. This swiftlet farm was cleared several years ago. PHT hopes that inspections will include all swiftlet houses, not just those with ceased operations.

PHT Recommendations:

a) Authorities have to be continually vigilant for new swiftlet houses. Figures are actually higher as owners are more aware that swiftlet houses need to be hidden, often behind overly ornate facade ‘restoration’; many look ‘over-restored’. In both UNESCO sites important examples of architecture and grand family homes of prominent historical figures have been become swiftlet houses.

b) State must co-ordinate with GTWHI & MPPP to begin the implementation process.

c) MPPP should act immediately on the matters it can control, e.g., blocking of 5-foot ways, illegal renovation.

d) State must give clear decisions & instructions for all Departments to act now. It must not always wait for Exco, thereby undermining the State authority and confusing enforcement issues. MPPP must act on its own & implement the laws to protect the people & safeguard against bad practices threatening Malaysia’s heritage.

e) State has accepted the 1GP. Attention to these rules & regulations and implementation must begin to keep the industry under control.

f) State entered negotiations with the Swiftlet Associations and came to the agreement that, if JWN instructs them to be removed, they have to go. State has to ensure that the Swiftlet Associations are informed of the decision and must push them to leave the UNESCO zones

*By Rebecca Duckett-Wilkinson
1st February 2012*

19 March 2012

PRESS STATEMENT

PENANG HERITAGE TRUST SUPPORTS CHIEF MINISTER ON PRESERVATION OF MACC BUILDING (FORMERLY CABLE & WIRELESS)

The Penang Heritage Trust (PHT) welcomes the reported statements by YAB Lim Guan Eng, Chief Minister of Penang, made during a recent visit to the site, in favour of preserving and restoring the historic two-storey building on the seafront behind the new MACC building on Jalan Sultan Ahmad Shah (formerly Northam Road). This building between the former Metropole Hotel and the Penang Club is classified as a Category 2 heritage building. Built around 1900, it later belonged to Cable & Wireless Limited, the early 20th century international communications company that linked Penang to the world by undersea cable.

The building possesses interesting architectural features typical of the period, including high ceilings, external balconies and an impressive teak staircase. While other important Cable & Wireless structures have been lost in the construction of new MACC offices, PHT applauds the Chief Minister's decision to reject an earlier application to demolish this building and instead support the MACC application to the Minister of Information, Communications and Culture for funds to restore the building with a view to its integration "in a holistic manner" with MACC's development of the site.

PENANG HERITAGE TRUST



<http://www.thesundaily.my/news/312884>



<http://www.mmail.com.my/story/reprieve-heritage-building>

20 March 2012

PRESS STATEMENT

BY PENANG HERITAGE TRUST ON BATU UBAN AS A HISTORIC LANDMARK

Penang Heritage Trust (PHT) supports the zoning of Batu Uban as a heritage site based on its early history as a landing site of the first Malays of Penang, Batu Uban ("White Rock") got its name from Malays who used the rocks, gleaming white in the sun from the droppings of seagulls, as a navigational guide to the island. It strongly supports the efforts of the Penang Malay History and Heritage Association – Persatuan Sejarah dan Warisan Pulau Pinang (PEWARIS) to present a proposal to the State government to declare Batu Uban a heritage site. Batu Uban like Tanjung Tokong predates the occupation of Penang by Captain Francis Light in 1786 and is evidence of the existence of early Malay settlements along the island's coast. With massive land reclamation projects changing Penang's coastline, it is all the more important to conserve these former coastal areas as the original sites of early Malay settlements. To propose upmarket development on land which has been occupied by the Malays for centuries will obliterate the rich cultural diversities of Penang's early history which is strongly supported by the State Government.

Dato' Dr Wazir Jahan, anthropologist and advisor for Muslim Affairs to PHT endorses its early history, affirming that the mosque at Batu Uban built around 1734 is the oldest mosque on the island and should be conserved in its original form. Nakhoda Nan Intan from Sumatra was its founder and it led to a thriving Sumatran Malay settlement which later expanded all along the Southwest coast of the island to Sungei Batu. It has been historically established that coastal areas of Penang and Seberang were dotted with settlements that served as stop point for shelter and water by traders plying the port of Kuala Kedah to other well known trading ports of the Straits of Melaka, like Pasai, Batu Bara, Kota Pinang and Siak, Indragiri and Melaka. Batu Uban conforms to Malay cultural ecology of a Malay "water-edge" settlement characteristically containing four main elements : mosque, fresh water source , penghulu's house and cemetery.

Unfortunately, The Sungei Batu settlement has already been destroyed , leaving Batu Uban the last remaining Malay settlement along the Pualu Jerjak channel. The site at Batu Uban is already destroyed by rampant development which has not encased the village in its original form and the approach from the sea to river tributaries here has been destroyed by the highway and other commercial housing. Given that this is the landing site of the early Malays of Penang, both State and Federal agencies should cooperate to make this a visible landmark of heritage on the island.

Dato' Dr. Mohd Razha Rashid
Vice President
Penang Heritage Trust



photography by Ganesh Kolandaveloo

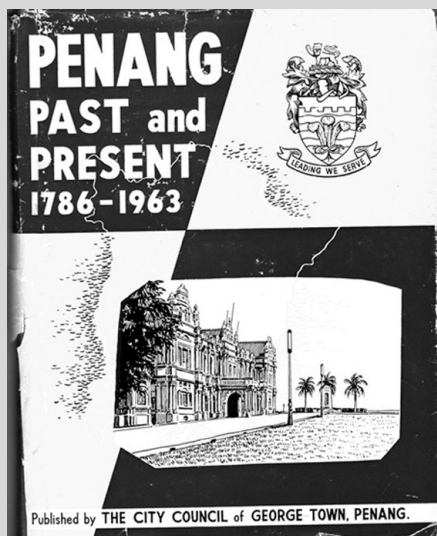


<http://www.penang-traveltips.com/masjid-jamek-batu-uban.htm>

PENANG PAST AND PRESENT – THE FUTURE?

On the 1st of January this year Penang celebrated 55 years of George Town being bestowed, by proclamation of Queen Elizabeth the Second, the honorific status of a City – the first in this country.

That date in 1957 was also celebratory for two other reasons. First, it marked the centenary of George Town as a municipality and, second, a decision was taken to publish a very special book on the history of the City from its early beginnings as a colonial port/fort to a democratic autonomous local authority - one of the wealthiest and most progressive in areas of health, water, electricity and even public transport in this region. The book was called **Penang Past and Present 1786-1963** and subtitled "A Historical Account of the City of George Town since 1786".



A committee was set up composed of leading personalities. It was first headed by J.E. Tod, then Headmaster of the Penang Free School, and later by the Mayors of the City, D.S. Ramanathan and C.Y. Choy respectively from the Labour Party/Socialist Front. A host of Penang's local luminaries served on the committee, which met over eight years to collate materials, agree on the format and get people to write chapters. Each Department of the Municipality was asked to contribute its history and it did so assiduously. Somewhere in the archives of the Municipality would be these interesting original pieces and it would be good to recover them and give them and the series of photographs some attention to preserve them and even hold an annual exhibition in conjunction with City Day.

One of the remarkable decisions made by the committee was that the book should meet two objectives, and I quote the Mayor, C.Y. Choy, who said in his preface that these dual objectives were:

- 1) "to provide the general readers a historical sketch of the development of our City, George Town"; and
- 2) "to answer the oft-made requests (and complaints) by members of the public for a road-directory of the city and its environments."

Both these objectives, a historical sketch and a detailed map directory, were fulfilled making the publication a rather unique hybrid of a book.

The historical sketch is a quite amazing journey with sometimes unimaginable detail. For example, the votes cast for each of the ten candidates for three vacant positions of the first elections in 1888 under Ordinance No. 1X of 1887 are detailed as announced by the "Sheriff of Penang". Among the employees of the Municipality was a "Punkah Puller", whose duty was to operate by hand, and sometimes his feet, a large fan made of heavy and often decorated cloth and hung on the ceiling by a pole. (I remember that the Governor of Penang's official quarters, the Residency, still had such a contraption in the early sixties. I wonder if it is still there? As Raja Fuziah bte Raja Uda, daughter of the first local Governor of Penang, was in my Sixth Form class at the Penang Free School, we had the joy in having our annual class get-together there!)

The story of local governance, of water and electricity and other utilities is given in amazing detail and there are some historic early photographs. The maps are equally outstanding – there are maps of 1803, 1807-1808, 1883 and 1961. There are detailed street maps and something few people know – every map of the street directory has coloured numbers! There are selected house numbers so the book gives a clearer idea of where the place is - at the beginning or the end or on the left or the right. You rarely ever get such a detailed map like that anywhere!

As I mentioned, there were committees working on the book for eight years. (Books edited by committees are always a difficult and challenging task.) It was decided that enough was enough and one of the first tasks I was given by the then City Secretary, Sonni Pillai, when I joined the City Council as an Assistant City Secretary in December 1965, was to get this book out. It was a joyful experience to be immersed in the deep history of the city, getting familiar with the fascinating details of the historical maps and the various streets of George Town. It was the best orientation I could have had for my new job and that is

why the story of George Town continues to fascinate me till today.

It also introduced me to two remarkable persons. First, Jeyaraj Rajarao, another Assistant City Secretary, who had a hand in finalizing the book and whose brilliant University of Malaya 1958 academic thesis entitled “Public Administration in Penang” is worthy of resurrection. He is still around, active and did some masterly editing of this article. Second, there was a Penang icon, Captain Mohd Nor bin Mohamed, a stern disciplinarian, who used to teach me at the Penang Free School and who for many years was the President of the Penang Historical Society.* He wrote the introduction to the book reminding us about the importance of local history -- that it is a continuous, unfinished and even contested journey -- by ending with the rather unique and very appropriate Malay proverb “Rumah sudah, pahat berbunyi” (“The house may be built, but the chisel is still making the noise.”)

This remarkable book is now rarely available and its existence is beginning to fade even from the memory of those very institutions it talked about. It needs to be reprinted. There was nothing like it ever in the country. It is hoped that we can celebrate the 56th year of George Town’s City status with the launch of a new edition. The leadership of Penang, both at the Majlis Perbandaran Pulau Pinang (MPPP) and the State government, should get this going and perhaps even add currency by including a post-script

Penang can then celebrate yet another first!

By Anwar Fazal

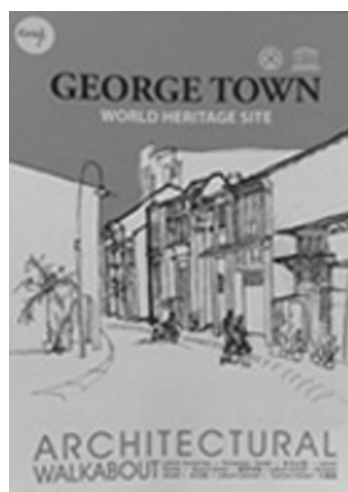
**Note. The Penang Historical Society, the first of its kind in the country, met its sad death when the indefatigable Capt. Mohd Nor, who was also head of the Penang Museum, was ousted as President through a campaign by certain quarters. This led to its bureaucratic expiration, but that is another story for another time! It created a vacuum that is more than being filled, thank goodness, by the Penang Heritage Trust.*

Editor’s note: Dato’ Anwar Fazal, a Trustee of the Penang Heritage Trust, was from 1965 till 1973 an Assistant City Secretary in the City Council of George Town and in 1969, after the dramatic change of government in Penang, was seconded to the position of Private Secretary to the Chief Minister of Penang, the late Tun Lim Chong Eu. He is currently Director of the Right Livelihood College, c/o Universiti Sains Malaysia (see www.usm.my/rhc).

MERCHANDISE



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Malaysian Moments,
A Pictorial Retrospective,
by Andrew Barber RM50

OLD TOWN OF HOI AN, VIETNAM – LESSONS FOR GEORGE TOWN?

Hoi An, in central Vietnam, is a UNESCO World Heritage site with certain similarities to George Town. It is a historically important port city (named Faifo on old maps) and once the largest harbour in SE Asia. It dominated international trade in its region for several hundred years and has a large surviving heritage of low-rise 16th-20th century Chinese, Vietnamese, Japanese and French colonial buildings.

My wife and I have visited Hoi An several times, starting in 1999, the year in which it was granted UNESCO World Heritage status, and have always found it a totally charming place. We went there again for nine days this March, knowing that we would certainly enjoy ourselves there but nevertheless curious as to how it had evolved in the nine years since our last visit in 2003.



We were not in the least disappointed this time – always a risk when returning to a favourite haunt of earlier years. Hoi An seems definitely to be making a success of its World Heritage status and its people seem to be benefiting from the development of heritage tourism.

In Hoi An we looked for any possible pointers for George Town and I have listed some thoughts below. Direct comparisons are difficult since Hoi An is a much simpler challenge than George Town: (i) Hoi An's stock of heritage buildings is concentrated in a compact area, (ii) it has escaped damage from any wars and (iii) it became a relative backwater after losing its trading importance in the mid-1800s and thus did not attract interest from commercial and residential property developers. Conservation efforts began in the 1980s when the old town was still a relatively intact and unspoilt example of a historic 16th-19th century Asian trading centre.

1. Hoi An is a success story.

It has succeeded in overlaying a vibrant visitor economy on top of its underlying current working role of regional market centre (farming, fishing and various crafts). Visitors find it a fascinating blend of history, old buildings and contemporary Vietnamese life. The town is alive and its buildings are visibly lived in and worked in. The local inhabitants are benefiting from the visitor economy and one senses that they feel ownership of the heritage conservation efforts. By contrast, George Town is still very much a work-in-progress in these respects.

2. Some ingredients in Hoi An's success appear to be:

- Town is compact, pedestrianised, relatively walkable
- Locally made quality craft items to buy - including custom-made leather shoes, silver jewellery, high class men's and women's tailoring, silk lanterns
- Efficient cleaning and rubbish removal in central area
- Beggars and hawker food stalls absent from centre
- Large numbers of heritage buildings open to visitors: museums, private family homes, shops, restaurants etc
- Pleasant streets with lots of trees and flowering shrubs
- Warm, willing and efficient service in local retail and food and beverage establishments; Western café culture
- Wide range of inexpensive eating and drinking places attuned to a variety of visitor needs

- Reasonable alcohol prices (beer or a glass of local wine, served in a restaurant, US\$ 1 only)
- No brands or franchises, just genuine local eateries, some of them dating back to our earliest visit in 90s.



Hoi An's French-built Central Market



Cathedral-like interior under restoration

Visitors are drawn by the favourable reports of other visitors and have a relaxed, enjoyable time here. It is a good place just to hang out and enjoy the European/Australian cafe culture which Hoi An has adopted. You can stay in or close to the old town and reach everywhere on foot. There are interesting and inexpensive things to buy or have custom-made. All this sits on top of the real working local community which continues to live and work in the old buildings. In some cases families have been in their properties for seven or more generations.

3. Sustainability

We do not agree with those (including UNESCO) who decry the way in which tourism is 'swamping' Hoi An and 'spoiling' it. Hoi An is using its heritage buildings in a grass-roots economic way; there is real economic activity going on. There seem to be no expensively restored but inactive buildings; property developers with a purely development agenda have not taken hold. Heritage conservation cannot exist in a vacuum, serving some theoretical heritage goals. We see no reason that Hoi An cannot manage its visitor and tourist numbers and the corresponding infrastructure needs in a balanced way, as it appears to have done up to now. Of course, the existence of locally focused political and administrative structures in Vietnam removes one of the handicaps currently complicating conservation in George Town.

4. Traffic

Problems and shortcomings for visitors naturally exist and the largest of these by far is road traffic in the core and adjacent areas. We are talking here of motor bikes. The pedestrianised core is car-free but motor bikes are admitted with various restrictions. However, the bike situation is out of control (just as in Saigon) and the bikes openly ignore all restrictions and rules and are starting to saturate the old streets. Bikes are parked everywhere safely on the sidewalk, blocking pedestrians who are forced to walk dangerously in the roadway and dodge the fast moving bikes. This is not a visitor-generated problem but a local one and will need to be addressed; otherwise it may affect the 'pull' of Hoi An for visitors.



Text and photography by Brian Walling

PULAU TIKUS COSS-CURRENTS



In the two years since we surveyed Pulau Tikus in Issue No.97 of the Newsletter, this “island” in George Town has witnessed much change, unfortunately not all of it for the better. First of all, traffic congestion has become worse if that can be imagined -- aggravated by illegal parking undeterred by clamping-zone signs. When authorities are quoted as saying that there are now more cars than people on the island of Penang, it certainly holds true for Pulau Tikus. On weekend afternoons, traffic is so backed up on Cantonment Road between Gurney Drive and Kelawei Road that it is almost impossible for cars of residents to leave their driveways. The municipal traffic managers in their wisdom have exacerbated the problem by altering the timing of the traffic lights at the junction of Cantonment Road and Kelawei Road so that southbound vehicles on Cantonment Road have only 21 seconds before the lights change back to red. As for Kelawei Road itself, traffic is regularly gridlocked in both directions between Bagan Jermal and Cantonment Road, largely the result of inadequate road infrastructure to serve existing and future shopping plazas. There is talk of turning Kelawei Road and Burmah Road into one-way streets but the situation is hardly likely to improve through measures that will simply encourage increased vehicle use, especially when the latest shopping centre under construction is completed.

That brings us to the second change for the worse, the relentless proliferation of monster tower blocks during the past two years. At least five such buildings have been completed within sight of our apartment on Cantonment Road and four more have been

started on Gurney Drive. Is there really a market demand for such high-end condominiums or are we seeing property speculation? If the number of floors lit up at night is any indication, the vacancy rate would appear to be quite high despite claims by developers to the contrary. The explanation would seem to suggest that units are being purchased en bloc by non-resident speculators and left vacant, hardly a solution to the housing requirements of Penang's low and middle-income population. The appearance on lampposts of handwritten signs advertising the sale of multimillion-ringgit condo units is a new and curious phenomenon suggesting some buyers may be desperate to re-sell.

The destruction of heritage is a tragic feature of some of the projects that are underway, even small ones. College Square is a case in point. An oasis of green used by the adjacent Pulau Tikus Convent



College Square - a leafy oasis



Concrete bunker on College Square

School for its sports days, the leafy square is bordered by two rows of terrace houses facing each other, the houses all of a common design and those at each end of their row being particularly attractive. Whether approved by the MPPP or not, the past year has seen this symmetry broken. The house at the east end of the southern row at the corner of College Lane has been demolished and replaced by what can only be described as a concrete bunker.

Work stopped for a few months when neighbours understood the MPPP had issued a “stop work” order. Sadly, however, work on the bunker has resumed. It is hard to believe that serious urban planners could have approved this. Another case, almost as bad, is the “renovation” of the corner house at the other end of the opposite row for commercial premises of some kind. Has this been approved? Has the area been rezoned from residential to commercial use?

A short walk from College Square confronts residents with the massive construction that continues unabated day and night on the “Gurney Paragon” project. A multi-storey excavation has been dug and two huge tower blocks are rising above Kelawei Road, one of them creating a “Great Wall” almost twenty storeys high along Kelawei Lane towards the Loke Mansion.



“Great Wall” of Paragon, Kelawei Lane

None of this can claim any redeeming architectural merit! Moreover, at the front of this project on Gurney Drive the five-foot way has been obstructed by sloping driveways with high kerbs that make walking dangerous or even impossible for agile pedestrians, let alone for persons pushing baby-strollers or wheelchairs.

St Joseph’s Institution once stood proud on this site. It has disappeared from view on the Kelawei Road side and sits cowering at the foot of the two forty-plus-storey towers on the Gurney Drive side. “Dining amidst heritage”, the banners proclaim for this historic building now rudely touted as “St Jo’s”. What a travesty! What a sacrilege! St Joseph is a figure of respect and honour for many Christians -- albeit a small minority in Malaysia. In a country known for its religious tolerance such disrespect towards any other religion would simply not be dared.

Lest this essay be regarded as entirely negative, let me assure readers that we live in Pulau Tikus because despite the unwelcome and threatening incursions described above it remains a special part of George Town worthy of preservation as a culturally diverse and pedestrian-friendly neighbourhood. We love to watch the religious ceremonies and parades that pass beneath our windows from temple to sea. We love the bustle of Pulau Tikus Market. We love the many simple kopitiam on Burmah Road that offer authentic and inexpensive local fare compared to the international fast-food outlets in the burgeoning Western-style shopping centres. Most of all we love this choice on our doorstep!



Hindu Procession, Gurney Drive

Text and photography By Leslie A.K. James

ANTI-WAR MEMORIAL, AYER ITAM ROAD

At 11 a.m. on 11th November every year a wreath-laying ceremony is held at the Chinese Anti-War Memorial near the Ayer Itam roundabout. The original memorial is a white obelisk with inscriptions in Chinese. The purpose of the memorial is twofold: to commemorate the Penang Chinese volunteer drivers and mechanics who went to China in support of China's resistance to Japan's invasion in the 1930s, and to commemorate the Chinese victims killed during the Japanese Occupation of Penang (1941-45). The memorial was erected on the site of a mass burial of remains of about 700 of these victims.

Because the inscriptions on the memorial were only in Chinese, the purpose of the memorial remained a mystery to passers-by who could not read Chinese, particularly foreign tourists who passed the site on their way to Penang Hill. In 2011, the committee responsible for the memorial, the Kong Min School Board of Trustees, resolved this issue when it decided to landscape and expand the memorial by adding sculptures depicting the struggles of the Penang Chinese volunteers on the Burma-Yunnan Road and by erecting explanatory panels in English, Malay and Japanese as well as Chinese. The panels outline the history of the Penang Chinese volunteers in their response to Japan's aggression in China and also describe Japanese atrocities during the Occupation of Penang, particularly the *sook ching* or "cleansing" campaigns that resulted in the killing of thousands of so-called "anti-Japanese elements". The sculptures were devised by "Sculpture at Work" which was responsible for the Sun Yat Sen sculptural grouping in front of the Philomatic Society building on Macalister Road.



Sculpture of the Penang Chinese Volunteers

Substantial financial support for the project was provided by the Penang State Government and George Town World Heritage Inc. while the Penang Heritage Trust assisted historian Mr. Tan Kim Hong in the preparation and translation of the multilingual signs and brochures. Air Itam Member of Parliament YB Wong Hon Wai provided funding for PHT to print the brochures distributed at the unveiling of the expanded memorial by the Chief Minister on 11th November 2011. During the ceremony a wreath was laid by PHT council member Clement Liang supported by Tan Kim Hong, Leslie & Pow James, Ho Sheau Fung and Helen Foong.

By Leslie A.K. James



PHT Council Member Clement Liang laying wreath

NOTICE

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

Reminder for membership renewal with increase in subscription for 2012:

Admission: RM50

Annual subscription: RM60

Overseas postal surcharge:

RM14 annually for Asia, Australia, New Zealand

RM24 annually for rest of the world

Enquiries: phtrust@streamyx.com

Tel: +604- 264 2631

Please send cheque or visit

Penang Heritage Trust

26 Church Street

City of George Town, 10200 Penang

STUDENT INTERNSHIP PROGRAMME

PHT received two students from Ritsumeikan University of Kyoto as part of their student internship programme to fulfil certain curriculum requirements. Mr. Yuichiro Kurokawa and Miss Sayaka Umiji were assigned to PHT from 7th February for a month. Under the programme, they carried out studies on the various aspects of heritage conservation in Penang and documented the Japanese history in the island, including the pre-war Japanese community and the wartime occupation.

The students were amazed by the myriad cultures found in Penang and how different communities live together in harmony. They also studied how the local Japanese have adapted to the living environment here and they created a Japanese language website for PHT <http://pht-jp.blogspot.com/> with information on PHT, local sites of interest and the local Japanese community and to facilitate online searches on Penang to be available in the Japanese language.

By Clement Liang



Second from left: Ho Sheau Fung, Clement Liang, Yuichiro Kurokawa, Vanessa Lim, Sayaka Umiji

TALK BY PROF. SHINJI SHIGEMATSU

“The Heritage of the Armenian Maritime Traders in Modern Asian Seas: Penang, Yokohama and Calcutta”

6.00 p.m., Tuesday, 20th March 2012, Penang Heritage Trust

In his public talk at PHT, Prof. Shinji Shigematsu of the Asian Studies Department, Otemon Gakuin University, Osaka, shared interesting stories and photographs of the period when the Armenian diaspora was active in the Far East running grand hotels and other successful businesses.

As an historian and historical anthropologist, Prof. Shigematsu has spent the past 25 years tracing the Armenian community by conducting extensive researches in India, South-East Asia and Japan. Although the small but once prominent Armenian community has declined or even vanished from the region, it is possible to identify the sites of the churches, hotels and tombs belonging to the Armenians in these places. As an example Prof. Shigematsu mentioned the Apcar family, which was based in Japan and India.

Prof. Shigematsu has visited Malaysia more than twenty times since 1970 and has just published a book in Japanese entitled *Penang, a Cosmopolis in the Straits of Malacca*, which includes a chapter devoted to the Armenians in Penang.

By Clement Liang



Prof. Shinji Shigematsu

**DINNER DISCUSSION WITH JUDY CHENG-HOPKINS,
Assistant Secretary-General of the United Nations
14 March 2012, Sunday, 6.30pm at China Tiger**

This dinner, hosted by PHT council member Rebecca Wilkinson, was the first of a series of 'mini' fund-raising activities. It was attended by 11 paying guests -- PHT Immediate Past President Dr. Choong Sim Poey and wife Dato' Kee Phaik Cheen, Mr and Mrs. Harriet Saw, Julian Candiah, Gwynn Jenkins, Mr. Zimbulis and wife Sehra Yeap Zimbulis, Mr. Strawalde (German artist who had offered one of his paintings for our fundraising event in April), Liyana Aziz from Time Out Magazine, and Mdm Linda Ch'ng.



China Tiger

It was an honour and pleasure to have Judy Cheng-Hopkins share her personal view on heritage preservation. She was appointed Assistant Secretary-General of the United Nations for Peacebuilding Support in 2009. Also present at the dinner were Dato' Anwar Fazal, PHT council members Salma, Clement, Gaik Siang, Prof. Wazir and Ben Wisman, as well as Jay Sharma.

Many thanks are extended to Rebecca who worked tirelessly to prepare the logistic arrangements and the fantastic meal for the guests, and to David Wilkinson for his guided tour of the house for the guests.

The dinner raised RM4,400 for PHT.

By Sheau Fung

LOKE VILLA FUNDRAISER VISIT



Loke Villa

The Loke Villa Private House Visit was a very special fundraising event for PHT as this is the first year we have celebrated World Heritage Day, 18th April, with the public! The key person behind this PHT fundraising event was council member Rebecca Wilkinson, who arranged exclusive permission, worked out the intricate logistics and worked tirelessly to prepare the house for the visit, even though she had to attend to a family emergency and could not be with us on those days.

We are proud to announce that on the two days, 18th and 21st April, we welcomed 160 visitors who came to see the grand house and to support our fundraising program. PHT collected RM9,130 from this event. Thanks to the 'inspirational' briefings at the Loke Villa by our president Khoo Salma Nasution we also managed to recruit 14 new members to join PHT.

The caption boards by Dr. Gwynn Jenkins provided valuable insight into the design details of the Loke Villa. A few visitors inquired about the paintings by Strawalde displayed on preview at the Loke Villa. These paintings are on show at Gehrig Art Gallery, Coffee Atelier, 47-55 Stewart Lane, until June, and one special painting, Penang No. 1, has been donated by Art Trove, Singapore, to the Penang Heritage Trust for auction.

We should like to thank all members, friends and volunteers who made the PHT second fundraiser at the Loke Villa a success and welcome our new PHT members. Special thanks to all the volunteers: Dr. Gwynn Jenkins, Lau Pei Ling, Paul Gerarts, Mark Lay, May Yeap Kam Moey, Tan Yar Loon, Dr. Ang Ming Chee, Yeoh Eng Hong, Hasya, Fiona and Lee Hoon for their time and dedication. We also wish to extend our gratitude to Teresa Capol (Edelweiss Café) and Stefan Gehrig (Coffee Atelier) for sponsoring the wonderful snacks, cake and food for the visit.

Encouraged by this success, we hope to organise another exclusive "Open House" as a fundraiser in conjunction with World Monuments Day in September.

By Sheau Fung

NOVEMBER SITE VISIT - OASIS HOTEL, 23 LOVE LANE



On 13th November 2011, the owner and the management of the newly restored Oasis Hotel generously opened the building to 50 members of PHT for our regular site visit.

The old Oasis Hotel at 23 Love Lane, in the heart of George Town -- the core zone of the World Heritage Site -- was in a run-down state when bought by the present owner in 2008. The site consists of a collection of buildings that have evolved over 150 years on two lots - No 80 and No 82. No 80 is the Anglo-Indian bungalow, formerly owned by a European and later a Chinese, who added their own cultural embellishment. Once a family home it later became a lively small local hotel. Eventually it became a backpackers' hostel, and after the management moved on, rising damp, white ants and creeping vegetation gradually took over. By 2007 the buildings housed a few local 'strays' moving from corner to corner as the rooms became uninhabitable.

Despite the advanced decay, the new owner saw the charm of the place and recognising the potential put together a team to bring the Oasis back to life, through conservation and careful adaptation. The brief was that

- the buildings remain as an hotel,
- their history should be the resource for adaptation,
- conservation take the lead,
- the sense of an oasis created by the trees, must be maintained.

In briefing us Dr. Gwynn Jenkins, conservation consultant for the project, displayed the passion and expertise she had brought to restoring the building. PHT members congratulated the owner and restoration team for their painstaking restoration work.

By Dr Gwyn Jenkins & Sheau Fung

DECEMBER SITE VISIT - RESTORED DISTED COLLEGE PREMISES AT CHINA STREET GHAUT AND TALK ON THE JAPANESE BOMBING OF GEORGE TOWN

On the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the Japanese invasion of Malaya and the Japanese Occupation of Penang, a special talk was organized by PHT on Sunday afternoon, 11th December, 2011 in conjunction with the opening of the newly restored Distd College premises at China Street Ghaut. Close to 80 people attended the talk by PHT council member Clement Liang who specialises in local Japanese history.

Following the Japanese landings in Kelantan and South Thailand on 8th December 1941, George Town suffered devastating aerial bombardments by waves of Japanese aircraft, especially on 11th and 12th December. Following the secret withdrawal first of British civilians and later of British military personnel, Penang fell to occupying Japanese forces on 19th December. Penang under Japanese occupation was marked by widespread fear, hunger and massacres that mainly targeted the local Chinese populace. Especially feared were the Japanese military police, the Kempeitai and its network of informants.

Penang was administered by four successive Japanese governors, Lt. Gen. Shotaro Katayama being the notorious one who launched the "sook ching" ("cleansing") campaigns. The destruction of the Penang Secretariat building by Allied bombing in the final months of the war caused the loss of the greater part of the British and Japanese records concerning the island, causing enormous difficulties to compile a comprehensive history of Penang.

Following Japan's surrender on 15th August 1945, the **Penang Shimbun** on 21st August published the statement of capitulation issued by the Emperor. British naval forces reached Penang on 1st September and after a meeting between the Commander-in-Chief of the East Indies Fleet and Japanese Rear-Admiral Uozumi, a detachment of Royal Marines from the British flagship HMS Nelson landed at Swettenham Pier and occupied the island on 3rd September. The war and Occupation left an indelible scar for many people in Penang who continue to recall the trauma of killed family members and loss of property.

By Clement Liang

MARCH SITE VISIT - CALEDONIA ESTATE AND TALK BY PROF. LYNN HOLLEN LEES ON SIR JOHN RAMSDEN AND THE PENANG SUGAR ESTATES

On 10th March 2012, PHT with the collaboration of the Municipal Council of Seberang Prai (MPSP) arranged a talk by Professor Lynn Hollen Lees of the University of Pennsylvania on Sir John Ramsden and the Penang Sugar Estates, focusing on the Caledonia Estate. The talk was followed by a site visit to the Caledonia Estate (99-Door Mansion) with the kind permission of the present estate owner, Mr. Lee and family.

Seberang Perai, formerly known as Province Wellesley, was leased in perpetuity to the English East India Company by the Sultan of Kedah in 1798. Province Wellesley, together with Penang Island, make up the State of Penang.

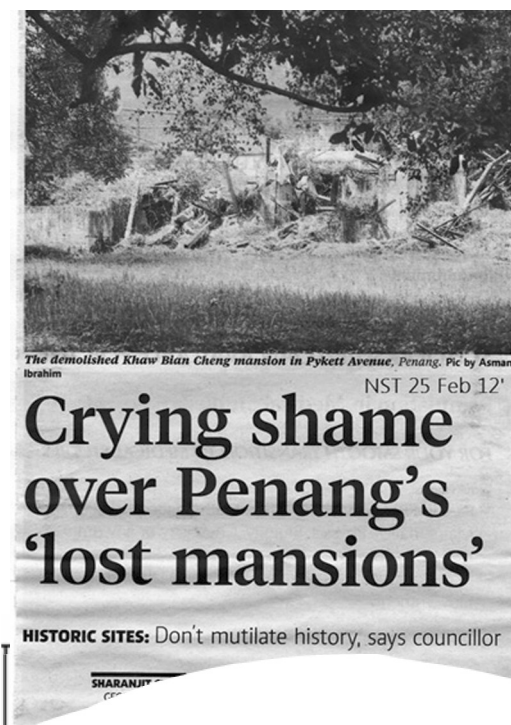
The site visit began at the MPSP headquarters building where Yang Dipertua of MPSP, Pn. Maimunah binti Sharif, welcomed PHT members and expressed the hope that this would be the first of a series of talks in which PHT and MPSP would cooperate in telling "The Prai Story". She said it was timely for MPSP and PHT to study and research the historical sites in Seberang Perai in order to create the first heritage trail of Seberang Perai.

Professor Lynn Hollen Lees followed with an informative talk on the 19th century sugar plantations and industry in Province Wellesley and the particular role of the cluster of estates owned by the Ramsden family. She outlined the importance of sugar in the colonial and global economy and described how sugar was eventually replaced by rubber which in turn was replaced by palm oil. Professor Lees also discussed the effects of the plantation economy on social structures in colonial Malaya and speculated on the 1948 murder of Sir John Ramsden's grandson at Caledonia Estate (the subject of a separate article in this issue of the **Newsletter**). At the conclusion of Professor Lees's talk members drove in convoy to Caledonia Estate to view the extraordinary Ninety-nine Door Mansion.

Khoo Salma thanked Pn. Maimunah for her support and Professor Lynn for her enlightening talk.

By Sheau Fung

MEDIA COVERAGE



THE HINDU

MADRAS MISCELLANY: THE MADRAS-PENANG CONNECTION

S. MUTHIAH FEBRUARY 26, 2012



In town recently was Dr. Gwynn Jenkins, a consultant in architectural heritage and cultural anthropology who is looking at the Madras-Penang connection for George Town World Heritage Inc., Penang. And I envy her the fact that George Town was pouring money into its much younger heritage, whereas our Fort St. George and Georgetown, leave alone the rest of the city's splendid heritage, languish because of lack of Government will. There is in this city even a lack of will on officialdom's part to answer any letter if it has anything to do with heritage!

Among the things Jenkins was searching for was the St. George's Cathedral, Madras, connection with St. George's Church in Penang which has been listed in 2007 as one of Malaysia's fifty National Treasures. Our Fort St. George should be listed as Modern India's First National Treasure, but we can't even get it protected, leave alone restored! Be that as it may, I was able to lead her to the Trust that is restoring St. George's Cathedral and she was able to gather much information from IIT-M Prof. Mathew's team on the construction of the Cathedral and note the similarities with the Penang church. St. George's, Penang, was built by Capt. Robert N. Smith of the Madras Engineers, had its drawings done by the same military engineer as our cathedral, Col. James Lillyman Caldwell, and had its original furniture organised and flat-packed to Penang by Major Thomas de Havilland who built the Madras church (1814-1816). In 1816, the church which was to be

come a cathedral was consecrated by the Rt. Rev. Thomas Middleton, Bishop of Calcutta. And it was the same Bishop who consecrated the Penang church in 1819 after work was started on it in 1816 and completed in 1818.

Gwynn Jenkins was also searching for information about a Superintendent of Survey, F.W. Kelly, who was sent to Penang by the Survey of India to map the island. All that she knew was that he had served in Madras and then in the Nilgiris, where he had lived in Forest View, Coonoor, a house that is still there according to D. Venugopal, that recorder of the Nilgiris and heritage enthusiast, to whom I guided her.

While they talked of following Kelly's trail, they discovered something else of mutual interest. Venugopal works with the Indian Overseas Bank and the Bank, founded in November 1936 to help Indians settled overseas, opened in Penang in July 1937 its first branch overseas. Venugopal showed her a picture of the Branch in Penang not long after it was opened and she showed him a picture of the building today — virtually unchanged and listed as a Category II building (with its Art Deco styling) in a World Heritage Site. With the IOB planning to return to Malaysia in the not too distant future, she hopes that when its Chairman visits there she will be able to get a memorial plaque placed in that first overseas branch of the Bank.

MYSTERY OF RUBBER ESTATE MANAGER'S MURDER

Penang's historic cemeteries have many stories to tell. Not only do the memorial inscriptions on graves provide an important record of the social fabric of the times but some tombstones give a hint of forgotten incidents that rocked local society. One such grave is that of John Saint Maur Ramsden in the Western Road Cemetery, a large tomb with inscriptions on two sides.*

John St. Maur Ramsden, scion of one of England's leading landed gentry families with descent from the Plantagenet kings, was elder son of John Frecheville Ramsden, 6th Baronet. His family were also Malayan "sugar barons" before converting their estates to rubber in the early 20th century (cf. "Sir John Ramsden and the Penang Sugar Estates", public talk by Lynn Hollen Lees, Ph.D., 10th March 2012). John St. Maur Ramsden was born in London in 1902 and according to the memorial inscription on his grave was "killed by gunshot from an unknown hand at Caledonia, Province Wellesley" on 8th June 1948. The memorial inscription also records that he served in the 1939-1945 War first in the Royal Air Force, later in the Royal Navy on the North Atlantic Patrol and afterwards in the Pacific, adding that he was present at the surrender of Japan as a Lieutenant RNVR on board HMS *Indefatigable*, a British aircraft carrier.

According to various online genealogical sources, John St. Maur Ramsden married Lady Catherine Heathcote-Drummond-Willoughby (1906-1996, daughter of 2nd Earl of Ancaster) in 1935 and a daughter was born in 1938. They were divorced in 1947. John St. Maur Ramsden had been in Malaya since 1945 and had returned from home leave three months before his murder. (*The Straits Times*, 10th June, 31st August, 1948)

John St. Maur Ramsden was managing director of the Penang Rubber Estates Group and his murder in June 1948 occurred during the period of mounting political

violence on rubber estates and at tin mines that led barely a week later to the proclamation of the Emergency (1948-60) after the murder of three British planters at Sungei Siput on 16th June. Initial press reporting, however, discounted political motives in Ramsden's killing, *The Straits Times* stating this baldly in the opening paragraph of its report on 10th June. The article reported that he was shot twice in the back of the head as he was going upstairs in his bungalow at Caledonia Estate, Nibong Tebal. He was killed almost instantly.

According to this first newspaper account, the weapon used was thought to be a smooth bore sporting gun belonging to a Malay who kept it in Ramsden's bungalow and who reported its loss to the police on the night of the murder. While the Chief Police Officer W.A.C. Haines was reported as saying there had been no labour trouble on the estate, six Malays and Javanese were detained for questioning.

In its 11th June edition, *The Straits Times* reported that the London evening papers had front-paged the shooting of "the heir to Sir John Ramsden, once described as England's richest baronet". A week later, according to *The Straits Times* on 17th June, while the Colonial Secretary answered questions in the House of Commons on the situation in Malaya following the proclamation of the Emergency by the High Commissioner Sir Edward Gent, the Ramsden murder was raised in the House of Lords. Asked whether the British Government could make a full statement about Ramsden's murder, Lord Listowel, Minister of State for the Colonies, said a full report had been called for but had not yet been received. He added that a preliminary report from the High Commissioner had stated that the police were satisfied the murder was in no way connected with the with the recent wave of politically inspired crimes in Malaya.



Caledonia Estate (99-Door Mansion)

A month later, there was some movement in the murder enquiry. **The Straits Times** on 10th July reported that (Mohamad) Zain bin Ramjan had been remanded in police custody on a tentative charge of murder with the hearing fixed for 14th July. Meanwhile, it was also reported that the case against Embi bin Ismail, charged with illegal possession of ammunition on Caledonia Estate, had been postponed to 16th July. Embi was described in a later report as Ramsden's "head boy".

By the end of August, however, Zain was discharged in the magistrate's court, the discharge not amounting to acquittal, and ordered detained as a material witness until after the coroner's inquiry three days later. The coroner's finding was that Ramsden was "shot by an unknown person with a double barrel gun". He added, "There is no evidence against any particular person." Zain was released after the coroner's verdict. In his evidence Zain said that a pair of his shoes found at the murder scene may have been "planted" by someone who had a grudge against him. He denied he had been dismissed by Ramsden and said he knew of no one bearing sufficient grudge against Ramsden to shoot him. (It may be of more than passing interest to remark that the magistrate and the coroner appear to have been the same person, Mr. Tay Hooi Soo.) Two weeks later Embi bin Ismail was sentenced to three months for illegal possession of ammunition (which his counsel argued had been given to him by Ramsden). He was immediately released, his sentence deemed to have dated from the day of his arrest. (**The Straits Times**, 28th August, 31st August, 3rd September, 17th September 1948)

Thus ended the legal proceedings, leaving unresolved the mystery of who killed John Saint Maur Ramsden and why.

By Leslie A.K. James

***Note:** In addition to his grave in the Western Road Cemetery John St. Maur Ramsden is commemorated by a large screen behind the altar of St George's Church in George Town. A tiny brass plaque affixed to the base of the screen bears the following Latin inscription:

IN MAJOREM DEI GLORIAM
ET IN MEMORIAM FILII DILECTI
APUD PROVINCIAM WELLESLEYANUM
CRUELITER OCCISI
JOHN RAMSDEN BARONETUS
ET CONJUX SUA JOAN
PARENTES
MONUMENTUM HOC DEDICAVERUNT
MCMLII

In translation the memorial inscription reads:

*To the greater glory of God
And in memory of their beloved son
Cruelly murdered at Province Wellesley
John Ramsden Baronet and his wife Joan,
His parents, have dedicated this monument
1952*

The conspicuous absence of any mention of John St. Maur Ramsden's name in the inscription coupled with the memorial plaque's discreet placement out of public view is odd and seems to beg explanation.



Grave of John Saint Maur Ramsden in
Western Road cemetery

15 JUNE - 15 JULY GEORGE TOWN FESTIVAL 2012

HIGHLIGHTS

George Town Festival is a month long celebration of art, music, theatre, dance, opera and film that transforms George Town into a unique platform for arts, heritage and culture. GTF 2012 runs for the third year in a row commemorating the inscription of George Town on the UNESCO World Heritage listing on 7th July, 2008.

The unique appeal of the festival lies in its well-balanced blend of local culture and cutting-edge international acts. The main objective of the GTF is to rejuvenate Penang as an international boutique destination of arts and culture. It has already succeeded in attracting international attention with media giants such as The New York Times, CNNgo and The Wall Street Journal citing interest in the event.

One of the main accents of the month of culture and heritage is the UNESCO ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION themed "LIVE HERITAGE" held on July 6, 7 & 8, 2012 in George Town Heritage Zone, hopefully elevating George Town as the regional platform for traditional performing arts.

SILAT – OUR HERITAGE FOR THE WORLD is specially commissioned as the gala-opening of the George Town Festival 2012. Directed by award winning Saw Teong Hin who together with a cast of 150 people produces a show that goes beyond just demonstrating silat's graceful dance-like movements. One can expect to be glued to their seats throughout the show as Saw, along with his crew deftly transforms silat into full-on theatrical performance with dazzling lights coupled with brilliant sound effects.

GTF film highlight TROPFEST is the world's largest short film festival out of Sydney, Australia. It is back for its second year running as part of the festival, putting George Town on the map with other TropFest showings in New York, Las Vegas, and Abu Dhabi.

BLINDED MIND by one of the most internationally acclaimed Finnish choreographers Susanna Leinonen is an inspiring dance performance. "Blinded Mind" was well received by the audience at the International Art Festival of San Francisco. Its powerful visual elements and soundtrack tells the story of one individual's bravery in swimming against the stream and the unavoidable consequences that follow.



Another dance highlight of the festival, Melbourne-based Tony Yap Company present RASA SAYANG, a critically acclaimed, multi-award nominated dance theatre performance. Combining traditional themes from East and West creates a contemporary visual architecture.



The LEE WUSHU ARTS THEATRE will present a dance and drama performance choreographed especially for the George Town Festival 2012. The Lee Wushu Arts Theatre boasts highly trained athletes and dancers with many years of competition and performance experience, to bring this spectacle to life.



Back for a second time at George Town Festival after last year's success, is PRO MUSICA 2012 Gala and workshops. This operatic gala features four outstanding international performers sharing the stage with participants from the opera workshops held as part of the festival.



The George Town Festival this year proudly presents the critically acclaimed Manganiyar Seduction, created by Roysten Abel, a production which has toured extensively throughout the world. This musical performance is a dazzling union between Manganiyar's music and the visual seduction of the Hawa Mahal and the Red light district of Amsterdam.



One of the world's most highly acclaimed choral choirs, THE PHILIPPINE MADRIGAL SINGERS will be performing as one of the musical highlights of the event. Having won the top prize in almost all the world's most prestigious choir competitions, the choir has also been awarded the title of Artists for Peace by UNESCO, for its efforts in promoting cultural diversity.



YES ACADEMY – Broadway and Hip Hop Workshops and Gala Performances is being held in collaboration with the United States Embassy. International teachers in both Broadway and Hip Hop hold workshops for Malaysian youth, leading up to Gala performances.

Visual Arts highlights include Mirrors George Town, a cutting edge street art project by international artist Ernest Zacharevic. The project consists of 6 to 12 mural paintings created on the walls of buildings within the George Town heritage area. The 'Mapping an Identity' exhibition by David Cheeh (Sydney) will launch a unique Penang and George Town floral motifs, which are batik and map inspired.

All the above listed programs are just a few of the numerous highlights George Town Festival 2012 will have to offer. More information available on www.georgetownfestival.com

Do not miss out on this feast of arts, culture and heritage!



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Production~ Sheau Fung & Vanessa

Unless specifically stated, the views and opinions expressed in the articles are the author's own and do not necessarily represent the views and opinions of PHT