

SARAWAK



Community street art - The public was invited to contribute to a mural painting in Kai Joo lane, Kuching on Feb. 3. It was a Kuching North City Commission (DBKU) initiative, part of the 'Kuching Clean, Beautiful and Safe' (CBS) project, in collaboration with For Art (F'Art), an Australian non-profit. Source: "[Opportunity to leave your mark in Kai Joo Lane](#)" Borneo Post online, 04 Feb. 2016.

Brooke legacy - The director of the *Brooke Trust* (a UK-based non profit organisation dedicated to the preservation and sharing of the history of the Brooke family) was on visit in Sarawak in February. He said that the **Brooke Gallery** being set up at Fort Margherita in collaboration with the Sarawak Museum is scheduled to open around May this year. He also held discussions on the **Rajah Brooke adventure movie project** and recalled the **project to rebuild James Brooke's ship, The Royalist**, in the UK. The Trust has also progressed in its **e-archive** project, planned to be opened to the public. It was also announced that a special committee comprising of departments and agencies in Sri Aman, and NGOs is to be formed under the Sarawak Museum Department to enrich the museum at the recently restored Fort Alice, Sri Aman. [Press: "[Preserving 175 years of Brooke history](#)", New Sarawak Tribune, 04 Feb. 2016, "[Heritage museum to have committee to improve its facilities](#)" Borneo Post online, 04 Feb. 2016, and "[Sharing a unique heritage](#)" Borneo Post, 14 Feb. 2016.]



Fort Long Akah,
Marudi, 1929

Renewed call to restore Long Akah Fort. An ex-Baram district councillor reissued a call to restore the Brooke era fort located in Long San, Baram (Borneo highlands), downstream of Lio Matu Fort. He recalled that the fort, built in 1929, served as an administrative centre during Vyner Brooke's era and acted as a defense post during the Japanese occupation. "*It saddens me when locals, especially the children, are not aware of the history of this fort. I believe if the government does something about this, the fort would also become a national treasure and tourism attraction*", a

local resident was quoted saying. [Media: "[Turn Long Akah Fort into a cultural attraction, urges ex-councillor](#)", Borneo Post online, 15 Feb. 2016. You may also have a look at 2009 post by a local blogger, entitled "[Long Akah Fort, the forgotten heritage](#)"]

[Long Akah Fort was part of a list of assets that were officially proposed to be registered as heritage sites in 2008. These sites have not been gazetted up to now. The fort thus remains unprotected. In 2015, the Sarawak Government announced an initiative to conserve 14 Brooke era forts but the detailed plan has not been made public. As there are quite a number of Brooke era Forts in Sarawak in various states of conservation, there is a need for prioritization according to solid criteria. In this respect, the information provided Dr John Ting's (University of Canberra) current in-depth research, still to be published, on the forts is probably of precious guidance.]

Tree of Life Exhibition, Kuching - this exhibition by Society Atelier Sarawak (SAS), World Crafts Council Asia Pacific (WCCAP) and World Crafts Council (WCC) took place from 30 January to 21 February in the 'Japanese Building' of the old Court House complex, Kuching. The symbolism of the tree of life is found worldwide and for millenia across most cultures, and can be seen as an universal concept. The exhibition showcased this common thread through pieces, mostly textiles, from across the globe, including from Sarawak where the tree of life features in native culture, for example in the 'pua kumbu' textiles. A guided tour was given on 13 Feb. by the exhibition curator to *Friends of the Sarawak Museum* members. After Kuching, the exhibition will move to India. [Press: "[Tree of Life exhibition launched](#)", Borneo Post online, 31 Jan. 2016; '[Tree of Life' brings world art to Kuching](#)", Borneo Post online, 15 Feb. 2016.]

Call for papers - The **Institute of Borneo Studies** (formerly Institute of East Asian Studies), **Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS)** called for papers for the second issue of its **Borneo Kalimantan Journal**. The BKJ is a new multidisciplinary, peer reviewed, open access publication. Being a publication platform for diverse topics related to Borneo, we understand that it welcomes papers on cultural heritage. [Source: "[Call for papers for Sept 2016 issue](#)", BKJ Facebook, 05 Feb. 2016 and [Journal of Borneo Kalimantan webpage](#).]

MALAYSIA-WIDE AND BEYOND (a look at news on heritage management beyond Sarawak, as food for thought for Sarawak

Good news from Kuala Lumpur... :

Vivekananda Ashram heritage building and its setting definitely saved? - The High Court struck out the bid by the owners, to repeal the decision of the National Heritage Department to gazette the building and its surrounding land. A victory for heritage conservation. [Sources: "[Vivekananda Ashram owner fails to strike out National Heritage Dept's decision](#)", MalayMail

online, 12 Feb. 2016; "[High Court dismisses application to revoke Vivekananda Ashram heritage status](#)" The Malaysian Insider, 13 Feb. 2016.]

... and not so good news from George Town, Penang:

'Runnymede bungalow' no more. An old brick bungalow, part of the ex-Runnymede hotel complex along the seafront on Jalan Sultan Ahmad Shah, and several other constructions, were demolished during the Chinese New Year holiday to make way for a major real estate development. The demolition sparked an outcry by conservation lovers and heritage conservation groups. They said that the bungalow was Stanford Raffles' residence during his Penang times, a claim refuted by the authorities and presumably by the owners. The building was not listed as a heritage item. [Sources: "[Historian raps Penang over demolition of Stamford Raffles' last standing home in Asia](#)" Malay Mail Online, 12 Feb. 2016; "[Netizens too decry Runnymede ancillary buildings demolition](#)", The Star online, 13 Feb. 2016; "[If old buildings could talk...](#)", column, The Star online, 14 Feb. 2016; "[After Runnymede, watchdog fears more heritage buildings will suffer same fate](#)", The Malay Mail online, 20 Feb. 2016; "[Demolition was a grave tragedy](#)", column, The Star online, 22 Feb. 2016; "[Penang govt's lack of will led to loss of Runnymede bungalow](#)", New Straights Times online, 23 Feb. 2016.]

There were also new and more general **calls to strengthen heritage management rules and their enforcement** : see for example "[Party wing and groups voice concerns about heritage issues](#)" in The Star Online, 2 Feb. 2016 (Penang's heritage management seems to be getting increasingly politicized); or "[Destruction of Penang heritage getting worse, says activist](#)", in FMT News, 27 Feb. 2016.

Sky-rocketing shophouse rents - "A drastic increase in rentals has forced 34 tenants to move out of the 55 pre-war properties along Penang Road, Kimberley Street and Lim Chwee Leong Road. (...) Some of the monthly rentals have gone up to RM14,000 from RM2,000 (up by 700%), while others have increased to RM2,000 from RM700 (up by 285%)" reported The Star online. "*I believe the properties here are owned by investors from Hong Kong, who bought them up in 1960s for a shopping mall project*" a shopkeeper is quoted saying. Inflating rentals to get tenants to leave? This is reminder of the double edged impacts in areas which gained popular heritage status, and therefore of the need for agile heritage management frameworks to mitigate the risk of 'loss of soul'. [Source: "[Pre-war shop rent too high](#)", The Star online, 20 Feb. 2016.]