

BISHAN HERITAGE TRAIL

By Singapore Kwong Wai Siew Peck San Theng

10

2008
PLACES TO SEE



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 School

TODAY





Introduction

Located right in the heart of Singapore, amidst 500 acres of idyllic green parkland and reservoir catchment areas, Bishan is a charming town and home to many. It is also a site of rich culture and heritage, being the location of the Harmony Centre @An-Nahdhah Mosque, as well as Phor Kark See and Tse Tho Aum, the largest Buddhist monastery and nunnery in Singapore respectively. Top schools such as Raffles Institution, as well as Catholic High School also call Bishan home. Besides, Bishan is also the site of Bishan Park, as well as the headquarters of The Salvation Army. It can be clearly seen that Bishan is a microcosm of our dynamic, progressive, multi-racial, multi-cultural, green and beautiful Singapore.

The rich history of Bishan, however, is not known to many. Meaning “pavilions on the green”, the name “Bishan” was derived from the century-old organisation Peck San Theng, which previously occupied the plot of land that the new town is now standing on.

The *Bishan Heritage Trail Booklet* takes you on a journey to 10 key landmarks in this charming estate, exploring the history, culture and heritage of these places. We will also make a pit stop at Peck San Theng, where the history of this official burial ground and the role it plays in the history of overseas Chinese in Singapore will be revealed.

1

HARMONY CENTRE @ AN-NAHDHAH MOSQUE

History

Housed in An-Nahdhah Mosque on Bishan Street 14, the Harmony Centre is an integrated hub for promoting greater understanding of Islam and the lifestyle of Muslims.

The Centre symbolises the Islamic Religious Council of Singapore (MUIS)'s efforts to encourage a greater understanding of Islam and Muslims amongst the multi-racial population of Singapore. This is also the first harmony centre to be built by MUIS within the compounds of a mosque. It is a unique platform that portrays Islam in an unblemished form, demonstrating what it means to be Muslims in a challenging and ever-changing world.

Officially opened by Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong on 7 October 2006, the opening coincided with the Muslims' fasting month of Ramadan. The Harmony Centre is also a key cornerstone in Singapore's efforts to promote inter-religious harmony and inter-faith dialogues. As Prime Minister Lee pointed out in his speech during the opening ceremony, the centre is a noteworthy initiative as it is a one-stop centre that promotes inter-religious dialogue and explains the true teachings of Islam.





2

“O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other (not that ye may despise each other). Verily the most honoured of you in the sight of God is (he who is) the most righteous of you. And God has full knowledge and is well-acquainted (with all things)”

Qur'an (Al Hujurat : 13)

Highlights

The two-storey building showcases a rich variety of exhibits and artefacts on the Islamic faith. Visitors experience an array of audio and visual devices illustrating the practices and culture of local and international Muslims. There is also an image montage display showing how Muslims in Singapore have interacted with citizens of other faiths since the 1960s. This section of the centre, called Images of Islam, highlights how the notion of peace is synonymous with the outlook of Muslims.



3

The centre also features the personal histories of renowned Muslim personalities who have made significant contributions to modern civilisation such as Ibn Khaldun, Father of Sociology, as well as Hajjah Fatimah. In addition, there are exhibits explaining the importance of the search for knowledge in Islam and its traditional importance as an act of worship. The role of Muslims in fields such as linguistics and architecture, mathematics, physics, astronomy, geography, medicine, chemistry and philosophy are revealed.

- 1 An-Nahdhah Mosque located at Bishan Street 14 which also houses the Harmony Centre
- 2 18th-Century Handwritten Qur'an displayed in the artefact room
- 3 The Essence of Islam Section explaining the beliefs and pillars of Islam



1

The Artefacts Room of the centre displays objects used in the daily life of a Muslim. These include Quran, Madrasah books, pottery, and handmade carpet. The MUIS Halal logo and certificate, and some samples of Islamic art and calligraphy are also showcased.



2

Trained guides are stationed at the centre to provide visitors with first-hand accounts of the Islamic faith. They possess a wealth of knowledge about Islam and will answer any query regarding their faith. For the many non-Muslim visitors, this presents a wonderful opportunity to interact with members of the Muslim community.

- 1 The Islamic Lifestyle Artefact Room
- 2 Arabic Language in Chinese Calligraphy

Contact Details
9A Bishan Street 14 S(579786)
6478 4310
www.harmonycentre.sg
Buses: 53 and 410

Beliefs

There are ten religions recognised in Singapore: the Baha'i faith, Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Jainism, Judaism, Sikhism, Taoism and Zoroastrianism. As a multi-ethnic and multi-religious society, it is crucial to ensure not just respect of other religions but also understanding of their basic teachings. The following tabs detail information about the other nine religions of Singapore.

Did you know?

True to the essence of the Harmony Centre, whose tagline is "Building Bonds of Humanity", the centre allocates one section to showcase the multi-religious aspect of Singapore. It recognises the importance of respecting and understanding the basic teachings of other religions in our multi-ethnic and multi-religious society.

There are 10 official religions in Singapore including Islam. The other nine religions are Baha'i, Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Jainism, Judaism, Sikhism, Taoism and Zoroastrianism. Visitors are provided with an overview of each religion's beliefs.

2

BISHAN HEARTLAND

History

Bishan New Town is the public housing estate situated in the approximate geographical centre of Singapore. Its aesthetically-pleasing design and good *fengshui* have made it one of the most popular public housing choices in Singapore.

Before the 1980s, an old cemetery called Peck San Theng, which means “pavilions on the green”, occupied the area with graveyards for the Cantonese. In 1984, all graves were exhumed and remains were cremated to allow for residential and commercial development.

Today, you can find more than 19,000 dwelling units at the Bishan heartland, with a population of more than 67,000.





2

Highlights

Bishan New Town has a disjointed town layout consisting of a mixture of three-, four- and five-room HDB flats. The oldest public housing blocks were located around Sin Ming to serve as housing for the surrounding industrial estates. When the area was designated as a new town, the main housing area was built in the vicinity of Bishan MRT station, with neighbourhoods established in Bishan North and Shunfu. Newer blocks were also built in Sin Ming while the old blocks were being refurbished.

There were initial fears that Bishan HDB flats would face poor occupancy as cemeteries bode bad *fengshui*. This turned out to be unfounded, however, and Bishan became one of the most popular towns after new flats were built.

The history of Bishan as a cemetery and columbarium also inspired the subsequent design of apartment blocks with distinctive and colourful roof forms to reflect Bishan's pavilion heritage. Besides roof terraces in Bishan East and pitched roofs in Bishan North, the romance of the old pavilions can also be seen in the design of precinct entrances, access paths and rest areas.

Today, Bishan New Town has become one of the model housing estates in Singapore. It is often the choice housing estate to bring overseas visitors to, and Bishan flats are also largely featured in local TV productions.



3

- 1 Exercise amenities at Bishan Active
- 2 Soccer field at Bishan Active
- 3 Commercial amenities at Bishan Town Centre

11

Did you know?

Opened in August 2008, the \$1.8million Bishan Active is touted as one of the largest outdoor sporting facilities in Singapore. It is an integrated fitness and recreation area created to suit the various needs of different residents.

The 375-metre track which circles the park is popular among residents who love leisure runs while kids are kept happy at the children's playground.

Apart from two fitness corners, you can also find a senior citizens' fitness corner. The park also contains one basketball court, beach volleyball court, roller blade track and football pitch each.



3

BISHAN COMMUNITY CLUB

History

In Singapore, Community Clubs (CCs) are set up by the People's Association (PA) as meeting grounds for residents of all races and ages to make new friends and explore common interests.

The 1950s and early 1960s saw turbulent times for the country. Racial riots and political strife meant that Singapore was a divided society made up of communal groups that were closely-knit as individual units, but were pulling in different directions from each other. On 1 July 1960, the PA was formed to help foster racial harmony and social cohesion, and to form the basis for nation-building.

Today, the PA continues to bring people together through a wide range of activities organised at more than 100 CCs located island-wide.





Occupying a total land area of 5,900 square metres, Bishan Community Club (CC) is an activity hub in Bishan where residents get together to enjoy a myriad of activities and bond with one another.

The CC was officially opened on 26 April 1998 by Mr Wong Kan Seng, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Home Affairs. He is also a Member of Parliament for Bishan-Toa Payoh GRC.



Highlights

Bishan CC has a pleasant, resort-like ambience. As Bishan Town has a relatively young population with a significant number of newly-married couples, the CC also focuses on activities and programmes that cater to post-65ers.

Many facilities, including a reading room, activity room, music room and singing room all serve the various needs of the residents.

With all these facilities, the CC hosts many interesting and varied activities such as Chinese Calligraphy, Indian Classical Dance and various culinary courses.

Contact Details

51 Bishan Street 13 S(579799)

6259 4720

www.pa.gov.sg

Buses: 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59 and 410

Did you know?

Besides being in a strategic location, Bishan CC has a Dome cafe within its compound. It is a popular meeting place as the environment creates a relaxing mood for residents to bond and chat over a cup of coffee.



4

BISHAN PARK

History

Siting between the two housing estates of Ang Mo Kio and Bishan, Bishan Park is one of the largest and most popular parks in Singapore.

Built in 1988, this beautiful park woos visitors with its lakes and bridges, colourful shrubs and lush greenery. With its wide array of lifestyle facilities available, Bishan Park has emerged as one of the key lifestyle parks in Singapore and reinforces Singapore's image as a Garden City.

The concept of a Garden City was first envisioned four decades ago, driven by Minister Mentor Lee Kuan Yew (then Prime Minister), who identified a green Singapore as a key competitive factor in attracting foreign investments to the country. The first Tree Planting Campaign was launched in 1963. More than 40 years later, the greening concept is still as relevant and the Government remains just as committed to the programme.

The National Parks Board (NParks) plays a critical role in ensuring that the island's seamless green infrastructure of parks and streetscape is an essential part of Singaporeans' lives. It strives to build partnerships with corporations and the community to initiate programmes that will inspire Singaporeans to love their environment.

- 1 The public celebrating Mooncake Festival
- 2 Training ground for pet dogs
- 3 Jogging path for all to use
- 4 Shelters and exercise corners
- 5 Greenery and waterscape



Highlights

Bishan Park is the gateway to other key nature areas in the central part of Singapore, and is part of the national Park Connector Network.

The Park Connector Network is an important part of NParks' plans to transform Singapore into a "City-in-a-Garden". Its vision for the city of Singapore is that it exists nestled in lush greenery, with green lungs set amidst built-up areas, and with over-arching tree canopies shading park-goers from the scorching sun. Besides building new parks and redeveloping existing ones, NParks also links nature reserves and parks with park connectors, creating a "Garden of Gardens".

At Bishan Park, visitors can access Kallang Riverside Park through the Kallang Park Connector. Joggers, cyclists and casual walkers often use this seamless pathway to enjoy the green scenery and waterscape. Bishan Park also serves as a gateway to nature reserves with its close proximity to Lower Peirce Reservoir.

Contact Details

National Parks Board

<http://www.nparks.gov.sg>

Buses : 132, 133, 136, 165, 166,
169 and 262 (along Ang Mo Kio Ave 1);
162 and 410 (along Sin Ming Ave)



Did you know?

The Handkerchief Tree is one of the most handsome trees found in Bishan Park. Its profile is low and spread-out, with the main branches ascending close to each other and forming a surprisingly tidy symmetrical crown. The crown is usually covered with evenly-spaced and white-coloured "handkerchiefs" that occur at frequent intervals.

Shedding leaves and blooming anew every few months, the trees are particularly attractive in the evening twilight when the contrast between the "handkerchiefs" and the dark crown appears at its strongest.



Photo courtesy of NParks

5

THE SALVATION ARMY TERRITORIAL HEADQUARTERS



History

The Salvation Army was formed in 1865 when London minister William Booth took his message into the streets to reach the homeless, hungry and destitute. He originally intended to send converts to established churches, but soon realised that the poor did not feel comfortable or welcome in most Victorian England churches. Booth founded the East London Christian Mission church especially for them. The church was reorganised along military lines in 1878 when his son Bramwell objected to being called a “volunteer”, stating that he was “a regular or nothing”. Renamed “The Salvation Army”, the organisation continues its work

today, guided by its faith in God and love for all people.

The first Salvation Army headquarters in Singapore was established in 1935 by Brigadier Herbert Lord and was housed in an old Chinese mansion on Killiney Road. With progress and expansion, the headquarters moved to Tank Road (later renamed Clemenceau Avenue) in January 1938. It occupied the House of Tan Yeok Nee, which is regarded as one of the four grand mansions of 19th-century Singapore. It eventually relocated to its current purpose-built premises on 20 Bishan Street 22 in 1995.

Highlights

Although it does not have the biggest facilities among its branches in Singapore, The Salvation Army headquarters plays the important role

of taking charge of many of the activities and programmes that embody The Salvation Army's long-standing mission of providing care and support to all the needy with a loving heart. It is also the territorial headquarters for Singapore, Malaysia and Myanmar.

Those unfamiliar with The Salvation Army may regard it as a strictly Christian or English outfit. In reality, it reaches out to the needy regardless of their religious beliefs and ethnic identities. For example, the Bishan Chinese Corps housed at the Headquarters is a long-standing programme supporting the elderly

staying in the neighbourhood and other estates, running regular programmes for senior citizens, including free health checks and haircut services for the poor.

1 The donation bin is open 24/7

Contact Details

20 Bishan Street 22 S(579768)

6555 0188

sg.salvationarmy.org

Buses: 13, 52, 54, 74, 88, 162,
410, 851 and 852

Did you know?

The rectangular donation box standing in front of the HQ building is the compound's most outstanding "feature". In fact, many mistake the donation box as the core function of The Salvation Army.

At the end of every year, about two months before Lunar New Year, the donation box experiences its "peak season" as Singaporeans spring-clean their homes, donating items to The Salvation Army. Staff and volunteers have been pleasantly surprised by the wide and sometimes extraordinary variety of items donated, such as a sword, pistol, weighing machine and manual typewriter.



1

6

TSE THO AUM BUDDHIST TEMPLE (NUNNERY) 自度菴

History

Along Sin Ming Drive lies this majestic temple of Tse Tho Aum (TTA). With a legacy of more than half a century, the TTA nunnery compound comprises multiple prayer halls, lecture halls, hostels, columbarium and even a crematorium. TTA has long been famous for being the largest nunnery in Singapore, with more than 35 live-in female Buddhist devotees and nuns who are aged from eight to 85.

Founded by the late Abbess Venerable Hui Ping in 1941, TTA was first established in a small, rundown hut along Changi area. Shortly after that, Singapore went through one of its toughest periods during the WWII Japanese occupation in 1942-1945. Strictly devoted to her Buddhist teaching "A day without labour is a day without food"

(一日不做，一日不食), Abbess Venerable Hui Ping led the nunnery's devotees through this dark period by carrying out basic farming activities, which kept them self-sufficient through this phase of their enduring history.

Three decades down the road after the end of the Japanese occupation, the Singapore Government decided to acquire TTA's land in 1977 for national development. Three years of hard work and tremendous help from her Buddhist followers, Abbess Hui Ping eventually realised her dream to build the largest nunnery in Singapore at its present premises. Since then, TTA has consolidated and put into practice the late Abbess's philosophy of self-discipline, self-reliance and assistance to others.



Highlights

Dedicated to charity work and helping the needy in Singapore, TTA has committed most of its resources to help the less fortunate, in particular, the orphans and elderly. The nunnery management is also a regular contributor to various charity organisations and schools like the Community Chest, Buddhist Free Clinic and Maha Bodi School.

TTA's ongoing efforts to help those in need are in line with Abbess Hui Ping's vision of contributing to society. She was passionate about education and established the Singapore Girl's Buddhist Institute, which has churned out many outstanding female Buddhist devotees and leaders.

Looking forward, the temple hopes to spread the teachings of Buddhism by inspiring and engaging more youths in



their spiritual seminars and workshops on the teachings of Buddhism.

1 The buddha hall

Contact Details

601 Sin Ming Drive S(575719)

6454 7666

Buses: 52, 130, 410 and 162

Did you know?



TTA is one of the three institutions which offers cremation services in Singapore. The other two are Kong Meng San Phor Kark See Monastery and Mandai Crematorium and Columbarium.

The late Abbess Hui Ping was a very good cook. She was famous for producing a wide variety of delicious vegetarian dishes using simple and ordinary ingredients. She was a passionate advocate for vegetarian food and its relationship to good health, and even wrote a cookbook introducing 25 of her signature dishes, complete with detailed instructions. This book was probably the first vegetarian cookbook ever published in Singapore. During that period, Abbess Hui Ping, with five other devotees who shared the common vision and goals, also opened Singapore's very first vegetarian restaurant in Chinatown. Today, in line with the late Abbess's legacy, TTA is still taking orders for vegetarian dishes from those in the know.



7

KONG MENG SAN PHOR KARK SEE MONASTERY 光明山普觉禅寺

History

Situated on a hillside in Bishan, Kong Meng San Phor Kark See Monastery is the largest Buddhist temple and also one of the largest places of worship in Singapore.

Kong Meng San Phor Kark See Monastery has a history of 88 years. In 1920, Venerable Zhuan Dao realised that the time was right to build a place where the Dharma could be propagated and practised, and where lodging for immigrant monks who had accommodation problems could be provided.

Built in the midst of a rubber plantation, the Monastery

was officially set up in 1921 and became the first traditional Chinese forest monastery in Singapore. Since it is situated on Kong Meng San (or "Bright Hill"), it came to be known as Kong Meng San Phor Kark See Monastery. The Monastery grew steadily and Dharma propagation began in Singapore.



- 1 Ven. Hong Choon Memorial Hall (VHCMH), completed in 2003
- 2 Covered walkway in traditional Chinese design
- 3 “3 Steps 1 Bow” during Vesak Day Celebration
- 4 The Monks’ Quarter, taken from the interior of the Hall of No Form on the fourth floor of VHCMH



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In 1943, after Venerable Zhuan Dao's death at Putuo Monastery, the second Abbot, renowned Venerable Hong Choon, took over. He belonged to the group of the early missionary monks who came from China to Southeast Asia. During his term of office, he built various Buddhist Halls and the Ten Thousand Buddhas Pagoda. Kong Meng San developed well under his 47 years of able leadership. Venerable Hong Choon also initiated the monthly Great Compassion Prayer and taught the Dharma to many.

After Venerable Hong Choon died in December 1990, Venerable Kwang Sheng took up the current abbotship, from June 2004.

Highlights

The entire land size of the monastery measures 75,470 square metres or the equivalent of about 11 football fields.

Visitors can find buildings featuring fine examples of Chinese decorations, as well as many statues and shrines throughout the compound. A large turtle pool, peaceful gardens and the constant hum of prayer add to the air of tranquility, making this place ideal for a soul-searching retreat.

Modelled after the southern Chinese style of architecture, all the building structures of the monastery feature an interesting and unique combination of Chinese art, aesthetics, and Southeast Asian architectural styles.

Each hall is built to suit the undulating hill structure the monastery rests upon. The oldest building is the Hall of Universal Brightness, followed by the Hall of Great Strength, the Hall of Great Compassion, the Dharma Hall and Library, the Hall of Precepts, the Sangha Quarters and the 10,000 Buddhas Pagoda respectively. In 2003, the Venerable Hong Choon Memorial Hall was completed, making it the latest addition in the monastery. All over the monastery, visitors will see Buddha and Bodhisattva images from the various traditions expressing the Mahayana spirit of encompassing one and all.



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Constructed in 1947, crematorium services have been made available to Buddhists and Taoists in Singapore. Ashes can also be housed in the Pu An or Pu Tong Columbarium.

Be sure to look out for the statue of Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva, standing on top of the columbarium — he is well known for his great vows to save all beings, especially Hell beings, from their sufferings.

Under Venerable Kwang Sheng's leadership, the Dharma Propagation Division was set up for Singaporeans to learn Buddhism and practise the Dharma in relevant ways.

One of its departments, kmsYM, or the Youth Ministry was set up in 2003 to serve as a platform for Singaporean youth who want to know about Buddhism, learn Buddhism and serve the society through Buddhist teachings. The kmsYM holds regular



programmes such as fellowship sessions, talks, workshops and movie discussions suitable for youth aged 17 to 35.

Appreciating the universal truth that all phenomena are impermanent, unsatisfactory and lacking in inherent reality, kmsYM youth live life with wisdom, compassion and courage.

- 1 Bell Tower, on the left of Hall of Great Strength
- 2 Candle Light Offering, part of Vesak Day Celebration

Contact Details

88 Bright Hill Road S(574117)

6849 5300

www.kmspks.org

Buses: 52, 162 and 410

Did you know?

The Hall of No Form is most notable for housing an awe-inspiring Giant Sakyamuni Buddha that stands at 13.8 metres from its lotus base. The hall, measuring 3,290 square metres, can accommodate up to 2,000 people and is believed to be the largest column-free religious hall in Singapore.



"I joined the Youth Ministry in 2006 but since young, I have been visiting the temple with my parents regularly. I feel an affinity for the religion and I think Buddhism teaches us many important values about life."

– Aster Chia, 21 years old, member of the kmsYM

8

CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL

History

Catholic High School is a full government-aided school, comprising a secondary and a primary section. As one of the 10 current Special Assistance Plan (SAP) schools in Singapore, Catholic High School provides opportunities for top scorers in the Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE) to effectively learn both English and Chinese at the first language level.

The school was originally located within the premises of the Church of St Peter and Paul on Queen Street. To cope with the increasing demand of prospective students, it relocated to its present site in Bishan in 1992.

Since its inception, the school's mission has been to nurture bilingual scholars and gentlemen of high integrity and robust character who are passionate about life, learning and serving others. Over the years, the school has emphasised four core values: love, constancy of purpose, creativity and continuous improvement.



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Highlights

Founded in 1935 by the late French missionary, Reverend Father Edward Becheras, the school is a Catholic institution that takes in both Catholic and non-Catholic students.

Although founded by a French national, Catholic High has, from the start, placed a strong emphasis on bilingual education. Reverend Father Becheras's Chinese name 劳爱华 (literally "Loves Chinese") hints at his strong passion for Chinese culture. He once said that "the way of the Catholic High School is a way made of two rails - Chinese and English - free from any entanglement,

straight to its end. Happy are those who follow. They shall obtain the scope of a sound education."

Till today, the pursuit of outstanding bilingualism remains firmly as a cornerstone of the school's philosophy. This is why over the years, Catholic High has produced many outstanding talents, including Singapore's present Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong and Minister for the Prime Minister's Office Lim Swee Say. To date, Catholic High has also produced 19 President's Scholars.



3

- 1 A sculpture of our founder, the late Father Edward Becheras, with his vision for the school inscribed at the sculpture base
- 2 A magnificent view of the school with the iconic clock tower building
- 3 Catholic High Student – Gentleman and Bilingual Scholar

Contact Details

9 Bishan Street 22 S(579767)

6458 9869

www.catholichigh.moe.edu.sg

Buses: 13, 52, 54, 74, 88, 156, 162 and 410

Did you know?

Amidst a modern school complex, one can find remnants from the past that reveal the history of Bishan and in particular, the site which Catholic High School is now standing on.

Boundary stones marked "Peck San Theng" (碧山亭) can be found at the south-west and south parameters of the campus, defining the boundary between the school and the adjacent housing estates. These marker stones are believed to be the only ones left intact after the original Peck San Theng burial ground was cleared for public housing in 1979.

Prior to 1857, there was no legislation in Singapore to regulate the boundaries of burial grounds, and hence it was not uncommon to find graves in unexpected corners of Singapore. On 1 January 1857, formal legislation was enforced to regulate all burial grounds in Singapore. However, because the governing authorities had difficulty in enforcing the act, boundary stones remained as useful territorial markers during the early days.



9

RAFFLES INSTITUTION

History

Raffles Institution is an independent all-boys secondary school with a co-educational senior (junior college) division. Founded in 1823 by Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles, it is the oldest local school in Singapore. Together with its sister school, Raffles Girls School (Secondary), Raffles Institution offers a seamless Raffles Programme curriculum for boys and girls from Secondary 1 to Pre-University 2.

The story of Raffles Institution started when Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles envisioned setting up a school for both the local and regional communities. He secured a grant from the British East India Company, set up the structure for the board of trustees and laid the foundation for the school.

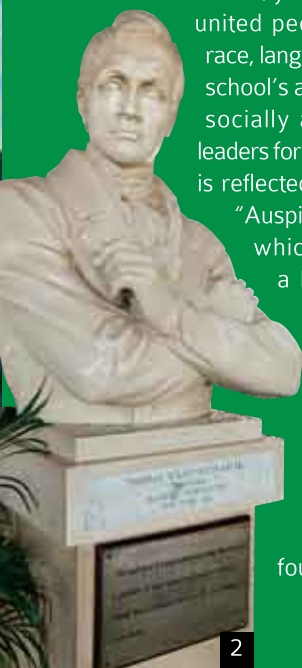
His goal was to provide education for the sons of the Company's servants and the children of local leaders in Singapore, then a British colony. "It is probably due to him



(Raffles) more than any other individual that education began in Singapore,” noted former Headmaster Mr E. Wijesingha, who helmed the school from 1986 to 1994.

The original campus of Raffles Institution was located along Bras Basah Road, where Raffles City now stands. When the Government decided to redevelop the city area, the old buildings on Bras Basah Road had to be demolished. Raffles Institution then moved to a new campus on Grange Road. However, when the school needed to be upgraded and expanded in the late 1980s, it decided to move to a larger site in Bishan which had been cleared for re-development. In 1990, Raffles Institution moved to its present site, followed by Raffles Junior College in 2005. The current campus of the integrated Raffles Institution consists of 21 main blocks lying on 18 hectares of land in Bishan.

Raffles Institution has grown to be the premier school of Singapore, producing many distinguished national leaders, including Minister Mentor Lee Kuan Yew, Senior Minister Goh Chok Tong and the late Mr S Rajaratnam, who drafted the National Pledge in 1966, which articulates our country’s aspiration to be “one united people, regardless of race, language or religion”. The school’s aspiration to cultivate socially active citizens and leaders for the wider community is reflected in its school motto “Auspiciū Mellioris Aevi” which means “Hope of a Better Age”. Being located in the heart of Singapore, the students and staff of the institution hope to serve the community in Bishan and beyond, in the spirit of Singapore’s founding fathers.



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- 1 Nurturing Rafflesians to be thinkers, leaders and pioneers
- 2 Sir Stamford Raffles, founder of Raffles Institution
- 3 Raffles Wall of Fame : They Led Us To The Fore
- 4 The five House Colours with Mr Griffles, RI's mascot
- 5 Raffles Institution





1

Highlights

A heritage centre is housed behind the school's atrium, showcasing the prestigious Raffles legacy.

In a replica of a typical classroom setting from the 1960s, visitors can get a glimpse of the Rafflesian way of education during its days on Bras Basah campus. Those with an eye for details can even spot photographs of Minister Mentor Lee Kuan Yew and Senior Minister Goh Chok Tong.

- 1 Raffles Heritage Centre
- 2 Replica of the Principal's Office at Grange Road

Contact Details

One Raffles Institution Lane S(575954)

63538830 (Years 1-4)

64199888 (Years 5-6)

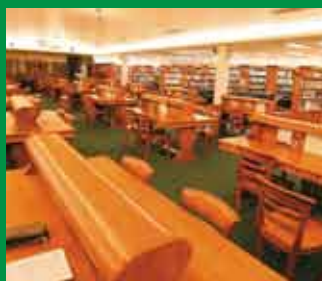
www.ri.edu.sg

Bus: 410

29

Did you know?

The Hullett Memorial Library at Raffles Institution is the oldest library in Singapore. It was established as the Raffles Library by former Headmaster J. H. Moor (1837-1843). From the Raffles Library came The Hullett Memorial Library and the Singapore National Library. In 1923, the institution's library was upgraded through the efforts of Rafflesian alumni, Dr Lim Boon Keng and Sir Song Ong Siang and was named after Raffles Institution's longest serving principal, R. W. Hullett, who was Headmaster from 1870 to 1906.



The wood furniture in the library has been custom-made in the Regency style which was popular during the period when Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles was with the East India Company in Java. Each chair in the library is styled with only its hind legs carved and named The Raffles Chair.

10

SINGAPORE KWONG WAI SIEW PECK SAN THENG 新加坡廣惠肇碧山亭



1

History

After Sir Stamford Raffles founded Singapore as a free port in 1819, massive numbers of Chinese migrated to Singapore. Most of them came from the southern coastal areas of China where people spoke mainly in Hockien, Teochew, Cantonese, Hainanese and Hakka.

The early immigrants also brought along with them their traditions and values of ancestor veneration as practised by the Chinese for thousands of years. Families observe the Spring-Autumn Festival (春秋二祭) and pay



2

respects to their ancestors during these two occasions. Ancestor veneration has now become a living heritage of Singapore.



3



4



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- 1 Main entrance to Peck San Theng facing Bishan Lane
- 2 Earth Treasure Bodhisattva at the entrance of Peck San Theng Columbarium
- 3 Paying respects to seven Jun Zi during Spring-Autumn festivals
- 4 Main entrance to Bishan Temple
- 5 Original road sign for Peck San Theng Cemetery until the early 1980s
- 6 Gateway to Fu Te Chi facing Braddell Road

In those days, all dialect communities built and managed their temples and cemeteries. The temples were the meeting places for the living and the cemeteries were the resting places for the dead. Peck San Theng (PST) was set up in 1870 to cater to the Cantonese and Hakka communities.

During the 1970s, PST management received notice from the government that the land had been earmarked for a new town development. The government encourages cremation rather than burial, so as to maximise land use. At that time, PST consisted of 324 acres with more than 100,000 graves and was one of the biggest cemeteries in Singapore. Thus, all existing graves were exhumed and remains cremated during the 1980s.

In a bid to preserve its traditions, the Cantonese community decided to re-build PST. The Government agreed to lease back eight acres of land to PST for re-building. Today, Kwong Wai Siew Peck San Theng at Bishan Lane is a gentle reminder of the past and plays a key role in preserving an important part of the heritage and identity of Chinese culture.



6



1

Highlights



2

In this 8-acre compound, we can see the results of 20 years of rebuilding:

Columbarium

The columbarium has a 100,000-niche capacity.



3

Fu Te Chi (Earth God Temple): Earth God, also known as Ta Pak Kong is the most popular deity in this part of the world, and shrines of Earth God can be found throughout Singapore. PST rebuilt and dedicated this century-old temple in 2004. Inside are a number of invaluable stone carvings recording important events since the inception of PST in 1870.

Administration Block

The Peck San Theng Administration Block was rebuilt in 1987. Two 8-metre long gold foil and camphor wood wall murals, weighing 1000kg each, are located in the main lobby. The left mural highlights 28 scenic spots of 18 counties in Guangdong province, locating the origins of early Cantonese immigrants. The right mural details the various trades of the early immigrants.

Kwong Wai Siew Monument

Early immigrants without family had common graves. There were common tombs for clans from the same place of origin, the same surname and similar business types. It was crucial for early immigrants to join the clan associations, or they would not have a final resting place.

32

Above the carpark's entrance are eight Chinese characters “慎終追遠，源远流长” which means that the value of ancestor veneration is to be carried on like an ever-flowing river. This neatly sums up the reason for PST's 139-year existence and why PST will continue for many years to come. Columbarium services are now open to all, regardless of race and religion.



4

Two Temples

Bishan Temple: This is a century-old temple rebuilt in 1985. It houses Kuan Yin and 13 other deities including Buddhist saints, Taoist immortals and Confucian sages. There are large-scale porcelain wall murals depicting famous Chinese classic stories from the Romance of Three Kingdoms, Journey to the West and Twenty-Four Filial Piety Stories, as well as wall murals of Yue Fei and the Five Hundred Luo Han.

This monument honours the common tombs exhumed in the 1980s. Members of the PST Management Committee pay their respects to the forefathers represented by this monument during the Spring/Autumn festivals.



Kwong Wai Siew Clan Altar

In the early days, many clan members placed the ashes of their deceased parents and relatives together with their tablets at PST. PST has since accumulated some 9,498 tablets of individuals from the three prefectures of Kwong Fu, Wai Chow Fu and Siew Heng Fu in Guangdong province. These 9,498 individuals are seniors of Kwong Wai Siew Clan associates. In 2008, PST built two Clan Altars honouring them, in line with its mission of “shen zhong zhui yuan”.

Seven Jun Zi Pavilion

The pavilion was built in 2003 in memory of the magnificent seven who sacrificed their lives to protect the interests of the Cantonese Community during the early turbulent years of Singapore. They were killed in 1841, during the China Opium War period, and their seven urns are housed here. In paying their lives to uphold the values of “loyalty” and “righteousness” and defending the community’s interests, they earned deep respect from the early Cantonese community. The Management Committee of PST pays respects to them during the Spring-Autumn Festival, a custom continuing from the practices passed down by the early Cantonese immigrants.

- 1 Wall mural showing locations of 28 famous scenic spots in Guangdong Province
- 2 Clearly-marked location of each of the many niches in the Columbarium
- 3 Chinese characters expounding the value of ancestor veneration, comparing it to an ever-flowing river
- 4 Kwong Wai Siew Clan Altars commemorating a total of 9,498 senior clan associates
- 5 A beautiful landscaped garden with Kwong Wai Siew monument and two temples in the background

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Did you know?

Amidst the group of traditional buildings, there is a quiet landscaped garden with a waterfall, fish pond and landscaped rocks for visitors to rest and reflect.

When visitors take a walk down the 20-metre long “Corridor of Life Teachings” they will be greeted by meaningful sayings inscribed on the pillars lining the sides of the walkway. The sayings aim to guide us on the right path in life.



碧山亭舊址簡圖

TERYEARS

