

May - June 2008
Volume 5, Issue 3

Heritage News

A bi-monthly newsletter of the Perak Heritage Society. For Members only.

Greetings!



Sybil's Clinic in Papan.
photo : Julie

The PHS fund-raising event at Taman Budaya Negeri Perak has set us up for our project: Documenting Perak Heritage. Thanks go to The Actors Studio, sponsors, Event Organising Chairman, Audrey Poh and her team of volunteers, Perak Academy, Perak Society of Performing Arts, and everyone who came in support of the PHS Show.

There is no question that the legacy of Sybil Kathigasu is a Malaysia heritage etched in the history of WW2 in Perak. We simply cannot forget it. Yet, despite feature stories in newspapers and magazines in recent years, many people, it seems, have not heard of Sybil Kathigasu. Here is a brief account about her.

A Catholic Eurasian, Sybil Kathigasu (1899-1948) was one empowered woman who became a beacon for humanity. She was a trained nurse and a mid-wife while her husband, Dr Abdon Clement Kathigasu, born in Taiping of Ceylonese parentage, was a general practitioner specializing in obstetrics. Together, they operated a successful clinic in Ipoh. As the Japanese bombed Ipoh in December 1941, they left town and found a shophouse in Papan, a small tin-mining town in the Kinta Valley. They rented it and made it their home and clinic. When the doctor resumed his practice in Ipoh a few months later, Sybil stayed back in Papan and ran the small clinic until August 1943.



Sybil Kathigasu
aged 37.

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Views and opinions expressed by contributors do not necessarily reflect those of the Editorial Committee. Verification of facts and statistics are the responsibility of the respective writers.

Sybil was strongly anti-Japanese. Defiantly, and secretly, of course, she listened to BBC radio broadcast on her short-wave radios, and gave medical treatment to the anti-Japanese resistance fighters hiding in the hills of Papan. Not surprisingly, perhaps, her activities were punishable by death.

When the Japanese Military Police, the Kempeitai, became suspicious, she was arrested, interrogated and tortured until she became partially paralysed. She languished in Batu Gajah jail until after the war. She was sent to England for treatment. Recovering, she received the George Medal, a civilian award for bravery. Sybil is the only Malayan woman recipient ever. She succumbed to injuries sustained during the horrendous tortures and died in Lanark, Scotland on 12th June, 1948. Months after her death, Sybil was brought back to Ipoh and was buried in the cemetery at St Michael's Church.

The unique terrace houses in Ipoh's Fair Park are disappearing! To highlight the demolition, we reproduce for you Azizi bin Ahmad Termizi's blog page. We are glad that people like Azizi bother to communicate this through the internet. If you notice any heritage under threat do not hesitate to contact us at perakheritage36@gmail.com

Enjoy.

READERS' WRITE

"My first impressions when I opened the attachment were... wow! I like the font and I like the colour pictures. The pipeline story was great. Lots of detail and historical fact included. It was good to see all the photos of the pipeline. It's a sad story and I guess it won't have a happy ending." -- Liz, KL

Editor: Read Liz's contribution on page 7, this issue.

"What a shame about the iron pipeline - the scrap metal value of it must be amazing!!!" -- Darryl, Cambodia

"A great edition! To feature the water pipe demolition in this issue was a very important thing to do - it raises the whole notion of industrial heritage a big notch. Brilliant!" -- Nick, KL

"Well Done! Very informative, very impressive, well researched and all essence of Perak's rich heritage captured. This will help both the present and the future generations to treasure and remember their rich heritage, without taking it for granted." -- Colin, Singapore

FAREWELL TO IPOH 'S FAIR PARK

By courtesy of Azizi bin Ahmad Termizi (Blog page, 10 May 2008)

Buildings make up most of a city's built-up area. When well-designed, even a single building is enough to stand out with its attractive appearance. In a group, they constitute an even stronger presence as a visual feast for the eyes. However, in our age of mega-sized shopping malls and multi-storey office complexes, it is very easy to overlook some of these aging, but otherwise quaint and, historical structures. One such example is the Fair Park residential scheme in Ipoh, an area with a strong character and history of its own.

Fair Park is a British Colonial period housing scheme located right smack in the centre of Ipoh city, off Jalan Kamaruddin Isa – formerly Fair Park Road. But when it was first built, in the 1930's, it was to be found on the outskirts of Ipoh town. Just beyond it would be forests and kampong areas, including Kampong Kepayang, Fair Park, which is my birth place.

When I was small, I remember going to the hairdresser's in Fair Park, pillion riding on my Tok Hussein's motorbike. We'd pass by the single row of wooden shophouses before passing through Fair Park itself. The hairdresser's was just across the main road from the earliest section of Fair Park to have been built. You can imagine why Fair Park has a special place in my heart. This place is inextricably linked to my Kampong Kepayang – physically, in name, as well as, the fond childhood memories it brings.

According to Ms Rosy Tan, a resident for 30 odd years, Fair Park was developed in 1939. The oldest section, which sits on an area of about 2 acres, comprises 60 terrace-housing units arranged in five parallel rows of 10 separate blocks. It was designed by a British architect firm, Iverson & Co. It had a handsome design with modern facilities. All housing units have three bedrooms and a toilet. Each toilet comes with a flushing system – something of a novelty (not to mention a rarity) for houses back in the 1930s. The houses also come with a chimney up on the roof. But it is for the cooking stove rather than a living area fireplace.

A concrete entrance canopy grace the front of the houses providing some shade and protection from rain. However, it is rather small compared to what we Malaysians are used to today. Nevertheless, the front façade have remained intact as none of the units have any additional structure to their canopies. This, to me, is quite amazing, when you consider that one of our favourite national past time is extending our houses.

I am not clear as to the architectural style of Fair Park. However, it was built and designed in the late 1930s when Art Deco was the in thing. To my untrained eyes, some traces of this can be detected in the form of the concrete canopies above the front windows.

below (L to R):

L : Entrance. Original concrete canopy over front door and window.

M : View of a slightly newer section of Fair Park.

R : Scene of demolition job in progress



Signage on the main road, Jalan Kamaruddin Isa.





Traces of Art Deco features

Being the latest offering of an up-market housing area meant that Fair Park attracted mostly English tenants when it was first completed. In fact, if one were to flag down a rickshaw to go to Fair Park back then, one has only to mention “kee ah molau” – which means “go to the English houses” in Hokkien – for you to be promptly taken there. My mother still remembers that, when she was making her way home from her primary school those days, she would often stop by along the way to play around with the “Mat Salleh” (whites) kids.

After Malaya’s independence, most of the Mat Sallehs left for Britain. However, Fair Park continued to be an affluent and exclusive community. The Mat Sallehs were soon replaced by rich Chinese towkays and prominent Ipoh professionals – doctors, lawyers and politicians. Heck, if there was

a Bel Air for Ipoh in the pre-Merdeka days, it would have been Fair Park !

Alas, after almost 70 years standing tall, Fair Park is now being demolished to make way for new development. This, I sadly discovered last weekend when I was back in Ipoh to visit my parents.

A check around the neighborhood revealed conflicting answers as to what will be developed over Fair Park’s site. “A health centre” offered Ms Rosy Tan. Yet the local newspaperman was quite adamant that it shall be a multi-storey shopping complex. Whatever stands in place of the old Fair Park, things would never be the same again for this part of Ipoh. And as the old English saying goes: “out of sight, out of mind”. Soon enough Fair Park will be forgotten and lost in history.

This need not have been the case. For if the authorities had been more sensitive to history, some research would have established the social and historical significance of Fair Park. Its architectural values could have been documented. The place could have been conserved. Even if that was not possible, at least the documentations would have been useful for future generations as a record of Ipoh history, as well as, homage to a piece of our heritage.



Passage between the blocks.



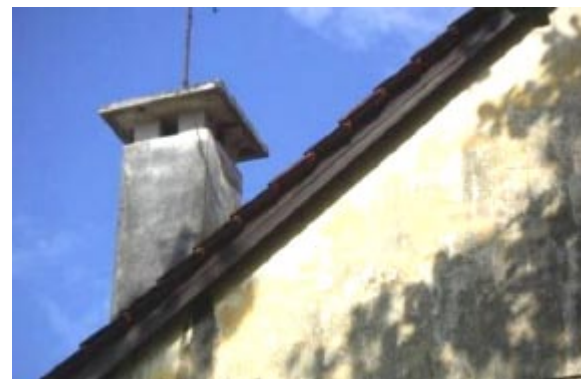
Sprightly and friendly Ms Rosy Tan, her beautiful garden and letter box.



Second floor. Notice the red brick used for construction. They are still in good form.



Unique profile of side wall.



Chimney for the cooking stove below



‘Heritagings’: Fun with heri.discoveries

The process of ‘heritaging’ consists of site visit, observation, learning from the experts and follow-on reading and research.

The process is enjoyable, learning through observation on site and asking questions. For answers, try to get them from the locals, and then consult the experts and heri.friends in the heritage network. Some information gathering and research will be necessary to substantiate a good story.

This process provides for adventure, good fun and often good food nearby. There is satisfaction when information comes forth, and fascination when pieces of the puzzle come together.

Now, go out and enjoy!

HERI.GORILLAS IN THE MIST

Edited extract from Siak Hong’s talk to the Taiping Heritage Society (see report last issue).

‘What is Heritage?’

There is no simple answer. Dictionary definitions are inadequate, like: what has been, or can be inherited; a legacy. It is not specific enough. So, we refer to the National Heritage Act 2005 for clarification. This, too, has many shortcomings: because without specific identification, subjective judgment must be used, and that creates problems of interpretation.

From the original focus on natural sites, buildings and objects, ‘heritage’ has become the operative word, the catch-phrase, often misused for anything that is old and neglected, abused, or threatened with loss or depletion, without any judgment on its value to the community, often the majority stakeholder by sheer numbers.

Referring to a community-centred interpretation: ‘Caring for your Community’s Heritage’, issued by the Heritage Council of Western Australia, in the year 2000, here is what we get:

Natural Heritage

- All features in our environment: magnificent forests, hills, valleys, rivers, waterfalls, caves, mangrove swamps, jungles, lakes and seas.

Cultural Heritage is all man-made, and it can be tangible or intangible.

Tangible Cultural Heritage: buildings, bridges, streetscapes, man-made landscapes, gardens, relics, World War 2 installations, industrial and mine sites, cemeteries, statues, jetties, monuments, artifacts.

Intangible Cultural Heritage: skills, old trades, memories, language, music, folksongs, dance, poetry, story telling, martial arts.

Tourism potentials of Cultural Heritage

Indigenous and non-indigenous, home-grown or imported, our heritage reflects the bio-physical and cultural diversity of our society.

Why is heritage so important? Because human progress can be measured by the degree our heritage is embraced and protected by our communities. In fact, the appreciation of and care for our heritage contribute directly to society and its cultural development.

Heritage matters because it helps people understand what kind of community they live in, what it was, and what it hopes to be. It defines what is distinctive about the local area and its people. It establishes identity and makes one suburb or town different from another. Heritage enriches our lives. It makes us human.

For the community, its heritage is a valuable economic asset. Part of that value is realized in its appeal to tourists, who are increasingly looking for cultural tourism (heritage) experiences.

What may be experienced are the people and the community, cultural identities and landmarks. Knowledge of the past is critically important to local communities. It gives a sense of being anchored to a place. Local knowledge, legends and memories offer fascinating stories. As witness to history, heritage sites can easily bring the stories to life.

It has been found that the community’s concern for heritage has sprung from a desire to protect places and structures which they regard as important and which they want to conserve and pass on to the future generations; for example, places which are:

- Evidence of important aspects of the past
- Aesthetically pleasing
- Important to the social life of the community or
- Particularly rare and interesting.

History is intrinsic to Heritage. To further explore the depth of heritage, social historians and anthropologists have become prominent, for human interest is the stuff of heritage. Our Heritage gives us our identity. Heritage and History must be made relevant to people and their communities. Vanishing trades may be promoted, but without sustainable business strategies, it would only amount to flogging a dead horse.

Every building tells a story

What is true about a heritage building is that, once gone, you can never get it back. That is why, seeing one completely destroyed can be heart-breaking. The fate of buildings and their environment lies in the hands of their owners, but other stakeholders with an interest in its continued presence can be formidable.

Buildings, sometimes referred to as built heritage, seem to corner the heritage agenda. Why? Buildings are important for human activities. They are repositories (storehouses) of history, legacies and memories. Every buildings tells a story.

Heritage buildings are quantified as real estate and its 'use' value is its occupancy. PHS member and architect, Ken Yeh says, 'You may have a large bank account and some wonderful buildings, but only the buildings have a history.'

Why should we re-use old buildings?

The fast-changing urban streetscape is not necessarily a good development. The 3Rs for the environment: Reduce, Re-use and Re-cycle is directly applicable to building conservation. The amount of energy invested in constructing a building - equivalent to about 12 gallons of gasoline per square foot - is enough to cool and light the building for 15-20 years. When we tear a structure down we are negating the amount of energy, human thought and ingenuity that had put it there in the first place. The better (more efficient) the building, the higher is the human input. The respect and care given to that input is what makes us cultural creatures with a mind to regenerate.

An architectural critic said: Values always decay over time. Societies that keep their values alive do so not by escaping the process of decay but by tapping into the powerful process of regeneration.

Echoing the Badan Warisan Malaysia (Malaysia Heritage Trust), the following issues are of common concern:

1. Understanding cultural significance and reasons for listing of heritage 'items';
2. Promoting heritage education – what is the best way to teach the younger generation that history matters and heritage counts;
3. Identifying a model for good co-operation between regulatory authorities, owners and NGOs;
4. Identifying standards and guidelines on conservation and preservation.

Who determines a nation's heritage - the government in power or the learned in society? Why are the learned overwhelmed by the policy-makers? Well, simply put, the bottom line is power and money. Not that you can do without them.

Heritage appreciation is a life-long process. If you are no closer to understanding what heritage is, fret not. It is not good just talking about it. You have to do something about it by getting involved.

More Photos of Fair Park



Side elevation of a block



The road dividing two rows facing each other. A cosy and relaxing atmosphere. Just imagine this space teeming with life and activities back in its heydays.



There are only three units left still with occupants. The rest have left to make way for the demolition job. This is the front view of Ms Rosy Tan's residence.

Interesting read in
Heritage Asia,
Feb-Apr 2008

A Tale of Two Fortunes
By Ho Tak Ming:

'...coffee and tin formed an unusual backdrop of a saga at Tambun, near Ipoh, involving an English Inspector of Mines and a Chinese tin miner,, that had all the elements of a Greek tragedy for one, and a fairy tale with happy ending for the other.'

Delving Into Malaysia's
Cavernous Past
By Liz Price

'The development of Malaysian pre-historic archaeology has depended largely on discoveries made on sites in limestone caves...providing much of our knowledge about the ancient cultures in Malaysia's history.'

Nation: old 'new villages' and historic houses

During the Emergency, triggered by the murders of three English planters in Sungai Siput (Utara) on 16 JUN 1948, the Briggs Plan was implemented. Ostensibly to control supplies to the Communists by their rural sympathizers, settlers in out-lying areas were relocated to some 450 'gated' new villages, fenced by barbed wire, throughout Malaya. Should we preserve some streets of timber houses for their architectural history? The development of these villages offers an interesting comparison with the FELDA settlements, which followed a few years later.

Ipoh: Yuk Choy High School Centennial Celebrations

Independent Chinese schools are funded by benefactors and the community. Founded in 1908, Yuk Choy operated in three shophouses on Jalan Lahat belonging to Yau Tet Shin. The school's history will be told in their special centennial publication. For details, call 05-5061726.

Ipoh: Anderson School Centennial next year

Ahead of the centenary, former principal, Dato' N S Delvmany wrote *Journey of the Andersonians: Who's Who*, which track the noteworthy careers of hundreds of former students of this premier school. Of these, HN notes heri.personalities: the Chairman of the Malaysian Heritage Trust (Badan Warisan Malaysia) Tan Sri Ahmad Sarji Abdul Hamid and Dato' Mohd Khalid, Lat the cartoonist. Meanwhile, in the shade of the old rain tree at one corner of the school ground, the Old Andersonians' Club House continues to attract locals with its eatery with quality Indian food.

Taiping: SMK King Edward VII School celebrates its 125th anniversary

SMK King Edward VII celebrates its 125th anniversary this year with a gala dinner, two rugby tournaments and the launch of a coffee table book, a limited edition of 3,000 copies. The school takes pride in having produced many illustrious Malaysians. For more info, call Mohaideen: 019-5784786 or V Sivananthan: 012-5001115.

Penang: Fort Cornwallis saved

Perak Pioneer, established in 1894 and 'the oldest and most widely circulated newspaper in the Federal Malay States', reported in 1908 that the mercantile community of Penang advocated the removal of Fort Cornwallis. The government, however, chose to retain the 'picturesque old structure' as a Police barrack. Thus, a Malaysian heritage was saved.

Taiping: 5 old shophouses burnt out at noon

Apparently, the fire started in a Nasi Kandar shop at No.40, Chung Thye Phin Road. Facing the 1884 Central Market, the shophouses are of the 1890s Transitional Style. Old trades snuffed out included a Chinese ceremonial paper-craft shop and a rattan dealer.

KL: Khazanah Brickfields

The Badan Warisan conducts an education programme with Digi Telecommunications for the Digi Amazing Malaysian programme: 'Khazanah Brickfields'. Over 70 schoolchildren between the ages of 9 and 16 years become 'treasure hunters', as they discover the heritage of Brickfields.

Penang: Suffolk House

Restored for RM6.3million to its 1812-1820 state, the sole surviving Georgian residence in Malaysia, built by Captain Francis Light, will open by the end of the year as a cultural, historical and art collection centre for Penang. It will feature furniture once belonging to Eu Tong Sen, a wealthy tin-miner in Perak who created the Eu Yan Sang Pharmaceutical Empire originating from Gopeng, Perak.

Chenderong: Dredge TT5

No one has written to us about their visit to the dredge in Chenderong, between Batu Gajah and Tanjong Tualang, but Liz Price's story (STAR, 22 MAR) has done the job, sharing with us her experience in the cavernous silence of this metal monster.

Sarawak: Preserve the forts of the Rajah Brooke era.

President of the Sarawak Heritage Society, Mike Boon has called for a comprehensive conservation plan for forts of historical importance. Apart from the famous restored Fort Margherita, now a police museum, and the Square Tower at the Waterfront area, most of them were built from the hardwood, belian and located in the interior. Towns have grown out of the settlements and trading posts around the forts, which became their administrative centres.

Kampar: The Centennial of the Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus

From a small 1908 plank chapel near the old railway station, built by the French, Father G Chevauche to the imposing masonry 1938 Church building on a hillock overlooking the town, the Church has SEK Co Ltd, Kampar (a French tin-mining company) to thank for the land on which the churches were built. Celebrations ran from 12 to 20 June.

Sabah: 19 heritage sites, for now

In Sabah, the legislative assembly passed the Cultural Heritage (conservation) (amendment) Enactment 2008 on 7 May. The state Tourism, Culture and Environment Ministry have gazetted nineteen heritage sites. Among them are Padang Merdeka, Atkinson Clock Tower, Kota Kinabalu Community Centre, War Memorial, Chong Tain Yun City Park, Tambunan Rafflesia Forest Reserve and the Likas lagoon. Many more sites have been short-listed.

KL Pudu Jail: a historic building under threat

'WW2 veterans are outraged at plans to demolish the historic Pudu jail, where allied prisoners were held and executed during the brutal Japanese Occupation', reports the NST. Many people are upset, including historians who lament the lack of interest in Malaysia heritage. Within walking distance from the tourists' zone of Bukit Bintang, the site is primed for a commercial cum residential complex.

Belum: New role for the Orang Asli

To protect the 'treasures', forest produce such as sandalwood, rattan and agarwood from the Royal Belum Forest Reserve, the Perak police want to involve the indigenous community living in the forest reserve. They could provide information to the police on any illegal logging or criminal activities in the forest.

Kuala Gula bird sanctuary for Ramsar list of wetlands

A Sivanesan, the Perak state executive councillor in charge of Environment, wants to communicate with the state Forestry Department and the state Economic planning Unit to evaluate the viability of listing the Kuala Gula bird sanctuary as a Ramsar site. The listing, he reckons, would promote Perak as an environment-friendly state, which is good for eco-tourism.

Bak Chang: a legend and a delicious speciality

Each year, Duan Wu or the bak chang Festival, is celebrated by the Chinese on the fifth day of the fifth Moon. This year, it fell on 8 June. As the legend goes, Qu Yuan was a patriotic scholar-poet. When the King refused his advice and war ensued, he took his life in despair by throwing himself into a river and vanished. His loyal friends and supporters made dumplings and threw them into the river for the fish so that they would not eat his body. Today, in Malaysia, people enjoy the *bak chang*, a steamed rice dumpling wrapped in bamboo leaves, with savoury fillings in glutinous rice, as the speciality of the day. There are, of course, numerous local recipes for this food of remembrance.

Membership Renewal

The PHS minds your Perak heritage. It needs your continuing support. Don't delay. For only RM20 per year, you'll enjoy the benefits of a priceless PHS membership.

Negeri Sembilan:

Heritage Gold Mine to prosper thy village
The NST 24/5/2007 reported that villagers hoped to turn an old gold mine near Gemas, Negeri Sembilan, into a tourist attraction. The report said the mine was worked in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Today all that remains is a series of tunnels which are home to hundreds of bats. The mine was apparently worked by the British and closed before the Japanese arrived in World War II. It seems to have been dug by hand and the tunnels are generally of a uniform size, and there are shafts down to lower levels, and some leading up to daylight. There is no sign of the railroad tracks which supposedly went into the mine, or of the processing areas outside. The hill above has many trail shafts, some of which connect with the mine below. It would be interesting to find out the real history of the mine. -- Liz Price

MAP OF PERAK

We Care About Our Past

PHS, as we call ourselves, is a non profit-taking non governmental organization.

Our main aim is to promote heritage preservation and raise awareness of our natural and cultural heritage.

An elected committee runs a programme of activities for members and friends.

We network with individuals, groups and local communities for local knowledge.

We support information-gathering on 'hometown heritage'.

Heritage News (HN) is the vehicle for news, views and information to reach our readers.

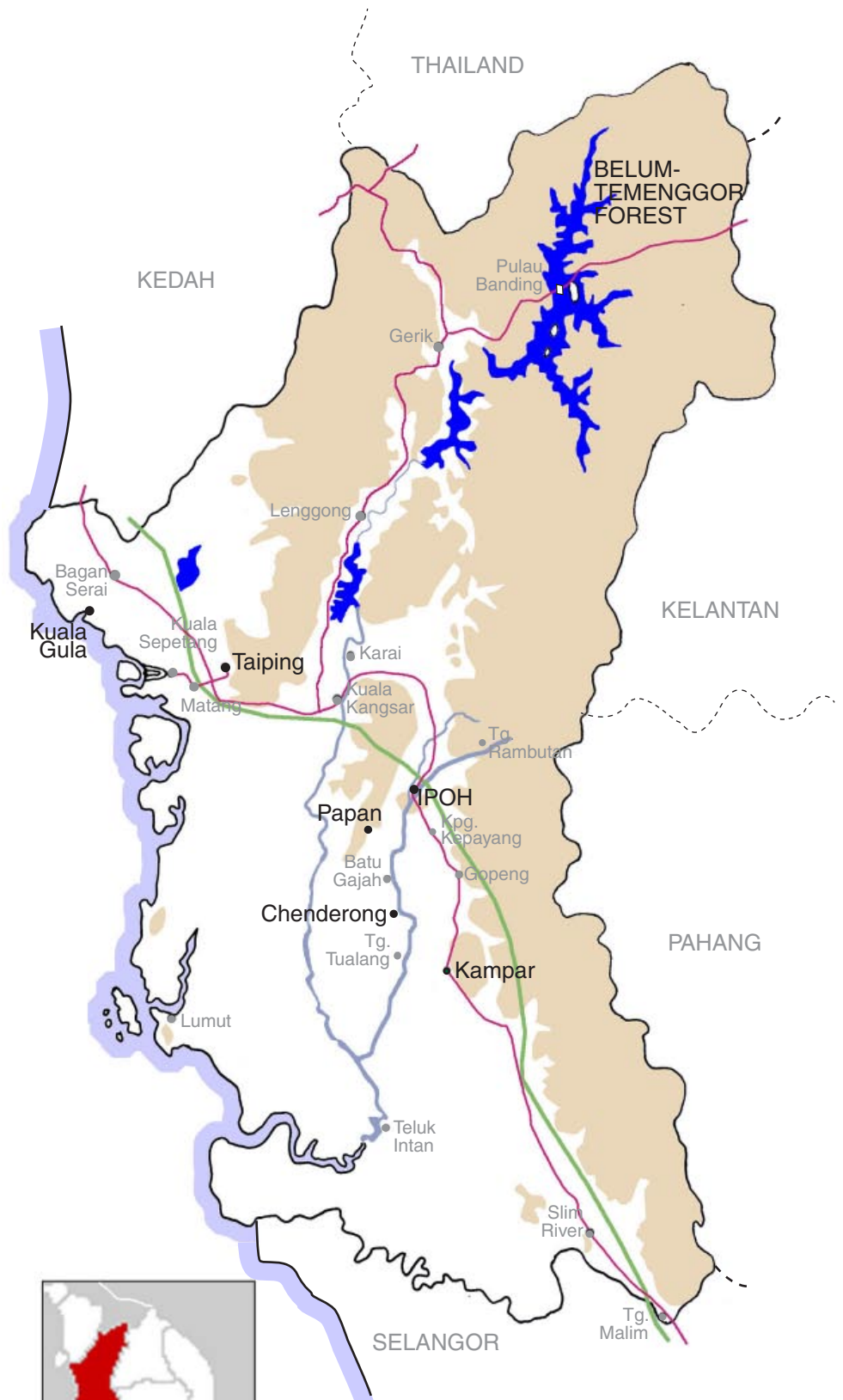
Membership has its privileges; more information and application forms are available from our office.

Persatuan Warisan Perak, the Perak Heritage Society (Reg No:1254) was registered with the Registrar of Societies in August, 2003.

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Location of the state of Perak in Peninsular Malaysia

LEGEND

- Land 150m above sea level
- North-South Expressway
- Main Road