



PHT Newsletter

Issue No. 107 | May 2015



**PENANG
HERITAGE
TRUST**

**Persatuan
Warisan
Pulau
Pinang**

PHT

Support Conservation Efforts in Your Community!

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Editorial

Greetings for the New Year 2015! This would be our first newsletter for the year and by the time we have published it, we would have already celebrated annual festive events that Penang is so famous for; Thaipusam and Chinese New Year. We hope that the Year of the Goat will be a delightful one for all of you.

Already in early 2015, we are hitting the right chords on conservation with a bang. In this article, we will view several newspaper articles regarding the row of shops on Lorong Cheapside and Chulia Street that will potentially see the end to some of George Town's local trades that have been operating for more than decades. For years we have been promoting heritage and we are happy to hear that the mass media is diligently reporting on George Town's heritage.

We also stand proudly to welcome Penang's regained city status. The local council formally known as Majlis Perbandaran Pulau Pinang (MPPP), will now be referred to as Majlis Bandaraya Pulau Pinang (MBPP). We also wish to congratulate Datuk Patahiyah Ismail, who is officially appointed as the first mayor of the Penang Island City Council (MBPP). It is also interesting to note how the people of Penang think after regaining its city status. Also, we will hear from tourists about what they think of George Town as a world heritage site and the developments that have been taking place since achieving this status.

What remains of the Jewish community in Penang today is the Jewish cemetery located on Jalan Zainal Abidin. We will hear the story of a family from Australia, who once lived on Nagore Road, who are keen on preserving and ensuring this cemetery is protected with the help of the Penang Heritage Trust (PHT).

Honorary PHT secretary Clement Liang speaks out about the recent developments on heritage buildings. He is gravely concerned about Penang's UNESCO World Heritage status and how fragile the status is. While refusing to blame any party, including the state government or the developer, he

suggests some guidelines on how we can protect this status.

We will review the 124-year-old Pykett Methodist School in Penang as a reminder of the urgency to protect historic institutions and buildings outside the Unesco-listed heritage zone of George Town. We will also look at its pivotal role in education and how those that walked through its corridors before, feel about losing it to modern development now. Did you know it was the first in Malaya to hold its annual sports event at night under neon lights at the school field?

There are a lot more interesting articles in this newsletter to cater to the varied reading interest of our members, young and old. I do hope you enjoy them! We are also looking forward to more contributions of articles to be included in our upcoming newsletters. It is my strong conviction that the thoughts of everyone should be heard.

A lot is going on for us at the PHT. We thank all of you for your continued support. We are also very appreciative to all our volunteers and those that have shown a keen interest to be a part of us. Looking at the fact that we are an NGO, we appreciate your undying support. Our office doors are always open to welcome you with merchandise from new reading materials to souvenirs. Feel free to register for our very own PHT organized heritage walks around George Town with guides that are truly helpful and knowledgeable. As for the site visits, please stay tuned.

We are very glad to see our Facebook page buzzing with activity from concerned PHT fans. It will be good to see more Facebook fans sign up to be members with PHT. Please help to recommend new members to join with us as members and also with opening our site visits to friends and family who are interested to know more about Penang's diverse heritage.

The Editor: Trevor Sibert

Cheapside Press Statement



The hustle and bustle on Lorong Cheapside (Photo taken from Utusan Online)



The inner street of Lorong Cheapside (Photo taken from The Malaysian Insider website)

10 March 2015

We are calling a press conference on the eviction of Cheapside tenants as it also involves the traditional traders who have been staying there. It will be at 10 am tomorrow (Tuesday morning) at Cheapside itself. Press notification yet to be sent out. Hope some of you can join us.

Here is the draft press release, to be restructured, but content will be the same.

The tenants of six shophouses on Lorong Cheapside have recently received eviction notices, and are currently trying to negotiate for an extension to their leases. The six houses are on the same title, and according to the tenants, the owner wishes to sell the properties.

The six houses are currently occupied by people associated with the hardware shops and locksmiths of Lorong Cheapside, with some of the houses currently being used as warehouses.

Cheapside has had this industrial character for much of the twentieth century, and is strongly associated with its hardware shops, locksmiths and key-cutters. It is also one of the few remaining residential neighbourhoods in inner city George Town. The eviction of Cheapside's residents threatens the street's businesses, and therefore its very character and history.

It is clear that tenancy issues are increasingly

becoming an issue in the George Town World Heritage Site, with a number of recent evictions affecting the residents of Chulia Street, Jalan Kuala Kangsar, and Chulia Lane. These evictions are also taking their toll on the city's intangible cultural heritage, with a number of artisans affected.

The Penang Heritage Trust expresses its deep concern about the state of the rental market and tenants' rights within the George Town World Heritage Site. We believe the situation is untenable. The George Town World Heritage Site: Population and Land Use Change Surveys commissioned by Think City showed a significant drop in the residential population of the city between 2009 and 2013, with the population decreasing by about 800 people to below 10,000.

George Town's heritage is as much about its people, their daily lives and their livelihoods as it is about architecture. Yet we risk losing the rich intangible cultural heritage for which this city was inscribed to the World Heritage List.

We are calling for responsible and sustainable approaches to development, land use and tourism within the George Town World Heritage Site. George Town should first and foremost be for its citizens. As it stands, the city risks losing its people – and therefore its soul.

The Penang Heritage Trust calls upon MPPP, the state government, and property owners to engage in active dialogue with tenants, and to actively look for ways in

Lorong Cheapside residents facing eviction

which this impending crisis in inner city housing can be nipped in the bud.

1. Lorong Cheapside, GTWHS
Chooi Tee Hardware Office & Warehouse
Tenant Mr Yeoh Ah Phong has been sent eviction notice
3. Lorong Cheapside, GTWHS
Tenant has been sent eviction notice
5. Lorong Cheapside, GTWHS
Tenant Mr Phuah has been sent eviction notice
7. Lorong Cheapside, GTWHS
Syarikat Chooi Tee
Tenant Mr Yeoh Ah Phong has been sent eviction notice

9. Lorong Cheapside, GTWHS
Lean Seng Electrical
Tenant Mr Quah has been sent eviction notice

11. Lorong Cheapside, GTWHS
Residential
Tenant Mr Loh Eng Khoon has been sent eviction notice

Mr Loh learned the key cutting trade from his father and the family has been living at No.11 for over 80 years.

By Khoo Salma Nasution, President of the Penang Heritage Trust.

CELEBRATED EVERY YEAR SINCE 1857

Thaipusam 2015



Devotees offering fresh fruits and incense to the deity on the silver chariot in front of Nagarathar Sivan Hindu Temple on Jalan Dato Keramat.

In Penang, Thaipusam was celebrated on Tuesday, 3rd February 2015. Thaipusam is an annual Hindu festival becoming one of the main events in Penang events calendar. The Murugan temple (The protector of innocent) stood majestically in the inner sanctum is the

popular place on the important occasion. The festivities in Penang have evolved to such an extent that they assimilate distinctly local characteristics that would raise eyebrows in India. For example, the celebrations have drawn many non-Indians. However, Thaipusam is still by

large inundated with Hindu rites and rituals despite few inevitable socio-cultural differences.

Thaipusam is a Hindu festival celebrated mostly by the Tamil community on the full moon in the Tamil month of Thai (January/February). It is also mainly observed in countries where there is a significant presence of Tamil community such as India, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Mauritius Singapore, South Africa, Guadalupe, Reunion, Indonesia, Thailand and Myanmar. The word Thaipusam is a combination of the name of the month, Thai, and the name of a star, Pusam. The festival commemorates the occasion when Parvati gave Murugan a Vel “spear” so he could vanquish the evil demon Soorapadman. This festival was created during one of the battles between the Asuras (or to be more specific Soorapadman) and the Devas.

It is known that the Thaipusam tradition was brought to the Malay Peninsula through the South Indian diaspora during the 19th century. The festival has since evolved and grown so big in Malaysia and Singapore that it has now far outsized celebrations, mostly unheard of, even in India. It is interesting to note that the yearly chariot procession during Thaipusam in Penang has been held without fail since 1857. A wooden chariot was used for the first 37 years until the silver chariot was brought from India in 1894; this chariot has been used ever since. The silver chariot was made in 1894 by craftsmen from Karaikudi in Tamil Nadu, South India. As the chariot, pulled by bulls, slowly lunges forward, a frenzy of coconut smashing ensues before the sacred deity.

On the eve, coconuts are smashed on the roads before the chariot to symbolise the shattering of one’s ego in the pursuit of self-realization. Municipal council workers plunge into disciplined action, zooming a pair of bobcats and compactor units to clear the debris as the chariot moves on. During the procession, many peaceful waves of devotees wait patiently to have their glimpse of the sacred idol of Lord Murugan. The procession usually starts at 6.00am where the 120 year old silver chariot bearing Lord Muruga, departs from Kovil Veddu (Temple House) at Market Street and travelling through Chulia Street, Victoria Street, Prangin Road Ghaut, C.Y. Choy Road, Magazine Road (KOMTAR), Datuk Keramat Road, Irving Road, Jalan Utama and Waterfall Road on its route. It reaches the Nattukkottai Chettiar Temple at Waterfall Road at about midnight, culminating a 15-hour journey.

In addition, devotees also make offerings of fruits, flowers and incense to the Lord Muruga in the Silver Chariot. Hundreds of devotees flock peacefully around the gleaming chariot, carrying trays of offerings - flowers, fruits, betel-leaves, coconuts - amid undulating music of an Indian piper and his drummer. Little children are lifted up to the idol in the chariot for priests to invoke the deity’s blessings; jasmine garlands passed along up to be placed on the idol; wisps of incense smoke, fragrance of rosewater; camera flashes and chants.

On Thaipusam Day, devotees undertake a pilgrimage from the Lorong Kulit temple to the Thannirmalai Arulmigu Balathandayuthapani Temple. It is located high on a hill. Carrying kavadis can be an act of penance or fulfilment of a vow done to develop spirituality. The kavadis can take the form of Paal Kudam (milk pots) as offerings to god or in the form of physical endurance by piercing the cheeks, tongue, or skin on the body with hooks and Vel skewers.

The Thannirmalai Arulmigu Balathandayuthapani Temple can accommodate up to 800,000 devotees for the annual Thaipusam Festival. Devotees need to climb over 500 steps to reach the hilltop temple. This is more than the 272 steps at the famous Batu Caves (Kuala Lumpur). Upon reaching the temple, devotees will fulfill their vows, offer thanksgiving prayers and penance to Lord Muruga. On the next day, the silver chariot with Lord Muruga makes a return trip to Kovil Veedu at Market Street from the Nattukottai Chettiar Murugan Temple.

More than 600,000 devotees and tourists converged at Waterfall yearly to celebrate or watch the annual procession of the Hindu festival. The lengthy stretch of road leading to the area, were shut completely to traffic as it teemed with throngs of people who were fringed on both sides by two lines of temporary stalls that provided refreshments, vegetarian food and religious souvenirs.

From the top of the green hill, the endless string of devotees dotting its way up the concrete steps seemed like a sacred procession of silence. They carry milk-pots of brass and silver, and harnessed in colorful kavadis and inched their way to the great temple overhead with sweet hypnotic resolve. The children, the elders and even the disabled ones, scaled slowly with their ceremonial burdens, ascending with a mission to the call of the good Lord Murugan.

During the festivities, some devotees spear their cheeks with long, shiny steel rods often a meter long and pierce their chests and backs with small, hook-like needles in penance. Tourists, who join the festivals, watch in awe as metal pierces the skin with hardly any bleeding and, apparently, no pain as the devotee stands in a trance in the dawn light after weeks of rigorous abstinence. Over the years, curious British, American and Australian medical experts have come to observe and speculate. Some think the white ash smeared on the body, the juice squeezed from the yellow lime fruit or the milk poured on the pierced areas may help to numb the skin. But most admit they have no answer. The devotees say it is faith and belief in Lord Murugan is what prevents the pain and the bleeding. Many observe a strict vegetarian diet for about 40 days and renounce all forms of comfort and pleasure-giving activities. The 40 days are spent in meditation and prayer.

Clad in yellow and saffron, clean-shaven heads (symbol of humility and atonement) smeared with sandalwood paste, the devotees walk along the road sans the boisterousness that dominates the later hours of the

day. The pilgrim procession passes a number of temples along the Waterfall road before the ascent up to the famous hilltop temple. The usually barren rain gutters along the hillside look like slender white capillaries, flowing down with ceremonial milk offered at the temple above. Further below, a whole river has turned into an amazing canal of milk.

The return trip for the chariot from the Waterfall temple lasts from 6.00 pm until dawn the next day. It takes a different route back, passing through Waterfall Road, Gottlieb Road, Jalan Tunku Abdul Rahman, Cantonment Road, Macalister Road, Anson Road, Burmah Road, Transfer Road, Sri Bahari Road, Penang Road, Campbell Street, Buckingham Street, Jalan Mesjid Kapitan Keling, Chulia Street, Queen Street, China Street, Beach Street and Market Street. On this day, the same activities that were carried out on the eve of Thaipusam are carried out again along the route of the procession.

By Trevor Sibert

RISK LOSING STATUS

George Town’s World Heritage Status In Danger!



L-R: Mark Lay and Joann Khaw

GEORGE TOWN: World heritage city, George Town risks becoming a mere tourist city if its living and intangible cultural heritage are not conserved, preserved and protected.

New Zealander Mark Lay, a regular visitor to this island-state, claimed that the imminent eviction of five tenants in a row of pre-war shop-houses along Chulia Street represented an erosion of the outstanding universal values (OUV) of cultural intangible heritage and tradition of George Town.

GEORGE TOWN: World heritage city, George Town risks becoming a mere tourist city if its living and intangible cultural heritage are not conserved, preserved and protected.

New Zealander Mark Lay, a regular visitor to this island-state, claimed that the imminent eviction of five tenants in a row of pre-war shop-houses along Chulia Street represented an erosion of the outstanding universal values (OUV) of cultural intangible heritage and tradition of George Town. He said OUVs were among the reasons George Town was listed under the Unesco World Heritage Sites alongside Malacca in 2008.

He said this living cultural heritage, local residents and tenants must be protected because heritage listing was not to serve tourists, but to preserve local history for future generations.

George Town's World Heritage Status In Danger!

He said that proactive steps should be taken to preserve and conserve the city living cultural heritage from being swept away by swanky development.

"Or else, George Town risks losing the goose that lays the golden eggs," said the Kiwi, who regarded Penang as his "first" home.

Also present was Heritage Walking Tour tourist guide Joann Khaw, who said the city would not survive even as a tourist town if it were to lose its heritage and cultural attractions.

She said responsible tourism was rapidly expanding across the world, with many guests researching hotel choices based on responsibility and sustainability indexes.

The tenants of Lot 348, 350, 352, 354 and 356 along Chulia Street are proprietors of various businesses such as recyclable items, antiques, chemical supplies, machinery repair, spare parts and hardware.

One lot is a local budget hotel, Sky Hotel, with the ground floor being a popular typical Chinese coffeeshop.

The primary concern of the tenants was lack of responsible tourism on the part of the developer and building owner. Apparently, the developer did not meet with the tenants to discuss the eviction. Instead, the owner and developer communicated with them via lawyers.

"Tenant inclusion in this hotel project could serve as a benchmark and catalyst in tourism responsibility for others in George Town world heritage site to emulate," said Joann Khaw.

A tenant, senior citizen Lee Beng Huat, 80, is sad that she has to leave a shophouse where she had been selling old antiques and knick knacks for decades.

"It holds a lot of memories for me because this was the shop where I made a lot of friends," she said. "I am already 80 and what else can I do?"

Legal eviction notices were served late last year to the tenants.

By Athi Shankar

Published January 23, 2015

Source:

<http://www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/nation/2015/01/23/george-towns-world-heritage-status-in-danger/>

ATTRACTING WRONG ATTENTION

George Town losing cultural heritage to irresponsible tourism, guide warns



Tenants from this row of shophouses have been evicted to make way for a hotel. — Pictures by K.E. Ooi

GEORGE TOWN, Jan 23 — George Town risks losing its shine as a heritage city if it continues to be exploited as merely a tourist town, cultural heritage specialist Joann Khaw warned.

When expressing concern today over the eviction of five tenants along Chulia Street here, Khaw, who is also a tour guide, and expatriate Mark Lay said that these old tenants and their traditional trades in George Town are key factors that have helped give the city its heart and soul.

George Town's World Heritage Status In Danger!

"If the state continues at this rate, the Unesco world heritage site will risk losing its cultural heritage, which is part of the city's outstanding universal value (OUV)," Lay told reporters today at an antique store run by one of the five.

Khaw said most tourists who visit George Town do not only come for its built heritage but also its cultural heritage.



Cultural specialist guide Joann Khaw said tourists come to George Town for its traditional trade and cultural heritage, not only for its built heritage.

The duo warned that irresponsible tourism could turn George Town into Singapore's Chinatown, which they described as a "tourist town without any intangible heritage".

They said they believe that the eviction of the five tenants, who are not the first ones forced to give way to the construction of new boutique hotels, cafes and restaurants in the city, represent the start of an erosion of George Town's OUVs.

They reminded the Penang state government and house owners that George Town's intangible cultural heritage had been one of the OUVs that led to the city being awarded the Unesco heritage site status in 2008.

The five tenants — a recycling shop, an antique shop, a chemical shop, a mechanic and a budget hotel with a coffee shop downstairs — have been conducting their business there for decades, some more than 50 years.



Chemical shop Liangtraco's 91-year-old owner Ong Liang Ching in his cluttered shop which he says will take months to slowly clear up as it involved dangerous chemicals. "We appeal to the owner to demonstrate effective tourism responsibility by meeting with the tenants, listen to their concerns and discuss possible options to retain them as part of the proposed hotel project," Lay said.

The tenants received eviction notices in August last year and have until March this year to move out but after their appeal, their deadlines were extended to April.

One tenant, antique shop owner Soo Yeow Hoay, said he has yet to find a place to relocate as rental within George Town has skyrocketed.



By Opalyn Mok

Published Friday January 23, 2015

Source: <http://www.themalaymailonline.com/malaysia/article/george-town-losing-cultural-heritage-to-irresponsible-tourism-guide-warns>

Council President Now Penang's First Mayor



Penang's new mayor Datuk Patahiyah Ismail delivers her speech at the commemoration ceremony in Penang, March 31, 2015.
— Picture by K.E. Ooi

GEORGE TOWN, March 31 — Penang Island Municipal Council (MPPP) president Datuk Patahiyah Ismail was officially appointed as the first mayor of the Penang Island City Council (MBPP) in a ceremony before the state governor this morning.

Patahiyah, who was the first female council president when she was appointed in 2010, said the city status declaration afforded to Penang brings with it challenges and heavier responsibilities.

"We have to continue to deliver efficient services with an emphasis on an outcome based administration," she said when delivering her maiden speech at the City Hall here today.

She attributed part of the state's success in attaining city status to the commitment displayed by the council workers.

"So, we must strive to continue with the good work and to improve the quality of our services and management," she said.

This morning, the Penang Yang diPertua Negri Tun Dr Abdul Rahman Abbas declared the MPPP as the MBPP in an official ceremony at his Sri Mutiara.

He read out the declaration that was signed by the Yang Di-Pertuan Agong Abdul Halim Mu'adzam Shah on March 10 this year.

Patahiyah's appointment was announced by the Penang Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng.

George Town was initially conferred the city status by Queen Elizabeth II back in 1957, the first town to be afforded the status in then Malaya.

However, the status was never acknowledged until the Penang Pakatan Rakyat state government applied for Putrajaya to do so.

The Cabinet approved the application in November last year and the Agong signed the declaration on March 10 for the city status to be effective from January 1 this year.

With the city status, the MBPP will cover 305 sq km on the island and will be setting up four new departments — landscaping, heritage, enforcement and solid waste management and public cleanliness. There are now 13 cities in Malaysia including Penang.

The other cities are Kuala Lumpur, Ipoh, Petaling Jaya, Shah Alam, Alor Setar, Johor Baru, Malacca City, Kuala Terengganu, Kota Kinabalu, Miri, Kuching North and Kuching South.

By Opalyn Mok

Published Tuesday March 31, 2015

Source: <http://www.themalaymailonline.com/malaysia/article/council-president-now-penangs-first-mayor>

Our City Shines Again

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03 April 2015

Dato' Patahiyah binti Ismail
Mayor
Majlis Bandaraya Pulau Pinang
Paras 17 Komtar,
Jalan Penang,
10675 Pulau Pinang.

Dear Dato' Patahiyah binti Ismail,

The Penang Heritage Trust (PHT) would like to extend its heartiest congratulations to you as Mayor of Penang Island on the occasion of the island's Municipal Council being elevated to city status. This is a joyous occasion for Penangites, and we join you in celebrating the city's newfound recognition.

We believe it is important that the status of the historic city of George Town – which was made Malaya's first city in 1957 – within the broader context of the new City of Penang Island is clarified in order to enhance civic pride and effective governance. The Penang Island City Council has under its jurisdiction the George Town World Heritage Site and thus joins the prestigious ranks of World Heritage Cities.

Penang has a rich history and now, more than ever before, it is important that we safeguard the wealth we have inherited from our predecessors. A new city council would be perfectly poised to do so. We note that the State Heritage Conservation Enactment, passed in 2011, has not yet been implemented. Local governments therefore remain the de facto custodian of local and state heritage. PHT hopes that the new Penang Island City Council will approach the protection of our heritage with renewed vigour.

As part of this protection, the heritage-rich City of Penang Island should maintain a comprehensive inventory of its heritage assets. Without such an inventory, illegal demolitions – such as that of 22 Pykett Avenue – will continue to take place even before significant historic buildings have a chance of being heritage listed. This historic house belonged to at least two of Penang's historical personalities: Sir John Bromhead-Matthews (whose name originally appeared on the building) of the firm Presgrave & Matthews, solicitor general and member of the Straits Settlements Legislative Council, and later Dato' Khaw Bian Cheng after the war.

Without such an inventory, Penang will lose many more such treasures outside the World Heritage Site without even realising what it has lost. The lack of an inventory and heritage protection measures makes it harder to take effective

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action against those guilty of deliberate illegal demolition. Hundreds of significant heritage sites outside the George Town World Heritage Site need protection; PHT's maintains a list of 7 Most Important Endangered Sites. We would like the authorities to show commitment to heritage protection by tackling the restoration of these sites without delay.

We know from previous reviews of existing heritage inventories that even important landmarks along Jalan Sultan Ahmad Shah have been omitted from early lists. We hope that the new Penang Island City Council will maintain a comprehensive register and allow this to be periodically reviewed by the Penang Heritage Trust. We will bring our passion and knowledge of heritage to this task.

As the City of Penang Island emerges on the regional, and indeed world stage, it is crucial that we set an example. Our George Town World Heritage Site is just the beginning. The Penang Island City Council should maintain an inventory of its heritage assets and set high standards of maintenance and management of the heritage properties under its care, such as the Chung Thye Phin Villa at Relau, which is now in a deplorably dilapidated state.

Apart from architectural heritage, the Penang Island City Council is also the custodian of other types of heritage – that includes natural heritage and cultural landscapes such as the forested hills and coastlines, industrial and transport heritage, open spaces and the public realm. Proper planning will ensure that this heritage is preserved for the education and enjoyment of present and future generations of its citizens.

The Penang Heritage Trust hopes that the Penang Island City Council will have the vision and resources to expand its Heritage Department, and in doing so, be fully equipped to manage the world-class heritage assets of this most historic city.

Preserving Northam Road's Icon

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30th April 2015

Dato' Patahiyah binti Ismail
Mayor
Majlis Bandaraya Pulau Pinang
Paras 17 Komtar,
10675 Jalan Penang,
Pulau Pinang.

Dear Dato' Patahiyah binti Ismail,

It has come to our attention that there is a new proposal involving the historic mansion known as Soonstead at No 46-B Jalan Sultan Ahmad Shah. The proposal includes plans to 'demolish part of the house... [and] to build 1 block of 13 storey (97 rooms) including 3 storey parking bay.'

The Penang Heritage Trust (PHT) strongly and unequivocally objects to the proposal. In a press interview, YB Chow said 'The Council had taken into consideration views from the public and also comments from George Town World Heritage Incorporated (GTWHI) that the building should be preserved', and that the developer had been asked to amend the design to avoid any demolition. The newly submitted plans thus appear to contravene this condition. What is of equal concern is the plan to construct a highrise block behind the existing historic building, which will have a tremendous visual impact on the setting of Soonstead and on Jalan Sultan Ahmad Shah as a whole.

Last year, PHT coordinated the highly publicised Save Soonstead petition, objecting to similar plans. The signature garnered considerable media attention, and received almost 4000 signatures. Objections came from many significant parties, including Dr Richard Englehardt, former UNESCO regional advisor for culture, who was involved in the process of obtaining George Town's UNESCO World Heritage Listing.

As a result of the petition, the plans were shelved, and PHT asked that MBPP involve us in consultation regarding any further proposals. We were however not officially informed of the present submission. We expect that MBPP, as custodians of the City of Penang Island's heritage, will take its role seriously and take into account the strong public interest expressed in the heritage of Soonstead.

We regret that one of Penang's most iconic heritage buildings is once again threatened by an unsympathetic development proposal. While MBPP is now consulting the neighbours of Soonstead for their views, we feel that the overwhelming public interest in iconic architectural landmark warrants wider consultation. We now ask for a moratorium on all development on this important road, a complete review of the heritage inventory and new

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urban design guidelines for Jalan Sultan Ahmad Shah, before any further development is considered.

At the time of the previous objections, we also suspected Soonstead, as well as other significant buildings along Jalan Sultan Ahmad Shah, was missing from MBPP's heritage inventory, and this suspicion was confirmed in several meetings we had with the MBPP regarding the on-going heritage inventory. We therefore asked for a complete review of the heritage inventory of Jalan Sultan Ahmad Shah, and also for the drafting of design guidelines to retain the character of this important street so as not to repeat the mistakes of façadism and façadomy which have marred Penang's reputation as a heritage city.

Attached below is the text of last year's petition letter which, at the time of writing, has 3972 signatures.

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Save Soonstead Petition 2014

The heritage of Soonstead is threatened by a proposed 11-storey tower block which would necessitate the demolition of the house's dining room wing and annexe buildings.

Originally called Northam Lodge, the mansion was built by the prominent architect James Stark in 1911 for the rubber and sugar planter Heah Swee Lee. The house was a focus of George Town's high society. At the housewarming, the Straits Settlements Legislative Councillor A. R. Adams congratulated the owner on his 'splendid domicile' and the architect on the 'excellent results'.

Soonstead at 46B Jalan Sultan Ahmad Shah (formerly Northam Road) is Penang's leading 'castle mansion', setting the fashion for the city's grand houses. It was emulated by Lim Lean Teng's Woodville on Northam Road, and the house for Choong Lye Hock's on Macalister Road designed by Chew Eng Eam.

Today, this iconic mansion is one of the few homes on Penang's 'Millionaire's Row' still set within its original grounds, which stretch out towards the sea.

With the proposed development, Soonstead would be mutilated and dwarfed by the 11-storey block (hotel of 108 rooms inclusive of 2-storeys parking), while its garden setting and relationship with the sea would be lost. Such an outcome would make a mockery of George Town's status and responsibilities as a UNESCO World Heritage Site (WHS). It is important to maintain the architecture and urban setting of George Town's adjacent historic townscape in sympathy with the WHS as part of our legacy for future generations.

In 1989, MPPP drew up a list of 20 heritage buildings on Jalan Sultan Ahmad Shah and drafted guidelines for the sensitive development of the area; Soonstead was identified as one of the heritage buildings worth conserving. Yet many developments approved in the last 25 years have compromised the character of 'Millionaire's Row'. Soonstead should not become another victim of guidelines being ignored.

The Penang Heritage Trust (PHT) urges the Penang state government and the Penang Island Municipal Council (MPPP) to protect the heritage of Soonstead, and calls for a moratorium on developments on Jalan Sultan Ahmad Shah until MPPP's own guidelines and the developments in this area have been reviewed.

Many Penangites view city status with scepticism

GEORGE TOWN: The whole island of Penang will be officially declared a city next Tuesday on March 31.

Penang Governor Abdul Rahman Abbas will hand over the official declaration to the Penang Island Municipal Council's (MBPP) first mayor, a woman, Patahiyah Ismail, who is currently the Penang Island Municipal Council president.

The City Day celebrations will be held on April 4, following the Agong's royal consent to declare Penang Island a city on March 10 after the Federal Cabinet's approval last November.

However to some Penangites, the news was "no big deal" with many saying they always felt the island was a city and the only thing missing was the technical issue of a federal recognition.

Penang's capital, George Town was given city status by the royal charter from Queen Elizabeth II on January 1, 1957, although this was not acknowledged by Putrajaya.

Naturally islanders welcomed the federal recognition, which they felt was long overdue, albeit with a note of caution.

Penangites don't want the island to turn into a concrete jungle ala Klang Valley or Singapore. They want the future policies of the city council to prioritise the preservation of nature, structural and intangible heritage, while improving the quality of life, upgrading public transportation and building more housing for the lower income group.

However, they are skeptical whether the current Pakatan Rakyat state government, perceived by many as promoting pro-capitalist policies, was up to the task. Penang Citizens Awareness Chant Group coordinator Yan C Lee wanted MBPP to step up enforcement to protect the environment.

Given that MBPP would receive more federal funds, he suggested the council install a satellite monitoring planned system to monitor illegal land clearing, especially on hill slopes.

"We hope the new city council does not take this title as Carte Blanche to increase building density all over the island.

"City status is for the improvement of the quality of life for the people. This is paramount," said Yan Lee. Parti Cinta Malaysia vice-president Huan Cheng Guan lamented that Penang Island was no longer the same under the current PR state government.

"Once, Penang had green hills, now some are bald. Penang had character, history, culture, and living history but today had lost its soul.

"It's all but a shell of what it used to be known as the Pearl of the Orient, thanks to the unsustainable overdevelopment by the state government.

"Penang has been slowly cloned to look like Singapore minus the efficiency, transparency, and quality of life," said Huan.

He said the PR government had slowly eroded the living history of Penang by rapid development, including in the heritage enclave.

He claimed that properties were now sold to foreigners, who in their bid to enjoy lucrative returns for their investment, had triggered the mushrooming of touristy cafes and boutique hotels.

In the process, he said foreigners were driving out local residents out of their inner city homes and robbing the state of its living culture.

Penang Umno chairman Zainal Abidin Osman has outlined a wish list for the new city council to fulfil:

- 1: Build more public houses of low rental to cater to the needs of low income earners
- 2: Do not review the assessment rate, which went up this year, for the next few years.
- 3: Do not destroy both structural and intangible heritage that made the island so unique and interesting.
- 4: Implement pro-active actions to once and for all resolve the issue of vagrants and homeless in the city.

Chant advisor Professor Jimmy Lim Cheok Siang called on the state government to implement the Penang Structure Plan and the Penang Island Local Plan immediately to commensurate the city status.

He said the island city should have people and real rules to govern proper development plans according to local plans.

He said council policies must be executed in a cohesive manner to protect the interests of the lay public and the environment, control density and have properly planned transportation.

Saying the chaotic destruction of seas, hills and heritage should not take place, Lim added, "We must decide on whether the island will become a city for people or a city for politicians."

By FMT Reporters

Published March 29, 2015

Source: <http://www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/nation/2015/03/29/many-penangites-view-city-status-with-scepticism/>

SURVIVING CITY EURASIAN

Last Eurasian on Argus Lane

Argus Lane, or Lorong Argus, is a short lane behind the Church of the Assumption (formerly known as the Cathedral of the Assumption). It is located on the left side of Love Lane, if you enter Love Lane from Farquhar Street. When the Eurasian community moved their church from Church Street over to here, they settled on this little lane in their own village. Chinese called it Sek-lân-ní lé-pai-tāng-aū hāng-á, literally in Chinese language it means the lane behind the Eurasian church. Sek-lan-ni or Serani means Eurasian, people with mixed European and Asian parents. One of the bungalows there was called Argus House, and it was there that Penang's first independent newspaper, the Pinang Argus was published way back in 1867, surviving only until 1873.

Visible today are upcoming shops on Argus Lane, bringing the end to the once Eurasian heritage village. You can still see elements of Catholic influences with the pictures of Jesus Christ and the Blessed Virgin Mary on front doors. One such family that is still living on this lane is the Carter family. Ann Cutter, 76, and Alicia Cutter, 89, both also former teachers still live in one of the row of houses since 1945.

Their father, H.L. Cutter and mother, Hilda Henrietta Doral, moved into their current home with nine children at the time. The house which is almost entirely original since they moved in has 3 bedrooms and 2 bathrooms. The house is very airy and cool, especially when she agreed for this interview when it was close to noon. The pathway leading to her front-door has the same

tiles for decades. It is interesting that those same tiles were taken by her mother from a dancing center, where her mother did teach, located on Muntri Street in the 1960s.



Ann Cutter, in front of her home

Over the years in order to maintain the comfort and convenience of her home, she has done several renovation works by engaging private contractors for wiring and plumbing. She also did mention that her home had recently been painted. Uniquely, the ceiling of her the top floor is made out from metal with stamped designs. The home has been the venue for several memorable events in her life from weddings to sadly funerals of Ann's beloved family members. She said most of her family members who have passed on are interred in Western Road Cemetery.

When Ann together with her family first moved in to the neighbourhood in 1945, there were several Eurasian families staying in that row of terraced houses. This Eurasian colony was mainly for those that play an important role in taking care of the church and carrying out church activities such as participating in the church choir. This land was given

by three known figures to the church; the d'Oliveiro family, the Lessler family and an individual known as Maximol Doral.

As we view the row of houses from the left most, house number 18, it was inhabited by Eddy Lessler, Bridgette Lessler, CC Lessler, Emma Reutens and Hillary DeSouza. The next house, house number 16, was lived in by Emile Scully and Katie Theseira. The rooms of this house are now rented out to three individuals. House number 14 is Ann Cutter's family home. The next house is house number 12A was lived in by Hector Lessler and Nita Lessler. Currently this house has become a warehouse. Lastly, is house number 12 which was inhabited by Cybil DeSouza. Currently this house is also a warehouse.

As the houses belonged to the Cathedral of Assumption at the time her family moved in, her father paid a monthly rent of Malaysian \$25 to the Parish Priest. Over the years, the rent had increased and today she is paying monthly RM500 to the Diocesan Center at the Church of Our Lady of Sorrows. Although they have been renting throughout the 70 years, she feels the house is very much home to her and her family. Her home today still remains very much a family home, with relatives from as far as England still returning home to visit and stay.

Her experience living there has had its also a fair share of disappointments too. On 13th June 2003, she was threatened with an armed robber. This incident took place in the afternoon, as the robber entered from the front door while Ann was in the house. The robber armed with a dagger, had tied up Ann before searching the bedrooms for valuables. Her sister, Alicia, was out at the time. Ann did try to escape and had put up a fight with the robber but the robber took what he could find and escaped through the back of the house. Ann together with her sister had lost valuables that they had accumulated throughout the years and hold great sentimental value.

Despite changes to the neighbourhood with cafes opening, Ann continues to enjoy living on Argus Lane. She said she still has not yet been to any of these trendy cafes yet. She is proud to see tourists flocking by the front of her house, taking pleasure in the wonderful heritage architecture of her home. They take photographs and jot down notes about the

appearance of houses on Argus Lane. She finds that her house has and will always be very strategic within George Town. Whenever possible, she still goes about her daily errands on foot, walking as far as the main post office on Beach Street. Ann is still a very active member with the Penang Heritage Trust, still is very concern of Penang's heritage. She also spends time up keeping her beautiful home, gardening and reading.

When asked about her hopes for Penang, her wish is for Penang to continue to maintain the heritage of Penang for generations to come. She has also done a great deal on the preservation of the Catholic Cemetery off Penang Road (adjacent to the Protestant Cemetery) and still continues to be involved in ensuring it is never forgotten as part of Penang's heritage.

By Trevor Sibert

LET'S HEAR WHAT THEY SAY

Tourists lament lack of 'life' in Penang's heritage areas



While development and progress are generally good, several tourists lament how Penang is slowly losing its rustic charm. — TRP file pic

GEORGE TOWN, March 28, 2015:

Pristine white sandy beaches, good food, rows of pre-war houses with unique architecture awarded with the prestigious Unesco World Heritage Site status reminiscent of that from a movie set.... these



A signboard with a brief story of the Eurasians in Argus Lane

are some of the factors which drew German George Hoermann, 58, to Penang after having read about Penang's attractions on the Internet and travel sites.

However, after just two days of being on the island, the scientist specialising in hydrologic technology said he felt let down and disappointed as "Penang is nothing but just another Disneyland".

Explaining what he meant, Hoermann said based on his observation, there was just too much development taking place on the island and the heritage houses he had visited gave him the impression it was not "heritage in its true sense".

"I came here to see for myself the unique architecture and to soak in some sun at the beach in Batu Feringghi, but I am very disappointed.

"Batu Feringghi is dead quiet during the day and the beach there is not like what was described to me. It is dirty and the water is too murky to swim in.



Tourists George Hoermann (left) and Sophia Dazert.

"And as I was walking through the streets of George Town, I noticed many nice buildings with beautiful architecture, but many are empty and in a sad state. There is no real life.

"My wife and I walked along the streets and there are rows after rows of cafés and eateries as well as homes that have been converted into hotels and then in between, there are some shops that are closed down and left in a state of neglect.

"I see more tourists here compared to locals and then there's the downside of George Town where there are many nice shops or houses, but I find them empty and abandoned.

"Why is this? I'm an avid photographer, but it is sad to photograph this," asked Hoermann.

He said from his observation, there was an imbalance going on in the tourist attraction places.

"On one side, you have a place full of life with people admiring the paintings, and this place called Acheh Street and Armenian Street are nicely done, but as we walked further out, we found many empty buildings left to rot and they were an eyesore.

"I could sense somehow that this whole heritage area is not 'genuine' and it is like a mini Disneyland where people wear costumes with the whole parade going on — that's what I feel about the heritage site.

"They try to cram in everything together and it ends up looking messy," he said.

Nevertheless, he said he was delighted to see barber shops, cobblers and furniture makers running businesses in old traditional shops.

"These are the things I wanted to photograph and show my friends back home as they are not available where I come from in Frankfurt," he added.

True enough, Hoermann's thoughts echoed that of Penang Heritage Trust president Khoo Salma Nasution, who told The Rakyat Post in a recent interview that if not careful, George Town, especially the heritage area, might lose its soul with original residents left with no choice but to move out, given the major increase in rental there.

She said a recent survey showed that George Town was now occupied by only 9,000 original residents as compared to its previous population of 50,000.

"This has happened to many world heritage sites, where there are more tourists than locals, so tourists end up coming here to see more tourists," said Khoo Salma.

Hoermann's partner, Sophia Dazert, said she had not found a clean enough beach for a swim in the sea.

"I am quite disappointed with the beaches that are murky, while the heritage zone is becoming more of a tourist town than a rich heritage area.

"While I am quite happy being here, the environmental aspects and beach cleanliness should be looked into. I've been to Phuket and Bali, they are lovely," she said. Another tourist from Britain, Mark Hayes, 61, said Penang island had transformed from a laid-back place for relaxation to a fast-paced town.

"Ten years ago, when I was here, the traffic congestion was not so bad. Now it is horrific. As I walk around George Town, I see it has changed so much for the good and for the worse.

"While I have to admit it is cleaner now with more life in town, I miss the old days of Penang, very laid-back and definitely a place for relaxation.

"Now everywhere I turn, I see cars and more cars," said Hayes.

By Zalinah Noordin

PUBLISHED: Mar 28, 2015 07:00am

<http://www.therakyatpost.com/news/2015/03/28/tourists-lament-lack-of-life-in-penangs-heritage-areas/#ixzz3VuuTYK3T>

"Alehem Hashalom, a visit to the Penang Jewish Cemetery"

A good number of PHT members and friends turned out on 5th January, 2015 to attend the site visit to the Penang Jewish Cemetery. Hosted by Meeda, Joseph and David Jacob who were born in Penang and now residing in Australia, they offered a briefing on the cemetery and a rare glimpse into their family history. As the only Jewish cemetery in this country and the oldest in S.E. Asia, the Penang Jewish Cemetery with 107 tombs covers an area of approximately 38,000 square feet. The site was described as a gift by an Englishwoman of Jewish extraction to the local Jewish community in the early 19th century. She was later buried at the cemetery in 1835. The latest burial was recorded in 2011, when Mordecai David Mordecai, the former manager of E&O Hotel, Casuarina Hotel and the last Jews living in Penang passed away on 15th July, 2011.

The Jacobs' family history started with the arrival of their grandfather Hayoo Jacob to Penang from Baghdad to administer the only synagogue in Penang at Nagore Road. Hayoo played several roles concurrently, he was a hazan or the leader of the synagogue, a shochet, one who slaughtered animals for kosher consumption and a mohel, who performed ritual Jewish circumcisions. The Jacobs recalled the good old days when they grew up in a cordial neighbourhood made up of Chinese, Muslims, Indians and a few other Jewish families near Jahudi Road, before it was renamed as Jalan Zainal Abidin in 1970's. Jewish religious customs and prayers like Sabbath and circumcision ceremony were held at the synagogue and to ensure the supply of fresh kosher meat, their grandfather would perform the ritual of animal slaughtering at home but that also meant chicken was the only available kosher meat served on the dining table. Later on, Leslie James from PHT shared the story of Lieut. Eliaho Victor Cohen, a British soldier who died just before WWII and buried at the special corner in the Jewish Cemetery reserved for the Cohens and Levis, believed to be descended from the Jewish high priests since the Biblical times.

To ensure the historical Jewish cemetery will serve as a tangible reminder of Penang's rich communal history and unique cultural diversity, PHT is working with the trustees to raise funds for the preservation and maintenance of this old dilapidated cemetery. It is appealing to all, regardless of religious and political differences to donate towards this noble cause and to show the world people from diverse ethnic backgrounds could live together in peace and harmony on this little island. May we wish all who were interred in the Penang Jewish Cemetery, rest in peace forever. Alehem Hashalom.



Visitors for the Jewish Cemetery site visit



David Jacob sharing the history with PHT members

By Clement Liang

After five-year hiatus, Penang's Living Heritage Treasure Award invites nominations



Nominations for the living heritage treasure award is open until January 31, 2015 said award coordinator Loh-Lim Lin Lee, December 3, 2014.

— Picture by K.E. Ooi

GEORGE TOWN, Dec 3 — A handmade signboard carver. A master jeweller. A rattan weaver. A traditional lantern maker. A Thai Menora performer. A Hokkien puppet troupe owner.

These are the people who breathe life and vibrancy into Penang, forming a part of the intangible heritage. They also have one other thing in common: they are all Penang Living Heritage Treasures awardees.

The Penang Living Heritage Treasures Award was first started in 2004 where selected awardees will receive public acknowledgement, a plaque, a certificate and a RM2,000 grant annually.

There can, however, only be a maximum eight awardees at any one time.

Since 2004, a total 11 skilled local craftsmen and artisans were selected as award winners; four have since passed away.

"We can have a maximum of only eight awardees at any one time. A few months back, traditional lantern maker Lee Khek Hock passed away so now we have one award to give out," said the award coordinator Loh-Lim Lin Lee.

Lee was the last traditional lantern maker in Penang and did not have an apprentice, so his trade died along with him, Loh-Lim said. "This showed how important it is for us to protect our intangible heritage and to give these people the respect and honour they deserved," she said. The other award recipients who had passed away were master batik artist Datuk Chuah Thean Teng, performing artist Mohd Bahroodin Ahmad and kebaya designer Yeap Seong Kee.

The remaining recipients, some of whom are still practising their trades, are chef Lim Bian Yam, signboard carver Kok Ah Wah, Hokkien puppet troupe owner Ooi Sew Kim, Thai Menora performer

Noo Wan @Wan Dee Aroomtana, Teochew puppet troupe owner Toh Ai Wah, master jeweller N.B.Samarasena and rattan weaver Sim Buck Teik.

The award is introduced by Penang Heritage Trust (PHT) and is supported by boutique hotel, Seven Terraces Penang.

The previous time PHT called for nominations for the award was in 2009 as they had reached the maximum eight recipients after that.

This call for nominations is the first to be held after 2009 and Loh-Lim said since it is an annual grant sponsored by Seven Terraces Penang, they do not have enough funds to give out more awards.

"This is also more than just an annual grant as we also made sure the needs of the recipients are taken care of and we try to find apprentices to pick up the trade from them," she said.

She added that sometimes if the recipients faced problems, such as when Lim Bian Yam was hospitalised and could not afford the medical bills, PHT had raised funds to help him pay for his bills.

Loh-Lim said the public may nominate individuals with the highest degree of skills in any traditional craft, arts, literature, culinary skills, martial arts and performing arts.

Nominations are open from now until January 31. Nomination forms are available at the PHT office at 26, Church Street.

All nominations will be judged by a panel of judges and they will be judged based on their level of skills, dedication and practise of the cultural heritage, the authenticity of the skill, techniques used, years of involvement in the trade and interest to pass on the skills.

By Opalyn Mok

Published: Wednesday December 3, 2014

Source: <http://www.themalaymailonline.com/malaysia/article/after-five-year-hiatus-penangs-living-heritage-treasure-award-invites-nomin#sthash.Xc8sHcMK.dpuf>

WE NEED TO WORRY

'Penang's heritage status may become history if no proper guidelines are introduced'



Clement Liang,
Honorary Secretary of the Penang Heritage Trust

Penang Heritage Trust secretary Clement Liang says people should be aware of the status of properties they buy and how to treat them if they fell under the heritage category.

GEORGE TOWN, March 6, 2015:

It will not be long before Penang's heritage status is revoked due to the lack of proper guidelines in heritage conservation, says a heritage expert. While refusing to blame any party, including the state government or the developer, Penang Heritage Trust secretary Clement Liang said there should be clear guidelines when it came to conservation.

Stressing that heritage conservation should not only apply to tangible heritage, the Penang-based Liang said the guidelines should also look into the living

heritage and also heritage buildings that are not within the George Town Heritage Zone. People, he said, should be aware of the properties they buy and how to treat them if they fell under the heritage category.

“What if they are not aware of the heritage value and demolish heritage-rich property by mistake or even deliberately?”

“People will take advantage of the grey area and it might not be impossible for Unesco to retract the George Town Unesco World Heritage Site status as the current fine of RM6,000 by the local government is not a strong deterrent,” he said when contacted.

Liang cited as an example the demolition of the Khaw Sim Bee Mansion which would not be rebuilt under the new development project plan approved by the Penang Island Municipal Council (MPPP).

This, he said, was because it did not come under Unesco’s heritage zone listing of the city.

Earlier today, local government, traffic management and flood mitigation committee chairman Chow Kon Yeow disclosed that the council reverted from its earlier order to the developer to reconstruct the mansion because the structure did not come under the heritage buildings of Categories 1 and 2.

He also stated that the developer had insisted that it would not rebuild the mansion even if the council put it as a condition.

“The developer did not want to rebuild the structure because it reasoned that the land belonged to it and it had the right to do whatever it wished with it.

“The council has been told by the developer that even if it were forced to rebuild, it will tear it down again.

“It insisted that it would re-apply to have it demolished,” said Chow after an inspection of a completed flood mitigation project near the Methodist Girls School (MGS) here today.

When asked on why the state government did not do anything to save the mansion, which was considered

historical, Chow reasoned that given the fact that it was a private land development outside the heritage zone, the authorities had no locus standi on the matter.

He explained that sometimes when people bought the land it had yet to be listed as a heritage site.

“How can we subsequently say that it falls under the list?”

He said the offence committed by the developer was the illegal demolition of the Pykett Avenue structure on July 26, 2010, just a few days before the council approved the application for demolition.

The council issued an order on Jan 11, 2011 to the developer to rebuild the demolished mansion and hauled up the company to court, where the developer was fined RM6,000. Chow said the council’s prolonged delay not to process the project plan for nearly four years had been sufficient punishment on the company apart from the court action.

It is learnt that the council had approved the new project plan to build a high-rise condominium last November.

The 19th century mansion was originally owned by Khaw Bian Cheng Sdn Bhd, a company linked to a local tycoon, the late Sim Bee, who became governor of Phuket, Thailand in the 1890s.

Its demolition had sparked an uproar among many heritage activists in the state. Penang was awarded the George Town Unesco World Heritage Status in 2008.

By Zalinah Noordin

PUBLISHED: Mar 6, 2015 03:51pm

Read more:

<http://www.therakyatpost.com/news/2015/03/06/penangs-heritage-status-may-become-history-if-no-proper-guidelines-introduced/#ixzz3VuxRLBQd>

Courtesy Call on His Grace Rt. Rev. Sebastian Francis, D.D.



Rt. Rev. Sebastian Francis, DD

On the 11th of March 2015, the Penang Heritage Trust paid a courtesy call on His Grace Bishop Sebastian Francis, Fifth Bishop of Roman Catholic Diocese of Penang, Malaysia at his office at Pusat Keuskupan Katolik (Catholic Diocesan Centre) on Jalan Macalister. The Roman Catholic Diocese of Penang is situated in the northern region of Malaysia covering 5 states, namely Penang, Perlis, Kedah, Perak and Kelantan. His Grace was installed on 20th August 2012, succeeding the former bishop, Antony Selvanayagam, who retired due to old age.

Together with the bishop at the meeting, was a panel of heritage conservationist representing the Penang Catholic diocese. The meeting began with an introduction of PHT representatives Khoo Salma, Clement Liang, Loh-Lim Lee and Trevor Sibert. The meeting lasted almost 2 hours which was very optimistic and constructive on the view of the Penang Catholic diocese with regards to heritage and how it prioritizes the various Catholic heritage sites in Penang.

The Bishop together with his panel are open to suggestions, feedback and guidance from the PHT on how it can go about to preserve the Penang Catholic Cemetery on Penang Road beside the Church of St Francis Xavier. The current state of the cemetery is of grave concern with the wall broken down due to the elements and with intruders such as drug addicts living in the cemetery.

The bishop’s intention is for the cemetery to be opened to public similar to the likes of the Protestant Cemetery on Northam Road. The plan is to create brochures and tourist booklets to create the attractive to visit this cemetery and put it as one of the must visit locations for heritage seekers.

Kicking off this partnership between PHT and the Penang Catholic Diocese, is to consolidate the name list of the deceased in the Catholic cemetery.

The PHT certainly looks forward to working closely with the Penang Catholic Diocese under the leadership of His Grace Bishop Sebastian Francis, in the coming future especially on other key Catholic heritage sites.

By Trevor Sibert

Photo taken from:

<http://directory.heraldmalaysia.com/malaysian-catholic-church-mas-centre-chapel-directory/diocese-of--penang/3>

Colonial Penang Museum



Colonial Penang Museum

The newly opened Colonial Penang Museum will bring visitors back to Penang’s colonial past. Experience the lifestyle of both the British Administrators and the wealthy merchants of Penang and appreciate the intricate art form from the past.

Visitors can find unique antiques such as personal handwritten document by Captain Francis Light, founder of Penang, Francois Linke (1855 -1946) the Belle Epoque of French Furniture, the white carrara marble statues by Atelier R.Bigazzi Florence,reverse painting by William Morris & Company (Westminster) Ltd., (Ruskin House), Stained Glass window by Hubert McGoldrick / Alfred Ernest Child and Katherine O’Brien and many more.

Antique lovers and history enthusiasts will find themselves in a time machine back to the 18th century when they visit the newly opened Colonial Penang Museum. Carefully put together by the Ma family, the museum has more than 1,000 well-preserved antiques and artifacts including a 1794 parchment with the handwriting of founder Captain Francis Light. Before setting foot into the museum in Jalan D.S. Ramanathan (Scott Road), a classic American automobile, 1929 Dodge Senior Landau, will definitely catch your eye at the entrance.

Museum director Eric Ma, 47, said his family had spent around RM3mil to renovate and restore the dilapidated building. The artifacts including some Peranakan artifacts have been with his family for

three generations. Among the other notable exhibits are Belle Epoque furniture by Francois Linke, a white carara marble item by Atelier R. Bigazzi Florence, East Indian-styled furniture and a pair of Nyonya bridal tables (only four pieces available in the world).Visitors can also admire a 1919 Asprey Silver crystal ladies vanity dressing table set and stained glass windows.

The family is also in the midst of erecting 30 architectural columns and pillars from the Victorian and Edwardian eras at the lawn. They are also putting up a tree house for visitors to get a bird’s eye view of the entire place. It is expected to be completed before March. The museum can also be used as an educational instrument for students to promote the understanding and significant of our rich heritage.

Operating hours : 9.30am to 6.30pm (Sunday to Saturday).

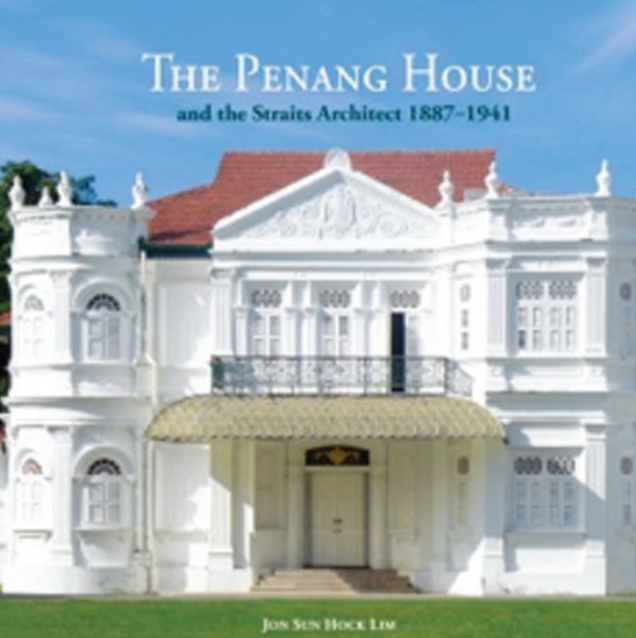
Address : No.7, Jalan D.S. Ramanathan (Scott Road) ,10350 Penang, Malaysia.

Entry Fees: RM30.00 (Adult), RM15.00 (age 5-12). MyCard holder - RM20.00 (Adult), RM 12.00(age 5-12).

For more information please contact +6017- 6662789 or general@colonialpenangmuseum.com

By Trevor Sibert

The Penang House and the Straits Architect 1887-1941



THE PENANG HOUSE AND THE STRAITS ARCHITECT

RM110

Jon Sun Hock Lim

2015. Areca Books

Hardcover. 24.6 cm x 24.9 cm, 208 pages

130+ colour photographs and architecture drawings

ISBN: 9789675719196

Product Description

The mercantile communities of the Straits of Malacca were patrons of a distinctive architecture which flourished in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Western advances in technology combined with Eastern tastes, craftsmanship and local ways of building to create distinctive habitats appropriate to the tropical climate. As the island’s wealth grew, the buildings constructed by military engineers for the

British East India Company were surpassed in size and beauty by the grand homes of the colonial and local elite. European architects such as Henry Alfred Neubronner, James Stark, John McNeill, Charles Geoffrey Boutcher, David McLeod Craik and Joseph Charles Miller were pioneers in the practice of modern architecture in early twentieth-century Penang, laying the foundations for future generations of local architects.

The development of Straits architecture is succinctly expressed in the evolution of the Penang house. More than just a home, the house in this mercantile community was a statement of wealth, influence and cultural affiliations. With the inscription of George Town to the UNESCO World Heritage List, the heritage of the Penang house – noted for its architectural flair, inventiveness and stylistic diversity – is now world-renowned. This lavishly illustrated book is an important landmark study of a glorious chapter in Malaysia’s architectural history.

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The Penang House and the Straits Architect, an exploratory work in the emerging fields of intercolonial and vernacular studies, is the first serious attempt to define the architectural identity of Penang, and one that will certainly give rise to more detailed studies by others in the future.

— Miles Lewis

Source: *Areca Books*

REPRESENTING PHT OVERSEAS

George Town: Protecting World Heritage in an Asian City

The President of the Penang Heritage Trust, Madam Khoo Salma Nasution was away in United Kingdom to take part in the London Book Fair. She has offered to represent PHT and to give a talk on George Town while she is there on Monday 13 April 2015, 6.30pm at The Gallery, 77 Cowcross Street London EC1M 6EL.

The scope of her talk will ultimately be about Penang — formerly called The Prince of Wales — and current approaches to conserving historical diversity, intangibles and built heritage in the city of George Town.

She will be also giving another talk at The School of Oriental and African Studies, commonly abbreviated as SOAS, University of London on the Chulia in Penang. SOAS is the only Higher Education institution in Europe specialising in the study of Asia, Africa and the Near and Middle East.

For more info, pls go to:
<https://www.soas.ac.uk/cseas/events/seminars/21apr2015-chulia-cultural-expressions-in-nineteenth-century-penang.html>

SCHOOL IS DISMISSED

Loss of 124-year-old school highlights need to protect historic sites, says Penang group



Construction workers at SK Pykett Methodist in George Town. The 124-year-old school in Penang has been sold to a developer. — The Malaysian Insider pic by Hasnoor Hussain, December 26, 2014.

A civil society group has warned that the possible closure of the 124-year-old Pykett Methodist School in Penang is a reminder of the urgency to protect historic institutions and buildings outside the Unesco-listed heritage zone of George Town.

Penang Citizens Chant Group (Chant) adviser Yan Lee said any move to replace the old school with a modern development project was reflective of the danger Penang's heritage faced in the absence of early intervention by the authorities to save and conserve the sites.

"The Pykett school has a long history going back almost 130 years. It will be a disappointing if Penang loses this piece of its heritage to development again," he said.

He said maintaining the site as a school or educational establishment, as has been done for the last century, was of utmost importance.

"We feel that education is paramount. To forgo education for another mega development is wrong." The land is for educational purpose. Only if the State Planning Committee converts the land to development land can it be developed.

"We feel it should remain as educational land. Chant will be fighting for this."

He added that an idea to have a school for autistic children at the Pykett school site has also been mooted as there was no such proper school in the northern region.

It was reported yesterday that the school, which was founded as the Anglo-Chinese School in 1891, has stopped enrolment for Year One pupils for next year.

The school, whose sprawling complex once had some 2,000 students, currently has only about 140 students.

Jeya Balan A.N. Rajan, 70, a former headmaster as well as a former student, expressed sadness at the reported closure.

“Three generations of my family have studied at the school, including my grandfather, my father and all my six brothers,” said Jeya Balan, who studied there from 1951, when he entered primary 1 to 1961, when he completed form 5.

“I was so proud when I was appointed as its headmaster from 1995 to 1997,” he said.

He remembers the establishment when it was turned into a primary school from January 1, 1957, when it was renamed after Methodist missionary G.F. Pykett, who served as its principal five times between 1893 and 1927.

The school’s other site at the Suffolk House, which once served as the residence of Francis Light, the English sea captain who pioneered the colonial development of Penang, became the Methodist Boys School for secondary education, he said.

Jeya Balan said some of the country’s eminent personalities had taught at the school, including DS Ramanathan, who became the first mayor of George Town and chairman of the Labour Party of Malaya, and legendary artist Abdullah Ariff.

He also said the school was advanced and cultured in its heyday.

“For example, it was the first in Malaya to hold its annual sports event at night under neon lights at the school field.

“It was also the only school where the staff had their own symphony orchestra in the 1950s,” he added.

“With its closure, a huge part of the Anglo-Chinese School history will be lost.”

S. Murali, whose son is studying at the school, expressed disappointment at not being informed of the development by the school authorities.

He said although a notice had been sent by the Education Department to the school earlier, the parents only found out about the closure when they approached the department a week before the school holidays began in early November.

He said as members of the parent-teacher association, he and the others also do not know what happened to money allocated to the school by the authorities, which he claimed totalled RM140,000 over the last two years.

He said the federal and state governments each gave the school RM50,000 in 2013 and the state gave another RM40,000 in 2014.

He said he and the other parents were trying to help the school but there has been no proper communication from the school’s authority.

“It is disappointing if the history disappears and the students are moved away,” he said.

“Unlike many others who studied in other schools in Penang, in 20 years’ time, my son will not be able to show where he studied as a boy.”

BY HIMANSHU BHATT

Published: 26 December 2014 6:59 AM

Source:

<http://www.themalaysianinsider.com/malaysia/article/loss-of-124-year-old-school-highlights-need-to-protect-historic-sites-says>



Three generations of Jeya Balan A.N. Rajan’s family studied at Pykett Methodist School in George Town. The 70-year-old school was once a principal at the school. — *The Malaysian Insider* pic by Hasnoor Hussain, December 26, 2014.

VOICES

The illegal demolition of the Khaw Bian Cheng Mansion, Pykett Avenue

Following the MPPP’s rescinding of its order to rebuild while at the same time approving development plans for high rise, high density building in an established low rise residential area, several statements of protest have been issued. Below is the statement from Badan Warisan Malaysia to which the Penang Heritage Trust fully subscribes:

OUR HERITAGE HAS NO SECOND CHANCE



Ar Laurence Loh

In 2011, Malaysian heritage celebrated a victory when the Majlis Perbandaran Pulau Pinang (MPPP) very courageously exercised their discretionary powers by ordering Tetuan Klassik Tropika Development Sdn. Bhd. to rebuild the iconic double-storey, Anglo-Indian Palladian mansion at 20 Pykett Avenue owned by the late Dato Khaw Bian Cheng. Dato Khaw was the grandson of the Penang- based magnate Khaw Sim Bee (1857-1913), a former Governor of Phuket.

The developer had earlier submitted a proposal for several high-rise buildings on the site, but whilst awaiting approval of their plans they chose to willfully demolish the heritage building on June 2010, a few days before a scheduled visit by the Local Authority. This ensured there would be no heritage structure to engage the visitors,

no spaces to be wowed by and no physical evidence of the building to facilitate a debate about its heritage values.

We have seen this tactic used by developers in Malaysia time and time again; legal loopholes are exploited and penalties imposed for illegal demolition are miniscule (in this case, it was a mere RM 6,000.00) when compared to profits to be made without the encumbrance of a heritage building in the middle of the site. Once such a building is wiped out, the argument to conserve its cultural heritage values becomes academic.

Recently, YB Chow Kon Yeow, the Penang State Exco member holding the Local Government portfolio, made a public announcement that the MPPP had rescinded their order for rebuilding on the basis that the property was not within the UNESCO George Town World Heritage Site and neither was it listed as a Category 1 or Category 2 heritage building. This was a known fact from Day One. So what had changed? This begs the question as to what criterion the order to rebuild was based on in the first instance or whether there was ever a legal possibility that the order could be enforced, given that the MPPP has lost several Planning Appeals Board cases when the legal status of their heritage listing had been challenged.

Concerned heritage citizens and residents are up in arms and extremely disappointed with the government for backing down. Cynically they say that once again big business has triumphed over the aspirations of civil society. In the end, the great fanfare that accompanied the initial order turns out to be merely a grand gesture, as meaningless as the paper it was written on. In the intervening four years, the developer did not rebuild as ordered and in 2014 put in a fresh application for a new high-rise development with even higher densities in an established housing area. Between the time the building was demolished and the day the latest plans were approved the land value alone has risen five hundred percent or more!

A Local Authority which has no mettle to see its convictions through is a poor steward of our built environment. What was a victory has now turned sour. Badan Warisan Malaysia is gravely concerned at the dangerous precedent which has been set for the protection and preservation of our heritage buildings and areas when a developer is rewarded for illegal actions and recalcitrance. This episode shows clearly that the laws and regulations in respect of heritage buildings in Penang, and we would hazard to guess, all around the country, continue to be inadequate to protect such properties. And unless a comprehensive study is made and more powers are given to the local council under the Town and Country Planning Act we will see a repetition, many times over, of what has transpired here. This decision has made a mockery of the Penang State Heritage Enactment which was gazetted in 2012 but has yet to see the light of day and speaks equally poorly of the National Heritage Act.

There is no other choice. We must advocate that laws be enacted to allow Local Authorities to imposed million dollar fines and imprisonment for illegal demolition as they do in many developed countries. We must push for our right to take out injunctions to stop demolition of heritage properties in progress. The Penang Local Plan should be gazetted and heritage buildings beyond the World Heritage Site listed without further delay so there

Because sadly when a physical legacy is razed to the ground there is no second chance.

Ar Laurence Loh

President, Badan Warisan Malaysia

Photo taken from ACP, <http://acp.arch.hku.hk/people/Laurence%20CV.htm>

PHT Council Members



L-R: Agnes James , Clement Liang, Loh-Lim Lin Lee , Fatimah Hassan , Lim Gaik Siang, Bendula Wismen, Khoo Salma Nasution , Trevor Sibert, Razha Abdul Rashid

The Penang Heritage Trust would like to record its thanks to two volunteers, Mark Lay and Joanne Khaw for substantially helping to man the office from September 2014 to March 2015 when we were understaffed. We would like to welcome Ch'ng Tze Wun, our new administrative officer, who started working at PHT from 2 February 2015 and Trisha Nanda Gopal, our Junior Officer, who started working on 12 May 2015.



L-R: Ch'ng Tze Wun and Trisha Nanda Gopal

Membership 2015

Welcome to 2015! We are excited to meet new members in 2015 as we have more activities coming up. To all our existing members, we thank you for your loyalty and we hope that you will continue being with us by renewing your membership.

Category of membership	Admission Fee	Annual Fee
Life Member	RM1000	None
Ordinary Member	RM50	RM60
Student Member (#)	RM30	RM30
Junior Members (below 18*)	None	RM12

Student Membership

Student Membership is open to all students aged 18 and above, as long as they can provide proof of their student status. Student Members are required to pay RM 30.00 as admission fee, and an annual subscription of RM30.00 that is revisable by the PHT Council by not more than 20% annually. Student Members will enjoy all similar privileges as described for Ordinary Membership, as mentioned in Item 16 of the PHT Constitution. Upon the termination of student status, the student member may continue as ordinary or life member upon payment of the applicable fee.

Junior Membership

Junior members need written consent from Parents or Legal Guardians before being accepted as members.

Your membership benefits include:

Exclusive Guided Tours: Members are invited to monthly site visits to places which are not normally accessible to the public. The tours are guided by experts from a variety of backgrounds.

PHT Newsletter: Members receive a quarterly publication from PHT which features current issues effecting Penang.

Discounts: Members receive a special discount on select books and merchandise sold at PHT.

Private Events: Members are invited to PHT events, talks and seminars on cultural and heritage subjects – where you can also network with conservationists, architects, educators, and more.

Resources: Members have access to historical records for research purposes.

Kindly contact the PHT :

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