



PHT Newsletter

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**PENANG
HERITAGE
TRUST**

**Persatuan
Warisan
Pulau
Pinang**

PHT

Support Conservation Efforts in Your Community!

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Editorial

It gives me pleasure to come out with this edition of the newsletter after some time. I sincerely apologise for this delay due to some technical reasons.

However, I have managed to compile a great list of contributions surrounding endangering heritage acts and also highlighting issues that we can work on for the future of heritage conservation in Penang.

As we all are clearly aware, we sadly lost part of the iconic Runnymede. Just a stone's throw away from the boundary of the UNESCO Heritage Site, Runnymede was demolished, reportedly in accordance with planning permission approved by the council 17 years ago. The redevelopment project plan on the Runnymede site includes the mammoth construction project of a 61-storey apartment block, a 31-storey hotel block, a 12-storey commercial and office block, but with the main Runnymede building conserved. Historians have claimed that one of the demolished Runnymede ancillary buildings was built and occupied by Raffles once. However, the Penang Island City Council claimed it found no records to prove this.

Next we come to the hottest topic on the island currently; the Penang Transport Master Plan. While we would see certain parts of the island and mainland become closely connected, have we forgotten how endangered the beauty of the heritage buildings within the George Town World Heritage Site is? Imagine, monorail tracks running in front of bedrooms and shop houses, shadowing them from being appreciated for the exquisite architecture and focal point as a heritage icon in the world. In the coming pages, we mirror this to what has happened in Selangor where old shop houses have become lifeless as a dead town, similar to the drama series *Walking Dead*.

George Town was one of the first cities in the region to introduce trams, ahead of even Calcutta and Singapore. A steam tramway with a single metre gauge line commenced operation in the 1880s linking Weld Quay in the town centre with Ayer Itam, four miles away across picturesque scenery and coconut plantations. It was used both as a passenger

service and to transport farm produce to the docks for export. It lasted until mid-1961, when it was closed and replaced by a network of bus routes. Why not we re-introduce this mode of transportation but of course in keeping with current times; air conditioning and more energy efficient? Keeping this form of transportation on the streets is less of an eye sore than having it up in the sky, not forgetting those concrete pillars to support the massive networks 'in the air'. I believe this would be something we all could easily adapt to with acceptance and patience.

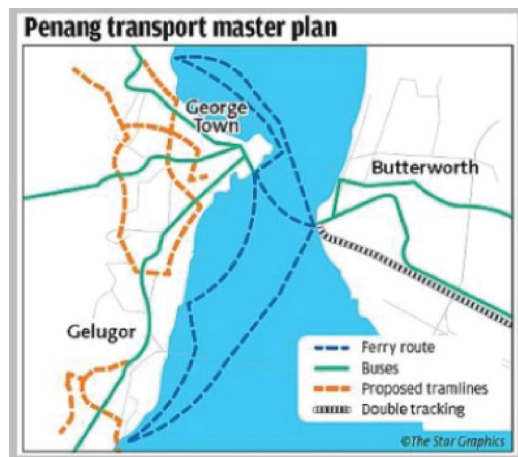
Despite the efforts of many, the Penang Siamese village in Pulau Tikus must go, making way for urbanisation. The Siamese community in Kampung Siam are in despair after their High Court appeal to stay on the land was dismissed on Feb 24 this year. The residents had first filed a case to the Sessions Court to challenge the eviction notice issued in April 2014 by the landowner but their application was dismissed in June last year. Penang Heritage Trust (PHT) vice-president Khoo Salma Nasution said many traditional settlements in Penang were under threat due to urbanisation. PHT organised a visit of 70 people to Kampung Siam to capture the last few moments before it is gone forever.

Lastly, I wish to thank all of you for your continued support and faith in the PHT. Our annual general meeting is around the corner, so we look forward to meeting and greeting you there. We would also like to see more new members joining our cause and making our voices heard for the good of heritage conservation in Penang.

The Editor: Trevor Sibert



PTMP Flawed from the word go



Penang Transport Master Plan or PTMP (Photo credits to The Star)

Penang's Transport Master Plan is aimed at alleviating the on-going traffic congestions around the island. It envisions a relatively complex integrated network with a light-rail transit system, a monorail, a cable car and an undersea tunnel to link George Town on the island to Butterworth on the mainland.

The plan may seem to look better on paper than it will likely turn out in reality. A group of 15 local NGOs have raised concerns about the Penang Transport Master Plan. They include the Penang Heritage Trust, the Consumers Association of Penang, the Malaysian Nature Society, the Citizens for Public Transport Coalition, Friends of the Penang Botanic Gardens, and the Women Centre for Change.

They say that the island's small population (currently about 750,000) may make it financially unfeasible for Penang to support such expensive light-rail and monorail systems. The various components of the plan, which also include bus routes, might prove hard to integrate successfully. In addition, some components of the plan may well turn into unwelcome eyesores within scenic heritage cityscape of George Town, mushroomed with colourful historical heritage buildings. We must remember that the UNESCO Heritage Status is not permanent and can possibly be revoked by the UNESCO World Heritage Committee.

"An elevated monorail," the NGOs stress, "is unsuitable for the Penang landscape, unsafe and way past its prime – many would say obsolete." Instead, they recommend a modern system of light-rail, which could match the carrying capacity of the planned monorail at far less cost to taxpayers. "At half the cost," they say, "Penang can implement an extensive network of

modern trams complemented by buses within a 10-15-year time frame."

Although the concerned NGOs acknowledge that there is an urgent need to upgrade the island's transport systems, they see the RM40 billion Master Plan as lacking both in vision and common sense. The project does not present transparency and accountability, with the plans having been drawn up without relevant consultation with the public, they insist.

The Master Plan's "expensive built-in obsolescence will embarrass Penang in the eyes of the world as soon as it is built," they warn. "By advancing massive road and tunnel expansion, this car-centric TMP imperils Penang's heritage, the ecological fragility of our hills and coasts, and our responsibility to future generations to strive for zero carbon emissions."

This is a real case evidence from Klang, Selangor where the elevated highway is passing by someone's windows or roof:

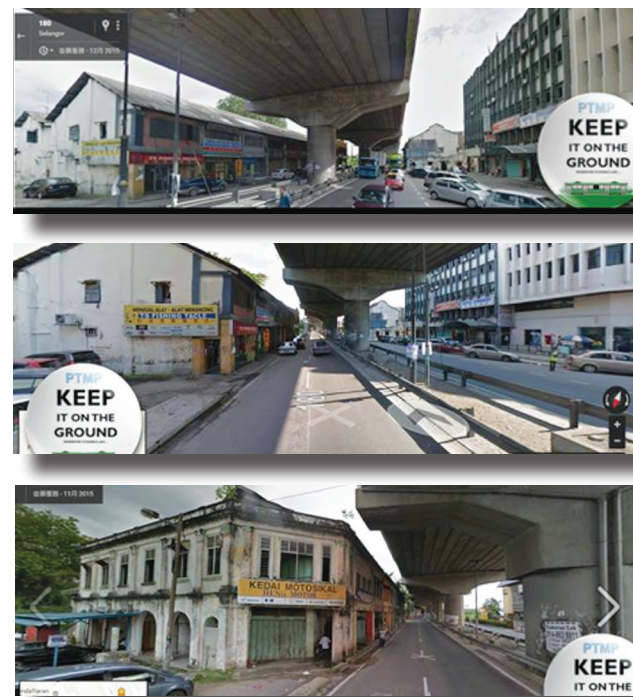


Photo credits to Lim Gaik Siang



Reference:
<http://cleanmalaysia.com/2016/05/01/penangs-transport-master-plan-is-seriously-flawed/>

The Editor: Trevor Sibert

Trams return to streets of Yangon



Yangon Tram

(Photo reference <http://www.skyscrapercity.com/showthread.php?t=1886060>)

'Rising personal wealth in Myanmar - also known as Burma - has led to an explosion in car ownership in its biggest city, Yangon. The authorities have responded by re-introducing trams to the city's streets, a form of transport last seen under British colonial rule 70 years ago. Cheap and efficient - but with a limited service - the government hopes the trams, bought second-hand from Japan, will help speed up the daily commute'.

The BBC's Jonah Fisher took a ride to see whether the trams really are the solution to Yangon's traffic woes.

Almost a century after trams stopped running in Yangon, a new electric line along Strand Road has opened, funded by Japanese investment. The three-carriage commuter vehicle will run six times each day, from 8am to 1pm, starting from Wardan Street and travelling to Linsadaung in Botahtaung township – a journey of around 3 miles (4.8 kilometres), with tickets costing 100 kyat (35 sen Malaysia) each. Myanmar's Ministry of Rail Transportation and Japan's West Corporation are funding the project, aimed at helping to relieve the traffic woes on the city's congested streets.

The tram line is now being extended from Wardan to Kyeemyindaing and from Linsadaung to Pazundaung, and the longer line will be ready for use later this year. It will eventually be connected with Yangon's circular railway. The railways ministry signed a 455 million yen (RM17 million) investment agreement with West Corporation last July. The tram depot, power station and 6.6 kilovolt power line cost K143.13 million (RM 50 million), said U Nyan Htun Aung.

For safety along the railway, the ministry plans to fix traffic lights at the junctions of Wardan, Pansodan and Sinodan streets complete with a sound system, and will also put up signboards. The 50-year-old tram cars are from Japan, Japanese ambassador Tateshi Higuchi said yesterday. The project has received much Japanese assistance as the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure Transport and Tourism (MLIT) of Japan and Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) both helped with technology and training.

U Htun Aung Thin, a general manager at state-owned Myanma Railways said "We want to provide good public transportation. At present we will run three carriages that can carry nearly 460 commuters. Of all the types of train, the tram is the easiest to maintain and operates at a low cost," he said. "We will continue to offer this service whether we gain profit or not. By using this tram, commuters from six downtown townships will find their journey to work more convenient and they can avoid traffic jams."

Yangon's 46-kilometre (28-mile) circular railway is also set to be upgraded, with Japanese investment, technology and guidance.

By Trevor Sibert

Reference: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-35340529> and <http://www.mmmtimes.com/index.php/business/18422-trams-return-to-yangon-after-100-years.html>

Runnymede Masterplan

International engineering consultancy Web Structures has been appointed to help create a £60 million development in Malaysia that includes restoring the site of Sir Stamford Raffles' historic home to all its former glory.

The Runnymede masterplan in George Town, Penang will see the creation of a stylish mixed development of offices, retail, houses and luxury apartments as well as a top hotel.

Runnymede Development in George Town:



What the future holds for Runnymede (Image from Web Structures)

The 1,000,000 sq ft, four-year project, for developers, Warisan Pinang Sdn Bhd, a member of the Prima Prai Group, has been designed by highly-acclaimed Kuala Lumpur-based GDP Architects.

It includes the careful restoration of the Runnymede property which was originally the home of Sir Stamford Raffles, founder of Singapore.

The original single-story colonial house, built in 1807, was named Runnymede after the field on which King John signed the Magna Carta.

That property was destroyed by fire in the 1920s and a glamorous and internationally-famous hotel, with its impressive ballroom and cocktail parties, was built on that site in the 1930s.

The British Navy took over the hotel in 1940 and it was used as a base by the Japanese during their

occupation. Post-war it was in British military hands until 1957 when it became the property of the newly-independent Malaya.

Web Structures will be involved in preserving that historic building during the development work and in the restoration of Runnymede. The building is earmarked to reclaim its historic importance, forming the heart of this high profile development.

The civil, structural and geotechnical engineering consultancy, which has offices in London as well as Singapore, Kuala Lumpur and Shanghai, will bring all its expertise working on challenging projects across the globe to the Runnymede development.

Dr Hossein Rezai, group director of Web Structures, said: "This is a major, landmark development in Penang with a great mix of properties, from luxury apartments to offices and shops in a fantastic setting.

"The conservation of the old hotel building will require some delicate work. We have to ensure that the new development work does nothing to harm that building as it takes place around it and also involves work underneath it.

"The conservation and underpinning will see what is an historic and iconic building in the region preserved and restored to something of its former glory, which is an exciting and valuable part of the project."

Founded in 1996, Web Structures has worked on more than 400 projects in over 24 countries. It has also been involved in the development of more than 52 residential and mixed-use skyscrapers around the world.

Other major architectural practices it has worked with include UN Studio, Kohn Pederson Fox and Maki and Associates. Its team is currently working on a new studio complex for UK-based Pinewood in Malaysia.

It has also won the contract to help create a £15.7 million new research and development facility for Munich-headquartered global electronics giant Rohde & Schwarz. The architects are Forum Projects.

Web Structures has an enviable reputation for its work on some of the biggest and most challenging construction projects in all parts of the world.

It has engineered more than 52 residential and mixed-use skyscrapers around the world in the past 15 years,

including the iconic 50-storey Troika development in Kuala Lumpur the 40-storey Queen's Condominium in Singapore and 61-storey Northpoint in Thailand. It is also heavily involved in creating some of the tallest towers in cities across India.

Runnymede Development images / information from Web Structures

Source: <http://www.e-architect.co.uk/malaysia/runnymede-development-penang>

HISTORY LOST

Sir Stamford Raffles & The History Of The Runnymede

Thomas Stamford Raffles was born in 1781, to Captain Benjamin Raffles and his wife Anne and in 1793 was sent as a boarder to the Mansion House Boarding school in Hammersmith, London. He joined the East India Company in London as a temporary clerk in 1795.

Raffles became Assistant Secretary to the new Governor of Penang in March 1805 and married Olivia Marianne Fancourt. He met her when she went to the East India House to petition for a pension from her deceased husband Jacob C. Fancourt, who was – before his death, an assistant surgeon in Madras. The Raffleses arrived in Penang in September 1805, together with Raffle's sister Mary Anne. They were housed, on arrival, in the Government Guest House until Olivia found a wooden, attap-roofed bungalow at the foot of what was to be known as Mount Olivia (Mount Erskine). In 1807, Raffles commissioned a new home to be built at North Beach.

Penang became known as an excellent place to recuperate from illnesses. An old friend of Raffles, John Casper Leydon stayed with the Raffleses after his illness. He fell in love with Olivia. When he left Penang, he wrote long letters to her. In a letter to John Leyden on 3rd. August 1808, Olivia wrote – "Mr. R. is building a pretty brick house on the beach, which I hope will be finished in eight to ten weeks." This is the only known letter from Olivia to have survived and it is kept in the National Library of Scotland.

The Prince of Wales Gazette dated 4th. January 1809 writes – "The north beach will, ere long, assume a very handsome appearance, when several elegant villas, now building, are finished. The new buildings commence with Runnymede, the property of Mr. Raffles and adjoining are the grounds of Mr. Hobson, Mr. Robinson, Mr. Erskine, Captain Douglas, Mr. Pearson and Mr. Lawrence, on which houses are erected."

D. C. Boulger states in his book; "The Life of Sir Stamford Raffles", that Raffles paid a sum of 330 pounds a year in rent for it. This leaves a question as

to whether Raffles actually paid for the building or whether he rented it from another person.

The new house was named Runnymede after the English field on which King John of England signed the Magna Carta. It was a single storey building with louvered wooden window shutters, carved balconies, deep cool eaves and large, relatively open living spaces within. During their stay in Runnymede, Raffle's two younger sisters joined them, adding to the gaiety of the many evening functions.

Raffles was moved to Malacca in 1811. Runnymede was advertised in The Prince of Wales Gazette – for sale. In C. E. Wurtzberg's book; "Raffles of the Eastern Isles" it was stated: - "Runnymede survived as a house in Northam Road up to September 1901, when the roof caught fire and the house was burned to the ground." Some of the surrounding buildings were renovated and Runnymede was converted into a hotel to compete with The E & O Hotel. W. Foster and H. Parker - two Scotsmen - managed the Runnymede Hotel.

In 1923, The British Malaya Magazine commented: - "The Runnymede Hotel has come right to the front in the last few years; and from its merits in regard to service and appointments, the hotel is one of that select number which the tourist or visitor retains in his recollection for its individuality and unobtrusive comfort".

There were four buildings making up the whole of Runnymede. A few rooms were laid out as private flats with separate entrances from Northam Road. Every hotel room had fans, running water and electric light. A large, airy seafront wing was built in the 1930's, which is the three storied building we see today. The first and second floors were guest rooms and the ground floor housed the huge ballroom.

In 1935, Runnymede boasted of a post office as well as a telegraph office. Services offered by the Runnymede Hotel included a hairdresser, book stall, reading room, billiard room, railway ticketing office

and a fleet of cars with chauffeurs. Cocktail dances were held every Monday, Wednesday and Friday, with dinner dances on Thursday and Saturday. Dinner was served on the lawns, (weather permitting). The well-known lawyer P.G.Lim remembers attending dinner dances at the Runnymede in her early years and always had a new evening dress for the occasion. Dress was formal for the evenings with long dress for ladies and black tie for the men. Runnymede Hotel management took over the Crag Hotel on Penang Hill, and to celebrate the 1935 Silver Jubilee of King George V and Queen Mary, the front page of the Pinang Gazette ran a full-page advertisement with a photograph of the hotel taken from the air.

The British Navy took over the hotel in 1940, to house fleeing Europeans. After the war, the British Military occupied the buildings and in 1951 the Choong Lye Hock Estate sold Runnymede for \$1.5 million to the British Government for continued military occupation. With Malaysia's Independence in 1957, the British

sold the Runnymede for a token sum of \$1.00 and the buildings became a government rest house and recreation centre called "Wisma Persekutuan". Parents of a friend, recalled staying in Runny-mede Hotel on their journey back to England - in 1963. Her mother was most upset that, with all the fresh vegetables in the markets, they were served baked beans as "the Vegetable of the Day" for their evening meal.

In 1986, the Malaysian Military moved into the premises. The main building is now used as an officer's mess and exhibition area, with their living quarters in the floors above.

The public can and do, rent the ballroom for wedding and dinner parties.

Source: <http://www.greatpenang.com/index.php/culture-a-heritage/40-heritage-trails/102-sir-stamford-raffles-a-the-history-of-the-runnymede>

PUBLIC OUTCRY

Secretive demolition of Raffles house

ON Aug 3, 1808, the wife of Thomas Stamford Raffles wrote to the Scottish poet and orientalist John Leyden to tell him that her husband was building a "pretty brick house" in Beach Road (later Northam Road and now Jalan Sultan Ahmad Shah).

Raffles and Olivia moved into their beachfront house called "Runnymede" in early 1809 and lived there until Raffles left for Malacca towards the end of 1810.

On Feb 9, 2016, the second day of the Lunar New Year and a public holiday, wreckers screened from public view by a 4m-high construction hoarding demolished the historic Raffles house. This act of premeditated and wanton vandalism destroyed an irreplaceable link with Penang's past and George Town's only edifice associated with the period spent in Penang by Raffles, an important figure in the early modern history of Malaysia, Indonesia and Singapore.

Public outrage has not been mollified by weak official explanations that the demolition could not be halted as the project had been approved in 1999 or that only the three-storey former hotel qualified for heritage status.

How can a project be allowed to lapse for 17 years without the approval being reviewed? Moreover, the heritage value of the Raffles house as well as the hotel wing has been widely acknowledged in travel guide books and websites.

Penang also boasts one of Malaysia's best informed heritage advocacy groups in the Penang Heritage Trust (PHT) which in 2012 listed the Runnymede among Penang's seven most endangered heritage sites.

All this information has been available to the state and municipal authorities charged with protecting Penang's heritage. Ignorance is no excuse for not taking pre-emptive action to prevent or delay this destruction through a legal stay or stop-work order while a heritage impact assessment or even archaeological work was carried out on the site. After all, why the sudden haste after 17 years to demolish the Raffles house in secret on a public holiday?

By Leslie A.K. James

Penang gov't unable to prevent parts of Runnymede Hotel from demolition



The photos of before (left) and after the demolition of the several annexe buildings of Runnymede Hotel in Jalan Sultan Ahmad Shah



An old photo of the grand ballroom at Runnymede Hotel. Courtesy of Penang Heritage Trust

The state government has made it clear to heritage activists that the administration was unable to prevent the demolition of several annex buildings to the Runnymede Hotel in Jalan Sultan Ahmad Shah.

State Local Government, Traffic and Flood Mitigation committee chairman Chow Kon Yeow said that the administration has no option but to allow the buildings to be torn down in accordance with the planning permission granted to the developer by the then Penang Island Municipal Council (MPPP) in 1999.

"However, the three-storey Runnymede Hotel will be preserved," he said at a press conference today.

Commenting on the demolition works which were carried out on a public holiday, Penang Island City Council (MBPP) secretary Ang Aing Thye said demolition works should not take place during weekends and public holidays in accordance with planning permission granted by the council.

"A notice has been issued to the developer," he said, adding that the developer has two weeks to provide an explanation.

In a blog post on Wednesday, activist Anil Netto said heritage circles in the state were abuzz with news of the demolition on Tuesday, on the site of Stamford Raffles home in Penang.

Meanwhile, Local historian Marcus Langdon, George Town Heritage Action co-founders Mark Lay and Joann Khaw were also present to voice out their concerns over the demolition.

Langdon said the buildings on the property had heritage value and should be preserved.

By Edmund Lee

Source: <http://www.thesundaily.my/news/1691117>

Runnymede buildings demolished using permits approved 17 years ago



PETALING JAYA: It was legal and proper. The Runnymede heritage buildings in George Town were demolished in accordance with planning permission approved by the council 17 years ago.

State executive councillor Chow Kon Yeow said the demolition by developer Warisan Pinang Sdn Bhd on Tuesday was allowed by the council since planning was approved on Nov 10, 1999.

Hence, he said the council's approval for demolition was valid, according to Section 24 (1) and (2) of the Town and Country Planning Act (TCPA) 1976.

"The planning permission was still active as development in the area started in July 2000," Chow, who is in charge of local government, traffic management and flood mitigation, told newsmen at Komtar today.

He stressed that the buildings moreover were not under the George Town Unesco World Heritage Site listing.

He also pointed out that the Employees Provident Fund (EPF) building, located next to the demolished heritage buildings, was part of The Runnymede planning permission.

The developer demolished seven ancillary buildings in the heritage enclave, sparing only the main three-storey building from the bulldozers.

Penang Island City Council secretary Ang Aing Thye said the developer had requested on Jan 13 to carry out the demolition and the council duly obliged.

But the city council had reminded the developer not to carry out the demolition on Sundays or public holidays.

Ang said the council had issued a show cause letter to the developer as the demolition had taken place on the second day of Chinese New Year – a public holiday.

"The developer must respond to our letter in two weeks."

The Runnymede buildings were located in the city's seafront heritage enclave.

Local historians and social activists claimed that Sir Stamford Raffles and his family had resided in Runnymede when he was in Penang in the early 1800s before leaving for Singapore.

Historians have claimed that one of the demolished Runnymede ancillary buildings was built and occupied by Raffles once.

But the city council claimed it found no records to prove this.

This was refuted by historian Marcus Langdon, who authored a book on Penang's history entitled: "Penang: The Fourth Presidency of India 1803-1830".

He slammed the council for allowing the demolition and not doing its homework to identify the historical background of the site.

The house was named Runnymede after the field on which King John of England signed the Magna Carta.

George Town Heritage Action Group (GTHA) activist Mark Lay said the Runnymede could have been saved if only the city council had its conservation management plan focusing on heritage sites.

He was surprised the council had still given the nod for the demolition although approval was given 17 years ago and with circumstances changing now.

Curiously, according to the update in the council's One Stop Centre (OSC) website, the application for planning permission submitted by Warisan Pinang – MBPP/OSC/PM2798/15 – had been "batal" (cancelled or rejected) by the city council on Nov 24,

2015. It is not known which part of the planning had been "batal".

The redevelopment project plan included construction of a 61-storey apartment block, a 31-storey hotel block, a 12-storey commercial and office block, but with the main Runnymede building conserved.

Source: <http://www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/nation/2016/02/11/runnymede-buildings-demolished-using-permits-approved-17-years-ago/>

TOGETHER SERVING

Announcement of New Council Members for Penang Heritage Trust (2015-2017)

On behalf of the Penang Heritage Trust, we would like to thank all members who had attended and facilitated the election of council members for the term 2015-2017 during our 29th Annual General Meeting held on 15th November 2015.

The new council features new faces, and with it new vigour and energy that will strengthen the Trust's cause and purpose. The new council also hopes to bring more activities and programmes as we start our 30th anniversary celebration in 2016.

The new council members and office bearers are as such:

President:	Lim Gaik Siang
Immediate Past President:	Dr Choong Sim Poey
Vice-president:	Khoo Salma Nasution
Hon. Secretary:	Ben Wismen
Hon. Treasurer:	Dr Ruth Foo
Council Members:	Loh-Lim Lin Lee
	Clement Liang
	Fatimah Hassan
	Trevor Sibert
	Himanshu Bhatt
	Dr Goh Hsiao Mei

The new council members would like to thank previous council members, trustees, advisers, members, affiliates and sponsors for their continuous support and contribution to the Trust.

Site Visit to Ranee Dhoby Ghaut and Sri Ramar Temple on 4 October 2015, Sunday.



Dhoby Ghaut is the site at the juncture of Sungai Air Itam and Sungai Air Terjun, from where Sungai Pinang emerges. Ghaut or stone steps were built by Indian laundries. Indian laundries have been operating here since the earliest days of Penang. In the early 19th century, they were said to be headed by a laundry matron, known as Ranee Dhoby, meaning “laundry queen”. Today there exist concrete embankments on the river banks. An old, abandoned shrine stands, probably built by the early laundries. There are still a number of Hindu temples in the area, the biggest being the Dhoby Ghaut Temple and Sri Rama Temple.

The Sri Rama Temple at Dhoby Ghaut is one of the earliest temples to be built in Penang. Although it is not known exactly when the temple was first built, according to available documents, it must have existed before 1872. This is confirmed by the existence of a will dated 12 July, 1872 that mentioned the temple.

According to the will, the land on which Sri Rama Temple stands was donated by an Indian woman by the name of Ranee Dhoby. Ranee Dhoby is of course a title rather than a proper name; it translates as “Dhoby Queen” in respect of her position over the laundrymen. Ranee Dhoby was the matriarch of the dhoby community that settled along the banks of the Ayer Itam River as early as the turn of the 19th century. A land grant dated 2 May, 1802, stated that she was given a piece of land by the order of Sir George Leith (for whom Leith Street was named), the Governor of Prince of Wales Island, by virtue of the authority of the Governor General of Bengal.

Somewhere between 1808 and 1811, Ranee Dhoby is said to have sold off a section of the Sungai Air Itam riverbank to William Edward Phillips, so that he can have access to the estate of Francis Light which he acquired from James Scott. Phillips then built on the foundation of Light's plantation the mansion that is now known as Suffolk House. Before she died, Ranee Dhoby created a trust for the temple building, to be known as the Ranee Dhoby Kovil.

Sri Rama Temple was renovated in 1982, and images of deities such as Rama, Sita, Hanuman and Ganesh were installed. There is also a memorial to Ranee on the walls of the present temple. The inner sanctum follows the original octagonal design. Sri Rama Temple is a Vaishnavite temple, that is to say, a Hindu temple where Vishnu and his associated avatars or incarnation are worshipped as the supreme deity. This is one of the two Vaishnavite temples in Penang, the other being the Sri Kunj Bihari Temple.

By Trevor Sibert

Reference: <http://www.penang-traveltips.com/dhoby-ghaut.htm>

Site Visit to Cheah Kongs, 16 January 2016, Saturday



THE majestic Seh Tek Tong Cheah Kongs clanhouse in Penang was reopened in a grand ceremony after being closed for almost three years for refurbishment. Cheah clans from around the world came for the event held at the 142-year-old clanhouse in Armenian Street Ghaut on Wednesday. A new interpretation centre which showcases the kongsi's rich and unique history was unveiled during the ceremony.

The interpretation centre has artefacts, touch screen tables showing animation and historical videos of the Cheah clan, and eight paintings depicting the transformation of Penang through the years. The centre, he added, would also house professionally designed exhibits, presented in world-class displays that tell the story of the kongsi in an easy-to-understand format.

Skilled artisans from Fujian, China were employed to reinstate the magnificent sculptures, using traditional designs which relate specifically to the Cheah clan, he added.

A talk was given by Lim Gaik Siang, President of the Penang Heritage Trust on the rich history, architecture and relevance of this kongsi in today's current times.



Talk by Lim Gaik Siang covering the early settlers and their movement to Penang

By Trevor Sibert

Reference: <http://www.thestar.com.my/metro/community/2015/12/11/entering-a-new-era-cheah-kongs-reopens-with-improved-features/>

Penang Riots 1867

Secret society wars known as the Penang Riots occurred in 1867 when the alliance of Tua Pek Kong Hoey (Kean Teik Tong) and the Red Flag Gang fought against the alliance of the Ghee Hin Kongsi and the White Flag Gang for ten days in George Town. The Tua Pek Kong Hoey, led by Khoo Thean Teik consisted mainly of the Hokkien; the Ghee Hin Kongsi was Cantonese-based; while the Red Flag and the White Flag Gangs comprised of the Malays and the Indians.



During the Penang Riots in 1867, only a limited armed force and police could the colonial government mobilize to keep the peace of the island. (Courtesy of the Penang State Museum)

The name of Cannon Street (Tua Cheng Hang) originated from this event with two versions of the story. One report said that in order to suppress the riots, the colonial government fired cannons at the territory of the Tua Pek Kong Hoey and created a big hole on the street; so people called the street Big Cannon Hole (Tua Cheng Khang). Later, as the hole was levelled up, it was renamed Cannon Street (Tua Cheng Hang).

Another story said that the Tua Pek Kong Hoey placed cannons on the street to resist the enemy and thus it was called Cannon Street.

According to a contemporary survey, the Tua Pek Kong Hoey actually possessed firearms and artillery during the riots, and the original Cannon Street was a much narrower defensive alley. In fact the name of Cannon Square had already appeared in 1867, indicating that Cannon Street could have been named after it.

By Trevor Sibert

Reference: Khoo Kongsi Website (<http://www.khoocongxi.com.my/history/the-origin-of-cannon-street/>)

GUJARATI IN PENANG

Gujarati Samaj

On 15th July 1950, the Gujarati Seva Samaj Pulau Pinang came into existence when 17 member companies came together to look after the social, cultural and economic interests of the Gujarati community. It was officially registered on 2nd February, 1951. It is the oldest Gujarati society in Malaysia and Singapore. Initially its membership was restricted to Gujarati firms in Penang but its eligibility was eventually passed on to Gujarati adults of both sexes.

The early pioneers came mainly from the state of Gujarat, India at the turn of the 19th century. They were engaged mainly in import/export activities primarily in commodities and later on textiles. They in turn recruited lads from their native villages to work for them here. Industrious as they were, many became successful and even extended their business to Malacca and Singapore, the main centres of trading prior to World War 2. Through the years, and especially after Penang lost its freeport status in 1977, the entrepreneurial members declined, and this contributes to the reality as to why we see so many professionals like doctors, engineers, lawyers, executives etc. among our deeply rooted business community.

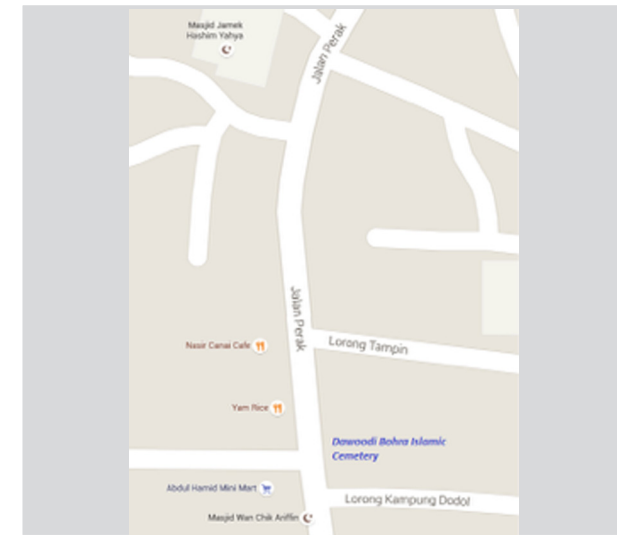
The Gujarati Seva Samaj has presently a membership of 120 members and organizes activities for the social, economic and cultural development of the Gujaratis in Penang. Its social programme covers education, sports and moral upliftment of members. It is closely networking with other Gujarati Associations and is one of 15 founder members of the Consultative Goodwill Committee of the state of Penang and a founder member of Gujarati Consultative Goodwill Council.

The Gujarati Seva Samaj has a long and illustrious history of service. Sixty years to be exact! It takes one project in hand and before it is realized conceives another and thus always remain active in the field of service. Also because of its ideals of service and zealous and enthusiastic nature of the members, it has always been able to achieve its goals. IT operates from Wisma Shri Gujarati 41 Green Hall, a 2 ½ storey building with colorful bright red doors and windows and with a functional hall, well-equipped kitchen and guest rooms.

By Trevor Sibert

Reference: Gujarati Samaj Penang (<http://www.gspenang.org/samaj>)

Dawoodi Bohra Islamic Cemetery, Penang



Map to Dawoodi Bohra Islamic Cemetery

Dawoodi Bohra Islamic Cemetery is the cemetery of a small Indian Muslim community in Penang. The Dawoodi Bohra is a branch of the Mustali subsect of the Ismaili Shia Islam. This is a school of Islam that flourished in India, even though it traces its origin to Yemen.

The Dawoodi Bohra Islamic Cemetery is located along Perak Road, across the road from Masjid Wan Chik Ariffin. There are over forty graves in this cemetery. The designs of the tombstones are very different from those of the Malays. They are mostly plain, and are similar to the tombstones found in India.

Source: <http://www.penang-traveltips.com/dawoodi-bohra-islamic-cemetery.htm>



Aerial view of Dawoodi Bohra Islamic Cemetery

Source: <http://www.penang-traveltips.com/pics/dawoodi-bohra-islamic-cemetery-2.jpg>

DEDICATED TO HIS CRAFT

The Kavadi Maker

Event planner Y. Rajasingham, who makes and decorates kavadi during his free time, made his first kavadi when he was just 15. Ten years on, he has managed to make and decorate more than 100 kavadis, using plywood and polystyrene.

"I found out that the art of making kavadis can only be perfected over the years if your heart and soul is in it. "I made my first kavadi after observing my uncle who was in the trade," he said when met at his workshop at Jalan Air Putih in Air Itam, Penang, recently.

The former St Xavier's Institution (SXI) student was seen putting the final touches on three decorative pieces for thaneer panthals (refreshment stalls) which will be set up during Thaipusam on Feb 3.

"The decorative pieces measure between six metres and 12 metres (40ft) and each one can take about 20 days to complete," he said. "My events planning and decorating takes a backseat during this time but luckily,

I have a few friends who help me out and we share the earnings," he said.

He charges rental of between RM3,650 and RM3,800 for the decorative pieces, which includes installation, dismantling and decorative lights. For the kavadis, he charges between RM500 and RM5,000 depending on the size of the kavadi and the decorations that go with it. During Thaipusam, he concentrates on making kavadis and the decorative boards.

Source: The Star (<http://www.thestar.com.my/metro/community/2015/01/24/dedicated-to-his-craft-former-sxi-student-an-expert-kavadi-maker-after-starting-trade-at-15/>)

What used to be a work jetty is now a popular tourist attraction in Penang



Two tourists on the lower right posing by the dragon masthead of a dragon rowboat which residents of Chew Jetty had once used to win a dragon boat race in Penang.

SHOULD you possess an extreme paranoia for water, you might be tempted to ask the dwellers of Chew Jetty in Penang a few touchy questions after spending some time along the boardwalk.

Does the sea ever get so rough that salt water would come splashing in through the windows?

“No lah! Our ancestors measured the jetty’s height properly when they built it. The sea doesn’t even wash up onto the gangway no matter how rough it gets,” said Chew Seng San, 60, who has lived there all his life.

Does your house sway or rock a little when a storm hits?

“No, of course not! It’s great living here. Cooling at night and comforting to sleep with the sound of the waves,” Seng San’s neighbour Hup Cheng, 64, defended.

No, they are not afraid of termites because they use termite-resistant wood for building their houses on stilts. Yes, they fear fire, and that is why two community fire engines are parked outside on Weld Quay, ready for immediate deployment.

Seng San and his fellow clansmen are paradoxes in George Town. Amidst this booming city, the Chews remain pastoral, even downright rural.

Many of them speak only “original” Penang Hokkien slang, broken Mandarin and hardly any English.

It is almost as if the blood of their ancestors still run thick in them.

The historical truth behind Chew Jetty would not be evident today for the throng of tourists who visit it.

Many of these cargo boats are no longer in use today because the Chews have become obsolete as stevedores.



Their ancestors were “late-comers”, arriving in Penang around the early 1900s when George Town was already a renowned port city.

Unlike the earliest Chinese who came around the time when Captain Francis Light founded Penang in 1786, this late wave of Chinese immigrants had come to escape the hardship in China of that era and could not afford accommodation on the island.

Chew Jetty, the largest of the clan jetties along the Weld Quay stretch, was a work jetty for loading and unloading barges that ferried cargo from ships too big to enter the port.

“The houses you see at the jetty today began as sheds that shielded the coolies from the sun as they waited for barges to arrive.

“Eventually, the coolies started spending the nights on the jetty too because it was free accommodation. The sheds then became communal houses and when the workers began having families, they built individual houses,” said local historian Clement Liang, who is also a council member of Penang Heritage Trust.

Chew Jetty is now a one-stop centre for tourists to pick up every Penang trinket and traditional confectionery that they will need to bring back with them.

A few budding artists have rented the tinier houses as their art gallery and many of the residents now sell a variety of snacks and drinks from their homes.

Seng San was a stevedore but his trade sizzled out years ago and now he sells durian puffs along the jetty. His large fibreglass boat tethered next to his durian puff display shelf remains a constant reminder of his yesteryears.

“I used to bring cargo from ships that cannot get near the coast. But when the deep-water wharf in Butterworth was built years ago, the ships don’t need me anymore.

“Since about five years, a lot of tourists started coming, so my neighbours and I are learning to do tourism business.”

There is an alluring innocence in the way the Chews engage with the tourists.

When asked, Seng San had no idea that his home is protected by Unesco and his community is considered a living heritage.

One of the Chews with the most interesting history that visitors might meet is also one of the community’s oldest members.

Ah Pee, 85, sits quietly at the verandah of his house not far from Seng San’s durian puff shop.

On a small table in front of him, he appears – at first glance – to be selling eggs balanced upright on a decorate tray. A closer inspection shows that the tops of the eggs are peeled open and inside, they hold jelly.

“This is how we ate jelly when we were kids. The taste is the same, but we are satisfied with being able to reuse eggshells,” said Ah Pee.

Chatting with him brought out another titbit.

“I am a Shaolin kungfu master,” said Ah Pee, the suddenly steely gaze in his eyes incongruous with his aged body. “When I was young, I taught Shaolin kungfu all over Penang.”

Source: <http://www.thestar.com.my/metro/community/2015/12/07/at-sea-with-the-chews-what-used-to-be-a-work-jetty-is-now-a-popular-tourist-attraction-in-penang/>

PENANG ROAD CATHOLIC CEMETERY

Kin of the departed delighted with initiatives taken to preserve cemetery



Bishop Sebastian showing *The Star*’s report on Oct 30 which highlighted the plans to restore the old Catholic Cemetery located off Penang Road. With him are Deborah (from second left) and Caroline, and two members of the restoration team.

DESCENDANTS of those who were laid to rest at the old Catholic Cemetery located off Penang Road have lauded the restoration plans at the site.

Deborah Taylor, 55, who lives in Brighton, England, said it was great that some parties are taking the initiative to preserve the cemetery and keeping it safe for generations to come.

“My first visit here was about 30 years ago and I have been returning several times over the years.

“It looks better now compared to the first time I was here,” she said.

Deborah and her siblings Christopher, 59, and Caroline, 53, had flown all the way from England for the launching of the cemetery’s restoration campaign on the eve of All Souls’ Day recently.

The cemetery is believed to be the oldest Catholic cemetery on Penang island.



From left: Aaron Moyer, 24, Mackenzie Staich, 22 (black dress), Brooke Leffelman, 33 (squatting, in peach blouse), Chloe Young, 24, and Morgan Wingler, 23, offering prayers at the cemetery.

The Taylor siblings are nieces and nephew of retired teacher Ann Cutter, 76, who was also present at the event.

Ann said that among her ancestors who were laid to rest at the cemetery, were her great-great-grandfather, D'Oliverio and his Thai princess wife, nicknamed "Bobo".

"They had a daughter, Marianne D'Oliverio, who married Maximo Doral. They were my great-great-grandparents. My great-great-grandfather, Bobo and Maximo were buried here while Marianne was laid to rest at the Western Road Christian Cemetery. Marianne lived to 84 years old.

"For me, I always knew who my ancestors are and I wanted the graves preserved. I am very grateful to those involved in this restoration," she said.

Christopher said his father was in the army when he met his mother, who is Ann's sister, in Penang.

It was reported that the mapping of the 0.34ha site between the St Francis Xavier Church and the Protestant Cemetery in Jalan Sultan Ahmad Shah, started about three weeks ago. The aim is to mark the location of the tombs numbering about 220.

The oldest tombstone discovered was that of a Portuguese woman dated 1798 and the most recent was from the 1920s.

With more expected to be unveiled during the restoration, which will cost RM300,000, the place has been identified as a burial ground where missionaries, educators, traders, planters, sailors, musicians, European noblemen, Eurasians, Chinese and Indian Christians were laid to rest.

Penang Heritage Trust honorary secretary Clement Liang had reportedly said the 1798 tomb belonged to 'Rita dos Reis', a Portuguese woman from Macau.

He also said that the restoration would take at least two years.

The first phase will involve the dilapidation study to record the condition of the tombs and research restoration options while the second phase, which is expected to start next year, is a heritage management plan involving the materials to be used for repair and preservation.

The cemetery, which is managed by the Roman Catholic Diocese of Penang, is believed to be the oldest Catholic cemetery on the island.

Penang Roman Catholic Diocese Bishop Rev Sebastian Francis commenced the launching of the restoration campaign, with a prayer service at St Joseph Home in Penang Road.

He also thanked The Star for its report on Oct 30, which highlighted the plans to restore the old Catholic Cemetery.

A slight drizzle did not dampen the spirit of those who were present, as they proceeded to the cemetery that was located adjacent to the home, to witness the blessing by Bishop Sebastian at the cemetery.

The event, which was followed by mass at St Francis Xavier's Church, also saw the presence of several missionaries from the United States.

Brooke Leffelman, 33, from Georgia, Morgan Wingler, 23, from South Carolina, Chloe Young, 24, from Washington State, Mackenzie Staich, 22, from Ohio, Aaron Moyer, 24, and Josh Stoneman, 26, from Kentucky, were in Penang as part of a Christian mission trip called The World Race.

"We have been to India, Nepal, Cambodia, Thailand prior to Penang and after this we're heading to Botswana, South Africa, Swaziland, Dominican Republic, Haiti, and Jamaica.

"This is our first time to Penang and Malaysia and we are loving our time here," said Leffelman, who was a teacher before joining the mission trip.

Source: <http://www.thestar.com.my/metro/community/2015/11/11/praises-for-renovation-plans-kin-of-the-departed-delighted-with-initiatives-taken-to-preserve-cemete/>

Penang to launch Sia Boey restoration project



Tony Pua (left) and Lim Guan Eng (2nd left) share a joke at the announcement of the Sia Boey Market regeneration project launch, today, in George Town. — The Malaysian Insider pic by Looi Sue-Chern, September 2, 2015. There will be colour at the dilapidated Sia Boey Market in George Town this Sunday when the Penang government will launch its RM100 million Sia Boey: Reborn project.

Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng said the 5.5-acre project will regenerate and rejuvenate the market, the Prangin Canal and the vicinity, which has been neglected for decades, and transform the area into a centre for art.

Giving the people a taste of the future, he said the Penang Arts Society, Penang Chinese Brush Painting Art Society, Penang Oil Painting Society and local galleries will be showcasing their artworks at the launching ceremony.

To mark the start of a new era, Lim said there will be an exhibition to celebrate the past, present and future of Sia Boey at Prangin Market from this Sunday for one week.

"The public will be able to delve into the rich history of Sia Boey and view the plans for this landmark.

"We invite everyone to come and witness how Sia Boey will transform Penang into the premier destination for artists and art lovers, for locals and tourists," he told a press conference at his Komtar office today.

Part of the plan for Sia Boey is the centrepiece Ilham Penang, a privately funded public art museum. The word 'ilham' means inspiration in Malay.

Lim said at the launch the state will also ink an agreement with the future sponsor of the museum, which is expected to cost RM30 million.

Also in the pipeline is the restoration of the decaying shophouses in the area. These will house art galleries, studios, schools, workplaces, restaurants and cafes.

The Victorian Prangin Market will be showing off another art Penang is famous for: its street food. Meanwhile, Prangin Canal will be upgraded to complement a two-acre public park with sculptures and installations.

The entire project, which is aimed at making George Town an internationally-known art and culture destination, is scheduled to be completed by 2018. — September 2, 2015.

Source: <http://www.themalaysianinsider.com/citynews/georgetown/article/penang-to-launch-sia-boey-restoration-project/penang-to-launch-sia-boey-restoration-project#sthash.SuiEDFI3.dpuf>

Art museum to be main draw at Sia Boey project

ILHAM Penang, a RM30mil privately funded public art museum, will be the highlight of the ‘Sia Boey: Reborn’ project in George Town.

Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng said it was great to know of those who not only love art but were willing to invest in it to help develop the economy of the state.

“We will be signing the agreement with the sponsors of Ilham Penang at the launch of the ‘Sia Boey: Reborn’ project on Sunday.

“Dubbed the Penang Heritage Arts District, the 2.22ha project will also feature restored heritage shophouses occupied by art galleries, studios, eateries, schools and workspaces,” he said.

He was speaking at a press conference in Komtar.

Lim added that the redevelopment was scheduled to be completed by 2018.

He also said it would see the old Prangin Market featuring the best of Penang street food.

He added that the Prangin Canal would be upgraded into a water feature.

This would complement a 0.8ha public park featuring sculptures and art installations, he added.

“I hope Sia Boey will transform Penang into a premier art destination for artists, art lovers, locals and tourists not just in Malaysia but also the whole of Southeast Asia,” said Lim.

The ambitious project costing RM100mil is funded by the Penang Development Corporation and the state government.

Lim added that local art societies such as the Penang Art Society, Penang Chinese Brush Painting Art Society, Penang Oil Painting Society, Urban Sketchers Penang, Batek-Lah Collection and many more would be showcasing their works at the launch.

The launch of the ‘Sia Boey: Reborn’ project will be held at 10am at the Prangin Market.

In conjunction with the launch, there will be a public exhibition at the Prangin Market from Sunday to Sept 13.

It is aimed at celebrating the past, present and future of Sia Boey.

The exhibition will feature the rich history of Sia Boey and future plans for the historical site.

Source: <http://www.thestar.com.my/metro/community/2015/09/04/art-museum-to-be-main-draw-at-sia-boey-project/>

ACROSS HERITAGE DISTRICT

The LRT Connection

THE old Prangin market or popularly known as Sia Boey (Town’s End) in Penang will be transformed into a premier art district in the country with a Light Rail Transit (LRT) line cutting through the 2.2ha site for easy access for the public. Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng said the area would be the focal point for the community.

“Under the Penang Transport Master Plan, there will be an LRT line cutting across this heritage and art district,” he said. He said this in his speech yesterday before witnessing the signing ceremony between the Penang Development Corporation (PDC) and Yayasan Haji Zainuddin to set up a new iconic art museum, Ilham Penang.

It was earlier reported that Sia Boey had been designated as the site for the central LRT station. The RM100mil Penang Heritage Arts District, upon

completion, will feature restored heritage shophouses occupied by art galleries, studios, eateries, schools and workspaces. It includes the RM30mil Ilham Penang, which Lim described as a catalyst for culture-led urban regeneration in the historical George Town. He said the PDC had granted Yayasan Haji Zainuddin a 30+30 year lease on a 0.6ha land.

In return, Yayasan will invest RM30mil to build and cover the cost of its operations and maintenance over the period of time. The art museum will have at least 45,000sq ft of gallery space which will be the largest of its kind in Malaysia. Lim said in addition to gallery space, the museum will offer a café or restaurant, a library, a 200-seat auditorium and art storage facilities. The museum will be free for school-going children while adults will only have to pay a nominal fee. “Upon completion, Ilham Penang will certainly go

a long way towards making Penang an international destination of choice.

“More importantly, in the times of economic slowdown and uncertainty, Ilham Penang will be a catalyst for urban regeneration,” he said. Lim said he had personally taken a trip to South Bank in London to check out the Tate Modern gallery. “It used to be an abandoned area where you will get mugged or robbed. “Even taxi drivers dare not take you to that place. But today, it is the hippiest and coolest place in London.

“It brings in urban regeneration and that shows art can also be an economic catalyst and driver. “Hopefully, this project will launch Penang into another dimension,” he said. Lim said the state government could have

easily converted the site into another RM500mil commercial and residential development project.

“But do we want another concrete jungle? We want to do something that is good for the community and create a centre for heritage and arts for our children,” he said. In conjunction with the launch, there is a public exhibition at the Prangin Market till Sept 13. It is aimed at celebrating the past, present and future of Sia Boey. The exhibition features the rich history of Sia Boey and future plans for the historical site.

Source: <http://www.thestar.com.my/metro/community/2015/09/07/the-lrt-connection-rail-line-to-pass-through-old-prangin-market-site/>

DO WE NEED A THIRD LINK?

More motorists using Penang Bridge than second link

THE number of vehicles using the second Penang bridge to cross from the mainland to the island is less than 10% of those using the first bridge. Penang Transportation Committee chairman Lim Hock Seng said an average of 6,752 vehicles used the Sultan Abdul Halim Mu’adzam Shah Bridge in that direction daily in the first nine days of the month compared with the March daily average of 68,113 for the first bridge.

Lim, who did not have the April figures for the first bridge, said 6,099 vehicles of all classes used the second bridge when toll was first imposed on April 1 but dropped to 5,607 the next day. On April 3, the figure was 5,757 and rose to 7,593, 8,900 and 9,647 on the three subsequent days which was the weekend. The figure then dropped to 6,123, 5,466 and 5,577 on April 7, 8, and 9 respectively.

Lim said an average of 19,601 vehicles used the second bridge daily in March before toll was imposed, from a low of 11,692 on March 19 to highs of 31,757, 33,464 and 43,815 on March 9, 8 and 2 respectively. During that month, the vehicles using the first bridge dropped from an average daily figure of 79,289 in February to 68,113 in March when the second bridge opened.

Lim said in an interview yesterday that the higher toll rates and longer length of the second bridge could be the reason why there was a low number of vehicles using the link. The toll rates for the second bridge are RM8.50 for cars and RM1.70

for motorcycles while they are RM7.00 and RM1.40 respectively for the first bridge.

The second link is 24km long compared to the first bridge which is 13.5km. Lim said another reason why motorists and motorcyclists shy away from the second bridge could be due to the fear of breakdowns. He said although the second bridge operator provided emergency assistance, they may still prefer to use the first bridge as they could get help from the many other users of that link.

He also said the industrial and residential areas in Batu Kawan on the mainland had also not been fully developed and occupied which could be why there was still low traffic along the second bridge. Lim, however, felt that it was good to have the second bridge to cater to future needs. It was earlier reported that Jambatan Kedua Sdn Bhd, which is the concessionaire for the second bridge, will launch an awareness campaign to attract more people to use the link.

By Anthony Tan

Source: <http://www.thestar.com.my/news/community/2014/04/11/more-motorists-using-penang-bridge-than-second-link/>

Performing the Last Menora Dance



Council Members of the Penang Heritage Trust with the fifth generation Menora Dancer and YB Yap Soo Huey, Assemblywoman for Pulau Tikus (Photo credit: Trevor Sibert)



Khun Boonleue, Penang Siamese Association Chairman (Photo credit: Trevor Sibert)

Kampung Siam, the unique remnant of Siamese heritage in Pulau Tikus area of Penang was playing host to some seventy visitors from PHT on a hot, balmy Sunday afternoon in April 2016. We were invited to witness the performance of Menora, a traditional Siamese temple ritual dance commonly seen in southern Thailand and northern Malaysia in the old days and more importantly, to understand the fate of this historic village which was supposed to be a permanent abode for the Siamese and Burmese people by the decree of Queen Victoria in 1845. The village is now facing the threat of demolition after unknown transactions succeeded to delist it from a cultural and religious zone, thus enabling commercial development to take place.

Pak Wan Dee Aroonratana, the 93-year-old Menora performer and PHT's living heritage awardee in 2007 and his son Khun Boonleue were there to greet the visitors and their family took the trouble to set up a huge canopy in front of their home to welcome us in a typical warm Siamese hospitality. Some villagers and their friends came to stage a traditional Thai music performance. In his emotional welcoming speech, Khun Boonleue could hardly hide his teary eyes and expressed disappointment that the villagers are now forced to leave their homes for generations. Later the guests were treated to a Menora performance by 17-year-old Siamese Soi Sudha Chem, the fifth generation Menora dancer in her family and a tour of the historic Siamese and Burmese cemetery in between the village and the Wat Chaiyamangkalaram Temple.

The news of Kampung Siam's eviction has become a hot topic of discussions in newspapers and social media and naturally it is drawing a lot of angry reactions from the public. It is telling us more unwelcome developments are coming and Penang with its current uncertain policies on heritage protection especially those outside the boundary of UNESCO WHS, will keep losing its tangible and intangible heritage. Should

we just lament and be swallowed by the ugly flow of events? Absolutely not! Keep lobbying to save these historic sites and for the residents from Kampung Siam, let them remain to live in the vicinity of Pulau Tikus. This is vital to sustain their cultural identity and to unite this small and yet vibrant ethnic minority that makes Penang so special.

PHT intends to start a fund to set up a special centre in this area with the aim to preserve and promote the Siamese culture and history of Pulau Tikus. We are looking for volunteers and funding support to carry out this task and hope to count more people in to keep our Siamese culture alive in Penang.



Kampung Siam endangered by urban development (Photo credit: Trevor Sibert)



A sketch by Luisa Hung on the Menora costume and traditional musical instruments found in Kampong Siam, Pulau Tikus during the PHT site visit on 10 April, 2016.

By Clement Liang

DOCUMENTING FOND MEMORIES

Pulau Tikus Cross-Currents



Greets you in front of the Pulau Tikus Police Station (Photo credits to Leslie A. K. James)

When we arrived in Pulau Tikus twelve years ago, its attraction was the atmosphere of a community within a community, with quiet residential streets close to the sea, and ample local services like banks and a post office, dentists and medical practitioners, as well as many varied restaurants and kopitiam and, of course, the Pulau Tikus market. Much of this attraction remains but much has been lost.

Among the features that have been lost are the quiet residential streets. Converted to a one-way system the main east-west arteries have become

noisy racetracks. Even the side streets have become raceways, not only for the mat rempit on motorbikes but also for the Lewis Hamilton wannabes in their souped-up overpowered cars. With exhaust silencers removed these anti-social hooligans race the one-way streets at night trying to make as much engine noise as possible.

One of the greatest threats to the community's identity, however, is the proliferation of monster high-rise luxury tower blocks that anecdotal evidence suggests are destined to remain only partially occupied as owners resort to short-term Airbnb vacation rentals. Approvals for the building of these towers appear to be haphazard with no apparent plan or consideration for the impact on their neighbourhoods. Two such towers in the immediate vicinity of the Pulau Tikus market have turned parking there into a nightmare. Elsewhere they extend like massive walls shutting out the morning sun from the streets and houses below. One of these towers includes an ugly multi-storey carpark that looms over the historic golden stupa of the Thai temple facing Kelawei Road. At the other end of the Thai temple compound "development" is forcing the eviction of the residents of historic Kampung Siam so that a budget hotel can be built.

Voices committed to strengthening and protecting the Pulau Tikus community find few platforms as the media remain strangely silent, preferring to trumpet the interests of property developers. One lonely voice is that of the energetic Pulau Tikus state assemblywoman whose latest project is the decoration of local bus stops with artistic posters depicting and extolling the cultural values and characteristics of the different communities that have called Pulau Tikus home.

Can Pulau Tikus survive the pressures of so-called development? As this article goes to print, the seawall along Gurney Drive is being topped by a tall fence and offshore rigs are laying booms in preparation for reclamation works that we are told will create a huge public park called Gurney Wharf. Who would not welcome a public park? Penang desperately needs more public spaces. What we are not told, though, but is evident from a close examination of the Gurney Wharf promotional displays is that the park is really a cloak for an eight-lane expressway along the shore to the entrance of the proposed tunnel under the North Channel, a limited access expressway that will cut off Pulau Tikus from the sea. That must be lamented.

By Leslie A. K. James

REST IN PEACE

Her Love for Penang



Betty Cotton at Beach Blanket Babylon, Penang (Photo credits to Victoria Cattoni)

Betty Cotton passed away on 21 February in Penang, her home for the last eight years of her life. Born in Hangkou in China, 1923, Betty had been married to Percy Cotton, aka 'Butch', before his death in the USA, where the family lived for some years. She is survived by their two children, daughter, Tracy and son, Cameron.

Those who knew Betty well would know that Asia was always within her. It was where she was most at home. In addition to having grown up in China, she and her husband had lived in Japan. Her family had also lived in Singapore for ten years between 1965 and 1975, where the children grew up. When I first met Betty, she was living in Perth, but she was planning her next move. She was very clear about wanting to live out the rest of her life in an Asian country.

Recently, I had the privilege of looking through the photos Betty had taken on her smart phone over the past 6 months. Anybody who had been to Betty's home in Pulau Tikus, would have seen her stunning black and white photographs adorning the walls – they included images taken in Malaysia, Singapore and India. She had begun capturing the world through the lens of her Leica in the 60s. She spoke of living in Shanghai where she had grown up, and of the 'gift' her father had given her for her 13th birthday, the gift of photography: of how amazed she had felt when he had given her a camera: 'Amazed', because she said there she was wearing old threadbare clothes, and yet here she was being given a camera.

I mention Betty's photographs, because they give us a glimpse of how she saw the world. Her recent images of the details of trees and leaves, of Little India, of Chinese New Year, of the rich diversity of

traditional and modern cultural practices around her in Penang. These, along with Betty's hundreds of black and white photographs from the 60s and 70s, reveal a search for beauty in what is before us. They elucidate Betty's intense and perpetual curiosity with life – with the fragility and strength of nature, and of the lives of ordinary people in their particular social and cultural contexts.

Betty died where she wanted to, here in Penang. She will be remembered as a woman of strong opinions and principles, with astute judgment, who didn't suffer fools easily. She was also a funny, sensitive and inspiring woman, inspiring not just for the longevity of her life, but for her unfaltering passionate engagement with life.

By Victoria Cattoni

CLEARING THE WAY

The 5 Foot Way Network Around George Town



photo credit to Pak Idrus's blog
<http://4.bp.blogspot.com/-PB4lZAWt2t8/T4-FO1HMrsI/AAAAAAAAAFHo/0cc1ZcS-Pq0/s1600/KakilimeP.jpg>

Minutes of George Town's 5-foot way Public Consultation held at Auditorium C, KOMTAR, on 22 May 2016

- 1. Lack of integrated 5 foot way network in George Town. Penang Institute has carried out a mapping exercise and found that 10km of 5 foot way and 6km of access points are missing. They are the issues to be addressed in order to make George Town a walkable city.

2. In addition, there is a significant level of variation in terms of levelling between 5 foot way of different houses on the same street, making mobility friendliness an issue for OKU, or even pedestrians for that matter.
3. 5 foot ways are found to be used for motorbikes parks, permanent structures, or removable merchandises/goods, or chairs/tables/social activities.
4. Studies found environmental and economic benefits of accessible 5 foot ways. There is high retail traffic, and car dependency is also found dropping and public transport dependency increasing.
5. Obstructions on Chulia Street: Permanent obstructions, 16 permanent obstructions, 58 Temporary, 44 motorbike parks.
6. Evidences of levelled and beautified 5 and made-safe (covered drain but not allowed in the old city core) foot ways on Pintal Tali and Nagore Road are demonstrated to highlight the values of workability and aesthetics.
7. 1974 Drain, Street and Building Bylaws is sanctioned to slap fines, i.e., RM500, followed by RM1000, and expenses for removal of obstructions, on offenders. This is not the chosen pathway to achieve the objective. Hence, public consultation is sought.
8. Engineering department has assigned four assistants to help in the implementation of making Chulia St 5 foot ways obstructions free, by engaging and educating tenants and owners on Chulia St.
9. Kam, a resident on Chulia St, highlighted homeless folks are sleeping on 5 foot ways, and at times, backpackers. Worse, under alcohol intoxications, some backpackers are found sleeping on the street itself. He also mentioned pedestrians hit their heads against the hanging low arch as they walk and look at smartphones.
10. Samsudin, the boss of the second hand book shop, is the first who commits to remove his temporary obstructions and won compliments of Lim Mah Hui.
11. I raised the questions of awareness level of this project and its motivation for those running businesses in Chulia St, the strategic pathway to ensure the objectives are achieved, and through what channels. I then shared my ideas about education to transform mindset for a start to begin with,
12. The panel then moved on to discuss about door to door visits, kopitiam talks, and forming a business-driven informal committee to mobilise supports, and to sustain the momentum for the initiatives.

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