

MEDIA RELEASE

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**THE FORMER KANDANG KERBAU HOSPITAL GAZETTED AS SINGAPORE'S 76TH
NATIONAL MONUMENT**

The hospital's former site on 1 Hampshire Road was the birthplace of generations of Singaporeans and has been preserved for its national and socio-cultural significance



Governor Sir John Nicoll at the foundation stone laying ceremony of Block 1 (of the Former KKH), with Block 2 visible in the background, 6 October 1953. Courtesy of the National Archives of Singapore.

Singapore, 1 October 2025 – The Former Kandang Kerbau Hospital (KKH) was gazetted today as Singapore's 76th National Monument, on its 101st anniversary since being established as a dedicated maternity hospital on 1 October 1924. Situated at 1 Hampshire Road before the hospital's relocation in March 1997, the Former KKH was the only government hospital in Singapore specialising in obstetrics and gynaecology at the time. The site holds an important place in Singapore's history, having witnessed many groundbreaking medical firsts and the births of over 1.2 million babies. For its socio-cultural value and national significance, three blocks at the Former KKH will be preserved and accorded the highest level of protection in Singapore under the Preservation of Monuments Act.

2 The gazette of Blocks 1, 2 and 3 as representative buildings of the Former KKH was officiated by Mr David Neo, Acting Minister for Culture, Community and Youth, who also launched *The Architecture of Care*, a special exhibition to commemorate this gazette. The exhibition is housed at the headquarters of Land Transport Authority (LTA), the site of the Former KKH, and will run from 1 October to 31 December 2025.

3 Professor Alex Sia, Chief Executive Officer, KK Women’s and Children’s Hospital, said: “For over a century, KKH has walked alongside our nation, sharing in life’s most precious moments by welcoming millions of children and caring for generations of families in Singapore. The recognition of the Former KKH as a national monument is a profound honour – a celebration not only of our pioneers’ compassion and vision, but also of the trust that families have placed in us through the decades. As Singapore has grown, so too has KKH, and this legacy inspires us to carry forward our mission to shape the future of women and children, to give every family the best possible start in life.”

4 Ms Melissa Tan, Director of Heritage Policy and Research, National Heritage Board, said: “Our National Monuments keep alive the stories of the men and women who have built our nation. Each monument tells different facets of the Singapore story. The Former KKH is a site that connects generations of Singaporeans across all backgrounds and communities. Many families in Singapore would have personal KKH stories that they hold dear. This gazette pays tribute to the site’s strong national significance, and preserves the buildings’ stories of care as part of our legacy for future generations.”

A hospital for the people

5 The term *kandang kerbau* (“buffalo enclosure” in Malay) recalls the site’s past when buffalo pens belonging to the colonial department of transport were located in the area. Built in 1858 to function as a general hospital, the site later evolved to become the Pauper Hospital for Women and Children and eventually, a free maternity hospital known as KKH in 1924. The hospital further adapted to meet the needs of the people over the years. It served as an Emergency General Hospital during World War II from 1941 to 1942, and was converted into a civilian hospital known as *Chuo Byoin* (“Central Hospital” in Japanese) after Singapore fell to the Japanese.

6 During the war, Dr Benjamin Henry Sheares, who later became Singapore's second President, took the role of the Deputy Medical Superintendent at the Former KKH. Dr Sheares was deeply concerned by high maternal mortality rates and pioneered, in Singapore, the use of lower-segment Caesarean section, a technique that reduced chances of complications during surgery and resulted in a scar that was better able to withstand future pregnancies. This procedure made childbirth significantly safer for women. Post-war, the Former KKH resumed its role as a specialised obstetrics and gynaecology hospital, introducing state-of-the-art technology and innovative care practices, facilitated by Dr Sheares, which placed the hospital on the world map.

"Birth-quake" and medical breakthroughs

7 In post-war Singapore, the Former KKH was faced with the herculean task of a phenomenal upsurge in local deliveries. In 1966, also known as the year of the "birth-quake", the hospital saw the delivery of 39,835 babies and was listed in the Guinness Book of Records for delivering the world's largest number of babies in a single maternity facility in a year. At its busiest, an infant was delivered every 13 minutes and 11 seconds and the hospital welcomed more than 110 babies per day. With those figures, the Former KKH held the title of the largest maternity hospital in the world for ten years between the 1950s and 1970s.

8 KKH's dedication to saving lives brought about several firsts in Singapore's medical history, ultimately paving the way for comprehensive and holistic maternity care available to families in Singapore today. For example, the nation's first School of Midwifery was opened by the hospital in 1952, spearheading the development of the midwifery and nursing professions in Singapore. Other medical milestones include the delivery of Singapore's first pair of Siamese twins in 1961 and Asia's first In-Vitro Fertilisation (IVF) baby in 1983.

Constructed with care

9 Built in the modern architecture style, the Former KKH buildings were known for their use of modern materials at the time of construction. The facades were designed to provide shelter from the tropical climate while allowing natural light and fresh air into the interior spaces. Blocks 2 and 3, constructed in the pre-war years of 1933 and 1940 respectively, stand as some of the

oldest buildings within the compound. Their design combined modernist architecture with vernacular features, which were designed and constructed using local materials and traditional methods. The pitched red roof of Block 2 is a prime example.

10 Designed by Dr Sheares with the assistance of Chief Government Architect K. A. Bundle, Block 1 was completed in 1955, with infrastructural improvements that prioritised the patients' well-being. The iconic windows lining the facade of Block 1 exemplified the Former KKH's architecture of care. The 'concrete fins' framing the windows reduced solar heat gain and glare, offered protection from rain, and promoted cross ventilation to facilitate patients' comfort on their path to recovery.

A monumental gazette for SG60

11 At the commemorative special exhibition *The Architecture of Care*, visitors can access the Former KKH's grounds and learn about the hospital's storied past through historical anecdotes, archival images, and artefacts, including a foundation stone that is being displayed for the first time. The foundation stone was laid during a ceremony marking the hospital's new wing in 1953, which later became Block 1. Another artefact highlight is a set of notes by Dr Yvonne Marjorie Salmon taken during lectures by Dr Sheares during his stint as a professor of obstetrics and gynaecology. She later became the first female head of the Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology at the Former KKH.

12 For more information, please refer to:

- [Annex A](#): Additional information on the Former KKH
- [Annex B](#): Information on *The Architecture of Care* and guided tours
- [Annex C](#): List of Singapore's National Monuments

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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.

About the Preservation of Sites and Monuments Division

The Preservation of Sites and Monuments (PSM) division, under the National Heritage Board (NHB) and with advice from the PSM Advisory Board, guides the preservation of buildings, monuments and sites, which commemorates Singapore's heritage as defined under the Preservation of Monuments Act. The PSM division also leads NHB's joint efforts with National Parks Board to list the Singapore Botanic Gardens as Singapore's first UNESCO world heritage site. It also oversees the 100 heritage sites that have been marked by NHB.

The PSM division's administration of the preservation gazette is complemented by its outreach objectives to promote a renewed appreciation and understanding of National Monuments and their history, and to encourage people to relate to them as sites of memory that convey a sense of place, identity and belonging. To date, 76 National Monuments have been gazetted under the Preservation of Monuments Act. For more information on the PSM division, please visit <https://www.nhb.gov.sg/what-we-do/our-work/preserve-our-stories-treasures-and-places/national-monuments-and-marked-historic-sites/preservation-of-sites-and-monuments>.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON THE FORMER KKH

Blocks 1, 2 and 3 of the Former Kandang Kerbau Hospital (KKH) stand as a testament to the hospital's historic achievements in gynaecology, midwifery and maternity services, and its role during Singapore's early nation-building years. Built in a modern architecture style catered for the tropical climate and patients' well-being, the hospital witnessed significant advancements in training healthcare professionals and childbirth practices. Dr Benjamin Henry Sheares, Singapore's second President and pioneer in obstetrics and gynaecology, performed groundbreaking procedures at the hospital.

The site holds an important place in Singaporeans' social memory as the birthplace of more than 1.2 million babies from the hospital's opening in 1924 to its relocation in 1997.

Type:	Government offices (Today) Hospital (Past)
Year of construction:	Block 1: 1955 Block 2: 1933 Block 3: 1940
Architect:	Public Works Department Block 1: Dr Benjamin Henry Sheares and Chief Government Architect K. A. Bundle
Address:	1 Hampshire Road, Singapore 219428

History of KKH

- Timeline of origins to war years
 - 1858: Singapore's fifth general hospital, the General Hospital, opened. It comprised two parts: the Seamen's Hospital and the Police Hospital. The former catered to the Europeans, while the latter treated locals.
 - 1865: The General Hospital began treating female patients for gynaecological conditions and childbirth.
 - 1905: The hospital became known as the Pauper Hospital for Women and Children after female pauper patients were transferred from Tan Tock Seng Hospital to the General Hospital. The General Hospital would also come to house female lepers and poor children.
 - 1924: On 1 October 1924, the hospital underwent internal structural reorganisation and reopened as Kandang Kerbau Hospital – a free maternity hospital specialising in gynaecology and childbirth.
 - 1941-1942: KKH was converted into an Emergency General Hospital treating war casualties and the sick.
 - 1942-1946: During the Japanese Occupation, KKH was renamed *Chuo Byoin* and converted into a general hospital for civilians. The hospital resumed its role in maternity care and gynaecology after the war in 1946.

Pioneering doctors

- **Dr Benjamin Henry Sheares**
 - Dr Sheares joined KKH in 1937 as the first local obstetrician. He made significant contributions throughout his service to the hospital, especially in the realm of gynaecology and obstetrics. During World War II, he performed the first lower-segment caesarean section operation in Singapore. Dr Sheares pioneered the 'Sheares Procedure' in 1960, a surgery that created an artificial vagina for women born without one.

- **Dr Joseph Sandys (J.S.) English**
 - As the hospital's director, Dr J.S. English reorganised KKH's internal structure in 1924 and led the construction of new hospital blocks with improved facilities. He was credited with building up Singapore's midwifery training and infrastructure, contributing to a significant decline in maternal mortality in Singapore.

Present day usage

- The site of the Former KKH now serves as the Land Transport Authority's (LTA) headquarters since 2004, and most of the post-World War II site layout has remained unchanged since their tenure.
- Blocks 2 and 3, two of the oldest blocks, were built during the pre-war years in 1933 and 1940 respectively. Block 1 was built in 1955 with Dr Benjamin Henry Sheares' input to its design, and has a façade that has been largely retained.

THE ARCHITECTURE OF CARE

Enter the former Kandang Kerbau Hospital, where over 1.2 million babies took their first breath from 1924 to 1997. Now gazetted as Singapore's 76th National Monument, this exhibition presents the remarkable stories and history that these buildings witnessed over seven decades of service. Featuring never-before-seen artefacts on loan from KK Women's and Children's Hospital and personal stories from those who worked and were born here, the exhibition celebrates the acts of care and medical excellence that touched the lives of generations of Singaporean families.

The Birthplace of a Nation

Guided tours of *The Architecture of Care* exhibition and the exteriors of Blocks 1, 2, 3

Saturdays: 11 Oct, 25 Oct, 8 Nov, 22 Nov, 1030am – 1130am

Wednesday: 15 Oct, 29 Oct, 12 Nov, 26 Nov, 5pm – 6pm (TBC)

Join us for an exclusive guided tour of Singapore's 76th National Monument, the former Kandang Kerbau Hospital, where over 1.2 million babies took their first breath from 1924 to 1997. This comprehensive tour offers a unique opportunity to explore the site that witnessed seven decades of medical excellence. The tour includes a visit to "The Architecture of Care" exhibition, featuring never-before-seen artefacts on loan from KK Women's and Children's Hospital and personal stories from those who worked there. Following the exhibition, there will be a short walk on the grounds to view the exterior of Blocks 1, 2, and 3, where our guide will reveal the thoughtful architectural design that embodied care in every detail – from the iconic hooded windows to the tropical adaptations that prioritised patient comfort. Experience the remarkable legacy of care and medical excellence that touched the lives of generations of families in Singapore.

Tour Guide

Jerome Lim is an award-winning heritage writer, photographer, and licensed tour guide. His acclaimed blog *The Long and Winding Road* chronicles Singapore's urban evolution, while his books *Uncommon Ground* and *Secret Singapore* uncover the hidden stories behind familiar places. As a heritage consultant and passionate storyteller, Jerome brings Singapore's rich cultural landscape to life through his tours and writings.

List of Singapore's National Monuments

Name of Building/Site/Structure		Date of Gazette
1	Former Thong Chai Medical Institution (1892)	28 June 1973
2	Armenian Church of St Gregory the Illuminator (1835–36)	28 June 1973
3	St Andrew's Cathedral (Rebuilt 1856–64)	28 June 1973
4	Former Telok Ayer Market (now Lau Pa Sat) (1890–94)	28 June 1973
5	Thian Hock Keng (1839–42)	28 June 1973
6	Sri Mariamman Temple (Rebuilt 1843)	28 June 1973
7	Hajjah Fatimah Mosque (1845–46)	28 June 1973
8	Cathedral of the Good Shepherd (1843–47)	28 June 1973
9	Nagore Dargah (now Nagore Dargah Indian Muslim Heritage Centre) (1828–30)	19 November 1974
10	Al-Abrar Mosque (1850–55)	19 November 1974
11	House of Tan Yeok Nee (The Former Salvation Army HQ) (1885)	19 November 1974
12	Tan Si Chong Su (1876–78)	19 November 1974
13	Jamae Mosque (Rebuilt 1830–35)	19 November 1974
14	Sultan Mosque (Rebuilt 1924–28)	8 March 1975
15	St George's Church (1910–13)	10 November 1978
16	Hong San See (1908–12)	10 November 1978
17	Sri Srinivasa Perumal Temple (Rebuilt 1961–66)	10 November 1978
18	Abdul Gafoor Mosque (1907–27)	5 July 1979
19	Siong Lim Temple (now Lian Shan Shuang Lin Monastery) (1902–08)	14 October 1980
20	Raffles Hotel (1887–1907)	4 March 1987 (Re-gazetted on 3 June 1995)
21	Telok Ayer Chinese Methodist Church (1924–25)	23 March 1989
22	Goodwood Park Hotel (Tower Block) (1900)	23 March 1989
23	Former Convent of Holy Infant Jesus Chapel (now CHIJMES Hall) (1903) and Caldwell House (1840–41)	26 October 1990
24	Istana and Sri Temasek (1867–69)	14 February 1992 (Re-gazetted on 1 October 1993)
25	Former City Hall (1926–29)	14 February 1992
26	Victoria Theatre (1856–62) and Concert Hall (1902–05)	14 February 1992
27	Former Parliament House and Annex Building (1826–27)	14 February 1992, 26 June 1992
28	Former Supreme Court (1937–39)	14 February 1992
29	Former Empress Place Building (now Asian Civilisations Museum) (1864–67)	14 February 1992
30	National Museum (now National Museum of Singapore) (1884–87)	14 February 1992

31	Former St Joseph's Institution – Main Building (1855–67), Chapel (1911–12) and Classroom (1906–07) (now Singapore Art Museum)	14 February 1992 26 June 1992
32	Former Attorney-General's Chambers (now Parliament House Block C) (Rebuilt c.a. 1906)	14 February 1992
33	Former Sun Yat Sen Villa (now Sun Yat Sen Nanyang Memorial Hall) (1900–02)	28 October 1994
34	Yueh Hai Ching Temple (1852–1855)	28 June 1996
35	Maghain Aboth Synagogue (1878)	27 February 1998
36	Former Ministry of Labour Building (now Family Justice Courts) (1928)	27 February 1998
37	Former Tao Nan School (now The Peranakan Museum) (1910–12)	27 February 1998
38	Chesed-El Synagogue (1905)	18 December 1998
39	Former Hill Street Police Station (1934–36)	18 December 1998
40	Ying Fo Fui Kun (1881–82)	18 December 1998
41	Central Fire Station (1908–09)	18 December 1998
42	Former Nanyang University Library & Administration Building, The Former Nanyang University Memorial and The Former Nanyang University Arch (1954–56)	18 December 1998
43	The Chinese High School Clock Tower Building (1925)	19 March 1999
44	Prinsep Street Presbyterian Church (1930–31)	12 January 2000
45	Former Admiralty House (1939)	2 December 2002
46	Tan Teck Guan Building (1911)	2 December 2002
47	College of Medicine Building (1926)	2 December 2002
48	Former Cathay Building (now The Cathay) (1939)	10 February 2003
49	Church of St Peter and St Paul (1869–70)	10 February 2003
50	MacDonald House (1949)	10 February 2003
51	RC Church of St Joseph (1906–12)	14 January 2005
52	Church of Our Lady of Lourdes (1888)	14 January 2005
53	Church of Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary (1901)	14 January 2005
54	Tou Mu Kung Temple (1919–21)	14 January 2005
55	Former Ford Factory (now Memories at Old Ford Factory) (1941)	15 February 2006
56	Former Raffles College (now NUS Campus at Bukit Timah) (1927–53)	11 November 2009
57	Church of St Teresa (1926–28)	11 November 2009
58	Former Keng Teck Whay building (now Singapore Yu Huang Gong) (est 1831)	11 November 2009
59	Former Command House (1939)	11 November 2009
60	Former St James Power Station (1926)	11 November 2009
61	Bowyer Block (1926)	11 November 2009
62	Former Singapore Conference Hall and Trade Union House (now Singapore Conference Hall) (1962–65)	28 December 2010
63	Esplanade Park Memorials: Lim Bo Seng Memorial (1953–54), Tan Kim Seng Fountain (1882) and Cenotaph (1920–22)	28 December 2010

64	Former Tanjong Pagar Railway Station (1929–31)	8 April 2011
65	Civilian War Memorial (1966–67)	15 August 2013
66	Chung Cheng High School (Main) Administration Building and Entrance Arch (1965–68)	10 July 2014
67	Sri Thendayuthapani Temple (rebuilt 1980–83)	20 October 2014
68	Alkaff Upper Serangoon Mosque (1931–32)	19 December 2014
69	Jurong Town Hall (1971–74)	2 June 2015
70	Istana Kampong Gelam (<i>circa</i> 1839-1843)	6 August 2015
71	Former Fullerton Building (1924–28)	7 December 2015
72	Changi Prison Entrance Gate, Wall and Turrets (1936)	15 February 2016
73	Singapore River Bridges: Cavenagh Bridge (1869), Anderson Bridge (1909) and Elgin Bridge (1929)	15 October 2019
74	Fort Siloso (1878)	15 February 2022
75	The Padang (<i>circa</i> 1822)	9 August 2022
76	Former Kandang Kerbau Hospital (1933, 1940, 1955)	1 October 2025