



## SARAWAK HERITAGE SOCIETY AND SARAWAK TOURIST GUIDES SHARE HERITAGE TECHNIQUES



Participants from various sectors – guides, forestry, tourist police and AZAM collaborate

For the second year in a row, Sarawak Heritage Society has joined forces with the Ministry of Tourism Sarawak to present a workshop on 'Sarawak Heritage and its interpretation for Tour Guides' with members of the Sarawak Tourist Guides Association (SKTGA) from 15 to 17 May. Following on from last year's success, the program was extended into three days in which members of the Society and participants shared information and expertise on Sarawak's heritage.

The workshop was also expanded to include representatives from Sarawak Forestry Corporation, the Tourist Police as well as from AZAM, bringing fresh perspectives and energy to the 3-day program.

The varied program introduced the participants to general heritage principles, as well as to Sarawak's heritage and history, including recent conservation projects in the state such as Forts Margherita and Alice. The participants reported particularly enjoying being on the other side of the guide/tourist relationship when they were taken on visits of two of Santubong's major archaeological sites and



The stories of Santubong unveiled

later of the Chinese History Museum and Ewe Hai and Upper China streets, conducted using heritage guiding techniques by SHS president Karen Shepherd and experienced volunteer heritage guide Paul Gerarts. At the close, the guides reverted to their usual roles, treating the rest of the group to well-researched tours of the historic old Courthouse in Kuching, adding heritage information into their already extensive knowledge of guiding techniques.



Guides share their knowledge in English...

Rose Au, the committee member for Sarawak Heritage Society who facilitated the event and a licensed tour guide herself confirmed that most of those who participated, giving up their time voluntarily, were senior guides. She stated: 'With new heritage guiding skills and knowledge on heritage, they will 'think heritage' and become ambassador storytellers, helping



And in Mandarin!

both to protect and to share our heritage with visitors. They will also enjoy their guiding assignments more. Tour guiding will never be the same again!'

In the course of the workshop, the participants were also given the opportunity to highlight lesser known sites of heritage interest as diverse as St James' Church in Kampung Quop and a durian orchard in Siburan and also to make suggestions to the Ministry representatives on potential problems and solutions for tourism in these sites. Principal Assistant Secretary of the Ministry Connie Christopher Kesa warmly welcomed their input as a means to inform the upcoming meeting of the State Tourism Task Group Committee presided by the Assistant Minister of Tourism Sarawak, Datuk Talip Zulpilip in Sibu at the end of this week.



Participants were given the opportunity to share their expertise

Sarawak Heritage Society President Karen Shepherd said: 'In fact, heritage and tourism are not natural partners, contrary to popular belief. When carefully managed, tourism can help to support heritage conservation, through awareness and of course through income generation. However, when not, tourism can cause untold damage. Therefore, the Society would like to commend the Ministry of Tourism Sarawak for approaching this workshop from a genuine heritage perspective. They have shown that they are committed to the ideal that we share our collective heritage with our visitors rather than allow them to dictate its future.'

She went on to add: 'Personally, I was hugely impressed and heartened by the knowledge, expertise and enthusiasm of the participants. They showed a genuine commitment, not just to enriching their guiding experience but also to heritage protection and concerns in the State.'

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