

# Ang Mo Kio

A HERITAGE TRAIL





**M**ention “heartland” and Ang Mo Kio comes to mind for many Singaporeans. Planned and developed in the 1970s, Ang Mo Kio is a quintessential Housing and Development Board (HDB) heartland with its mature neighbourhoods, good hawker food, strong neighbourly relationships and small businesses and shops which have been operating since the town was built.

Before the housing town came about, this area was largely covered with secondary forests, swamps and farmland. A 1936 map shows that part of it was marked as a forest reserve under the colonial government. One of the earliest references to this area is in a 1849 report on agriculture in Singapore, written by J T Thomson (1821-1884), Government Surveyor, which men-

tioned that *Amokiah*, the name for Ang Mo Kio then, contained sandstone. Early maps of Singapore refer to the area as *Amokiah* as well. By the 1900s, the area was referred to as Ang Mo Kio.

#### THE TOMATO IN ANG MO KIO

Theories about the origins of the name Ang Mo Kio have been raised. Some say that it is the Hokkien term for tomatoes. Others say that it refers to a bridge purportedly built by J T Thomson as *ang mo* is a Hokkien nickname for Caucasians, and *kio* means “bridge”. Former villagers in the area, however, report that tomatoes were not planted in the area and the name Ang Mo Kio was not used by locals as a place name. Instead, there were various *kampung* (Malay: villages) of different names,

such as *Cheng Sua Lai* (Hokkien: Green Hills Interior), *Jio Sua* (Hokkien: Stone Hill) and *Kow Tiow Kio* (Hokkien: Nine Bridges).

A more plausible explanation was given by Douglas Hiorns, former General Manager of Bukit Sembawang Estates (1948-1995). According to Hiorns, there were two key tracks crossing Ang Mo Kio, an area with large expanses of swamps and tributaries of rivers running through it. Bridges carrying the tracks over the waterways gained a local importance as a result. In the north, a wooden bridge carried Jalan Hwi Yoh over Sungei Tongkang and was locally called *pang kio*, meaning “wooden bridge” in Hokkien. The bridge carrying Cheng San Road over the tributary of Kallang River was made of concrete, a material commonly referred to as *ang mo he* or “Western ash” in Hokkien.

As such, the area acquired the name “Ang Mo Kio”.

Today, the swamps, bridges and farmlands are things of the past. Ang Mo Kio is one of the most sought-after housing estates in Singapore by home-buyers and the modern town has its own stories to tell and places to show. Some examples are the one and only block of circular flats in Singapore designed and built by Housing and Development Board, temples with interesting histories and town gardens where the original vegetation forms part of the landscape. Intrigued? Join us on this heritage walk to learn more about Ang Mo Kio and its interesting heritage and history.

# Ang Mo Kio

HERITAGE TRAIL

Ang Mo Kio Heritage Trail is part of the National Heritage Board's (NHB) on-going efforts to document and present the history, social memories and places that Singaporeans live, work and play in that many may not be aware of. Jointly presented by the National Heritage Board and Ang Mo Kio - Sengkang West CCCs, this trail will bring back fond memories for older residents and will be an eye-opener for new residents.

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## Ang Mo Kio Town



*“When I first moved into Ang Mo Kio, there were minimal facilities. There was no proper bus interchange and there were only a few bus services. There were no cinemas either. If you wanted to swim then, the nearest pool was at Farrer Park. The facilities came up over the years. Before AMK Hub was up, we used to go to Thomson Plaza and later Northpoint.”*

Mr Salleh bin Masjor,  
who has lived in Ang Mo Kio since 1979.

### ANG MO KIO TOWN

The seventh housing town built by the Housing and Development Board (HDB), Ang Mo Kio is one of the largest such towns in Singapore. When plans were first drawn up for Ang Mo Kio in 1971, it was for it to be developed as a relocation area for small-time motor-car repair workshops operating in town. By 1972, the plans had expanded to include residential and community facilities. By 1973, Ang Mo Kio was slated to be a full-fledged housing town with six self-sufficient neighbourhoods.

Described by HDB to be a new generation town designed for gracious living, Ang Mo Kio was built when the neighbourhood model, first applied in Queenstown and Toa Payoh, had been refined and improved.

The town, bounded by Ang Mo Kio Avenue 1, Upper Thomson Road and Yio Chu Kang Road, was based on a gridiron pattern, where streets run at right angles to each other. Signature landmarks and land use were planned at the town's fringe and key entrances, such as a mosque along Avenue 6 and a clover-shaped block at Avenue 1. This allows for better navigation while creating a visual identity. Two town parks, developed on hillocks, separate the neighbourhoods, creating a sense of space and providing relief in an urban landscape. The layout of facilities in each neighbourhood was planned to ensure that they were within comfortable walking distance.

Ang Mo Kio also lays claim to several “firsts” in design. It was the first HDB town to be designed in metric dimensions and the first to



Aerial view of Ang Mo Kio in 1981, stretching from Avenue 1 to its boundary at Yio Chu Kang Road.

have five-room flats in slab block forms, where units are lined up, instead of point blocks, where units are clustered. It was where HDB's New Flat design was implemented, an improvement over previous designs. Corridors were wider and flats were also bigger by about 10% than flats in other estates. In 1983, Ang Mo Kio New Town received the Outstanding Building Award from the Singapore Institute of Architects (SIA) for its design.

### AMK HUB 701B ANG MO KIO AVENUE 8

The first major suburban shopping mall in Ang Mo Kio, the opening of AMK Hub in 2007 was met with great enthusiasm by many residents. The upmarket shops and cinemas housed in the mall revived the local shopping experience, which had grown increasingly quiet before the mall's opening. Built as part of the efforts to rejuvenate the housing town, AMK Hub is also integrated with the bus interchange and Ang Mo Kio MRT station. It is currently owned by the Singapore Labour Foundation, National Trades Union Congress Income Insurance Co-operative and National Trades Union Congress Fair Price Co-operative.



## Ang Mo Kio Town Centre



### ANG MO KIO AVENUE 6

The heart of the town, Ang Mo Kio Town Centre is one of the largest town centres in Singapore. It is built in an elongated valley, flanked on the east and west by two hillocks.

Development of the town centre began in 1976 after a 36-hectare site was cleared. Ang Mo Kio's key entertainment, commercial and community facilities are located here. Many residents have fond memories of shopping at the former Oriental Emporium, which was popular for imported goods from China, and dining at the former Oriental restaurant on special occasions such as weddings and birthday celebrations during the 1980s. Residents living in Yishun and Sembawang then would flock here to shop as there were no major shopping facilities in their neighbourhoods then.

In the town centre, there used to be a fountain with a circular pool with coloured lights at night. Three cinemas, opened in the late 1970s and early 1980s, served the town at first - Broadway, Ang Mo Kio Cinema and Jubilee. Besides being popular recreational and entertainment grounds, the theatres also doubled up as places where events such as graduation ceremonies for kindergarten children were held.

To remain relevant and fresh, the town centre was constantly rejuvenated. The former cinemas were later transformed into shopping complexes and upgrading works were carried out regularly. Today, the town centre continues to bustle with activity as the main commercial and community hub of Ang Mo Kio.



Ang Mo Kio Town Centre, 1980.

SOURCE: HOUSING AND DEVELOPMENT BOARD

*"We were very familiar with Oriental and the restaurant upstairs. It was a place where people held their wedding dinners and birthday celebrations. When the festive season drew near, we would buy new clothes and festive goods at the town centre. I would also catch movies at Jubilee and Broadway now and then. AMK Hub is a really convenient place! Our church, the markets, shopping centres and transport facilities are all nearby. With Ang Mo Kio Hub now, I don't even need to go to the town as much as I used to."*

Albuquerque Karen Anne,  
who grew up in Ang Mo Kio after moving  
here in 1978.

### Did You Know?

During the 1980s, Block 710, in the town centre, was a "VIP" block where foreign dignitaries were brought to for a visit to Singapore's model housing estate, Ang Mo Kio. In 1989, Queen Elizabeth II, on her second visit to Singapore, visited Ang Mo Kio and admired a panoramic view of the town from this block as well.



## Ang Mo Kio Town Centre

Like many town centres in mature estates, Ang Mo Kio Town Centre also has interesting stories to tell through the long-time businesses that have survived the maturing of Ang Mo Kio. Here are just a few to kick-start your exploration!



### ELSIE DEPARTMENT STORE (BLOCK 709, #01-2607)

Named after its owner, Elsie Lim, this store has been around since 1980. Armed with a passion and talent for design and sewing, Elsie started the store with dreams of designing boutique clothes for working professionals. However, customers were more interested in replicas of existing conservative designs, and Elsie decided to convert half of her store into a craft retail outlet. She began giving craft lessons and introduced trends, such as soap basket weaving, cross-stitching and toy-making to locals. The store is now one of the most vibrant crafts hubs in the northern part of Singapore.

#### Did you know?

The fashion footwear and accessories brand, Charles and Keith, has its historic beginnings in Ang Mo Kio. Its founders, Charles and Keith Wong, used to help out at a young age at their parents' shoe store, L & A Trading. There, they gained experience in retail operations, learnt the importance of customer service and feedback and realised there was a potential market in offering fashionable shoes to consumers. This was to lead them to establishing the first Charles and Keith store in 1996.

### M S COLOR SERVICE (BLOCK 711, #01-3501C)

For over 30 years, M S Color Service has been catering to the evolving photography needs of residents. The first business run by the owner, a photography enthusiast himself, was a studio called Meilim Studios. Photography as a hobby and service was uncommon then, and the shop provided a vital service by taking passport photos and studio shots. Later, demand for film processing and printing services grew and the shop became a film processing hub. Today, the shop has again reinvented itself to meet changing needs by offering digital cameras and accessories at competitive prices.

### CENTRE SATAY BEE HOON (BLOCK 724, #01-12)

When residents in Ang Mo Kio have a craving for *satay bee hoon*, this is the first stall most head to. A fusion dish of Chinese and Malay cuisines, *satay bee hoon* combines rice vermicelli with *satay* sauce (peanut sauce) topped with *kangkong*, coriander and cuttlefish. Mr Tan So Meng has been selling this popular dish here for 30 years. His culinary skills and recipe, which Mr Tan calls his heirloom, were passed to him from his grandmother, who sold *satay bee hoon* from a pushcart in the past.

*"Both Keith and I were helping out at our parents' shop in the early '90s. There was always a deep sense of belonging and friendship built with the people in the neighbourhood. My fondest memories of Ang Mo Kio are the people and the community. I remember it to be a neighbourhood where the people are closely-knit and very friendly. Being in the heartland area, there was a familial closeness within the community."*

- Charles Wong,  
one of the founders of Charles and Keith

### BAN CHUAN KWAY CHUP (BLOCK 724, #01-19)

Mdm Hao Hong Sheng, the first stall owner in Block 724 market, began her business here selling rice porridge. She switched to selling *kway chup* after a friend of hers taught her how to prepare the dish, which consists of various pig organs and braised items. The trickiest part, according to her, was cleansing and preparing the offal to rid of its taste. *Kway chup* is also an illustration of the thrifty values of Chinese migrants, many of whom were formerly peasants, for whom life was harsh and resources were usually fully utilised. Every part of a slaughtered animal was put to use, as seen in this dish.

(Below): Ban Chuan Kway Chap, Yunos N Family, Tua Pek Kong Shrine



### HWA AIK GENERAL STORE (BLOCK 711, #01-3501G)

Looking for kitchen and household equipment, implements and accessories? Hwa Aik General Store probably has whatever it is that you are looking for, be it open forged cleavers, crockery or industrial quality steel ware. Another interesting feature of the shop is its structure. When Mdm Toh Kim Hui, affectionately referred to as Auntie Kim by locals, bought the unit in 1980, it was nothing more than a pergola-kiosk. She took on the challenge of converting the open space into functional shop space, and went on to run the "to-go-to" shop for kitchenware in Ang Mo Kio.

### YUNOS N FAMILY (BLOCK 724, #01-01)

When in Ang Mo Kio Town Centre, order a plate of *mee rebus tarik* or *mee soto dino*. Yunos N Family has been serving up innovative *halal* food at this market for the last 30 years. Here, traditional food served with a twist keeps customers coming back. A plate of *mee rebus tarik* will get you noodles piled with *satay* (barbequed meat) and topped with gravy which is a mix of traditional *mee rebus* gravy and *satay* peanut sauce. As for *Tarik* or pull, all you have to do is to mix the stuff. The stall was started by the current owner's father, who moved his stall here from Tekka Market because he wanted to experiment with new ideas for food. The innovative menu attracts long queues and customers from as far away as Holland and Indonesia.

### TUA PEK KONG SHRINE

Near the Block 724 market, there is a Chinese shrine housed under a tree. This shrine is taken care of by the market and hawker centre stall holders. According to them, a statue of Tua Pek Kong was found in the early 1980s by a stall holder under this tree. Finding the statue unusual, the stall holder installed it in the market and worshipped it. Other stall holders also began worshipping the deity. One week later, the statue was stolen though the urn remained. The hawkers thus installed another statue of the deity and built an altar for it. In 2004, the market underwent upgrading, and the statue had to be shifted. The stallholders thus came together and constructed a shrine for it, under the tree where the story began.

## Ang Mo Kio Public Library



### **ANG MO KIO PUBLIC LIBRARY** **4300 Ang Mo Kio Avenue 6**

Opened on 19 August 1985, the Ang Mo Kio Public Library (formerly known as Ang Mo Kio Branch Library) was the fifth full-time branch library to be built. Prior to that, residents in Ang Mo Kio had to travel to Toa Payoh for the nearest library. Planning for the library began as early as 1978. The site was finalised by 1979 and construction began only in 1983. Meanwhile, a temporary mobile library was opened in 1981, housed in the former HDB Area (East) Office at Block 528, Ang Mo Kio Street 52, to serve the residents.

When the library opened in 1985, the response from residents was overwhelming. Huge crowds turned up and the wait to borrow books took easily more than an hour. The library had to set up a temporary loans counter in its garage to help ease the queue, which snaked outside the library building.

The library underwent extensive renovations and upgrading in 2002. It now houses the National Library's first Indian Library service, focusing on materials relating to Indian history, culture, art and philosophy and holds the largest Tamil language collection among all the libraries.

### **ANG MO KIO FLORAL & LANDSCAPE PTE LTD**

Learn all about the uses of stivea, moringa and various other herbs at this retail nursery! A favourite with gardening enthusiasts living in Ang Mo Kio and the north of Singapore, this nursery was formerly owned by a government-linked company, which supplied plants for landscaping of housing estates, before it was sold to private businessmen in 1993. The nursery is known for its collection of exotic plants and for catering to gardening enthusiasts and supplying schools with plants for eco-gardens. Visit on a weekend and you will see enthusiasts chatting with Mr Chen, who manages the nursery.



*Ang Mo Kio Polyclinic, 1982.*

### **ANG MO KIO POLYCLINIC** **723 Ang Mo Kio Avenue 8**

Before the polyclinic opened in 1981, the nearest public clinics and healthcare facilities for residents in Ang Mo Kio were in Yio Chu Kang, Upper Serangoon and Toa Payoh. In 1977, the government revealed its plans to build more polyclinics to provide island-wide primary healthcare services. The Ang Mo Kio Polyclinic was planned to be a regional polyclinic for the northern part of Singapore. In its early years, the Ang Mo Kio Polyclinic provided women and child health care and family planning services. Over the years, its services continued to expand and improve.

In 2001, the clinic was slated for renovation. It was redesigned to ensure better patient flow, more effective operational workflow and better use of space. Facilities were also improved and the renovations were completed in 2003. Ang Mo Kio Polyclinic was also where several healthcare services for polyclinics were first launched, such as the family physician clinic, a dedicated mental health clinic and the Advanced Practice Nurse Women's Health service, where registered nurses who have completed a Master's Degree in Nursing provide healthcare services with a specialised nursing focus.



## Masjid Al-Muttaqin



*“To raise funds for the building of the mosque, we went door to door to ask for donations. We also called for donations at other mosques during Friday prayers. In the past, there used to be regular “expos”, much like fun-fairs with pasar malam (Malay: night market). We set up a stall there to sell mee rebus, mee siam, gado-gado – you name it, we have it! One such expo was held at Ang Mo Kio Avenue 1. During Hari Raya, we set up a stall at Bidadari Cemetery to offer “air batu” (Malay: iced water) to visitors, who would then donate some money for the drinks. This way, we gathered funds for the cause.”*

- Haji Mohd Rashid Shariff,  
on fundraising in the 1970s for Masjid Al-Muttaqin.

### MASJID AL-MUTTAQIN 5140 Ang Mo Kio Avenue 6

The only mosque in Ang Mo Kio, Masjid Al-Muttaqin is a distinctive landmark standing at one of the main entrances to the town along Ang Mo Kio Avenue 6.

In the 1970s, many Malay Muslims living in areas such as Buangkok, Jalan Kayu and Tongkang Pecah (present-day Fernvale) were resettled in parts of Ang Mo Kio. The nearest places of worship for these residents then were in Upper Serangoon, Sembawang Road and Thomson Road. Within Ang Mo Kio, religious sermons would be delivered at Block 715 Avenue 6 and prayers during festivities such as Hari Raya were conducted at a former community club at Block 208 along Avenue 1.

The idea of building a mosque in Ang Mo Kio was mooted during the late 1970s in the house of a Malay Muslim, Haji Muhammad Ariff, at Nemesu Avenue. Following that, a building committee was formed and Muslims living in and around Ang Mo Kio began fund-raising efforts. A 3,000 m<sup>2</sup> site was secured along Ang Mo Kio Avenue 6 and the ground-breaking took place in 1979. In 1980, the mosque was finally completed at a cost of close to \$1.8 million.

Opened on 21 September 1980, the mosque has served as the centre of Islamic activities for Muslim residents in Ang Mo Kio and its surroundings ever since. On top of its religious function, Masjid Al-Muttaqin also runs a kindergarten, marriage preparatory classes and counselling sessions.



SOURCE: MASJID AL-MUTTAQIN



SOURCE: MASJID AL-MUTTAQIN

Top picture: Fund-raising by selling Malay food at a food stall in an “expo” at Ang Mo Kio Avenue 1, circa 1970s.  
Bottom picture: Muslims in Ang Mo Kio gathered at Blk 715 for a religious sermon, circa 1970s.



## Catholic Church of Christ the King



### **CATHOLIC CHURCH OF CHRIST THE KING** **2221 Ang Mo Kio Avenue 8**

The only Catholic Church in Ang Mo Kio, the Catholic Church of Christ the King began in the 1970s. The nearest places of worship for Catholic residents then were at Upper Thomson Road and Serangoon Gardens. The Archdiocese thus decided to build a church in the new town to cater to Catholics. The task was entrusted to Father Louis Fossion, a priest from Belgium who arrived in Singapore in 1968. Costing around \$3 million, the church, officially opened on 26 September 1982, was one of the most expensive churches to be built in its time.

As the population in Ang Mo Kio grew, the congregation at Christ the King grew as well. By the 1990s, the sanctuary had become too small to accommodate the congregation. Power blackouts were common as the church did not have a power station and the roof was leaking badly. In 1996, the church decided to undertake a rebuilding programme to construct a bigger church and a columbarium. The original building was demolished in 1999 to make way for the current building.

In the church, you will also see an icon of the Mother of Perpetual Help. This icon dates back to the 1950s and was originally venerated in Novena Church till it was badly tarnished. It was then kept in a store till 1998 when it was given away to a devotee. The devotee, upon hearing about the church's rebuilding, donated the icon for display in the church. The grime and dirt on the icon was later removed by an art restorer and a new frame was installed.

### **ANG MO KIO SWIMMING COMPLEX** **1771 Ang Mo Kio Avenue 1**

Opened in 1982, this swimming complex was designed by the Housing and Development Board. Its opening was met with enthusiasm from residents, for whom the nearest swimming complex then was in Toa Payoh. The complex's tetrahedral skylights have also garnered the Singapore Institute of Architects 1986 Architectural Design Award.

### **PATHLIGHT SCHOOL** **5 Ang Mo Kio Avenue 10**

The first autism-focused school in Singapore, Pathlight School was started by the Autism Resource Centre (ARC), an organisation founded in 1997 to reach out to autistic students in mainstream schools. In 2003, ARC obtained approval from the Ministry of Education (MOE) to start a school for autistic children. Pathlight School thus began operating in the former premises of Chong Li Primary School.

By 2008, the school's intake had grown tenfold to 415 students. With a grant from MOE and generous donations from well-wishers, extensive rebuilding was launched in 2008. The \$34 million campus was completed in 2009. Facilities such as a retail store, cafeteria and industrial kitchen were built to allow students to pick up work skills in similar settings. Today, the school continues to play an important role in equipping autistic children with academic and life readiness skills.



*"I used to go swimming at Ang Mo Kio Swimming Complex every week with my colleagues. Now, even my grandchildren would ask me to bring them to the pool to swim. When it was just opened, there were a lot of people who went and there were long queues on weekends!"*

- Ms. Helen Goh,  
who has been staying in Ang Mo Kio  
since 1978.



## Ang Mo Kio Town Council



### **ANG MO KIO TOWN COUNCIL**

#### ***Blk 342 Ang Mo Kio Ave 1***

Today, Town Councils are part of everyday life in Singapore when it comes to the maintenance and upgrading of housing estates. Did you know that Town Councils were piloted in Ang Mo Kio in 1986?

The idea of having a local council made up of residents and headed by a Member of Parliament was mooted in 1984 by Lim Boon Heng, then Member of Parliament for Kebun Baru. The intention was to give residents more say in the upkeep and improvements of their own estates, duties which were borne by Housing and Development Board (HDB) then. It was felt that a stronger sense of ownership and identity would be nurtured as well.

Ang Mo Kio was chosen for piloting the concept as it was relatively new and would require less maintenance. Its grassroots infrastructure was strong and would contribute to making the concept a success. Three town councils, Ang Mo Kio West, Ang Mo Kio East and Ang Mo Kio South, were established. They operated from HDB area offices and the first meeting was held on 1 September 1986 by Ang Mo Kio East Town Council. Within the first six months, residents had implemented several ideas for better estate management, including the installation of ceiling fans at a hawker centre, adding more carpark lots and putting up maps showing locations of blocks, facilities and bus routes in Ang Mo Kio.

After the first year, the idea was deemed a success. The model was refined after taking into consideration lessons learnt by the three pioneer Town Councils and the Town Council Act was passed in 1988 to implement the model across housing estates.

In Ang Mo Kio today, the Ang Mo Kio Town Council manages the estates through four offices, with the main office housed here.

### **SCHOOLS IN ANG MO KIO**

Education in Ang Mo Kio today has certainly come a long way since the 1970s, when there were only a few community-run schools. Other than government primary and secondary schools, government-aided schools, special education schools, institutions for post-secondary education and international schools are found in Ang Mo Kio as well. Many of these schools have interesting backgrounds. Look out for them while on the trail!

### **TECK GHEE PRIMARY SCHOOL**

#### ***1 Ang Mo Kio Street 32***

The third government school in Ang Mo Kio, Teck Ghee Primary School began in 1979. In 2002, it merged with Chong Li Primary School. Chong Li Primary School began in the late 1940s as Chong Lip Chinese School, located off Upper Thomson Road. The school catered to children living in villages around Upper Thomson Road. It became a government school later on.

### **DEYI SECONDARY SCHOOL**

#### ***1 Ang Mo Kio Street 42***

One of the earliest government secondary schools in Ang Mo Kio when it was established in 1980, Deyi Secondary School was known as Teck Ghee Secondary School then. In its first year, the school's buildings hosted Brad-dell Secondary School and Jing Shan Primary School as well. The school changed its name to Deyi one year later, the *hanyupinyin* version of Teck Ghee, which means "Morals and righteousness" in Hokkien.



## Ang Mo Kio's First Neighbourhood



This neighbourhood was the first to be built when development of Ang Mo Kio took off in 1973 and has several “firsts” under its belt. Blocks 213-216, the first blocks to be completed, are located here. The town’s first market and hawker centre, Block 226, was opened here in 1976. The first community centre began operating at Block 226B as well and the first kindergarten, primary and secondary schools were located in this vicinity too.

### ANG MO KIO'S FIRST PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS

20 Ang Mo Kio Avenue 3 and  
6 Ang Mo Kio Street 22

The first government primary and secondary schools in Ang Mo Kio to be established are Ang Mo Kio Primary School and Ang Mo Kio Secondary Schools. Ang Mo Kio Primary School started in 1978. Over the years, two other primary schools, Jalan Kayu Primary School and Kebun Baru Primary School, have merged with Ang Mo Kio Primary School.

Ang Mo Kio Secondary School began operating in 1979 in the former Hwi Yoh Secondary School premises, and moved in the same year to Ang Mo Kio Street 22. In 1999, the school underwent rebuilding to equip it with facilities to meet the educational needs of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Today, the first secondary school in Ang Mo Kio continues to operate in its original location.

*Before the market at Block 226 came up, residents here had to go to the Lim Tua Tow Market at Upper Serangoon Road, and another one at Serangoon Gardens.”*

*- Mr Thiayagarah S/O Karthigesu, who moved to Ang Mo Kio in 1979.*



### CHEE SENG TONG MEDICAL HALL

Block 226C, #01-647

One of the few remaining pioneer businesses here, Chee Seng Tong Medical Hall was resettled from the former Nee Soon Village along Sembawang Road in 1975. The business was founded by an immigrant from Fujian province, whose children, Mr Ng Han Teong and Mdm Ng Soh Hua, run the medical hall today. Business today is a lot quieter compared to the neighbourhood centre’s heyday during the 1970s and 1980s due to an aging neighbourhood and competition from traditional Chinese medicine chain shops.

### WING CHIANG MEDICAL HALL

Block 226C, #01-657

At first glance, you may mistake this for two shops – a fashion shop and a Chinese medical hall. It is actually two businesses run by the Aw family in the same shop. Wing Chiang Medical Hall was formerly a distributor of Chinese herbs located along Thomson Road before the family moved to Ang Mo Kio in 1975 to set up a medical hall, assuming that business would be bustling in a new town. In recent years, as business declined, the owners have ventured into selling clothes alongside traditional medicine to make a living.



## Ang Mo Kio Joint Temple

### ANG MO KIO JOINT TEMPLE

791 Ang Mo Kio Avenue 1

Completed in March 2011, this joint temple along Avenue 1 comprises three older temples which came together in 1978 to build a temple at its present site. The original building, which was occupied in 1983, was demolished to make way for the building you see today.

In the days when access to medical care was limited, many villagers resorted to divination by the temple's mediums for healing. Devotees would seek advice on farming and other life issues. Some even "invited" the deities home as guests during events such as weddings. The temple's opera stage was used as a kindergarten. The celebration of the deities' birthdays, held in the eighth lunar month, was a key highlight of the year as festivities were grander than during the Chinese New year.

When development of Ang Mo Kio took off, the temple was granted the use of its original site. Today, former villagers of *Kow Tiow Kio* continue to gather here. The temple is also active in community work.



A religious procession in Ang Mo Kio by Kong Lim Kong, circa 1970s

### KOW TIOW KIO

Formerly stretching along Lorong Kinchir (de-funct) from Upper Thomson Road to Lorong Chuan, *Kow Tiow Kio* was named after nine bridges that were built to link Lorong Kinchir over streams flowing down from the north to the Kallang River. Constructed by the British colonial government, the bridges were made of wood and metal and could support vehicles as well.

*Kow Tiow Kio* started as a predominantly Hokkien settlement and remained so till World War Two. During the war, a number of Hainanese and Teochew families fled the town to *Kow Tiow Kio* so as to escape heavy bombing by the Japanese and eventually settled down here.

Agriculture was the key economic activity here. Rubber and coconut planting, pig-rearing and fruit and vegetable farming were undertaken by the villagers. To sell their produce, vegetable farmers would cycle down Upper Thomson Road with a large basketful of vegetables to wet markets at Tekka and other parts of town. There were two grocery stores which were also coffee shops. Children went to community-run schools nearby, such as Chong Lip Chinese School and Sin Ming Primary School. Due to its proximity to the Kallang River, there would be floods during the rainy season, especially when the sluice gates of Lower Peirce Reservoir were opened to let the excess water out.

In the 1970s, when development of the Ang Mo Kio New Town took off, the villagers were resettled. Some moved to Sin Ming Road while many more were resettled to parts of Ang Mo Kio and Toa Payoh.

### KONG LIM KONG (欉林宮)

One of the oldest temples in Ang Mo Kio, Kong Lim Kong Temple's roots can be traced to the late 1800s, when four immigrants arrived from Nan An county, Fujian province, China, bearing a statue of their patron deity from their hometown temple in Yu Hu Village.

These migrants settled near present-day Ang Mo Kio Avenue 1 and formed a settlement known as *Kow Tiow Kio* (Hokkien: Nine Bridges). The temple was formally established in 1888, according to the date carved on a wooden stand commissioned to support the Five Generals deities, who were deputies of the patron deity. Such a stand is usually commissioned when a Taoist temple is built.

Named *Hao Lin Gong* (Hokkien: Kong Lim Kong) after its mother temple in China, the temple was often referred to as *Tua Lang Kong* (Hokkien: Temple of the Lords) by locals. A thatched hut served as a temple before it was replaced by a wooden building. In 1962, a concrete structure replaced the wooden building. More deities were added to the temple over the years.





## Ang Mo Kio Joint Temple



### ANG MO KIO JOINT TEMPLE

791 Ang Mo Kio Avenue 1

The two other temples, Kim Eang Tong and Leng San Giam, in this combined temple were originally from villages in Ang Mo Kio as well.

### KIM EANG TONG (金英堂)

Kim Eang Tong was established in 1961 in a village called *Jio Sua* (Hokkien: Stone Hill) by the Kim Eang religious order. The order is founded on precepts from Buddhism and Taoism and is traditionally exclusive to the Hakkas. Kim Eang Tong, however, is open to non-Hakkas as well.

The temple was founded by three men from *Jio Sua*, together with their spiritual master by the surname of Zhang. In those days, access to medical care was limited. As such, the temple played an important role in the community as villagers who were ill would seek help from the resident spiritual master, who was well-versed in traditional Chinese medicine. Kim Eang Tong was also known for issuing amulets and talismans for various purposes, and its initiation rituals for new devotees usually took place over three to seven days.

When development of Ang Mo Kio took off, the temple had to move in the 1970s. It combined with the two other temples to form the Ang Mo Kio Joint Temple. Today, it continues to serve the religious needs of residents in Ang Mo Kio.

### LENG SAN GIAM (龙山岩)

The beginnings of Leng San Giam are unclear. What is known is that the immigrants of the surname Chew came from Yongchun county, Fujian province in the early 1900s and brought with them a statue of the deity Fa Chu Gong. A temple was built to the deity only in the 1950s,

in *Cheng Sua Lai* (Hokkien: Green Hills Interior), along the former Cheng San Road.

Over time, two other deities, the sworn brothers of Fa Zhu Gong, were added. The deities were known for works of miracles and attracted many devotees. The temple was also famous for giving out "lucky" numbers for betting. Former villagers recounted how the medium would announce winning lottery results before official announcements at 8pm. Villagers would then walk to *Ang Sali* (Hokkien: Red Zinc), as Serangoon Gardens was then known as, to buy the evening papers and confirm the results.

It was said that when the temple was built in the 1950s, the deity instructed through the medium to construct on a specific piece of land as it would not be affected by resettlement in the future. However, the villagers did not understand what resettlement was, and negotiations with Hokkien businessman, Tan Lark Sye (1897-1972), the land owner then, to build on the specified area, did not go through. Resettlement of the temple took place eventually when *Cheng Sua Lai* was developed.

### JIO SUA

*Jio Sua* was formerly located in the present-day Ang Mo Kio Town Centre and extended to Ang Mo Kio Avenue 5 and Avenue 7. It was most likely named after the red stone, believed to be sandstone, reportedly found in the area. Quarrying activities were carried out in *Jio Sua* as well. The settlement, believed to be established in the late 1800s, was largely Hokkien with some Teochew and Hainanese settlers. Most of the villagers depended on farming for a living. As the village was located on hillocks, villagers had to go to low-lying lands for water in times of drought. The villagers were resettled in the mid-1970s to make way for development.



Kim Eang Tong in *Jio Sua*, circa 1960s



## Ang Mo Kio Family Service Centre



SOURCE: ANG MO KIO FAMILY SERVICE CENTRE



SOURCE: ANG MO KIO FAMILY SERVICE CENTRE

### ANG MO KIO FAMILY SERVICE CENTRE 230 Ang Mo Kio Avenue 3

Piloted in 1978 as a one-stop social service centre for families, the Ang Mo Kio Family Service Centre was started by the Singapore Council of Social Service (present-day National Council of Social Service) and three affiliate agencies - the Asian Women's Welfare Association, the Singapore Anglican Welfare Council and the Young Men's Christian Association of Singapore.

In 1984, the service centre was registered as an autonomous organisation under the Societies Act. Today, the centre operates three branches which provide family services including befriending of the elderly, family and marital enrichment and child development.

### ANG MO KIO METHODIST CHURCH 1 Ang Mo Kio Street 21

The decision to build a Methodist church in Ang Mo Kio came about in 1976 at a meeting held by the Trinity Annual Conference of the Methodist Church in Singapore (TRAC) at Barker Road Methodist Church. The conference felt that it was important to cater to believers staying in the upcoming town.

Following that, TRAC located and rented a house in Mayflower Estate as residence for the appointed pastor. The ground floor of the house was used to hold services from 1976 onwards and religious outreach activities were carried out. At the same time, two other Methodist conferences, Paya Lebar Chinese Methodist Church and the Emmanuel Tamil Annual Conference also began to preach among residents in Ang Mo Kio.

As such, these three Methodist conferences decided to jointly build a church in Ang Mo Kio. Their bid for the plot of land along Ang Mo Kio Street 21 was successful and groundbreaking was carried out in 1979. The church building was completed in 1981.

As the congregation grew over the years, the existing facilities were insufficient to cope with the number of worshippers. In 1995, the church carried out extension works and in 1997, a third floor was added. However, by the turn of the century, it had become necessary for the church to undergo rebuilding. In 2008, the church embarked on an extensive redevelopment project to construct a bigger and better-equipped building.



SOURCE: ANG MO KIO FAMILY SERVICE CENTRE

(Facing page & Top picture): Activities held by Ang Mo Kio Family Service Centre during the early years of establishment, undated.



## Block 259



*"We moved to Block 259 in 1981 from Norfolk Road. Even though the prices for the flats here were higher than other areas, we decided to move here as the design of the block was unique and the area was very breezy. We are very proud of our block and we often have curious visitors coming in to take a look at how we fit furniture into our round flat!"*

- Mr and Mrs Wong Teck Ling,  
who were among the first residents in Blk 259.

### **BLOCK 259**

#### **Ang Mo Kio Avenue 1**

Distinctive and eye-catching, Singapore's only block of circular flats designed by the Housing and Development Board (HDB) stands along Ang Mo Kio Avenue 1, with sweeping views of Bishan Park and Peirce Reservoir.

Completed in 1981, Block 259 was an experiment in design by the HDB as part of the agency's plans in the late 1970s to build seven distinctively designed public housing blocks. The intention for such an undertaking was to break the monotony in public housing architecture, as well as to create a sense of identity in each new town through these landmarks.

The point block consists of 96 five-room flats, with four units per floor. Unlike most other housing blocks, solid bricks were used in its construction instead of conventional hollow bricks. The design is such that the bedrooms in every unit face the north or south while living rooms and kitchens face the east or west. This ensures that the flats stay cool through the day. The rooms are also bigger than those in the usual five-room flat. Building costs for Block 259 were significantly higher than for the conventional public housing

#### **Did you know?**

The water tank on the top of the building is circular to fit in with the round design.



Top picture: Interior view of a flat in Block 259.  
Bottom picture: Block 259 under construction, 1981.

blocks. As such, the launch price for the flats was much higher too, at above \$110,000. Many of its first residents were resettled from Hougang, Kampong San Theng and Potong Pasir.

The building received mixed reviews when it was first launched. While some praised it for its unique design, there were those who criticised it for its impracticality and higher costs incurred in renovation as customisation was needed to fit the furnishings along the curved walls. On top of that, few interior designers and renovation companies in those days had experience in designing for circular flats.

Nonetheless, over the years, the building gradually gained a reputation for its uniqueness and the residents here are well-known for their strong "kampung" spirit as many of them are long-time neighbours. The residents also initiate community efforts such as keeping a lookout for each other's vehicles to prevent attempted car thefts and circulating contact details. Today, these flats are highly sought after by prospective homeowners.



## Bethesda Hall (Ang Mo Kio)



### **BETHESDA HALL (ANG MO KIO)**

#### **601 Ang Mo Kio Avenue 4**

Completed in 1986, Bethesda Hall (Ang Mo Kio) was established by two assemblies of the Brethren Movement, the history of which in Singapore dates back to the 1860s, when a group of believers began meeting regularly. They began conducting public worship in 1864, in a rented room at Bencoolen Street. In 1866, the Assembly decided to erect a building to house the congregation, and Bethesda Chapel was built in the same year at 77 Bras Basah Road.

The Assembly continued to expand and in 1936, Bethesda Katong Church was established. After World War Two, more Assemblies were founded in Frankel Estate, Bukit Panjang, Toa Payoh and Bukit Arang. In 1981, the land occupied by Bethesda Chapel at Bras Basah Road was acquired by the government for redevelopment and, in 1982, the site of another Brethren assembly in Geylang was acquired for the same reason. Both assemblies appealed to the government for a piece of land to replace the two properties, whereupon they were granted a 30-year lease for a vacant plot in Ang Mo Kio. The building you see today has gone through extension works and renovations since 1984, including the addition of a four-storey block.

### **CHIJ ST NICHOLAS GIRLS' SCHOOL**

#### **501 Ang Mo Kio Street 13**

CHIJ St Nicholas Girls' School was started in 1933 by the Convent of Holy Infant Jesus (CHIJ) as a Chinese-medium school for Chinese-speaking girls. Called Victoria Girls' School then, it was located near the convent along Victoria Street. In the first year, there were only 40 students and the staff comprised the principal and a teacher. Enrolment picked up gradually and the first secondary class was opened in 1938.

During the Japanese Occupation (1942-1945), the school continued though English was forbidden as a subject. After the Occupation, the student population increased drastically as children whose education was disrupted were sent to school as well. As such, the school moved to bigger premises in the convent building in 1949, where it continued to function for the next few decades.

From 1980 to 1985, the school operated from various locations, including Armenian Street and Queen Street, due to insufficient space for its student population. The school's current premises at Ang Mo Kio Avenue 2 were finally secured for its permanent campus, which was completed in 1985. Further upgrading was carried out in 2010 and 2011.

### **TONG YAAN PROVISION SHOP**

#### **Block 181, 01-292G**

One of the first shops to open in this neighbourhood, Tong Yaan Provision Shop used to operate in a Malay village along Jalan Mashor in the 1960s before it was resettled here in 1978 due to redevelopment projects. The owner, Mr Seet Beok Yaan, remembers how Ang Mo Kio used to flood during the rainy season. In the early years, the water would enter his shop and damage the provisions.



## Ang Mo Kio Town Garden West



### ANG MO KIO TOWN GARDEN WEST

#### Along Ang Mo Kio Avenue 6

Developed in the 1980s, the 20.63-hectare Ang Mo Kio Town Garden West was, in its time, the largest town garden project by the Housing and Development Board (HDB). The garden was built as part of HDB's direction to have more open and green spaces in new housing towns for a better quality of living.

Costing \$2.7 million, the park was designed and built by a Japanese contractor. Much of the park's original vegetation and terrain was retained in the design and footpaths were constructed along the contours of the existing hillock. Part of the former Cheng San Road was incorporated into the paths as well. Features such as a grand entrance flanked by tall palms, a lotus pond and an observatory deck at the peak of the hillock were added.

Landscaping has been carried out over the years in parts of the park, and flora from other regions has been introduced. However, a large portion of the park remains covered by secondary forest and you can still see typical tropical plants such as *dillenia* and *vitex*. Insect life is bountiful as well, and sightings of various species of butterflies and dragonflies are common. Today, the park is a popular place for residents in Ang Mo Kio for recreation, leisure and butterfly-spotting.

*"When we were young, life was hard at times. Our family reared pigs, and when prices of pork went down due to oversupply, we were badly affected. There was a period of three years when our family survived on scrap food collected from army barracks. It was here in Ang Mo Kio that we learnt how to run a supermarket. It's not just about hard work, for you can be hardworking and still not be able to sell anything. There must be good communication and relationships between our suppliers, our clients and us. And now that we have made it, it is time for us to give back to society in whatever ways we can."*

- Mr Lim Hock Eng,  
Chairman, Sheng Siong Supermarket.



SOURCE: SINGAPORE INSTRUMENTAL PLOT P469, CHIEF SURVEYOR, SINGAPORE. COURTESY OF NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF SINGAPORE.

1970 survey map showing the terrain of the area occupied by the present-day Ang Mo Kio Town Garden West.

### SHENG SIONG SUPERMARKET

#### Blk 122 Ang Mo Kio Avenue 3, 01-1753

Did you know that this was where the popular local supermarket chain, Sheng Siong, started? The story began in 1985, when Mr Lim Hock Chee rented a counter in this store, which used to be a branch of the former Savewell supermarket. The counter was supplied with pork from his family's farm in Lim Chu Kang. In the same year, Savewell ran into financial difficulties and had to close down. The Lim family bought over the store and began running the first Sheng Siong supermarket.

Business in the initial years was difficult. Lim Hock Chee's eight siblings were roped in to help in the supermarket, on top of their duties at the family's pig farm. The family would purchase fresh produce daily at various wholesale markets. During the first year or so, salaries were only paid to employees and not family members as the profits were very low. Gradually, business picked up and the Lim family began opening up more stores.

After years of hard work, Sheng Siong Supermarket eventually became a household name. Today, the company is one of the top local retailers in terms of sales volume. It also actively supports social welfare and community causes.



## Ang Mo Kio Town Garden East



### ANG MO KIO TOWN GARDEN EAST Junction of Ang Mo Kio Avenues 3 and 8

The first town garden to be built in Ang Mo Kio, this 4.89-hectare garden was planned and developed between the late 1970s and early 1980s. This is also one of the few public places in Singapore where red brick paths, a popular design style in the 1970s, are still in use.

Ang Mo Kio Town Garden East is one of the last remnants of the former rural settlement, referred to as *Cheng Sua Lai* (Hokkien: Green Hills Interior), before the housing town was built.

The garden was largely built on an existing hillock. Scattered around the grounds are sculptures of giant rubber and nutmeg seeds, which remind visitors of the former agricultural use of the land in Ang Mo Kio as rubber plantations. Today, you can still see some clusters of old rubber trees standing in the garden. Besides rubber trees, groves of nutmeg, fruit and cinnamon trees are also found here.



Life at 30 Chengsan Road, 1970s.

SOURCE: RONNIE LIM AH BEE



Kampung Cheng San, 1970s.

SOURCE: RONNIE LIM AH BEE

*“People were very close then. Any stranger who came into the kampung would be recognised immediately. There was only one main road then – Cheng San Road and at the entrance, there was a coffee shop and people would be sitting there. Intruders and petty criminals were easily caught as they had to enter and leave by the main road. I’ve seen kampung people tie up intruders and thieves and punish them by throwing a red ants’ nest on them.”*

- Ronnie Lim Ah Bee, who grew up in *Cheng Sua Lai* and was later resettled to Ang Mo Kio.

### CHENG SUA LAI - GREEN HILLS INTERIOR

Locals called it *Cheng Sua Lai* or Kampung Cheng San, an area stretching from Serangoon Gardens along the former Cheng San Road to its exit at Upper Thomson Road. Most probably, the name was derived from the hilly terrain, of which only two hillocks remain today. *Cheng San* is the Mandarin version of *Cheng Sua*.

*Cheng Sua Lai* was a largely Chinese community, comprising mostly Hokkiens and Teochews. There were a few Malay and Indian families as well. Most villagers engaged in farming for a living. They grew vegetables, fruit and even orchids, and reared animals such as chickens, pigs, goats and fish.

There was very little infrastructural development in the *kampung*. Cheng San Road was little more than a laterite track and served to link Upper Thomson Road to Serangoon Gardens. British and Australian military personnel living in Serangoon Gardens sometimes used the track as a shortcut to get to military bases in Sembawang and Seletar. Many residences were not easily accessible and former villagers remember that during election periods in the 1960s, small aeroplanes would fly low over *Cheng Sua Lai*, drop campaign pamphlets over the settlement and play campaign slogans over loudspeakers.

In the 1970s, development of Ang Mo Kio new town took off and the villagers of *Cheng Sua Lai* were resettled to Toa Payoh and Ang Mo Kio. While the *kampung* no longer exists, its legacy lives on in the two town parks and in the place name “Cheng San”.



# Jing Shan Primary School



## JING SHAN PRIMARY SCHOOL 5 Ang Mo Kio Street 52

The story of this modern school began in 1945, when it was established as a Chinese-medium school in *Cheng Sua Lai*. It was founded by Chinese businessmen and members of the rural community here to provide education to children living in this area. Named Cheng San School at first, it was later called Chin San School, which means “Tranquil Hill” instead of the original “Green Hill”. The school was located at the present-day Serangoon Gardens Estate before moving to 502 Cheng San Road when the land was acquired in the 1950s to develop the estate.

The students were mostly from farming families who lived in the *kampung* and they communicated mostly in Chinese dialects. Many of them had to walk for half an hour or more to reach the school. Facilities were basic then and half of the walls were constructed with bricks while the other half was built from zinc plates. As the building was small, the school was divided into two sessions. The same levels were split so that students could choose to attend their classes either in the morning or afternoon.

In the late 1970s, the school had to move due to the development of Ang Mo Kio new town. It operated from three different campuses till 1982, when the new campus for the school was ready. Most probably, the school became a full government school around this time and was renamed Jing Shan Primary School, using the *hanyu pinyin* version of “Chin San”. The school underwent extensive rebuilding in 2000 and the campus you see today was completed in 2002.



The graduating class of Chin San School in 1967.

## PIONEER BUSINESS

The neighbourhood centre in present-day Cheng San still has a number of businesses which have been around since the early 1980s. Have a chat and listen to the owners' stories of Ang Mo Kio.



## WAH SIM (S) MARKETING AND TRADING

Block 529, #01-2353

The first things you will notice about this shop are the rows of keys and an old-fashioned key cutting machine. Mr Lim and his wife started this business together in 1980 to provide photocopying and printing services, which were in great demand as Ang Mo Kio was a new town then. In their heyday, the Lims had to employ six people to run the copy machines, bind books, laminate papers and cut keys. Nowadays, with stricter enforcement of copyright laws and the upgrading of the town centre where similar services are found, business has slowed down considerably for the Lims.

## MENG HIN TV & RADIO CO

Block 529, 01-2331

Thousands of homes in Cheng San have been furnished with washing machines, televisions and other household appliances from this shop over the years. In the 1980s and early 1990s, there were so many orders every day that proprietor Mdm Tan Boon Eng and her sister had to help with deliveries and carting fridges and washing machines to their customers' new homes. Today, the shop sells mainly smaller appliances and light fittings and half of the shop has been sublet. Says Mdm Tan, “Nobody thinks about the neighbourhood store anymore when they want to buy electrical appliances. Everyone wants the variety and discounts that large stores can offer.”



# Da Qiao Primary School



## DA QIAO PRIMARY SCHOOL 8 Ang Mo Kio Street 54

Founded in 1936 as a Chinese-medium public school, Da Qiao Primary School, known as Tai Keou School then, was first located at North Bridge Road. Its founders were clansmen from the Char Yong (Dapu) Association, a Hakka clan built in 1857 to serve the interests and needs of the Hakka community in Singapore.

Tai Keou School was named to commemorate its origins. *Tai* (大) refers to Dapu county (大埔), where the Hakka founders were from, and *Keou* (侨) is a term for overseas Chinese.

The school was closed during the Japanese Occupation (1942-1945) and reopened thereafter at Lorong Tai Seng. In 1964, the school relocated to Jalan Paya where it operated till 1980, when the site was acquired for redevelopment. The amount of money received from the resettlement was donated to the school for development purposes.

In 1981, Tai Keou School became a government school and its name was changed to "Da Qiao", the *hanyu pinyin* version of Tai Keou. It moved to 10 Ang Mo Kio Street 54 in 1982. As part of a nation-wide rebuilding programme launched by the Ministry of Education, the school was rebuilt and the current campus was completed in 1999. In 2000, Chong Boon Primary School merged with Da Qiao Primary School for greater efficiency and better utilisation of resources.

(Facing page): Class of 1960, Tai Keou School.

## BOTAK JONES

### Block 531, #01-2771

Though Botak Jones' first stall, opened in 2003, was located in Tuas, it was in Ang Mo Kio that the chain made its first foray into Singapore's heartlands. Armed with the vision to provide handmade, reasonably-priced Western food, Mr Bernie Utchenik, an American, and his Singaporean wife, Zee, opened Botak Jones at a coffee shop at Block 608 Ang Mo Kio Avenue 5 in 2006.

As word spread, the business became a roaring success. Even though prices were higher compared to other Western food stalls in food courts and hawker centres, the quality of the food kept customers coming, even older Chinese residents, for whom Botak Jones came up with a menu in Chinese. The sight of Bernie Utchenik working at the grill became familiar to Ang Mo Kio residents and they would flip a thumbs-up at him when they passed by.

Leveraging on their experience gained in Ang Mo Kio, Mr Utchenik went on to open more Botak Jones stalls in other neighbourhoods. Three years after it started at Ang Mo Kio, Botak Jones had to move out of Block 608 due to a change in strategy by the coffee shop owner. Today, Botak Jones continues to serve up huge portions of Western food at Block 531 along Ang Mo Kio Avenue 10.

*"Ang Mo Kio was a perfect start for us. We made many friends with the residents here. Even after our first stall closed down, they still invited us for seventh month celebrations and such. Ang Mo Kio showed me how little I knew Singapore before, and what Singapore is to Singaporeans. In a way, the relationships we built here shaped my decision to become a Singapore citizen."*

- Mr Bernie Utchenik, who came to Southeast Asia in 1990 and went on to make Singapore his home.



## Chek Sian Tng Temple



### **CHEK SIAN TNG** **10 Ang Mo Kio Street 44**

The best times to visit this temple along Ang Mo Kio Street 44 are on the first and 15<sup>th</sup> days of the Chinese lunar month, when devotees flock here for prayers and the temple stays open throughout the day.

Chek Sian Tng (积善堂) is devoted to Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva (观音) and its devotees follow the precepts of Xiantianjiao (先天教), a Chinese religious sect which merges key teachings from Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism.

The temple's history can be traced to the early 1900s, when a teacher of Xiantianjiao, Ma Dao Quan, came to Singapore from Chaoyang county, China to spread the religion. A temple was first built at Devonshire Road for male devotees and in 1905, Chek Sian Tng was established at 10 Kramat Road for female devotees. The temple functioned at Kramat Road till the 1980s, when the land was acquired by the government for redevelopment. The temple moved to Ang Mo Kio in 1984.

Female devotees of this order may decide to commit to an ascetic life in this temple. Ascetics follow a strict regime and adopt a vegetarian diet. Unlike Buddhist nuns, they are allowed to keep their family names and their hair. Some of the ascetics were brought up by the temple as children, having been abandoned by their families for reasons such as incompatibility of their astrological profiles with other family members.

While visiting the temple, note that only female devotees are allowed in other parts of the temple besides the main hall. Male devotees are not allowed in further than the main hall.

### **SEVENTH MOON TUA PEK KONG** **Blk 453 market**

Almost every wet market in Singapore has an informal association of Taoist and Buddhist food stall owners who gather to contribute money and resources for festivities of the Seventh Lunar Moon. An altar to a guardian deity, usually Tua Pek Kong, is commonly put up at their respective markets by these associations as well.

In this market, you can see a prominent shrine right next to the block. While the association here has been around for about 30 years, it is only in 2006 that the deity Tua Pek Kong was enshrined. According to stall owners, business improved by about 30% after Tua Pek Kong was installed. The shrine is also popular with residents and celebrations of Tua Pek Kong's arrival at the market are held every year for three days.

### **PASIR RIS FISH SOUP** **Blk 453 market, #01-91**

Stop by and have a bowl of fish soup at one of the most popular fish soup stalls in Ang Mo Kio. Mr Kwar Ser Seng has been serving satisfied customers in the town for about 12 years, having moved from a more hectic location at Pasir Ris. The recipe was created by Mr Kwar, who perfected it after countless experiments. Come by the market in the morning and you will see Mr Kwar hard at work at 6am, making the soup from scratch.



## Potong Pasir Joint Temples Association



### POTONG PASIR JOINT TEMPLES ASSOCIATION

8 Ang Mo Kio Street 44

As the name suggests, all the temples sharing the same roof here were originally from Kampong Potong Pasir. With the redevelopment of Potong Pasir in the 1970s and 1980s, all five temples decided to establish the Potong Pasir Joint Temples Association (宏茂桥波东巴西联和庙) in 1982. They purchased this site to construct a joint temple and the current building was completed in 1987.

### HOON HONG TIAN HAW BOO

(云峰天后庙)

Dedicated to Tin Hau, or the Heavenly Empress, this temple was started by Chinese immigrants from Guangxi Province, China, in the early 1900s. It was first located around St Michael's Estate before it moved to Kampong Potong Pasir, where another temple was built. It was said that Tin Hau's statue was carved from a log that was found floating on a tributary of the Kallang River near St Michael's Estate during the early 1900s.

### TIONG SING TZE (TIAN XING CI)

(天性祠)

This temple is devoted to the worship of the founder of a Three Sects (San Jiao) order, Lin Yao Si, who was born in Putian in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The order combined teachings of Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism, such as the Buddhist concept of the illusory nature of reality, Confucian moral philosophy and Taoist practices of nurturing the mind and body. The temple was established in 1918 in Kampong Potong Pasir by a Hokkien immigrant from Putian, China.

### SAM CHOON KENG LIONG WAH HUAY

(三尊宫)

Originally housed in a residence at Jalan Kolam Ayer, this temple was established in 1960 in Kampong Potong Pasir by a grateful devotee after he was cured of an illness. The temple is dedicated to the worship of three different forms of Buddha.

### HOON HONG KOON BEO (YUN FENG GU MIAO) / HUP HENG KWANG BEO ASSOCIATION

(云峰古庙/合兴光庙)

This temple comprises two older temples - Hoon Hong Koon BEO and Hup Heng Kwang BEO Association. Hoon Hong Koon BEO, dedicated to Tua Pek Kong, was established in the 1930s in Potong Pasir by Cantonese villagers. In Taoism, the establishment of branch temples usually involves the installation of an urn with incense ash from the mother temple. Following the tradition, some farmers used some incense from Hoon Hong Koon BEO and established another temple called Hup Heng Kwang BEO. When the temples were faced with resettlement, they decided to merge as the source of incense was the same.



### SIN LEONG KIONG TRADING COMPANY

Blk 448, #01-1705

This family-run store has been supplying religious goods such as joss paper for the last 30 years here. The business was originally located in Sembawang before moving here due to redevelopment.

The proprietors, three sisters of the surname Chen, decided to run a religious goods store as such goods do not expire and are independent of trends. Over the years, they have witnessed how Chong Boon neighbourhood has changed. While their shop seems resistant to change at first glance, a closer look reveals modern offerings to the dead such as paper mobile phones!



## Liuxun Sanhemiao Temple



### LIUXUN SANHEMIAO TEMPLE

4-8 Ang Mo Kio Street 63

On any given weekend at Liuxun Sanhemiao Temple (六巡三合庙), you can see former villagers of Lak Xun (六巡) gathered here socialising. The three temples housed in this building were from Lak Xun, a *kampung* which used to be located between the former Track 14 and Track 16 along Yio Chu Kang Road. In the early 1980s, they had to move due to resettlement. As such, they combined and purchased the current site in 1989. The temple was completed in 1993.

### THE LONGXUYAN JINSHUIGUAN TEMPLE (龙须岩金水馆)

It is unclear when The Longxuyan Jinshuiguan Temple was established. Its founders were immigrants of the surname Ong, who came from Jin An village, Xiangyun town, Nan An county in Fujian province, China. The temple is dedicated to various Taoist deities, including Pu An Gu Fo (普庵古佛), Qing Shui Zu Shi (清水祖师) and Da De Chan Shi (大德禅师), all of whom were said to be eminent ascetics in China.

### HONG SAN CHIN HUAT TEMPLE ASSOCIATION (凤山堂进法殿全盛宫)

This temple comprised three older shrines which combined in 1945. One of the shrines, established in 1902, was dedicated to Lord Yang, said to be a geomancer. The other two were dedicated to Lord Zhong and Lord Yu respectively, said to be former government officials.

On the temple's altar, you will see a Y-shaped stick. The story goes that in the 1930s, a villager in Lak Xun invoked Lord Yu to request healing for his ill sister. The deity then requested

through the medium to cut a specific branch from a rambutan tree to serve as the deity's physical form. The Y-shaped stick was thus cut and venerated as Lord Yu. As the deity was known for healing, villagers would sometimes request a shaving off the stick as medicine. Sometime later, a family from Malaysia visited the village bearing a statue of Lord Yu, claiming that they dreamt of the god instructing them to bring its statue to Lak Xun. Today, you can still see this statue, in front of the Y-shaped stick.

### SAM ANN FU (三安府)

Founded in the early 1900s by immigrants of the surname Chen from Anxi county, Fujian province in China, this temple is dedicated to the deities, the Three Chen Brothers (陈府三兄弟), whose origins are unclear. Most of the patrons of this temple today are of the surname Chen too. The temple celebrates the birthdays of its principal deities on the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> of the 11<sup>th</sup> lunar month.



Religious procession held by Hong San Chin Huat Temple Association in Yio Chu Kang, circa 1970s.

### INDUSTRIES IN ANG MO KIO

Ang Mo Kio's three industrial parks, built in the early 1980s, form an integral part of the town in providing employment and spurring business activities. The parks contain businesses ranging from multinational corporations such as Motorola to local industries such as sesame oil and noodle producers and joss stick makers. The first locally manufactured commercial microchip was produced in a factory in Ang Mo Kio Industrial Park II.



## Nanyang Polytechnic



*"My block is located near the junction of Ang Mo Kio Avenue 10 and Avenue 5. Ang Mo Kio then was only partially developed. Across Ang Mo Kio Ave 5, there was still a small village where there was a small Chinese kampung school that had stopped functioning and a small Chinese temple next to it. There was also a pottery dragon kiln, which gave Hwi Yoh (Hokkien: Fire kiln) its name, opposite present-day Ang Mo Kio Industrial Park II."*

- Mr Chew Thiam Kwee,  
who moved to Ang Mo Kio in 1981,  
recalling how the area has changed.

### **NANYANG POLYTECHNIC** **180 Ang Mo Kio Avenue 8**

Singapore's fourth polytechnic, Nanyang Polytechnic was planned in 1991 with the mission of equipping its students with the skills and knowledge to contribute to Singapore's technological, economic and social development.

The polytechnic was established in 1992 with two schools - the School of Business Management and School of Health Sciences. In 1993, three institutes started by the Economic Development Board, the German-Singapore Institute, the French-Singapore Institute and the Japan-Singapore Institute, were transferred to Nanyang Polytechnic. These institutes were established between 1979 and 1982 as joint-training centres to facilitate the transfer of technology and knowledge between nations.

Nanyang Polytechnic operated from five temporary campuses in various parts of Singapore before moving into its current 30.5 hectare campus in 1998. Today, the polytechnic runs seven schools and offers courses for professionals as well.

### **ANDERSON SECONDARY SCHOOL** **10 Ang Mo Kio Street 53**

A government school, Anderson Secondary School started as a primary school for girls in 1960 along Stevens Road. In 1964, it was converted into a secondary school for girls before it became a co-educational school after taking in its first batch of male students in 1965. The

school continued to function at Stevens Road right up to 1984, when it moved to Ang Mo Kio. Over the years, the school, which became autonomous in 1994, has achieved accolades as a distinctive neighbourhood school.

### **ANDERSON JUNIOR COLLEGE** **4500 Ang Mo Kio Avenue 6**

Established in 1984, Anderson Junior College was the 11<sup>th</sup> junior college to be built in Singapore. Plans to build a junior college in Ang Mo Kio were announced as early as the mid-1970s and were firmed up towards the end of the decade. The school was part of the second junior college building programme launched by the government to meet growing needs for pre-university education. Today, Anderson Junior College has a strong reputation for its academic performance and community involvement programmes.

### **THE NAME AMOY QUEE**

Near Nanyang Polytechnic, there is a military camp named *Amoy Quee*. The name of the camp came from the area's name, formerly known as *Kampong Amoy Quee*. According to locals, the name was derived from the nickname given to the British and Australian military personnel serving in the Seletar area - *ang mo quee* - meaning "red-haired devils" in Hokkien. According to some of the former villagers, military personnel living in Serangoon Gardens would drive through the village as a shortcut instead of using Yio Chu Kang Road to get to their bases in Seletar and Sembawang. Some of them drove recklessly, injuring and killing livestock such as chickens in the process, thus giving rise to the nickname.



Survey map showing Kampong Amoy Quee in 1969.

MAPS: NANYANG POLYTECHNIC; PHOTO: CHIEF PHOTOGRAPHER, SINGAPORE. COURTESY OF NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF SINGAPORE



# Presbyterian High School



## **PRESBYTERIAN HIGH SCHOOL**

**5209 Ang Mo Kio Avenue 6**

Presbyterian High School's story began in the post-war years. The education system was badly affected after the Japanese Occupation (1942-1945) and the Presbyterian Church in Singapore proposed the building of a Chinese-medium mission secondary school in 1945. However, owing to the lack of funds and a suitable site, the proposal was finally dismissed in 1947.

In 1955, the philanthropist and businessman Lee Kong Chian (1893-1967) donated the premises of Southern Hotel, located at West Coast Road, to serve as the school building. However, due to its remote location and lack of facilities, the church had to give up the premises.

The vision was finally realised in 1965. In January, Li Sun High, which took its name from the Chinese name of Reverend Alan Anderson, an American missionary who proposed the building of the school, opened its doors to the first batch of 150 students. The school first operated from the premises of Ming Sin Primary School at Jalan Lateh.

As school enrolment increased steadily over the years, the school began looking for a bigger site. It was only in the 1970s, however, that viable sites were available. In 1980, the Ministry of Education offered a plot of land in Ang Mo Kio, which was then accepted by the church. The school, which was renamed "Presbyterian High School", began lessons in 1983. In 2000, the school underwent extensive rebuilding and expansion works. The works were completed two years later and the new campus was officially opened in 2004.



*Chaoyang School equips its students with vocational skills as well.*

## **CHAOYANG SCHOOL**

Started in 1982, Chaoyang School is the second school opened by the Association of Persons with Special Needs (APSN), formerly known as Association for Educationally Subnormal Children (AESN), to provide education for children with mild intellectual disabilities. The school, named Chao Yang Special School then, began its operations along Clemenceau Avenue, in the premises of a former school run by the Teo Yeonh Huai Kuan, the clan association for Chinese from Chaoyang county, Guangdong province.

In 1986, the school merged with Clementi Special School and moved to the premises of the former Anthony Road Girls' School. It merged with another school under ASPN, Jervois Special School, in 2006. In the same year, the school moved to bigger premises in Ang Mo Kio, and was renamed Chaoyang School. Today, the school continues to cater to children, aged seven to 12 years old, with mild intellectual disabilities and prepares them for further education and vocational training.

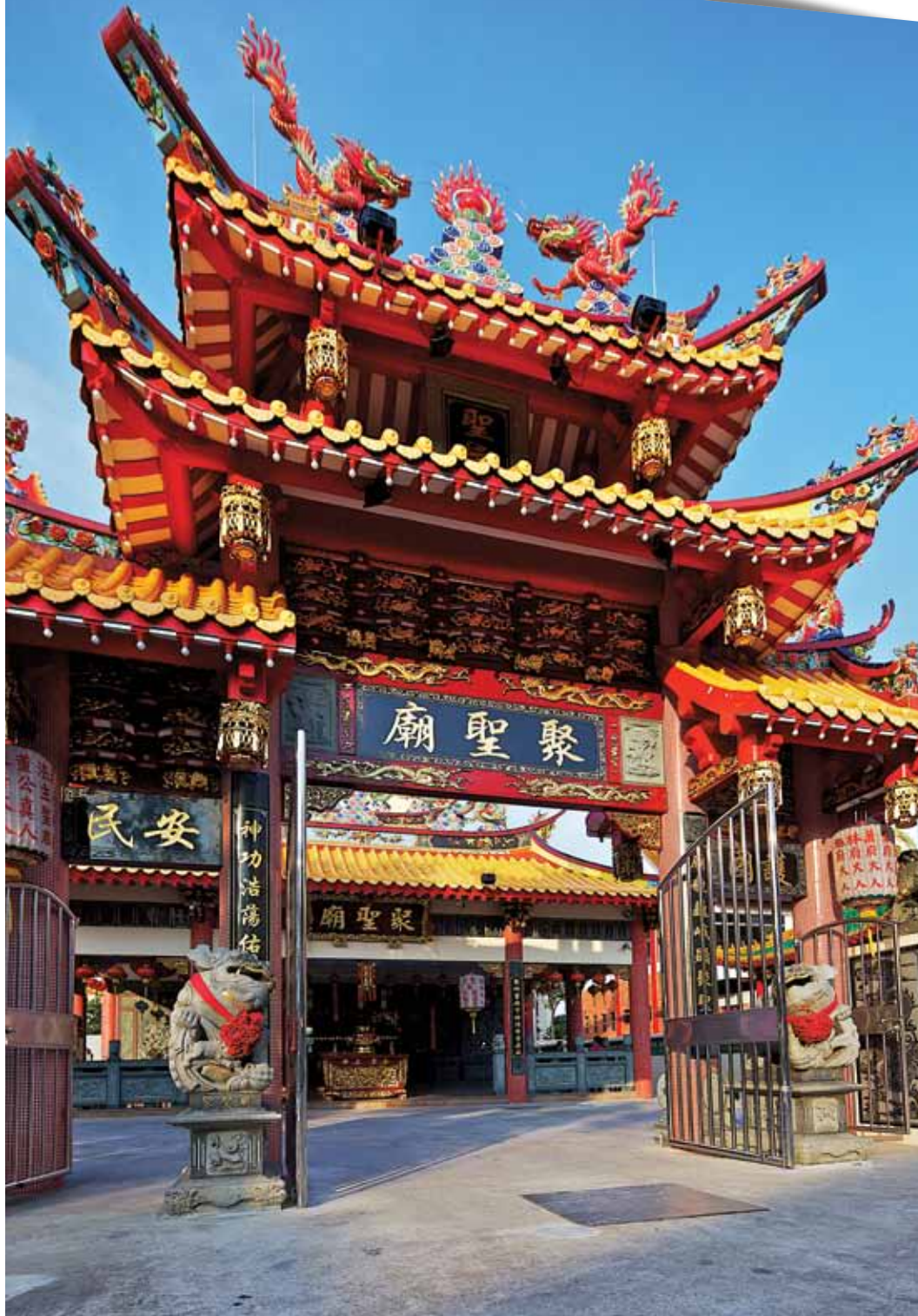
## **ANDERSON PRIMARY SCHOOL**

**19 Ang Mo Kio Avenue 9**

Opened in 2000, Anderson Primary School was formed by the merger of three older schools - Li Hua, Hong Dao and Ang Mo Kio North Primary Schools. Li Hua Primary School originated as a rural school, formerly known as Lee Hua Chinese School, located along Yio Chu Kang Road. Hong Dao Primary School began operations in 1982 while Ang Mo Kio North Primary School was established in 1981. The three schools were merged for greater efficiency as enrolment was low in the respective schools and their locations were near each other in Ang Mo Kio.



## Chu Sheng Temple



### **CHU SHENG TEMPLE (聚圣庙)**

**48 Ang Mo Kio Street 61**

This Chinese temple along Ang Mo Kio Street 61 houses three temples - Ji Fu Gong (集福宫), Hua Tang Fu (华堂府) and Long Quan Yan (龍泉岩)- all of which hailed from villages in Yio Chu Kang.

It is unclear when Ji Fu Gong was originally established. However, there are two artefacts, a sedan and a tablet, dated 1918, indicating the year in which the temple and opera stage were rebuilt. One of the deities, Lord Xiao, was said to be particularly effective in ensuring a good return in farming. Pig farmers, especially, would bring ailing pigs to ask for healing and to request protection over their herds whenever swine flu struck. During festivals, it was common to see over a thousand pigs and pigs' heads as offerings, together with chickens, ducks etc, by farmers to the deity.

Hua Tang Fu is said to have begun in 1918 when immigrants of the surname Shi brought along the statues of their patron deities from their hometown in Shan Mei village, Anxi county, Fujian province, China and installed them in Bukit Ho Swee. Later, many members of the Shi family settled in Yio Chu Kang, where they established a temple to house the statues.

As for Long Quan Yan, it was formerly located along Yio Chu Kang Track 24 (defunct), an area known locally as *Lao Pah* (Hokkien: Old plantation). The temple began in the 1930s, when an immigrant from Nan An county, Fujian province, came to Singapore bearing the statue of the deity Fa Zhu Gong and installed it in his residence. A temple was constructed in the 1940s and an opera stage erected in 1952.

In the 1970s, the government began acquiring the land around Yio Chu Kang for redevelopment and most of the villagers were resettled in Hougang and Ang Mo Kio. The three temples combined in 1978 to form Chu Sheng Temple, which name means a "temple where deities gather". The temple building at Ang Mo Kio was completed in 1981 and has undergone a few rounds of renovation and extensions since. Today, Chu Sheng Temple is also active in providing social welfare services and community work.

### **ANG MO KIO-THYE HUA KWAN HOSPITAL**

**17 Ang Mo Kio Avenue 9**

In 1982, the idea of a hospital to provide medical and nursing care to patients who did not need the services of an acute care hospital was mooted. Community hospitals as such would ease overcrowding in existing acute care hospitals.

Following that, the first community hospital in Singapore, Ang Mo Kio-Thye Hua Kwan Hospital, then known as Ang Mo Kio Community Hospital, was planned. It was officially opened on 17 December 1993, the second community hospital to be completed after St Andrew's Community Hospital.

The management of the hospital was transferred from the government to two voluntary welfare organisations, Thye Hua Kwan and Chee Hoon Kog Moral Promotion Society, in 2002. The government's intention was to get more welfare organisations involved in step-down healthcare. Today, the hospital continues to provide rehabilitative and recuperative care to residents staying in the north.





## Swee Kow Kuan Temple



One of the three Swee Kow Kuan temples in Singapore. This was located in Sembawang, undated.

### **SWEE KOW KUAN TEMPLE** **46 Ang Mo Kio Street 61**

On the right side of this temple building, there stands a stone tablet. This tablet, commissioned in 1905, marks the founding year of a temple called "He Sheng Guan Wu Wang Fu Ye Qing Miao" (和升馆五王爷清庙), upon which the names of 51 individuals who contributed towards the building fund were carved as well.

The tablet was discovered in Buona Vista in 2005, when the government was redeveloping the area. The National Museum of Singapore, upon learning the news, undertook research. It established that the tablet belonged to Swee Kow Kuan Temple, which formerly occupied the site and which had since renamed itself.

The majority of the temple's founders were of the surname "Ang" and hailed from Ying Nei Village, Nan An county, Fujian province in China. When they migrated to Singapore in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, they brought along the incense ash from the temple in their hometown. After settling in Buona Vista, the pioneers established a temple, naming it after the location. In the 1920s, the British acquired the land in Buona Vista for military use. The villagers then moved to fifth milestone, Holland Road, where the temple was rebuilt. It was renamed "Swee Kow Kuan", after the mother temple in China.

However, in 1967, they had to resettle again due to redevelopment, this time to Choa Chu Kang. By then, there were two other Swee Kow Kuan temples - Yio Chu Kang and Sembawang - established by migrants from the same hometown bearing incense ash from the

same mother temple. Over at Bo Sua Tian in Yio Chu Kang, there was a temple which originated from another temple, Ge An Guan, in Ying Nei Village. In 1977, all four temples combined to form Swee Kow Kuan Temple (水沟馆葛岸馆庙) and relocated to Ang Mo Kio.

### **YIO CHU KANG SECONDARY SCHOOL** **3063 Ang Mo Kio Avenue 5**

In 1965, when then Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew visited Yio Chu Kang, the rural community requested a secondary school to be built for their children. The request was approved and Yio Chu Kang Secondary School was built in the same year. The school, which was officially opened in 1966, started with only five classes. Its first graduating class in 1966 comprised only 37 students.

During the early years, Yio Chu Kang Secondary School had basic infrastructure and had to share facilities with the nearby Pei Hwa Public School. In 1982, it relocated to its current site in Ang Mo Kio. School enrolment increased steadily as students living in Ang Mo Kio applied as well. The school underwent rebuilding and upgrading in 2000, which equipped it with the necessary facilities to meet the educational needs of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### **ANG HIAP LEE DEPARTMENTAL STORE** **Blk 629, Ang Mo Kio Avenue 4, 01-994**

Block 629, Ang Mo Kio Avenue 4, 01-994  
This stationery store has been serving residents in the neighbourhood since 1980. Run by the Ang family, Ang Hiap Lee used to operate as a furniture shop in a village near the former Boh Sua Tian Road along Yio Chu Kang Road. When redevelopment took off in the 1970s, the business was resettled to Ang Mo Kio, whereupon the family decided to sell stationery instead as there were no other such shops in the neighbourhood. Ms Ang Bee Yan, who took over the shop from her father in 1984, recalls, "Ang Mo Kio was a new town then, and there were many school children. There were also many office workers from the industrial park. As such, business in the '80s was very brisk. Today, the younger generation has largely moved out to other estates and business has slowed down."



## St Thomas Orthodox Syrian Cathedral



### ST THOMAS ORTHODOX SYRIAN CATHEDRAL

#### 650 Yio Chu Kang Road

This present building of St Thomas Orthodox Syrian Cathedral, was constructed only in 1983. A parish of the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church in Kerala, India, the church's history in Singapore began in the early 20th century, when the British started building large-scale military installations. Large numbers of Indians migrated to Singapore to work in these installations. Among them were Malayalees from Kerala, some of whom were Orthodox Syrian Christians.

The first locally held Holy Qurbana, a rite observed by Orthodox Syrian Christians, was recorded in March 1928. As the number of worshippers increased, a church building became necessary. In 1953, a piece of land was purchased at Topaz Road and the completed church was consecrated on 27 December 1959. The church continued to grow till the withdrawal of British military troops in 1971, whereupon many Indians returned to their homeland, including a number of Orthodox Syrian Christians. As such, the church's congregation decreased to 65 families from 250 families.

In 1979, the land at Topaz Road was acquired by the government for the development of the Pan Island Expressway. The church purchased its current site in 1980 and the new church building was consecrated on 18 December 1983. Membership increased steadily and the church was granted Cathedral status in 1997. Aspects of the church's Kerala heritage can still be seen today. The Holy Qurbana is held every Sunday in Malayalam, the official language in Kerala, and English. Onam, the harvest festival in Kerala, is also celebrated with a vegetarian feast.

### FIRST EVANGELICAL REFORMED CHURCH

#### 652 Yio Chu Kang Road

Standing at the end of Yio Chu Kang Drive, the First Evangelical Reformed Church began in 1962 as a Bible study group in Monk's Hill Secondary School. The group operated from various premises and grew steadily in membership and, in 1976, it established an outreach mission in a *kampung* house at River Valley Road.

The society enjoyed a close relationship with the Protestant Reformed Church of America and received advice and support from the church in the initial years. In 1982, the society was finally instituted as a church called Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore. Five years later, it was renamed First Evangelical Reformed Church after a second church was founded and the denomination, Evangelical Reformed Churches in Singapore, was established. It moved into its current site in 1994.



FERC in the early days, operating from a kampung house in River Valley Road, undated.

SOURCE: FIRST EVANGELICAL REFORMED CHURCH



## Teachers' Housing Estate

### **TEACHERS' HOUSING ESTATE** **Bounded by Upper Thomson Road and** **Yio Chu Kang Road**

The Teachers' Housing Estate was started by Singapore Teachers' Union (STU) in 1967 to provide teachers with affordable housing. To keep development costs low, STU decided to undertake the project in the rural area, and acquired a tract of land off Yio Chu Kang Road.

Completed in 1968, 256 terrace houses were built in all, priced between \$23,000 and \$25,000. While the prices were low for the times, it was still a large sum for teachers then, the majority of whom were earning between \$325 and \$690 a month. About 70% of the houses were sold to teachers eventually.

In the early days, residents were dependent on washerwomen and baby-sitters from the *kampungs* along Yio Chu Kang Road. There were no provision shops or markets within walking distance and residents would buy from a mobile market selling groceries from a van or drive to the market at Nee Soon Village along Sembawang Road. It was only in the 1970s that shops were set up in the estate.

In 1973, STU completed the Teachers' Centre, located in the estate. The centre was equipped with office space and a multi-purpose hall. Facilities such as a swimming pool, squash courts, a library and a canteen were built. Such facilities were uncommon in the 1970s and they were highly popular among STU members.

*"During early years, the area was very secluded and there were often monkeys around. There was jungle around the estate and along Yio Chu Kang Road, it was all kampungs. Nearby there was a Chinese temple and a Hindu shrine near it and sometimes festivals would be held."*

- Pauline Wong,  
who has worked with STU since the 1970s.

Schools would also use the centre for events such as seminars. Courses were run for STU members, from professional development to recreational courses including cooking and social dancing here.

Towards the 1990s, however, schools had become much better-equipped and facilities such as swimming pools had become more common. The Teachers' Centre was no longer as relevant as it once was. In 2010, the land occupied by the facilities was leased to a private property developer.

### **SINGAPORE TEACHERS' UNION (STU)**

STU has its roots in an association known as the Singapore Teachers' Association, which tried to redress grievances of teachers. However, it had little success as it had no legal status. In 1946, it was founded as a labour union and went on to be the largest teachers' union in Singapore.

Over the years, STU has evolved to meet the changing needs of teachers. In its founding years, it brought about several changes, including the parity of salaries between male and female teachers, and European and local teachers. As the labour movement in Singapore evolved, STU adapted accordingly. Among other functions, STU today also provides professional development courses and resources for its members and runs programmes for students.

### **Did you know?**

The lanes in Teaches' Housing Estate were named after famous poets and writers from various cultures. Li Po and Tu Fu were Chinese poets while Tagore and Kalidasa were Indian poets and writers. Iqbal, Omar Khayyam and Munshi Abdullah were from Muslim cultures, one from India and the other from Malaya.





## Grand Prix of Yesteryears



*"My passion for racing was inspired by my uncle, Looi Im Heok, who was an avid racer in the Grand Prix. We lived right on the circuit and when the event came round, we couldn't help but feel the excitement! The Thomson Road circuit was a very challenging natural track. There was very little run-off area and if you make a mistake, you hit a rubber tree. There were ravines and embankments on both sides of the road, so you make a choice – get airborne or hit a wall! It rewards precision."*

- Mr Lee Chiu San,  
who took part in motorcycle races  
between 1969-1973.

### GRAND PRIX OF YESTERYEARS

Mention "Grand Prix" and many people will think of the Formula 1 Singtel Singapore Grand Prix launched in 2008. Motor racing in Singapore actually dates back much further. The Singapore Motor Club (SMC), established in 1948 by a group of motor sports enthusiasts, organised races in various parts of Singapore, including South Buona Vista, Lim Chu Kang and Farrer Road.

In the early 1960s, SMC felt the need to identify a new circuit for local races and saw the section of Upper Thomson Road and Old Upper Thomson Road as a possibility. At around the same time, the government felt that organising a Grand Prix would boost the tourism sector and Singapore's image.

As a result, in 1961, Singapore's very first

Grand Prix was held. Organised by SMC and sponsored by the Ministry of Culture, the event was held in conjunction with the region's "Visit the Orient" year. Nine races, four of them motorcycle races, were held over two days on 16 and 17 September. Grandstand tickets were sold at \$9, a considerable fee then.

The circuit, which was 4.865km long, stretched along Upper Thomson Road to the former Sembawang Hills Circus before routing up to Old Upper Thomson Road and exiting at Sembawang Road. It was a difficult circuit and had a reputation for being dangerous. Oil trails from local buses and lampposts, bus-stops and monsoon drains along the circuit made it dangerous for the drivers. One challenging section was Sembawang Hills Circus, called "Circus Hairpin". Accidents and even deaths have occurred at this hairpin bend. Two other sections, called "Snakes" and "Devil's Bend", were also infamous for the number of accidents that took place there.

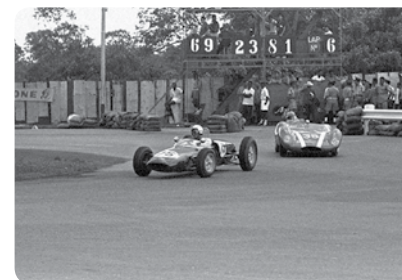
In 1962, the event's name was changed to the Malaysia Grand Prix. This name was to remain till 1966, after Singapore's independence, whereupon it was renamed Singapore Grand Prix. Organisation of the races was also transferred to the Ministry of Social Affairs in 1966.

The event garnered a lot of attention, especially after it was added to the World Motor Racing calendar in 1963. It was a key highlight of the year for many living in Singapore then. Locals and foreigners alike flocked to watch the races and top drivers from Asia and Australia flew here to take part.

However, after a number of deaths during the races, concerns arose that the event promoted reckless driving. In 1973, the last Grand Prix along the Thomson Road circuit was held and it was only 35 years later that professional motor racing was to take place here again.



(SOURCE: YUSOF ISHAK COLLECTION, COURTESY OF NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF SINGAPORE)



(SOURCE: YUSOF ISHAK COLLECTION, COURTESY OF NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF SINGAPORE)

(Top): Motorcycle events were held at the Grand Prix as well, 1966. (Bottom): Racing in the Upper Thomson Road circuit, 1965.



## Sembawang Baptist Church



### SEMBAWANG BAPTIST CHURCH

**140 Casuarina Road**

This church began in a small wooden house in Nee Soon Village along Upper Thomson road at its junction with Mandai Road. In 1955, a Baptist Christian, Mr Tan Huan Hin, offered the use of his late brother's house to the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), a Christian denomination based in the United States. A centre for teaching of the Christian faith was thus started by the convention and named Baptist Gospel Centre. Activities were pioneered by a missionary, Mdm Tan Kiat Jin, who came from Swatow, China.

Services were conducted in Mandarin, Cantonese and Teochew as most believers then were Chinese-speaking. Many of them were villagers living in Nee Soon and Sembawang. Gradually, the centre became too small for

the congregation. In 1957, with the aid of SBC, a corner shophouse along Casuarina Road was purchased, and the church was officially founded in 1958. Being located in Sembawang Hills Estate, it was named Sembawang Baptist Church (森峇旺浸信教会) in remembrance of its origins in Sembawang.

Over the years, the church underwent a few rounds of renovation and extension works. As the congregation grew too large for its premises, the church moved its Sunday service in 2000 to Yishun 10, a cinema in Yishun Town Centre. Services continued in the cinema till 2004, whereupon the church moved the worship service back to its original premises.

Besides serving the spiritual needs of Christians, Sembawang Baptist Church also organises visits to charitable homes and participates in community activities.



The church's premises in Sembawang before relocating to Casuarina Road, c. 1950s.

SOURCE: SEMBAWANG BAPTIST CHURCH

*"All four of us had to help out in the restaurant after school and during school holidays. That was when we learnt about the business and how to cook. As a child, I wanted more play time, and this was very hard work. But looking back, it built us to be better persons."*

- Mr Elango S/O Subramaniam (b. 1971), one of the owners of Casuarina Curry Restaurant, recalling how he and his siblings helped out in the family business.

### CASUARINA CURRY RESTAURANT

**136 Casuarina Road**

A favourite among locals, Casuarina Curry Restaurant has been serving up reasonably-priced, *thosai*, *prata*, *biryani* and other South Indian dishes at Casuarina Road since 1992. The family behind the business, however, has been in this line since the 1960s, starting with a South Indian cuisine restaurant called Ramakrishna Villas, located in Tanjong Pagar. In 1984, the business moved to Jalan Kayu as its premises were acquired for urban redevelopment. The business had to move again in 1992 when Jalan Kayu underwent development. Casuarina Curry Restaurant, which took its name from its new location, was thus founded. Today, the restaurant is also known for helping out regularly with charities in their fund-raising.



## Lower Peirce Reservoir

### LOWER PEIRCE RESERVOIR

The final stop on the trail, Peirce Reservoir is Singapore's second impounding reservoir to be built. Its planning took place in the early 1900s when demand for potable water was increasingly urgent due to rapid population growth. By then, water supplied by Thomson Road Reservoir (present-day MacRitchie Reservoir) had become insufficient.

Initially, there were plans to create a tunnel from a tributary of the Kallang River to direct more water to Thomson Road Reservoir. However, these plans were repeatedly delayed and incurred huge costs. In 1902, the Municipal Engineer, Robert Peirce, who served in Singapore from 1901 to 1916, submitted a proposal that an impounding reservoir be built on the Kallang River instead.

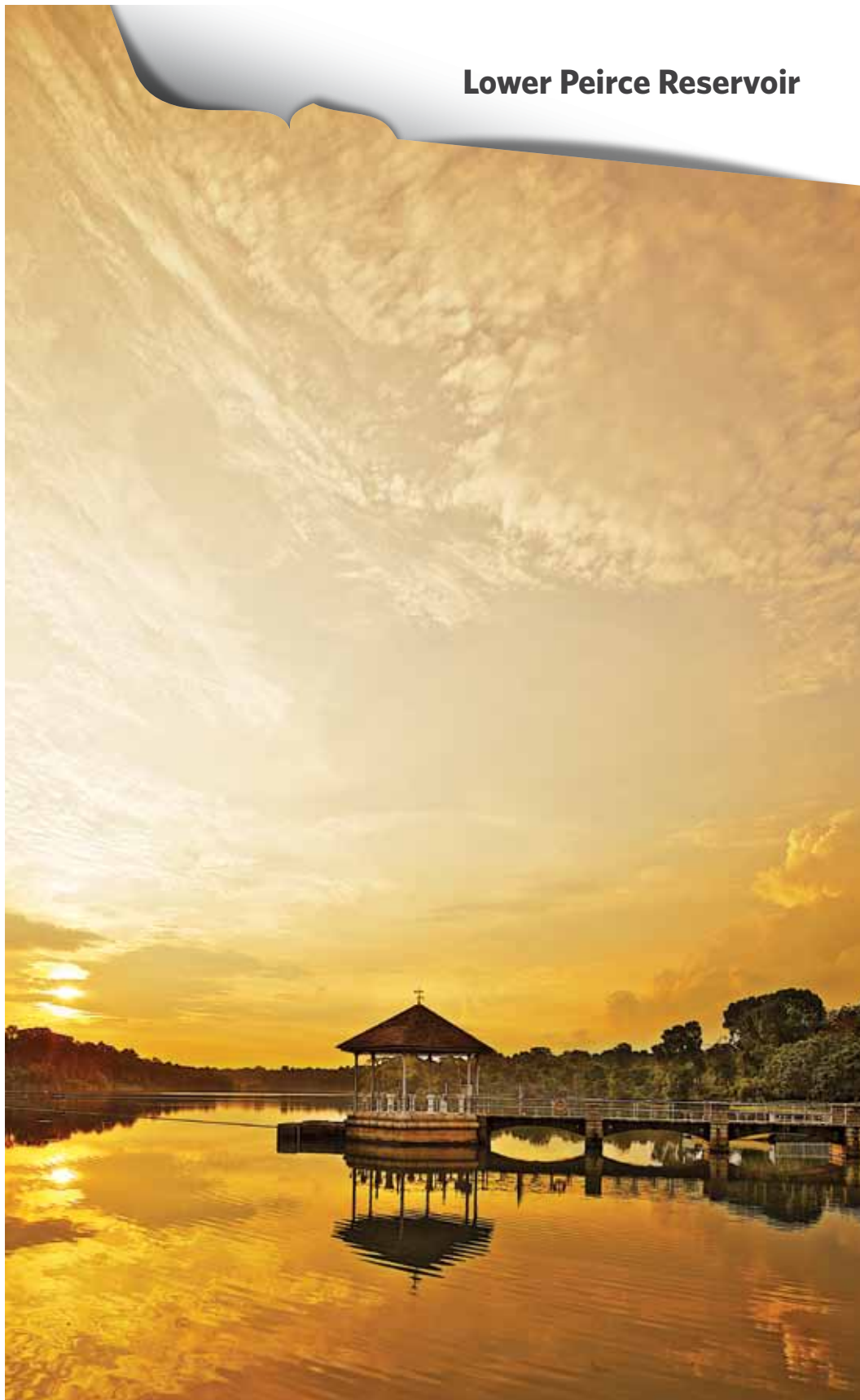
It was only in 1907 that Peirce's proposal was implemented and works began in June by the Westminster Construction Company. The new reservoir was named "Kallang River Reservoir" to distinguish it from Thomson Road Reservoir. Thomson Road had to be diverted for nearly three miles and an existing swamp on the left of the road was to be flooded and occupied by the dam and reservoir.

Works involved surveying the nature of the underlying ground, excavating the swamp to reach a depth of seven to 15 feet and constructing dams and walls for the reservoir. A tunnel was built to carry pipes through a hill to bring the water to new filter-beds at Woodleigh for treatment and storage.

The reservoir was finally completed in 1910. Water was first drawn in February 1911 while regular supply of water to the town began in December the same year. On 27 March 1912, the Kallang River Reservoir was officially opened by Sir Arthur Henderson Young, Governor of the Straits Settlements (1911-1919). In the same year, the reservoir provided 2,424,000 gallons of water per day to the town. The name of the reservoir was changed in 1922 to "Peirce Reservoir", as tribute to the engineer behind the project.

In 1970, the Public Utilities Board (PUB) began investigating the land around Peirce Reservoir with the intention of enlarging it, and decided to construct a new reservoir on the upper tributary of the Kallang River. The new reservoir, commissioned in 1975, was named Upper Peirce Reservoir and Peirce Reservoir was renamed Lower Peirce.

Today, Lower Peirce Reservoir is a popular recreational spot. It is served by the Central Catchment Nature Reserve, which also boasts of a large variety of flora and fauna. Time your visit in the evening to catch the sunset over the reservoir, and if you are lucky, you may get a glimpse of the local wild boar population in the park!

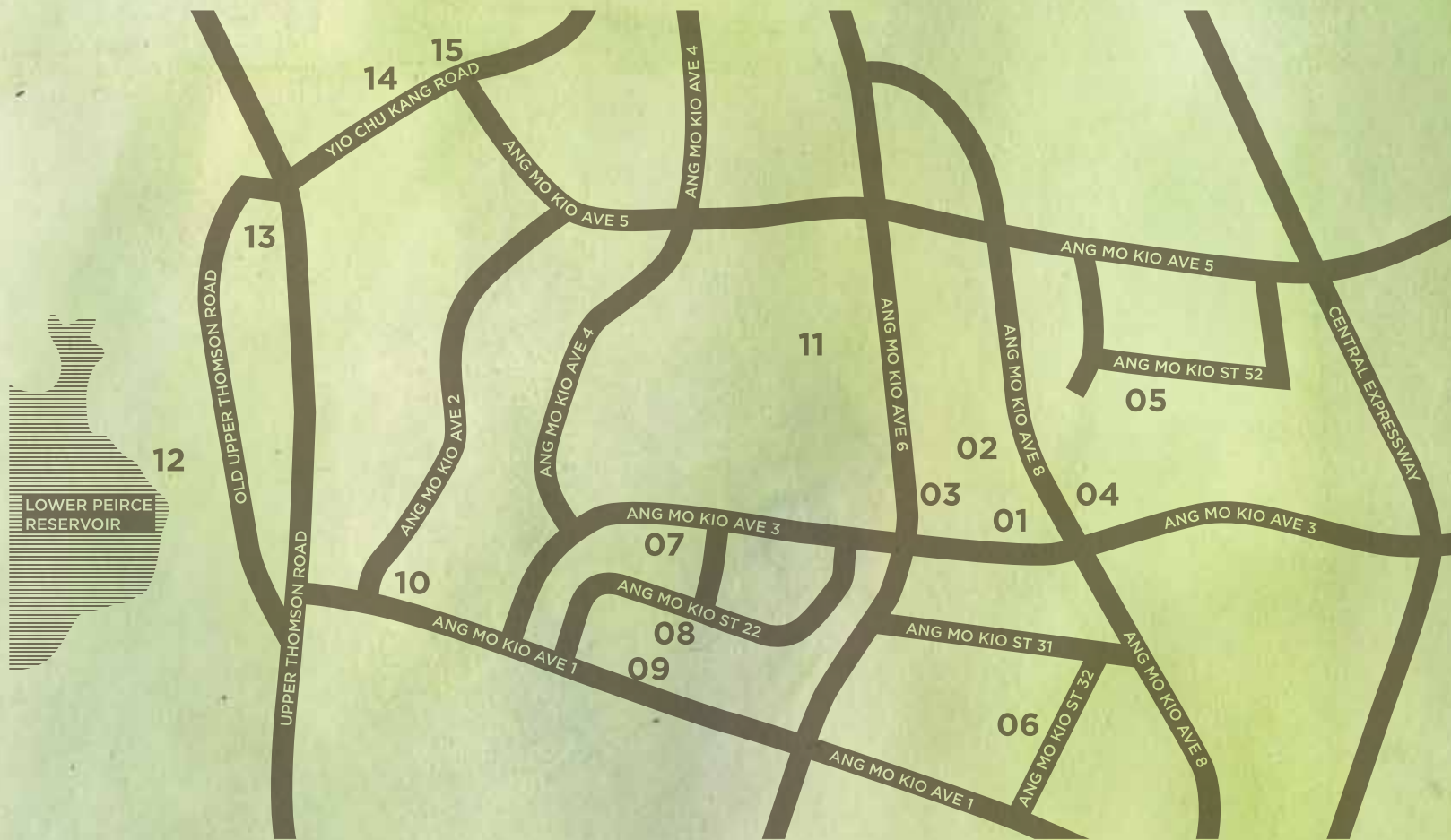






**TRAIL ONE**

- 01. Ang Mo Kio Hub
- 02. Ang Mo Kio Town Centre
- 03. Masjid Al-Muttaqin
- 04. Ang Mo Kio Town Garden West
- 05. Ang Mo Kio Town Garden East
- 06. Jing Shan Primary School
- 07. Ang Mo Kio Town Council
- 08. Ang Mo Kio Primary School
- 09. Kebun Baru Mall (Block 226)
- 10. Ang Mo Kio Joint Temple
- 11. Block 259



**TRAIL TWO**

- 12. Lower Peirce Reservoir
- 13. Former Sembawang Hills Circus
- 14. Teachers' Housing Estate
- 15. Yio Chu Kang Road



National Heritage Board

[www.nhb.gov.sg](http://www.nhb.gov.sg)