

PHT *newsletter*

PENANG HERITAGE TRUST • PERSATUAN WARISAN PULAU PINANG

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

Number 20

October 1995

PHT Council

-Term 1995/1997

The election of office-bearers was held on 19 August at the 1st meeting of the PHT Council (Term 1995/1997). The Chairman asked the Council members each to take charge of at least two of the PHT's projects, programmes, and activities. They are to keep a watchful eye on what is often advertised as "heritage development" in the city.

PHT Office-bearers – Term 1995/1997

Dato' Nazir Ariff

Chairman

*pht council meetings, pht awards,
press conferences and statements*

Dr Choong Sim Poey

Vice-Chairman

*conservation legislation,
liaison with government bodies*

Khoo Salma Nasution

Honorary Secretary

*research and publication, pht history circle,
armenian street/acheen street enclave*

Ms Lee Chui Wah

Honorary Treasurer

fund-raising, donations, special events

Tengku Idaura Ibrahim

*the heritage centre penang, restoration and
conservation skills seminars and workshops,
penang development corporation projects*

Ms Loh-Lim Lin Lee

*cheong fatt tze mansion, protestant cemetery,
street names, education in conservation for
schools, heritage awareness talks for the public*

En Ahmad Chik

*suffolk house, penang carpenters guild,
penang hill, heritage trees and urban parks*

Mr James Lee Yong Seng

cultural tours, museum shop

Mr David Khor Lee Keoh

*liaison with the private sector,
antique collectors club*

Mr Ong Teng Lam

talks and slide shows, nyonya food club

Mr Tan Teong Kooi

*executive secretary
newsletter, publicity, membership*



PHT

Antiques & Collectibles Fair

(in aid of the Penang Heritage Trust)

1, 2, & 3 December 1995

*Join the Penang Heritage Trust
and become an exhibitor at this
exciting exhibition and sales of
antiques and collectibles!*

- Members who wish to be exhibitors must register with the PHT office by **16 October**.
- The PHT will charge exhibitors a fee. The fee will count as donation to the PHT.
- The choice of venue will depend on the number of members taking part in the fair.

The PHT Antique-collectors Club will meet on Tuesday 17 October at 6 pm at No. 8 Bell Road, the residence of Martine de Saint Hilaire, to make the final arrangements for the fair

For further information contact:
Tan Teong Kooi, Tel/Fax: 04-2813187



PHT

Nyonya Food Club

Calling all aficionados of
authentic nyonya cuisine!

*Join the Penang Heritage Trust
and discover the secret recipes and
culinary skills of the nyonyas!*

For further information contact:
Mr Anthony Khoo
Tel: 04-6447942 (office), 04-2284343 (home)

The Loo Pan Hong Temple & the Penang Carpenters Guild

Restoring the Carpenters Guild and setting up a permanent exhibition of its antiques at its premises – a community effort led by the PHT

LOO PAN, a contemporary of Confucius and Mencius and inventor of many of the traditional building instruments used in China, is the patron saint of all Chinese master builders – from the architects to the carpenters, from artists to artisans. The Loo Pan Hong or Carpenters Guild here was founded in 1850, its magnificent temple on Love Lane built in 1865.

The Trust met with the Guild recently and was able to persuade them to restore their building and their antiques – gilded sedan chairs and other pieces of furniture, panels, swords, gongs, drums, lion dance costumes, flags, etc. – and to agree on a plan of action that would make the project a community effort.

- The two committees will work together to raise the funds needed to restore the Loo Pan Hong.
- The Guild will, as far as possible, take the advice of the Trust as regards the manner in which the restoration is to be done.
- **Mr Laurence Loh**, an architect, will do the dilapidation survey of the building, concentrating on its central section – the exhibition space on the ground floor behind the temple, upstairs floor-boards, the roof, etc. – and prepare drawings to show how best the antiques can be displayed. There will be labels and short write-ups to tell visitors about each item on show. Decorative panels which have been removed from the display area will also be restored and put back in their original positions. Mr Loh will work out the total cost of the restoration and a fund-raising campaign will be launched.
- The Malaysian Architects Association, the Penang Contractors Association, and the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology will be invited to take part in the project. Mr Laurence Loh will work with the architects and contractors, **Mrs Sandra Stoddart** with the RMIT students, and **Mr David Yeo** and **Dr Charles Krimminger** with the carpenters from the Guild. **Ms Gwyn Jenkins** will make an inventory of the Guild's antique furniture and numerous artifacts.
- Mr Ong Seng Huat, an expert on local Chinese history and culture, will write the history of the Loo Pan Hong in Mandarin and have it translated into English. The Guild will help Mr Ong by giving him access to its written records and arranging for him to interview its senior members. The PHT will bring out a fund-raising brochure based on Mr Ong's write-up.
- The exhibition of the the Guild's antiques will be in the care of the Guild. Visitors to the exhibition may be charged a fee. The money collected will be used to pay for the maintenance of the display and the building.

(Names of PHT volunteers in this project are in bold)

Ahmad Chik

LETTERS

The Acheen Street Mosque

I am very, very sorry to hear the news about the Acheen Street Mosque.

This is a landmark building, important not just for its architecture but also as a document and cultural monument, bearing living witness to the way in which the city and one of its leading communities have evolved over the past 180 years. It is also one of the key features which lends Penang its special, indeed unique charm, for visitors.

We all appreciate that a building like this, still thankfully meeting the needs of the community for which it was built cannot stand totally still. Repairs will be needed from time to time, and perhaps minor modifications, but the danger with large-scale alterations is that they will undermine the building's intrinsic character. This would be bad news for anyone who needs to identify, as most of us do, with our cultural roots.

Let us all hope there has been some misunderstanding and that it can be rectified in a spirit of goodwill.

Arthur Percival MBE

22 Stone Street, Faversham, Kent, England

The Protestant Cemetery

My husband and I have been coming to Penang for the last five years on vacation and have always taken a trip to the Protestant Cemetery in George Town. I've always felt it was a sad place, so overgrown where so many people were buried such a long way from home. But this year all has changed. The ground has been cleared, we can read many more gravestones and the map is a wonderful idea. Please pass on our congratulations to the people who have undertaken this worthwhile job.

Carole and William Adam

Rasa Sayang Resort, Penang

New Members

We welcome the following as ordinary members of the Penang Heritage Trust. They can nominate, vote, stand for elections, and take part in any of the Trust's projects, programmes, and activities.

Ms Saveria Cardona
Mr Woo Yee Saik
Ms Sandra Stoddart
Mrs B J Yeang

Mr C K Chew
Ms Gwyn Jenkins
Mr Ren Fennamore
Mr Anthony Khoo

In Memoriam

Thy day without a cloud hath passed,
And thou wert lovely to the last.
BYRON, *And Thou Art Dead*, l. 50.

There seems to be something missing from Anson Road.....an old familiar face gone, a strange intruder standing boldly there. When something has gone, it's quite difficult to recall all the details, but once there used to stand a house which looked something like this.....

I always thought of it as the Yellow House, but that was only its most recent dress. Looking at the peeling paint, one could also see layers of soft jade green, ochre and Venetian red. The plaster work was very special, picked out in soft white – garlands, and mouldings which supported delicate mythical creatures and birds – unique, I believe, in the city. Behind wooden shutters, green-painted cast-iron balustrades depicted paired elephants (these were the first things to disappear). Wooden fretwork shaded the front porches, and the side doors still had their outer swing-gates. The front of the house came out into a grand bay, allowing a generous arch porte-cochere beneath what must have been an elegant room above, with views towards the sister mansions which once lined this handsome avenue. Trees shaded the front garden, which was set with curved iron benches and decorative planting urns.....

This isn't a dream, for such a wonderful place sat there, on Anson Road until just a few months ago – a house rich in detail, the detail intact and in fair condition, the roof still on. Not a dream, but a nightmare: it's hard to imagine that such a grand old place – don't go looking for it today – could have been so harshly treated. It seems strange that towards the end of this century, when progress demands the machine-made package, such craftsmanship should be so lightly regarded. Quality too – to see such detail intact after years of neglect speaks well as to the skill of its creators.

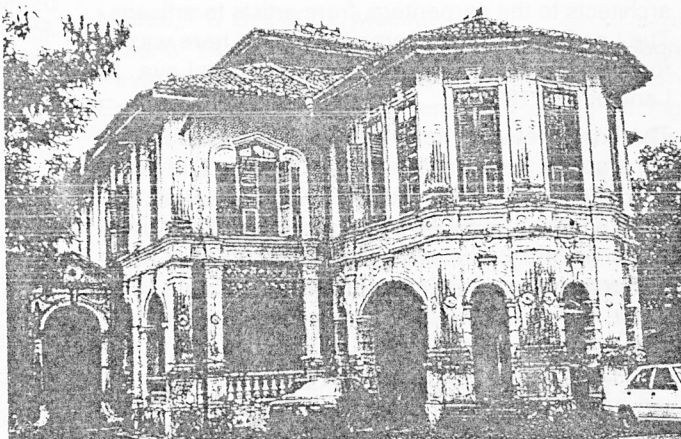
There is nothing to be done for this poor house now – the damage has been done on too drastic a scale. The property was simply not suitable for the purpose of the purchaser, and if the owner is not sensible to the potential of his property, and is not in any case interested in conservation, this can be the sad result. We can mourn, but not always, I think, apportion blame; the loss of such a house is a great sadness to some of us, but it must be faced that to many, an action which we would call destructive would be considered simply one of commercial common sense. Until an official listing policy renders such deeds illegal, we must resign ourselves to see many repeats of this Anson Road tragedy, as indeed there have been many in the past.

No longer can we see, in our mind's eye, the carriage draw up before the door, the glow of an oil lamp behind stained glass, or festive lanterns festooning the trees around this Anson Road mansion; soon, except to a few, it will be forgotten, and may rest in peace: unlike us, who must continue to agitate towards a kinder fate for the fast diminishing band of grand old beauties which yet remains.

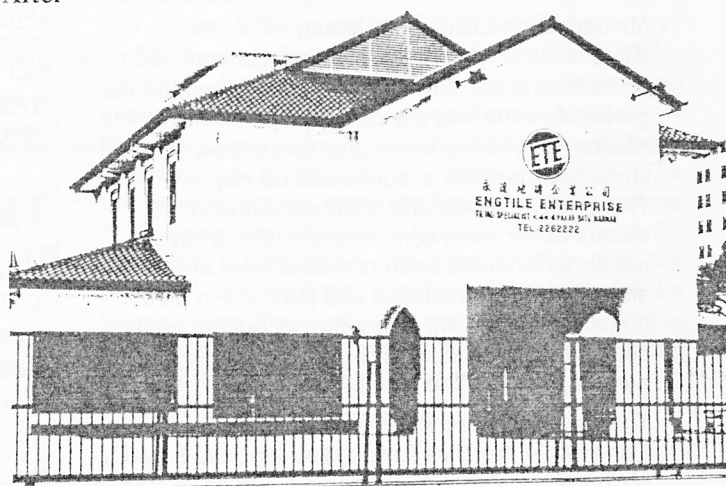
Alan James Flux

A Blueprint for the Future of Architecture in Penang

No. 45 Anson Road
before and after
it was given a face-lift by
Engtile Enterprise, Tiling Specialist



Before
After



Some comments from members of the PHT:

"Engtile Enterprise? A specialist job, no doubt. It's total, the face-lift, or rather the mutilation. Where have all our architects gone?"

"It's a matter of personal tastes and prejudices; you don't like it, others love it. It's just too bad if it spoils your day every day to have to see this monstrosity, sans eyes, sans nose, sans everything, on your way to and from work."

"It's the physical illustration of the utter contempt our new breed of entrepreneurs and marketeers must have for the symbols and images of our past."

"No law has been broken here and it should surprise no one if in the near future there is a proliferation of these faceless horrors in the city."

"Yes, one can't expect the authorities to bother their heads too much about our complaints, but speak out we must all the same and eventually the message, if we repeat it often enough, might bring about a change in their attitude."

HERITAGE
ADVISORY
COMMITTEE

Group seeks protection of heritage buildings

By Elizabeth John

THE Penang Heritage Advisory Committee (HAC) has outlined recommendations for a policy on the protection and development of the State's heritage buildings.

HAC chairman and vice-president of the Penang Heritage Trust Dr Choong Sim Poey said the committee had agreed on the main ingredients of the policy although the full report had yet to be completed.

Dr Choong said the first part of the report, on planning guidelines and incentives, was submitted to the Penang Island Municipal Council (MPPP) on Sept 1 last year while the second part, on identifying and listing of heritage buildings, would be ready soon.

The committee has rec-

ommended that the State Government adopt a separate building and planning guideline for heritage buildings as standard guidelines were not applicable.

It also recommended financial and planning incentives to offset any possible loss of income and the listing of protected buildings and precincts to avoid indiscriminate destruction.

A separate administrative machinery, which includes specialist architects and planners, has been recommended to implement incentive aspects of the policy.

This special body will monitor the status and development of heritage buildings and act on unauthorised demolition as in the case of heritage-list-

ed Hotel Metropole which was demolished without permission from the MPPP on Dec 25, 1993.

He urged the MPPP to study the report and implement the recommendations quickly to avoid another "Hotel Metropole saga", where the heritage building was illegally demolished and the developer fined a mere RM10,000.

He said the case had raised fears of similar incidents recurring and he hoped that the incident would add a note of urgency to the whole issue.

The HAC was formed under the invitation of the MPPP in April last year and has since been working on planning guidelines, incentives and heritage development on the island.

NEW STRAITS TIMES

7 June '95

'Heritage policy needs staff'

By HWA MEI SHEN

PENANG: The Penang Municipal Council needs a full-time paid staff to implement a policy on heritage buildings, Heritage Advisory Committee chairman Dr Choong Sim Poey said.

He said funds to employ such a team were "absolutely essential" as dependence on voluntary staff alone was inadequate.

"We need people to look at the buildings, list them out and get data on them and their histories. There is also a need for monitoring when buildings are being developed to ensure that policy guidelines are adhered to," he told *The Star*.

Dr Choong said the need for full-time staff was one of the main thrusts of the second report on heritage guidelines submitted to the council in July and presented last month together with the first report.

He said the committee had also recommended a lot of incentives for heritage development, noting that these deserved some priority.

"Otherwise it is difficult economically for heritage buildings to be developed as people have yet to realise the potential in this area.

"Incentives for heritage development should be compared to those given for pioneer industries. We may not need them

five years down the line when its value is appreciated," he said.

Dr Choong said the second report dealt with procedures for identification and listing of buildings, the kind of protection needed and the powers the council should have relative to protected buildings.

He said another meeting would be called between the council and committee to look into the technical aspects of implementing the guidelines recommended in the reports.

"Until the new regulations are adopted, the existing ones covering heritage (buildings) and planning permission will have to operate," he added.

THE STAR

15 September '95

'Heritage trust' for buildings

Greater efforts, including the setting up of a heritage trust, are vital to ensure the preservation of historical buildings in Kedah, say historians.

By Shukor Rahman

WELL-KNOWN Kedah historian and former educationist Ismail Salleh feels it is high time the State had a heritage trust to ensure that its historical buildings are preserved for posterity.

According to Ismail, several historical buildings had made way for development over the years.

He cited the example of Istana Pumphong which was torn down in the 1980s and whose site is now occupied by shophouses and food stalls.

"Several historic buildings are today in need of urgent attention and repairs, and they include the old Magistrate's Court, the Istana Lama and the Balai Seni," he said.

The old courthouse, he said, had been left unoccupied and neglected for many years. The Istana Lama was also similarly neglected. Both buildings were built in 1912.

"As for the Balai Seni which was built in 1892, the threat comes from termites. It used to be the courthouse before becoming a general office for the Public Works Department, the Drainage



ISMAIL
... urgent repairs

and Irrigation Department and the Land Office. The late Sultan Badlishah also used to have his office here."

Ismail, however, pointed out that Istana Tengku Kudin in Bukit Pinang was not a historic building.

"Many wrongly believe that it was the istana of Raja Bersiong but there is no connection whatsoever."

The istana, he said, collapsed many years ago and

only the ruins are left, almost hidden by the jungle. The area is infested by snakes and monitor lizards.

Ismail feels that the authorities should make greater efforts to compile and record the history of the State, especially from some of the more knowledgeable older folk before they pass on.

Without such historical records and accounts, he said, the younger as well as future generations would be quite ignorant of Kedah's rich and colourful past.

Another well-known Kedah historian and former teacher, Wan Shamsudin Mohamad Yusof, said the present town square bounded by the Balai Seni, Masjid Zahir, Balai Besar and Balai Nobat used to be a field known as Padang Court.

"It was here that massive anti-Malayan Union demonstrations were held."

He recalled that there were bullock carts and rickshaws in Alor Star before and just after the Second World War.

"In the 1880s, tongkangs could be seen in Sungai Anak Bukit near Masjid Zahir. In those days, rivers were large and deep and were not affected by siltation or pollution," he said.

Incentives to preserve Ipoh's heritage

By Khairun Nazirah

SPECIAL incentives which include a discount in assessment rates, reduction of the number of allocation of parking spaces, and the transfer of development rights are in store for owners of the 12 buildings which have been identified for conservation by Ipoh City Hall.

The move is to preserve the buildings which have their own distinct features as the city's heritage for the future generation.

The 12 buildings and a field are well-known landmarks and are mostly located in the Old Town centre, which has been gazetted in the Ipoh Local Plan draft as a Special Control Area.

The buildings are the railway station, the Town Hall, the High Court building, the Perak Hydro office, the Birch Memorial, the Hong Kong Shanghai Bank and the Royal Ipoh Club.

Others are the St Michael's Institution, the Indian Muslim mosque, the St John Church, the FMS bar and restaurant, the Fire Services building in Jalan Sultan Idris Shah and the Ipoh Padang.

Since City Hall wants to ensure that these buildings and field do not lose their identity, any renovation or refurbishment work must not affect the facade or front features of the buildings to maintain their characteristic features.

Owners who co-operate with City Hall stand to gain from the incentives offered.

Another feature which must be maintained, especially those buildings which were less than four storeys high, are the famous pitch-shaped roofs characteristics of the shophouses in the Old Town area.

City Hall has also set certain guidelines which the owners have to adhere to if they want to under-

take any new developments at their premises.

Some of the buildings at Jalan Yau Tet Shin, Jalan Bijih Timah and Jalan Koo Chong Kong were built between 1900 and 1904.

The shophouses in Jalan Laxamana, Jalan Dato Onn Jaafar, Tingkat Pasar and Leech Street are between 1930 and 1960.

The move to preserve these buildings is to maintain Ipoh's identity and to preserve some of the city's heritage.

30/8/95 NST