

CURRENT COMMUNITY BASED PROJECT

“ Reminiscing forgotten treasures ... SINIAWAN ”

This is a joint project implemented by Sarawak Heritage Society & The Talent & Art Performing Group, for Swee Gek Kung Siniawan Sarawak & Supported by BlueScope Lysaght (Sarawak) Sdn Bhd.

INTRODUCTION

In line with the Society's main agendas for the coming years, which is capacity building, public awareness and education to strengthen the understanding on cultural heritage conservation, the Society will continue to work closely with schools and other interested organisations and communities, with lectures, talks and heritage walks.

Other than that, this year the Society will introduce community projects to reinforce public awareness through participation by the local community concerned.

Siniawan Town

The first of this community-based project will be the documentation of Siniawan town, a rare remaining example of early small township about 16 miles from Kuching, where time seemed to have stood still.

Located by Siniawan main road are two rows of 48 wooden shophouses. It has a police station, a Chinese temple, the Ong family mansion, an old abattoir and a primary school. Approaching Siniawan Bazaar, visitors can see Gunung Seremba where Sir 'James Brooke, the first White Rajah of Sarawak had his mountain top resthouse.

Other significant historical event of this place included Datu Patinggi Ali together with other Bidayuh Chiefs staging the famous anti-Brunei movement in 1830s.

This is a flood prone area with the most serious flood in records in 1963, and in 2003 and 2004, where flood water reached the roof top and first floor respectively.

With the new Kuching-Bau road by passing the town centre, the traditional social and economic conditions have been greatly affected. The shop owners are moving out to the housing estate nearby and there is evidence of 'outsider' buying in at low property rates.

Objectives

Through our documentation process that intended to involve the locals, we wish to restore their sense of 'local pride' and hope that they will find a way to sustain their

existence without compromising to development and authenticity.

This inventory-styled documentation process will involve several levels of recording of tangible (i.e. buildings, sites, etc.) and intangible heritage (i.e. trades, lifestyle, culture & history). Both anthropological and historical observation will be benefited from the compilations of written records, i.e. documents kept at the local temple, which also served as their local community center, and also, compilation of oral history that will have to be done from interviews with the local elders.

Based on the documentation, this information gathered will be tools for the next step of proliferating heritage conservation through education and awareness by involving the immediate and other interested members of the local residents and other public volunteers.

Through this process of documentation and eventually sharing the information with the locals through awareness and education, the Society hopes to be able to help them reinforce and foster the understanding of their unique identity, sense of belonging and thus a strong sense of local pride.

This project also aims at providing sustainable economic opportunities to provide the quiet dying town a new



Photo of Siniawan Town taken by KHO HAI SENG in 1937.

For those wishing to inquire about SHS activities, general information, membership or sponsorship, please contact SHS at :

R.O.S. Registration No. :

0071-06-SWK

Correspondence Address :

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October 2008 - June 2009

NEWSLETTER



EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE'S COMMITMENTS

2009 is turning out to be an extremely busy year for members of the society. Staffed entirely by SHS members as well as non-member volunteers, people have had to juggle their day jobs, school, private responsibilities and their duties to the society. As reserves are limited, certain projects were given a priority status over others. These are projects that SHS felt were of a more important or more dire when it came to possible imminent threats of various kinds.

One of the major stumbling blocks towards heritage conservation are a lack luster attitude or even worse; apathy. How many historical monuments, buildings and traditions have disappeared and continue to do so because people simply didn't care or if they were concerned about it, simply hoped someone else would take up the issue and do something about it rather than them. SHS has received many calls from concerned members of the public about what should be done about all sorts of issues and what SHS should go about resolving it.

But how do we change an attitude of indifference to an attitude of progressive forward and proactive thinking? Awareness and constant reminders through various medias and activities aimed at the younger generation is one possible way. This is a long term process where constant reinforcement and perseverance will payoff in the future. Throughout the first half of 2009, SHS continued to pursue the issue of spreading the knowledge and awareness of the importance of heritage to the people with special emphasis on youth organizations and schools.

This is in line with the society's core principles and objectives where we realize that as a small group of people although dedicated, there is only so much that a small group can do. It is the society's hope that once enough awareness has been generated, people will be more understanding of the importance of heritage and how it relates to them. This would also hopefully be spurred towards taking an active role in it's conservation rather than fully depending on others to do it.

It is important to note that the conservation movement will not be effective without the support of the people and the government. Successful heritage conservation requires active participation from the public and NGOs.

We welcome members who wished to be directly involved in the current issues faced by SHS, to join our Executive Committee's monthly meeting, normally scheduled at 5.30pm on the last Tuesday of the month.

SHS can be reached through email at sarawakheritagesociety@gmail.com or be contacted at **082-246810**.

We are looking forward to your encouragement and continuous support.

THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE FOR 2008-2010

Immediate Past President

Datu Abang Janalak @ Aloysius b. Abang Dris

President

Ar. Mike Boon Chee Khian

Vice President

Joseph Ingai Gasing

Secretary

Bong Siak Khiun

Treasurer

Peggy Wong Bik Kay

Committee members

Chai Phay Yung

Hong Boon Kheng

Ian Thomas Parker

Rahah Haji Hassan

Florence Teo Lee Wei *(Member co-opted to replace Rose Au who had resigned from the committee on 05th June 2008 due to her other commitment overseas)*

MEMBERSHIP

Since the inception of the Sarawak Heritage Society (SHS) on 14 February 2006 the Society has 24 registered members to date.

SHS is glad to report that, on March 2008, the Registrar of Societies (ROS) has approved SHS's appeal to amend its constitution to allow Malaysians and non-Malaysians residing in Sarawak to join the society.

Moreover, a new student's membership category has been introduced with immediate effect.



3rd AGM in progress on 13th March 2009.

SHS'S 3RD ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

SHS's 3rd Annual General Meeting (AGM) was held on the 13th March 2009. As it was a non-election year and thus, the Executive Committee members remained the same.

Two amendments to the society's constitution were created and voted on and passed by society members present at the meeting. These amendments were to change the registered address of SHS from the "Ministry of

Urban Development and Tourism" to "c/o 3rd Floor, Lot 2361, No.29 Bormill Estate, Jalan Tun Ahmad Zaidi Adruce, 93150 Kuching, Sarawak".

The other amendment concerned the society's finances whereby an increase of the petty cash amount held by the treasurer was now set at RM500.

OUR NETWORKS

While SHS has received continual support from professional bodies and other NGOs like Badan Warisan and Penang Heritage Trust. We are also actively expanding our network by working with local community-based organizations like The Talent & Art Performing Group (Wujiaoji) and the community of Siniawan Township.

SHS is also beginning to gain support from corporate organization like BlueScope Lysaght (Sarawak) Sdn Bhd who is sponsoring our cultural heritage project at Siniawan, as part of their Community Social Responsibilities (CSR).



Activity (heritage walk) jointly organized by SHS and The Talent & Art Performing Group (Wujiaoji)

GOVERNMENT LIAISONS

Courtesy Visit to Director of Museum Sarawak

SHS also paid a courtesy visit to the new Director of Museum Sarawak En. Ipoi Datan on 29th June 2009. Various issues were discussed including the revival of the State Heritage Committee with a new and clearer organization structure and Term of Reference.



Courtesy visit to Encik Ipoi Datan, Director of Museum Sarawak (L-2)

Record of site investigations



1. Timber Bearer with rotten end.
2. Brick arch detail above door being revealed after removal of unstable wall plastering.
3. Incompatible concrete block wall found, shall be removed.
4. Original opening that was bricked up shall be restored.
5. Removal of unstable plastering revealed outline of Brooke's Coat of Arms.

Conserving the original brick walls

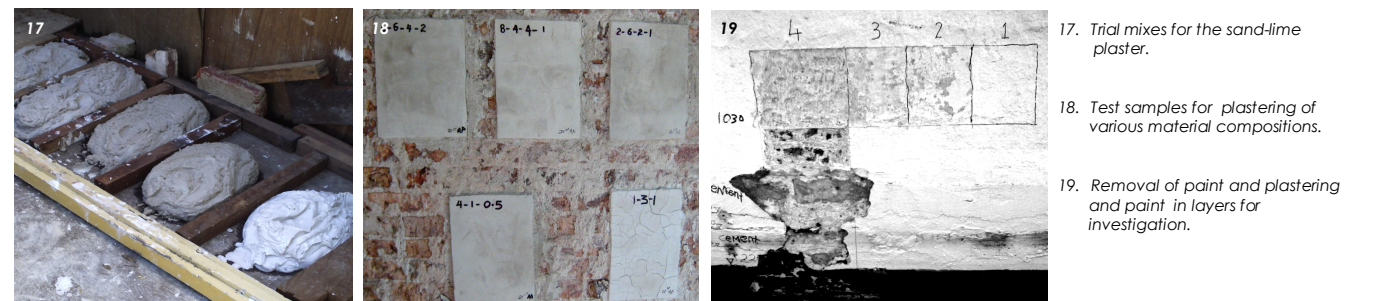


6. Removed plaster to a stable base.
7. Injecting chemical into the base of brick walls to prevent rising damp.
8. Application of 'cocoon' to extract salt in the bricks.
9. Protecting the 'cocoon' from the elements.
10. Removal of the dried 'cocoon' after 21 days.

Restoring the timber bearers



Site samples



17. Trial mixes for the sand-lime plaster.
18. Test samples for plastering of various material compositions.
19. Removal of paint and plastering and paint in layers for investigation.

Conservation of the Square Tower

Text by Ian Parker. Photos by Lim Min Zhen.

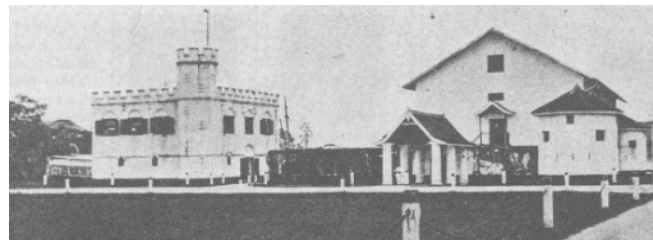
Background

Many residents of the city might have recently noticed that one of the city's iconic waterfront landmarks had been hiding behind a veil and closed off to the public recently. Many have wondered about the reason and some are even concerned about the building's future with all the talk of the waterfront extension and the government plans for the Gambier Street area.

All fears should be laid to rest as plans for the building are not of any malicious activity and the building as a designated heritage structure under Sarawak Cultural Heritage Ordinance, 1993 is to be protected and conserved.

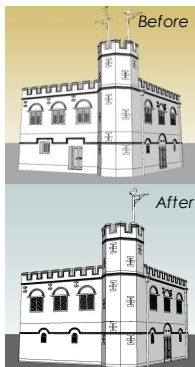
Originally built as a small fort in 1879 to replace a wooden fort located at the same site, it protected the approaches to the southern bank of Kuching from the river in conjunction with Fort Margherita on the Northern bank which was build one year later.

The building has been transformed to a myriad of other uses throughout its long lifetime. From it's original inception as a fort it has seen itself serving roles as a prison, store house and even a dance hall and later occupied by various government agencies.



Square Tower (1879) adjacent to Kuching Prison, extracted from HO AH CHON, KUCHING IN PICTURES 1841—1946

Many people do not realize that the original look of the Square Tower has been changed. Renovations and additions were done to the tower in the last few decades. For example one first floor window was bricked over, a door leading to the outside was created by knocking down a portion of the building's exterior wall and even a toilet was added inside the building. The current conservation work attempted to restore the building back to it's original state as closely as possible.



Although one might be given the impression that the building itself on the surface looks fine, certain critical elements have deteriorated over time which now needs to be addressed. A team of restorers and trained consultants who were familiar with conservation from Arkitek JFN Sdn. Bhd, with Ar. Laurence Loh as Conservation Advisor, will lead the project.

Conservation Process

Conservation is a process where one follows a set of established guidelines of international standards and a

conservator is like an investigator of a building. To initiate the conservation process, a dilapidation report shall be done in order to assess the existing condition of the building. This process allows the conservator to ascertain the "sickness" of the building by thorough inspection, investigation and verification through various tests.

Existing Building Conditions

The basic components of the original fabrics were brick and timber. Samples of the timber members in the building were tested to determine the species while samples of the plaster and brick were tested to determine the salt content as well as plastering composition.

Moisture content in the brick and plaster were also tested on site to determine the level of dampness. All this was done in order to reveal problems and details that would otherwise be invisible with visual inspection.

Among the most pressing issue is the roof of the Square Tower which was found to be leaking badly. The water proofing membrane (installed in 1993) has exceeded it's life-span and has cracked thus allowing water to seep through. This caused dampness in the walls of the building which led to the rotting of the buildings timber components that were in direct contact with the wall. The wall was also affected by rising damp at the base of the brick walls on the ground floor. This destabilized the salt deposit within the wall, if left untreated will weaken the structural strength of the wall itself.

The ends of the belian joists and beams supporting the roof structure suffered wet rot where it was embedded into the damp wall. The rotted ends were cut off and a steel extension were introduced to carry the loading.

Scope of Works

The conservation works on the Square Tower's walls started with stripping the acrylic paint and damaged plaster back to a stable base to prepare for "desalination" of the wall. This was done using the "cocooning" method where pharmaceutical grade cellulose fibers in poultice form, soaked in distilled water, was applied to the walls and left there for 14 to 21 days where the salt content in the walls will be drawn out into the poultice. The paste dries to form a "cardboard" layer which was then peeled away and a sample of the brick was again sent for testing to determine if the salt content has decreased to an acceptable level. Once done, the wall was then re-plastered with sand lime plaster and chemical sealant was applied to the base level of the ground walls to create a damp proof course to prevent any rising damp to affect the ground wall in future. The plaster surface was brushed with lime wash as finishing coat.

The original technique and materials that made up the roof were unknown. In light of this, it was decided that a metal roof was to be used as a reversible addition to stop the leaks that were the main causes of the problems. This metal roofing and the frame that held it up can easily be removed in future if details of the original roofing came to light.

The conservation team continued to look for clues on site hoping to find some evidence of the original construction of the roof.

Courtesy Visit to Minister of MUDT

SHS held a meeting with the Minister of Urban Development & Tourism Sarawak (MUDT), YB Datuk Michael Manyin Ak Jawong, on 29th January 2009, and the discussion can be summarized as below:

- The Ministry informed that RM 7 million was approved for landscaping works at old markets along Gambier Street by the State Cabinet.
- Dewan Undangan Negeri (DUN) will decide the fate of old markets.
- MUDT is looking at the issue on how the heritage buildings can boost tourism in Kuching.
- SHS presented views on the Conservation of the Historical Buildings along Gambier Street and submitted a Conservation Report featuring measured drawings and a proposal for their conservation to the Minister.



Presentation of the conservation report to the Minister of MUDT, YB Datuk Michael Manyin Ak Jawong

AWARENESS AND EDUCATION PROGRAMMES

Heritage Talks & Walks to students

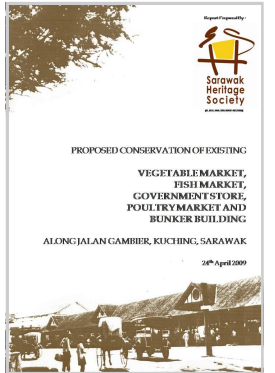
Public awareness and education remains the main focus of the SHS committee and are achieved through meetings, outings and heritage walks with various interested groups. Since the last newsletter, SHS has conducted such activities with the following entities:

- Lecture on the History of Urban Development of Old Kuching was conducted to 24 UTM architecture students on 12th Feb 2009.
- Talk on preparation of conservation report to UNIMAS students on 26th Feb 2009.
- Heritage walk conducted to SM Ming Lik of Batu Kawa on 23rd April 2009.
- Heritage walk conducted to members of Wujaoji Talent & Art Performing Group on 01st May 2009.
- Heritage talk to members and teacher-in-charge of History Club of SMB St. Joseph on 2nd May 2009.



SHS's Proposal for Revitalization of Historical Buildings Along Gambier Street

SHS hosted a small gathering of guests and reporters at a local restaurant immediately after their 3rd AGM on the 13th March 2009. During the gathering, SHS President Mike Boon gave a detailed presentation about the history and uniqueness of the buildings that made up Gambier Street and it's impact on the entire area from economics to demographics. Included in the presentation were computer generated images of how the area would look like if the buildings were preserved, with removal of unsympathetic additional modification to reveal it's original character and trees planted to create a green promenade to co-exist with the Kuching Waterfront Extension. Overall, there was a very positive feedback from the audience about the presentation with many staying behind after the event discussing the fate of the old markets.



Exhibition at Building Trade Show (BTS)

SHS also exhibited the above proposal on the conservation of the historical structures at Gambier Street to the general public at BTS 2009, from 26th to 28th March. The organizer, Pertubuhan Arkitek Malaysia Sarawak Chapter (PAMSC) (Institute of Architect Malaysia) contributed two booths to SHS, free of charge. During the exhibition, SHS displayed panels of images showing history of the markets through old photographs; and 3-D graphic presentation of the proposal. A model made by students of Lim Kwok Wing Institute of Creative Technology showing their independent ideas of how the old markets can be included in the development of the waterfront extension project was also exhibited. Our booth attracted the public and many who signed the guest book also gave encouragement and support to the society's proposal.



Students volunteered at SHS's booth in BTS exhibition

Guided Tour on Conservation Process of the Square Tower Building

A tour was conducted to the Square Tower at Kuching Waterfront which is undergoing conservation for interested SHS members and a small group of students on 14th June. During the tour, Ar. Mike Boon gave very

detailed insights to the group, on the construction methods of the tower, it's present state of disrepair and the work involved to conserve it. He highlighted the structural and construction techniques of the tower used by the original builders and pointed out their ingenious methods to overcome problems and other short comings due to limited choices of building materials and the soft muddy condition of the river bank. With a good turnout, it is hoped that other specially arranged tours on historical buildings in the city will be conducted in the future.

Heritage Talk To Public on World Heritage Listing

In response to the call by the Minister of MUDT to consider heritage listing for a series of old streets in the historical precinct of Kuching City, a Heritage Talk was organized by Sarawak Tourism Federation (STF), supported by PAMSC & SHS on 21st April 2009. The talk entitled "Potential for Kuching to be Listed by UNESCO as a Heritage City" introduced the concept of World Heritage to the public. The evening talk received an overwhelming response from the general public and concluded with a dynamic Question & Answer session where active interaction among the public with the speakers was most encouraging. This indicated that we have made the first step towards the direction of a soul enriching journey.



Heritage Talk on World Heritage Listing by Ar. Laurence Loh & Mdm Lye Pit Chin on 21.04.2009.

Mdm Lye Phit Chin (Auyang San) passionately told stories of people from all walks of life that gave meaning to the historical fabrics in Malacca. She related that every family has a little story, which when compiled becomes the story of the community and eventually, the story of a nation.

Ar. Laurence Loh shared the Penang experience on the road to become a city inscribed on the World Heritage List. He related the process, procedure and criteria of UNESCO to become a world heritage site where public consultation and participation is a critical part of the process. In his opinion, the rich cultural heritage of Sarawak has great potential to put Sarawak on the World Map. The key to success is how to link the diverse heritage values to tell a unique story. It has to be a story that has 'outstanding universal value', which cannot be replicated anywhere else in the world.

Both speakers emphasized that achieving the inscription on the World Heritage List, is not the end of this process. Subsequently, this will definitely raised public awareness in appreciation of their Cultural Heritage. That would instill the sense of 'local pride' that encouraged the public to take ownership of their urban cultural setting. The sense of responsibility will in return evoke the public's accountability to care for their living environment, which will eventually result in a better quality of life.



Ar. Laurence Loh from Penang is a professional architect for over 35 years. He is a prominent member of many international heritage organization eg. the International Council of Monuments and Sites; consultant to ICCROM, Unesco, World Bank, etc. He was also an International Assessor in Macau's successful bid for listing as a World Heritage Site and also a member of the Penang State Heritage Committee which was responsible for the Unesco Submission Dossier for Georgetown's listing as a World Heritage Site.



Madam Lye Pit Chin (Au Yang Sang) from Malacca is an award-winning author, senior reporter as well as an editor for Sin Chew Daily Newspaper. A collection of her articles on heritage issues was published as a book titles "The Lost Stories of an Old City". Her article "The Story of the Red Wall" concerning the excavation of the old fortress of Malacca has won the Chinese Literature Competition organized by Sin Chew Daily Newspaper. She also gives lectures to tourist guide associations in Malacca as well as in colleges in Kuala Lumpur.

Photography Competition and Exhibition - "Capturing History, Sharing Stories"

A Photography competition held on the 3rd of May, was jointly organized by The Talent & Art Performing Group, Wixin Photography, PAMSC, SHS and STF. The theme of "Capturing History, Sharing Stories" was chosen to bring awareness to the old streets of Kuching city which carried many memories of bygone generations forming the stories of the lives of people in that area.

The competition brought the photographers to experience the old character of the city and to absorb it's ambiance. The photographers were challenged not only in their skill of using their equipment but also their sensitivity to capture three images which they felt would best represent the theme.

The areas chosen for the competition were along Gambier Street, Khoo Seng Hai Street, Java Street, Market Street and India Street up till Brooke Dockyard. SHS members accompanied the photographers on their tour of the area and it was treated like a Heritage Walk where points of interest and history of the designated streets were pointed out to the photographers as they clicked away doing their best to capture the "essence" of the street life. There were over 70 submissions for the competition and the photos were displayed for Public viewing in Sarawak Plaza which graciously contributed their space from the 9th to 17th May. SHS sponsored RM1,500 as part of the prize money for the event. Judges comprised of chief judge Kim Teoh who is an internationally reknown photographer from Kuala Lumpur, Mike Boon (SHS president) and Ar. Hubert Kueh representing PAMSC.

There were 3 top prizes as well as 10 consolation prizes. All in all the competition was considered as a great success from the positive feedback received. This photography competition was part of SHS's many activities held in order to bring attention to the plight of the Gambier Street Markets and it's importance to the "old Kuching" section.

PHOTOGRAPHY COMPETITION AND EXHIBITION "Capturing History, Sharing Stories"



1st Place— Tan Yan Lin.
Text by Tan : «被遗忘的时光»

Text by Asfan :

L. Lorong Dockyard

At the end of Lebuah Jaya is a small alley called Lorong Dockyard, which used to be roofed. Here, traders sold all sorts of cheap and easy to carry items on its five-foot way. Now, it is just an empty alley connecting Jalan Market to the famous Brooke Dockyard.

C. Brooke Dockyard

This is part of the Brooke Dockyard where small vessels berth for minor repairs. It was established in 1912, one of the oldest shipyard in Malaysia.

R. The Old Railway Tracks

Across Jalan Market from Lorong Dockyard, there is an alley, which leads to the once famous **CATHAY** cinema. Here, you will notice part of an old railway tracks leading to the Brooke Dockyard.



2nd Place—Asfan Bin Bujang



3rd Place—Kho Yeh Wei

Text by Kho : «古墙巷角»

古晋甘蜜街是古街要道，多元彩色的古墙建筑的壮严与巷角的乞怜，构成巨大的讽刺。

Selected Photos From Consolation Prizes

