

MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release

**HEAD UP NORTH TO GET THE LOWDOWN ON WOODLANDS WITH THE NATIONAL
HERITAGE BOARD'S LATEST HERITAGE TRAIL**



(L-R) Today, the remains of the former Ruthenia Jetty can still be seen from the Woodlands waterfront at very low tides (*Ministry of Information and the Arts Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore*) while the former Malaysian Base Jetty is now part of Woodlands Waterfront Park (*Courtesy of National Heritage Board*)

Singapore, 27 October 2022 – With its position at the border of two nations, Woodlands is known to many as Singapore’s gateway to Malaysia. However, there’s much more to this northern town that is waiting to be discovered, like its early days as an area dotted with coastal and riverside settlements, the role it played during World War II, and the stories of the varied communities who have called Woodlands home over the decades.



2 Featuring 15 heritage sites and supplemented by eight heritage trail markers, the National Heritage Board’s (NHB) new ***Woodlands Heritage Trail*** traces the rich military history of Woodlands, the evolution of its communities and places of worship, and its transformation into a modern estate. The trail has been developed with contributions from the community and is presented through three thematic routes – *Communities of Woodlands*, *Woodlands at War*, and *A Journey through the Woods* – that uncover the area’s lesser-known stories.

3 Mr Alvin Tan, Deputy Chief Executive (Policy & Community), NHB, said: “With the launch of our latest trail, we hope to change public perception of Woodlands as merely a frontier town bordering Malaysia by highlighting its lesser known military, community and natural heritage. More importantly, we hope to increase our heritage touchpoints by expanding our island-wide network

of trails, and in doing so, we hope to encourage Singaporeans to continue to rediscover Singapore through neighbourhoods.”

Stories of kampong communities from the early days

4 For much of the 19th century, the present-day Woodlands area was known as “Kranji” or “Mandai”, after the main rivers in the area. In fact, the name “Woodlands” only emerged in the late 19th century after a bungalow bearing the same name was built on the northern coast. The *Woodlands Heritage Trail* tells the stories of early settlers in the 19th century, including the Orang Seletar and Teochew migrants. The Teochew settlers inhabited the land and established coastal and riverside settlements known as *chu kang* (Teochew for “river port”) along the northern coast. The nomadic Orang Seletar made their living by fishing, while the Teochew community cultivated gambier. For a visual record of Woodlands’ early communities, please refer to the table below:

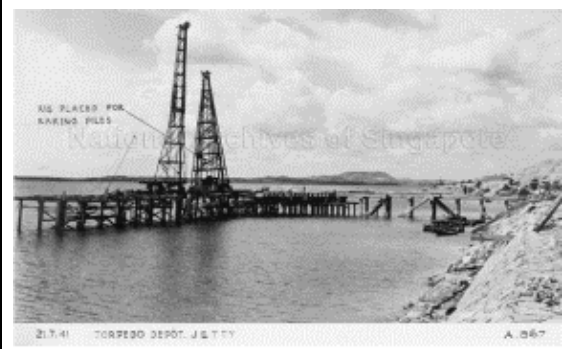
	<p>Orang Laut on board their <i>pau kajang</i>, 1950s <i>Dr Ivan Polunin Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore</i></p>
	<p>Farmers tending to a gambier plantation, 1900s <i>National Museum of Singapore Collection, courtesy of National Heritage Board¹</i></p>

¹ <https://www.roots.gov.sg/Collection-Landing/listing/1040761>, Accession: 2001-01562.


Military hub of the North

5 The *Woodlands Heritage Trail* also delves into the area’s rich military past. From the 1920s, Woodlands became an area of military significance as the Causeway formed a vital connection between Singapore and Malaya. The British built a naval base along much of Woodlands’ coast, with two major naval depots – The Torpedo Depot and the Royal Navy Armament Depot – that stored torpedoes and ammunition such as shells and mines.

6 Woodlands and Kranji became part of the military frontline in early 1942 when the Japanese invaded Singapore. The Japanese military converted the site of an Australian Army (which was assigned to defend the Woodlands area) field headquarters into a prisoner-of-war camp. The camp’s cemetery later became the Kranji War Cemetery after hostilities ended. From the 1950s to 1997, the Malaysian navy also operated its headquarters called *KD Malaya* (KD stands for *Kapal DiRaja*, or “Royal Ship” in Malay) in Woodlands. The former Royal Malayan Navy jetty was once part of the Malaysian naval base, and its administration block is retained at 21 Admiralty Road West. These landmarks serve as a reminder of Woodlands’ past as a military hub. For a visual record of sites that showcase Woodlands’ military heritage, please refer to the table below:

	<p>Torpedo Depot jetty, 1941</p> <p><i>Courtesy of The National Archives, United Kingdom²</i></p>
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² <https://www.nas.gov.sg/archivesonline/photographs/record-details/c06de94b-4eeb-11e6-b4c5-0050568939ad> Image: 20160000026-371

	<p>Train at the naval base's Armament Depot, 1930</p> <p><i>Courtesy of The National Archives, United Kingdom³</i></p>
	<p>Ex-POWs on the Causeway, 1945</p> <p><i>Nederlands Insituut Voor Oorlogsdokumentatie (NIOD) collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore⁴</i></p>
	<p>Kranji War Cemetery, 2022</p> <p><i>Courtesy of National Heritage Board</i></p>




Religious institutions that continue to serve their communities

7 Woodlands' former villages made way for new housing and checkpoint developments by the 1990s. While these settlements no longer exist, the religious institutions that once served them continue to cater to the spiritual and social needs of the community. Today, places of worship such as the Church of St Anthony of Padua, Hong Tho Bilw Temple, Masjid An-Nur and

³ <https://www.nas.gov.sg/archivesonline/photographs/record-details/3cd7e566-3da5-11e6-b4c5-0050568939ad> Image: 2016000007-0096,

⁴ <https://www.nas.gov.sg/archivesonline/photographs/record-details/af8d0893-1161-11e3-83d5-0050568939ad> Accession: 128362,

Sri Arasakesari Sivan Temple have become prominent and important landmarks of Woodlands that also help to foster a sense of community and kampong spirit within a modern housing estate. For a visual record of sites that showcase Woodlands' prominent places of worship, please refer to the table below:

	<p>Chapel of St Anthony of Padua at its original site in Mandai Catholic Village, 1930s</p> <p><i>Courtesy of Cyprian Lim</i></p>
	<p>Church of St Anthony of Padua, 2022</p> <p><i>Courtesy of National Heritage Board</i></p>
	<p>Hong Tho Bilw Temple at its original site in Kampong Hock Choon, 1980s</p> <p><i>Courtesy of Hong Tho Bilw Temple</i></p>



Hong Tho Bilw Temple, 2022

Courtesy of National Heritage Board



Masjid An-Nur, 1980

Courtesy of Housing & Development Board



The original *Sri Arasakesari Sivan Temple* and ceremonial pond at Woodlands Road, 1980s

Courtesy of Sri Arasakesari Sivan Temple

Explore the Woodlands way of life

8 Trail-goers can discover the long and varied history of the neighbourhood in their own time through three thematic routes that cater to different interests. These routes are:

- **Communities of Woodlands** (1.5 hours with public transport, 4km)

This trail introduces trail-goers to different religious institutions and community landmarks that originated in Woodlands and continue to serve residents today.

- **Woodlands at War** (2 hours with public transport, 9km)

This trail brings trail-goers to former military sites such as the Kranji War Cemetery and the former KD *Malaya* administration building, and reveals their role in Woodlands' history.

- **A Journey through the Woods** (1.5 hours on bicycle; 2.5 hours on foot with public transport, 15km)

This trail lets trail-goers to explore the parks and other green spaces in Woodlands, as well as the rich history of these places.

9 The *Woodlands Heritage Trail's* companion guide and map (the map is available in four official languages) can be downloaded from NHB's heritage portal [Roots.gov.sg](https://roots.gov.sg). Limited printed copies of the guide will also be available at Marsiling Community Club, Fuchun Community Club, ACE The Place Community Club, Woodlands Galaxy Community Club, Woodlands Community Club, the National Museum of Singapore, Asian Civilisations Museum and NHB headquarters at Stamford Court. A video of highlights of the *Woodlands Heritage Trail* can also be viewed at <https://go.gov.sg/video-woodlandsheritagetrail>.

10 For more information, please refer to:

- [Annex A](#): Thematic trail routes of *Woodlands Heritage Trail*
- [Annex B](#): List of heritage sites in the *Woodlands Heritage Trail* and information on heritage markers

- [Annex C](#): Seven lesser-known facts about Woodlands
- [Annex D](#): List of heritage trails developed by NHB

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For media enquiries, please contact:

Lee Say Hua

Tate Anzur

9668 4605

sayhua.lee@tateanzur.com

Shermaine Yeo

Tate Anzur

9237 0940

shermaine.yeo@tateanzur.com

About the National Heritage Board

The National Heritage Board (NHB) was formed on 1 August 1993. As the custodian of Singapore's heritage, NHB is responsible for telling the Singapore story, sharing the Singaporean experience and imparting our Singapore spirit.

NHB's mission is to preserve and celebrate the shared heritage of our diverse communities, for the purpose of education, nation-building and cultural understanding. It manages the national museums and heritage institutions, and sets policies relating to heritage sites, monuments and the national collection. Through the national collection, NHB curates heritage programmes and presents exhibitions to connect the past, present and future generations of Singaporeans. NHB is a statutory board under the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth. Please visit www.nhb.gov.sg for more information.

WOODLANDS HERITAGE TRAIL – THREE THEMATIC TRAIL ROUTES

The *Woodlands Heritage Trail* features three thematic trail routes of varying distances, which the public can embark on in their own time, according to their interests.

1. Communities of Woodlands (1.5 hours with public transport, 3km)

Located in Singapore's north, Woodlands has provided a home for various communities who built landmarks that served their religious needs. Today, residents of Woodlands continue to worship at these community spaces. They also enjoy modern community amenities such as a market and park that have existed for more than 40 years. This thematic route introduces trail-goers to different religious institutions and community landmarks that originated in Woodlands and continue to serve residents today.

- Hong Tho Bilw Temple (also known as Feng Tu Miao)
- Shang Di Miao Chai Kong Temple
- Sri Siva Krishna Temple
- Marsiling Lane Market & Food Centre
- Masjid An-Nur
- Marsiling Park
- Church of St Anthony of Padua

2. Woodlands at War (2 hours with public transport, 9km)

Ever wondered why Woodlands has places with names like Admiralty Road and Admiralty Park? The answer lies with the British Admiralty, which ran Britain's Royal Navy, once operated a naval base that included many parts of Woodlands. This thematic route brings trail-goers to former military sites such as the Kranji War Cemetery and former KD *Malaya* administration building and reveals their role in Woodlands' history.

- Admiralty Park
- Former KD *Malaya* Administration Block
- Former Malaysian Base jetty
- Causeway

- Kranji War Cemetery

3. **A Journey through the Woods** (1 hour on bicycle; 2.5 hours on foot with public transport, 15km)

True to its name, Woodlands continues to be a place filled with trees, parks and greenery. This thematic route allows trail goers to explore the parks and other green spaces that make up Woodlands, as well as the rich history of these places.

- Marsiling Park
- Former Malaysian Base jetty
- Admiralty Park
- Ulu Sembawang Park Connector (PCN)
- Sri Arasakwsari Sivan Temple

WOODLANDS HERITAGE TRAIL SITES AND MARKERS

1. **Hong Tho Bilw Temple***
2. **Shang Di Miao Chai Kong Temple***
3. **Sri Siva-Krishna Temple**
4. Marsiling Lane Market & Food Centre
5. **Masjid An-Nur**
6. Marsiling Park
7. **The Church of St Anthony of Padua**
8. Admiralty Park
9. **Former Malaysian Base Jetty****
10. **Former KD *Malaya*****
11. Causeway
12. **Kranji War Cemetery*****
13. **Kranji State Cemetery*****
14. **Ulu Sembawang Park Connector^**
15. **Sri Arasakesari Sivan Temple**

Total: 15 sites

Heritage sites featured on trail markers are in **BOLD** (note that multiple sites can be featured on the same marker as some of these sites are located in close proximity to one another).

*These sites share a marker.

** These sites share a marker.

*** These sites share a marker.

^ This site features two identical markers due the length of the PCN

SIX LESSER-KNOWN FACTS ABOUT WOODLANDS

1. For much of the 19th century, the present Woodlands area was known as “Kranji” or “Mandai”, after the main rivers in the area.



A map showing R. Kranji, R. Mandi (Mandai) and R. Simko (Senoko), 1828 Survey department, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore



A Kranji tree, 2010s
Flora & Fauna Web, National Parks Board, Ang Wee Fong

“Kranji” was also a name derived from the kranji tree, which may have been common along Sungei Kranji (now Kranji Reservoir). The meaning of “Mandai” is uncertain, some believe it comes from mandi (“to bathe” in Malay).

2. **Woodlands** derived its name from a bungalow that was built on the northern coast in the late 19th century.



A map showing the ferry route from Kranji to Johor Bahru, 1885. This map also indicates 'Woodlands', which was then the name of a seaside bungalow.

Survey department, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore

The bungalow was built by Edward John Leveson, Italy's Consul in Singapore, and had a seaside compound and served as a holiday retreat for Leveson and his associates.

3. **A railway service from Singapore to Malaya existed even before the Causeway was built.**



Woodlands Station, 1907

National Museum of Singapore collection, courtesy of National Heritage Board

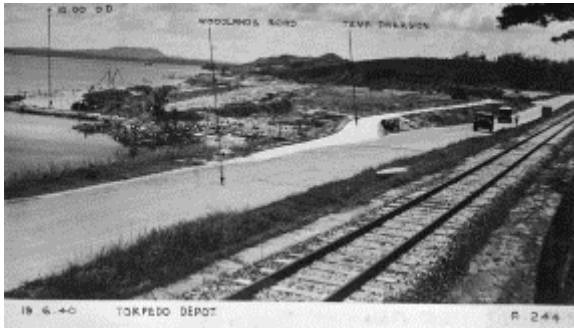


Wagon-ferry with train carriages at Johor Bahru, 1920s

Lee Kip Lin Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore

This service used special wagon-ferries (equipped with a railway track) that transported the train across the Straits of Johor from Woodlands to Johor Bahru, where it would continue its journey northwards.

4. Many areas of Woodlands were part of the British naval base that was operational in Singapore from 1938 until 1971.



Construction of the naval base's Torpedo Depot at Admiralty Road West (then labelled as Woodlands Road) with a railway running parallel to the road, 1940
Courtesy of The National Archives, United Kingdom



Train at the naval base's Armament Depot, 1930
Courtesy of The National Archives, United Kingdom

Admiralty Road was built in the 1920s to connect the Sembawang end of the naval base to Woodlands and the Causeway. There was even a railway line that ran parallel to Admiralty Road, which allowed materials to be delivered by train from Woodlands station to various parts of the naval base.

5. When it was opened in 1924, the Causeway had just a two-lane roadway about 8 metres wide.



The completed Causeway, c. 1924
Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore



The Causeway prior to expansions, 1950s
National Museum of Singapore Collection, courtesy of National Heritage Board



The Causeway, c. 1970s
National Museum of Singapore Collection, courtesy of National Heritage Board



The Causeway, with a view of Woodlands, that links Singapore to Johor Bahru, 2022
Courtesy of National Heritage Board

Since then, the Causeway had been widened three times (in the 1960s, 1970s and 1990s) and now has a 6-lane roadway.

6. Woodlands has the only WWII site in Singapore managed by the UK-based Commonwealth War Graves Commission.



Aerial view of Kranji War Cemetery, showing the “wings” and fin-like central pylon of Singapore Memorial, 1960-1962
All rights reserved. Sons of David “Danny” Daniel⁵

⁵ <https://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/pictures/Details/0065875c-f4ee-43c9-8575-f02013ef5a89>



Kranji War Cemetery, 2022
Courtesy of National Heritage Board

This is the Kranji war Cemetery, where more than 4,400 fallen soldiers are buried, and more than 24,000 soldiers (who died without a grave) have their names inscribed on the wall of Singapore Memorial, which is a wing-like edifice with a 22-m tall central pylon that recalls the tail-fin of a propeller plane. Viewed from the air, the Memorial resembles the silhouette of a World War II warplane.

List of Heritage Trails by the National Heritage Board

1. Bukit Timah Heritage Trail
2. Yishun-Sembawang Heritage Trail *(to be refreshed as the Yishun Heritage Trail at a later date)*
3. Ang Mo Kio Heritage Trail
4. Balestier Heritage Trail
5. Jalan Besar Heritage Trail
6. Kampong Glam Heritage Trail
7. World War II Heritage Trail
8. Tiong Bahru Heritage Trail
9. Queenstown Heritage Trail
10. Resilience Trails
11. Toa Payoh Heritage Trail
12. Jurong Heritage Trail
13. Singapore River Walk
14. Jubilee Walk
15. Bedok Heritage Trail
16. Little India Heritage Trail
17. Tampines Heritage Trail
18. Orchard Heritage Trail
19. Pasir Ris Heritage Trail
20. Hougang Heritage Trail
21. Sembawang Heritage Trail
22. Sentosa Heritage Trail
23. Woodlands Heritage Trail



For more information, please visit <https://www.roots.gov.sg/nhb/trails>.