

PHT *newsletter*

PENANG HERITAGE TRUST • PERSATUAN WARISAN PULAU PINANG

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

Number 21

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PHT

Talk and Slide Show

Organized by
Persatuan Peranakan Cina Pulau Pinang
(Penang State Chinese Association)

Baba Superstitions and Beliefs

by KENNETH CHEO

Sunday 15 October
4.00 pm

Penang Chinese Association
(13 Perak Road)

Mr Kenneth Cheo is the author of
"Baba Wedding" and the co-author of
"Baba Superstitions and Beliefs".
(Both books published in Singapore)

Penang Heritage Trust members
are welcome. Admission is free.



PHT

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Straits Chinese Porcelain: A Collector's Experience

by DR CHEAH JIN SENG

Sunday 22 October
4.00 pm

Penang Chinese Association
(13 Perak Road)

Prof Dr Cheah's deep knowledge of the
finest nyonya ware comes from his many
years of experience as a fervent and
discriminating collector. He teaches at
the National University of Singapore.

Penang Heritage Trust members
are welcome. Admission is free.



PHT

Dinner Concert

A fund-raising concert organized by the
Board of Visitors, Penang Hospital

under the distinguished patronage of
YAB Mr Chua Jui Meng,
Minister of Health

Tosca by Puccini

Highlights from Act 1, 2 & 3
performed by

Singapore Lyric Theatre

Leow Siak Fah Cavaradossi
Zhang Guo Min Tosca
Lim Chung Kyun Scarpia
Orville Lim Angelotti/Jailer
Ong Wei Kiat Sacristan
Narrator Gerard Chan
Pianist Shane Thio
Conductor Lim Yau

Tuesday 31 October
8.00 pm
Novotel Penang
(The Ballroom)

The funds raised will be used
to improve the facilities in the
reception areas of the 3rd Class
wards of the Penang Hospital

Tables (each seating 10 diners)
are available for
RM2,000 • RM1,500 • RM1,000

Please contact En Ahmad Chik
Tel: 04 - 8299461, Fax: 04 - 8299161 or
Tan Teong Kooi, Tel/Fax: 04 - 2813187

The Historic Khoo Soo Hong Mausoleum Threatened

The tomb of Khoo Soo Hong (died 12.1.1895), one of Penang's foremost historical personalities of the mid-19th century, is in danger of being desecrated. "Soo Hong Hooi", the private cemetery off Mount Erskine Road where the tomb is located, has been acquired by Suasana Kristal, a subsidiary of the Ardonia Group of Companies, and will soon become the site of a condominium development.

Khoo Soo Hong, shipowner, merchant and major benefactor of two Hokkien cemeteries, was one of the founders of the Leong San Tong Khoo Kongsi at Cannon Square in 1851. He was also a prime mover behind the construction of the Khoo Kongsi Temple. Soo Hong Lane was named after him.

His impressively large mausoleum (estimated area 70ft by 50 ft) was built by the same expert craftsmen from China who built the magnificent Khoo Kongsi (work started in 1894). Most of the materials used are similar to those found in the Khoo Kongsi Temple and its theatre. They were imported from China and assembled here.

The tomb has a Chinese temple style roof, its ridges decorated with ceramic shard (chien nien) motifs of phoenixes, flowers, etc; intricately carved, gilded and painted wooden and stone panels showing scenes from the Chinese classics and "grass calligraphy"; one pair of dark "Hokkien stone" lions; and two pairs of granite columns inscribed with verses referring to the strategic geomantic location of "coiling dragon" or "crouching tiger"; this vital position "will ensure the flourishing of local cultures". All this makes the tomb the only one of its kind in Penang and probably also in Malaysia.

To save the tomb a bounded area in the form of a small garden or a grove of trees could be created around it to mark out the significance of the site. If necessary, other graves – those of the descendents – could be relocated in this garden, but generous space should be reserved for the mausoleum itself. As it is located on a hill slope, the garden could be set on a different level as the housing development and approached by means of a series of steps.

The historic Khoo Soo Hong mausoleum is still in good repair and should be preserved in situ.

Khoo Salma Nasution

New Members

We welcome the following as members of the PHT. They can nominate, vote, stand for elections, and take part in its activities.

Life Member: Lee Khek Mui

Ordinary Members:

Elise Camus Ikeda

J. D. Spencer

Loo Hock Guan

Loh Leong Hai

Is the Penang Municipal Council ready to support its own Heritage Advisory Committee's reports and recommendations for conservation legislation?

Following the public outcry over the demolition of the listed Hotel Metropole in December '93, the Penang Municipal Council (MPPP) decided to pass its job of making tough decisions on heritage to a committee of architects, planners, surveyors, engineers, ratepayers, developers, entrepreneurs, museum curators, academics, conservationists, and environmentalists – the Heritage Advisory Committee (HAC) it set up in April '94.

What the ratepayers and developers want to do was expected to conflict radically with what the conservationists and environmentalists want done and it must have come as no small surprise to many that the Advisory Committee was actually able to deal successfully with the problems it was asked to investigate, and has handed in two sets of recommendations – "Giving Incentives to Heritage Development" and "Identification of Conservation Areas, and Historical and Heritage Buildings" (see accompanying pages).

The Penang Heritage Trust (PHT) held a press conference on 4 October to express its view that the MPPP should make the HAC reports public: the people at large coming forward with constructive comments can only help to improve the recommendations. Given Penang's sudden leap in prosperity, there is an urgent need for a clear and comprehensive planning policy to protect our architectural heritage. Conservation is also development, an investment for the future of the city's cultural and economic well-being. Perhaps the government should do a few well-planned projects itself to demonstrate to the private sector that there is money in heritage development. The MPPP must put adequate financial resources behind any conservation policy it adopts: if not, the policy will quickly become just another document of good intentions.

The PHT fully supports the HAC recommendations. At the conference, it called on the MPPP to implement them without further delay. But is the MPPP ready to give the recommendations the serious attention they deserve? Will it now find some pretext for rejecting them? How enthusiastic is the MPPP about establishing an effective conservation policy? We must hope that the MPPP is enthusiastic enough not to let Penang's grandest experiment yet with a heritage committee, the Heritage Advisory Committee, end ignominiously, in spectacular failure.

(6 October. A few days ago another of the old mansions on Anson Road was torn down. No one has claimed responsibility)