

[Incl. statement on the “renovation” of the Chinese–style pavilion, Museum Gardens, Kuching]

FROM THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

This year, Sarawak Heritage Society (SHS) has continued in its goal to raise awareness on Sarawak's heritage, and its efforts have seen encouraging forward momentum in this pursuit, both at an official and a grassroots level.

An invitation to address the PATA conference on the Roadmap for Kuching to become a Heritage City heralded a wave of increasing involvement by the Society in the activities of the Ministry of Tourism and Heritage (MinTH). Members have been called upon to lend their expertise to a number of briefings, culminating in a Ministry-sponsored visit to Melaka and Georgetown.

To follow up, SHS initiated a briefing by Badan Warisan Malaysia, the heritage NGO group which has been taken on by MinTH as the basis for the new terms of reference for management of heritage in Sarawak.

Amidst all this came a further boost for the profile of heritage status in the form of an award win from the Institute of Architects (PAM) for Arkitek JFN Sdn Bhd's conservation work on the Square Tower.

Yet, there has been some worrying backslide. At the end of last year, members noticed that the Chinese-style pavilion in the Museum Gardens, fondly known as

the Summerhouse, had been renovated with callous disregard to preserving the character of this historical site. SHS has officially expressed its concern and is seeking clarification on how this came about.

This event was closely followed by the news that the old prison building too was earmarked for demolition, despite being over a century old, clearly bringing it under the remit of the antiquities ordinance, and despite its location on the fringe of the heritage core. Once again, SHS has sent a letter of concern about this 'development'.

Elsewhere, SHS has continued its work in education on heritage. The guided site visits continue regularly with members receiving a huge amount of information on a diverse collection of sites from Brooke Dockyard to Kampung Kuap. Many thanks goes to those members and the hosts at the sites who have conducted these tours.

As for the year to come, SHS remains committed to the same goals – public awareness and education on the diverse heritage of Sarawak. This year, we are working closely with the new Ministry on issues pertaining to conservation of our cultural heritage. It will strive to help put in place the framework needed to preserve the heritage core and beyond for future generations.

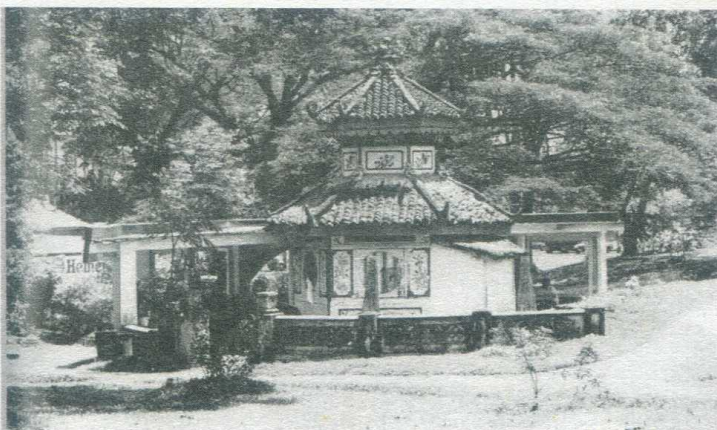


Image of the old Chinese Summerhouse.
(source : "Kuching In 1991" Ho Ah Chon)



The Chinese Summerhouse after recent renovations.
(December 2010)