

**Media Release**

**For immediate release**

**UNCOVER ONE OF SINGAPORE'S OLDEST AND LONGEST ROADS THROUGH  
THE REFRESHED BUKIT TIMAH HERITAGE TRAIL**

*New sites and community contributions a part of the refreshed Bukit Timah experience*



**Singapore, 3 May 2018** -- More than its eponymous hill and nature reserve, Bukit Timah is an estate steeped in history, with an old-world charm that comes from its unique mix of local and colonial heritage. From a road (Chun Tin Road) named after Cheong Chun Tin, who was the first certified Chinese practitioner of dentistry in Singapore, and whose descendants later founded the made-in-Singapore Pearlie White brand of toothpaste; to a former automobile factory (Former Ford Factory) that was the iconic site where the British surrendered Singapore to the Japanese; as well as home to Singapore's first UNESCO World Heritage Site – the Singapore Botanic Gardens, Bukit Timah is a treasure trove of stories waiting to be discovered.

2 Interesting facts include how Bukit Timah, which means “Tin Hill” in Malay – though tin was never discovered in the area, was possibly called “Bukit Temak” by locals back then in reference to the Temak trees that grew in the area. Its name could have altered when it was subsequently transliterated into English.

### Refreshed Trail Featuring New Sites and Community Contributions

3 These stories take centre stage in the National Heritage Board's (NHB) refreshed *Bukit Timah Heritage Trail*. The trail was first launched in 2007, and its content has been updated and now encompasses 38 heritage sites, eight of which feature newly-installed trail markers. New sites on the trail include the Dairy Farm Nature Park, St Joseph's Church, Adam Park, Former Command House, as well as the Fuyong and Former Princess Elizabeth estates. These sites were incorporated into the refreshed trail as new information was uncovered through oral interviews and new research materials gathered from archival newspapers, maps and other resources from government agencies.

4 Community contributions also feature prominently in the refreshed *Bukit Timah Heritage Trail*. To do this, NHB interviewed members of the public who lived and worked in Bukit Timah to document their memories, anecdotes and experiences. One of the key insights uncovered is the presence of kampongs and various local communities in the Bukit Timah area since the 1900s. These include Kampong Tempe (formerly located at present day Sixth Avenue), named after the fermented soybean cake known as *tempe* as a number of families there produced the delicacy; as well as Kampong Quarry, which was named after the nearby Hindhede Quarry that was crucial to the construction of the Causeway and the Singapore-Johor Railway. Cross-cultural connections were also strong in these kampongs, and saw different religious communities and buildings, such as the Masjid Al-Huda and Hoon San Temple, existing in close proximity.

5 Shared Mr Azman Kassim, a former resident of Kampong Tempe and Chairman of the Masjid Al-Huda: "In the 1960s and 1970s, the Chinese temple at Jalan Lim Tai See (Hoon San Temple) had opera shows during festivals, and after prayers at the mosque, we Malays liked to go watch these operas even though we didn't understand them! The actors would be flying across the stage and we would shine our torchlights at them. When they sold *cheng tng* (a Chinese sweet dessert with ingredients such as gingko, longan and barley), the Malays would be lining up as well."

## **One of Singapore's Oldest and Longest Roads with a Rich History**

6 At the heart of Bukit Timah's story lies one of Singapore's oldest and longest roads – Bukit Timah Road, first built by the colonial government in the mid-1830s to expand their knowledge of the outlying districts and regulate rural land use by plantation owners. Serving as a cross-island artery, Bukit Timah Road connected the bustling town centre to the heavily forested north. With the subsequent introduction of the railway in 1903 that facilitated travel to other parts of Singapore and eventually Malaysia, Bukit Timah quickly became a vital node for industry and trade, and a prime location for settlements to gather, which subsequently gave rise to a lively residential suburb.

7 The significance of the area was not lost on the invading Japanese forces during World War II, who saw the strategic importance of occupying the main arterial road leading into the city and controlling Singapore's main water catchment areas including the Pierce and MacRitchie reservoirs. The Japanese also occupied many colonial buildings in the area during the Japanese Occupation, transforming bungalows and the former racecourse into prisoner-of-war (POW) camps, and a rubber factory into a soy sauce factory run by the predecessor of today's Kikkoman Corporation.

8 Mr Alvin Tan, Assistant Chief Executive (Policy & Community) of NHB, said: "Through the refreshed Bukit Timah Heritage Trail, we hope to present a more complete and updated story of Bukit Timah's heritage, including how it used to house numerous kampongs, and how it contributed to Singapore's industrial growth as one of the country's industrial hubs during the 1950s with factories manufacturing a variety of industrial and consumer goods."

## **Bite-sized Thematic Routes to Enhance Self-Guiding**

9 To enhance the accessibility of the refreshed *Bukit Timah Heritage Trail* for trail-goers, NHB has created three easy-to-follow, bite-sized thematic routes covering different segments along Bukit Timah Road. They span an average of 2.5 km each and cater to different interests. They allow visitors to easily explore in their own time the buildings, structures, religious institutions and sites of natural heritage that make up Bukit Timah's multi-faceted history. They are-

- **“Kampong Life Trail”** (1 hour: bus and walk) - This trail features buildings and institutions that were once part of Bukit Timah’s kampong past, including a former railway station as well as houses of faith for communities that used to live there.
- **“WWII Legacy Trail”** (1.5 hours; bus and walk) - This trail explores WWII-related sites as well as places that carry the memories and legacies of the Japanese Occupation.
- **“Leisure and Learning Trail”** (2 hours; on foot) - This trail covers some of the social and leisure landmarks well-loved by residents and Singaporeans, including popular eating destinations, Singapore’s first UNESCO World Heritage Site as well as vital centres of research and education.

10 Mr Alvin Tan, Assistant Chief Executive (Policy & Community) of NHB added: “As with all our heritage trails, we hope that the Bukit Timah Heritage Trail will showcase Bukit Timah’s rich and diverse heritage, foster a greater sense of pride and belonging amongst residents, and provoke a sense of curiosity amongst Singaporeans and entice them to visit and look at the estate through fresh eyes.”

11 The refreshed *Bukit Timah Heritage Trail* booklet and map are available in four languages (English, Mandarin, Malay and Tamil), which members of the public can download from NHB’s heritage portal, *Roots.sg*, or pick up<sup>1</sup> at the Former Ford Factory.

12 For more information, please refer to:

- **Annex A:** Refreshed *Bukit Timah Heritage Trail* – List of heritage sites, and information on heritage markers
- **Annex B:** Refreshed *Bukit Timah Heritage Trail* – Three thematic trail routes
- **Annex C:** Five things you never knew about Bukit Timah
- **Annex D:** Full list of NHB’s 17 heritage trails

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<sup>1</sup> Other avenues to pick up the *Bukit Timah Heritage Trail* booklet and map are the Asian Civilisations Museum, the National Museum of Singapore, the Peranakan Museum and NHB’s office at 61 Stamford Road, #03-08.



### **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](http://www.nhb.gov.sg) for more information.

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**List of Heritage Sites on the Refreshed Bukit Timah Heritage Trail**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1. Bukit Timah Road   | 21. Adam Park   |
| 2. Bukit Timah Railway Station<br>(part of the Rail Corridor) | 22. St Joseph's Church  |
| 3. Bukit Timah Nature Reserve*                                | 23. Masjid Al-Huda*   |
| 4. Singapore Botanic Gardens*                                 | 24. Hoon San Temple*  |
| 5. Dairy Farm Nature Park                                     | 25. Fong Yun Thai Association<br>Columbarium  |
| 6. Wallace Environmental Learning<br>Lab (WELL)               | 26. Former Keramat Habib Syed Ismail  |
| 7. Hindhede Nature Park                                       | 27. Bukit Brown   |
| 8. Fuyong Estate  | 28. Swiss Club  |
| 9. Former Princess Elizabeth Estate                           | 29. Former Bukit Timah Racecourse   |
| 10. Former Bukit Timah Fire Station                           | 30. Former Beauty World*  |
| 11. Former Ford Factory*                                      | 31. Coronation Plaza  |
| 12. Former Raffles College*                                   | 32. Serene Centre   |
| 13. Pei Hwa Presbyterian Primary<br>School                    | 33. Cluny Court   |
| 14. The Chinese High School (now<br>Hwa Chong Institution)    | 34. Former A&W at Dunearn Road  |
| 15. Ngee Ann Polytechnic                                      | 35. Adam Food Centre  |
| 16. Nanyang Girls' High School                                | 36. Former MacDonald's Place at King<br>Albert Park                                   |
| 17. National Junior College                                   | 37. Cheong Chin Nam Road, Chun Tin<br>Road, Yuk Tong Avenue and Tham<br>Soong Avenue* |
| 18. Methodist Girls' School                                   | 38. Former Command House  |
| 19. St Margaret's Secondary School                            |   |
| 20. Raffles Girls Primary School                              |   |

\* *Heritage sites with markers*

**INFORMATION ON HERITAGE MARKERS  
ON THE REFRESHED BUKIT TIMAH HERITAGE TRAIL**

**Bukit Timah Nature Reserve**

Bukit Timah Nature Reserve contains the largest contiguous tract of primary rainforest on the island, and it is one of the remaining few places where one can experience Singapore's primeval forest environment. The reserve was first established by the British colonial government in the mid-1880s and it covers a total of 163 hectares today.

A third of the reserve comprises primary rainforest which includes Dipterocarp species such as the Seraya, Meranti, Keruing and Mersawa trees. It is also a haven for wildlife, including the Malayan Colugo, Clouded Monitor, and the rare and endangered Sunda Pangolin. The streams found within the reserve are also the habitat of the Singapore Freshwater Crab, an endemic species not found elsewhere in the world.

Despite its status as a forest reserve from the late 19th century, the reserve was threatened at various points by unregulated timber logging, granite quarrying and the illegal establishment of vegetable farms and plantations. During the 1980s, the construction of the Bukit Timah Expressway and other urban developments further contributed to the pollution and degradation of the ecosystem.

Fortunately, from the 1990s, a series of new initiatives were implemented to protect the native biodiversity in the reserve, and these included the addition of nature parks (such as Hindhede Nature Park) to act as buffers from surrounding urban redevelopment, and the installation of the Eco-Link@BKE wildlife bridge in 2013 to restore the ecological link between Bukit Timah Nature Reserve and the Central Catchment Reserve.

The 163-metre-tall Bukit Timah Hill, located within the reserve, also featured prominently during the battle for Singapore in February 1942. As the highest hill in Singapore, it offers a panoramic view of the island, which made it a strategic target for the invading Japanese forces.

**Singapore Botanic Gardens**

The Singapore Botanic Gardens is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and a vital centre for conservation, research, education and community recreational use. Founded by the former Agri-Horticultural Society in 1859, the Gardens originally spanned 23 hectares, including six hectares of primary rainforest that still remain today.

Originally laid out in the English landscape style under its first superintendent Lawrence Niven, the Gardens was characterised by rolling hills, open lawns, winding paths and panoramic views. Subsequent leaders of the Gardens included Henry James Murton, who started plant research efforts, and Henry Nicholas Ridley, who, together with plantation owner Tan Chay Yan, pioneered large-scale rubber cultivation in 1896.

During the Japanese Occupation, former British governor Sir Shenton Thomas requested that the Japanese authorities preserve the Gardens' natural heritage and scientific programmes. Botanist Kwan Koriba, a professor from the University of Kyoto, took over leadership of the

Gardens, and British staff including former Gardens' Director R. E. Holtum and Assistant Director E. J. H. Corner continued to work there.

After Singapore's independence in 1965, the Gardens played a vital role in organising and supporting the young nation's urban greening programmes. Today, the Singapore Botanic Gardens spans 82 hectares and houses 17 buildings and structures that have been accorded conservation status by the Urban Redevelopment Authority. The aforementioned buildings include Burkill Hall, the sole remaining example of an Anglo-Malay plantation-style house, and Atbara, the first Black and White bungalow in Singapore.

### **Masjid Al-Huda**

Masjid Al-Huda, formerly known as Masjid Kampong Coronation after the nearby kampong on Coronation Road, was constructed in 1925. It was central to the community life of Muslim villagers living in kampongs ("village" in Malay) in the vicinity, including the former Kampong Tempe, Kampong Chantek, Kampong Banjir, and Kampong Holland.

The mosque was built on land donated by Hindu landowner Navena Choona Narainan Chitty in 1905. It was originally constructed using wood and featured a multi-tiered roof similar to traditional mosques found in Java, Indonesia, thereby reflecting the Javanese heritage of the villagers of Kampong Tempe.

During the early 1960s, the community came together to raise funds to rebuild the mosque in brick and concrete. Some of these fund-raising efforts included collecting proceeds from the sales of *tempe* (a fermented soy bean cake that Kampong Tempe was known for), members of the community contributing part of their salaries and street hawkers volunteering to collect donations. As a result of the community's efforts, the new mosque was completed in 1966.

In 2015, Masjid Al-Huda underwent another renovation which included the expansion of the prayer hall and the installation of a heritage gallery. The aforementioned gallery focuses on the history of the mosque and showcases photographs and artefacts including a *kentong* (a cylindrical drum traditionally used for the call to prayer).

### **Hoon San Temple**

Hoon San Temple (云山宫) is dedicated to the deity Lim Tai See and was established by emigres from Jiazhou village in Fujian, China in 1902. Lim Tai See, born in 1537 during the Ming Dynasty, was well-respected for his stance against corruption and commitment to social justice. Following his death in 1604, Lim was deified and a number of Hokkien communities in China, Taiwan and Southeast Asia built temples in his name.

Originally built in wood, Hoon San Temple was reconstructed in brick, masonry and wood in 1920. The temple underwent renovations between 2008 and 2011, with its intricate frescos and painted pillar carvings restored by craftsmen from China. Its other notable features include interlocking wooden beams in the Hokkien style as well as wall murals depicting the 24 stories of filial piety that were written during the Yuan Dynasty.



During the 1950s and 1960s, the temple organised regular Chinese opera shows which were performed on a theatre stage near the temple. These shows attracted villagers living in the area, including Malay residents from the neighbouring Kampong Tempe who enjoyed the performances despite language and cultural differences.

Today, Hoon San Temple and the nearby Masjid Al-Huda continue to maintain good relations and often exchange gifts of food during special occasions such as the Lunar New Year and Hari Raya Puasa. The temple was awarded conservation status by the Urban Redevelopment Authority in 2009.

### **Former Ford Factory**

During the battle for Singapore in February 1942, Bukit Timah was strategically important as reservoirs and vital British supply depots were located here, and the main road to the city ran through the area. The Former Ford Factory, located near the 8½ milestone of Upper Bukit Timah Road, was also the site where the British surrendered to the Japanese.

After seven days of fighting at various locations across Singapore, the British forces were running low on supplies such as petrol, food and ammunition, and made the decision to surrender on 15 February. Allied commander Lieutenant-General Arthur Percival and the surrender party arrived at the factory and signed the surrender document in the factory's boardroom at around 6pm. The signing of the document signalled the start of the Japanese Occupation in Singapore.

During the Japanese Occupation, the factory continued operations as an assembly and servicing plant, producing military vehicles for the Japanese army. Two years after the end of World War II, Ford Motor Company restarted car assembly operations until its closure in June 1980. The historical front portion of the building was later transferred to the state in 1997. On 15 February 2006, the site was gazetted as a National Monument and housed a permanent exhibition on the battle for Singapore and the Japanese Occupation.

In remembrance of the 75th anniversary of the fall of Singapore, a new exhibition entitled *Surviving the Japanese Occupation: War and its Legacies* was launched on 15 February 2017 and showcases events and memories surrounding the Japanese Occupation, including archival materials that were contributed by members of the public.

### **Former Raffles College**

This National University of Singapore (NUS) campus was once the site of the former Raffles College. Established in 1928 to commemorate the centenary of the founding of modern Singapore, Raffles College was Singapore's second institution of higher learning and the predecessor to the NUS. Its first donors included business leaders such as Oei Tiong Ham, Sir Manasseh Meyer and Eu Tong Sen, as well as the Sultan of Johor and the Straits Trading Company.

Designed by Cyril Farey and Graham Dawbarn, Raffles College was built in the style of early European universities, with campus buildings and covered walkways opening out to quadrangles shaded by greenery. Construction works for the college were completed in 1928, and classes commenced on 21 June that year with the first cohort of 43 students.

In 1949, the college merged with the King Edward VII College of Medicine to form the University of Malaya, which operated from two campuses, one in Singapore and another in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. In 1962, the Singapore campus became an autonomous institution known as the University of Singapore. Its successor, NUS, now manages and operates from campuses at Kent Ridge and Bukit Timah.

A total of six buildings at the former Raffles College were collectively gazetted as a National Monument in 2009. The aforementioned six buildings are Oei Tiong Ham Building, Manasseh Meyer Building, Eu Tong Sen Building, Federal Building, C. J. Koh Law Library, and Li Ka Shing Building (Old Arts Block).

### **Former Beauty World**

Beauty World Centre was named after the former shopping and leisure destination of the same name that was located across the road. The former Beauty World had its beginnings during the Japanese Occupation as the Tai Tong Ah Sai Kai amusement park. The name “Tai Tong Ah” means Greater East Asia in Cantonese and references Imperial Japan’s concept of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere.

Back then, the main attraction at Tai Tong Ah was gambling, which was sanctioned by the Japanese authorities as a means of combating rampant inflation and forestalling potential resistance. There were also coffee shops with “coffee girls” that socialised with paying customers, stalls selling consumer goods, a photo studio, a Chinese medicine shop, *wayang* (“street theatre” in Malay) stages, and the Tiong Hwa cinema.

After the end of World War II and the return of British rule, gambling was once again made illegal in Singapore. In 1947, Tai Tong Ah was renamed Beauty World and included a market with stalls offering an array of goods under zinc and canvas roofs. By 1976, Beauty World had grown to include more than 160 market stalls, barber shops, a wet market and a Chinese temple.

By the early 1980s, Beauty World had been ravaged by fire on five occasions. The government eventually acquired the property in 1975, and the old Beauty World closed down in December 1983. The Beauty World Centre shopping mall was completed the following year to house shop owners and hawkers from the old market.

### **Cheong Chin Nam Road, Chun Tin Road, Yuk Tong Avenue and Tham Soong Avenue**

In Bukit Timah, there are a number of the roads which are named after members of the Cheong family that owned land and developed residential properties in the area. These roads include Cheong Chin Nam Road and Chun Tin Road off Upper Bukit Timah Road, as well as the connecting Yuk Tong Avenue and Tham Soong Avenue.

The family patriarch, Cheong Chun Tin, was the first certified Chinese practitioner of dentistry in Singapore. Born in Hong Kong and trained in San Francisco, Cheong set up his dental practice named Cheong Chun Tin & Company on South Bridge Road in 1869. After his death in 1898, the practice was taken over by his sons, Chin Nam and Chin Heng, and re-named Cheong Brothers.

The Cheong family also owned businesses in property development and rubber plantations, and bought tracts of land in Bukit Timah. One of the major contributions the family made to the community was the donation of land for the building of Tuan Cheng Public School (now Shuqun



Secondary School) in 1925. In 1964, the Cheong family started Corlison, a dental products distribution business, which later created the Pearlie White brand of toothpaste.

Adjacent to Chun Tin Road are Yuk Tong Avenue and Tham Soong Avenue, which were named after two of Cheong Chin Nam's wives. They passed away in 1952 and 1955 respectively, following Cheong Chin Nam's death in 1924.

**Refreshed Bukit Timah Heritage Trail – Three Thematic Trail Routes**

**1) Leisure and Learning Trail (2 hours; on foot)**

Bukit Timah consists of a number of social and leisure landmarks that are well-loved by its residents and Singaporeans. This trail covers some of these landmarks including popular eating destinations, Singapore's first UNESCO World Heritage Site as well as vital centres of research and education.



**2) WWII Legacy Trail (1.5 hours; bus and walk)**

During World War II (WWII), Bukit Timah was a key target for the Japanese as the British supply depots, reservoirs and the strategic Bukit Timah Hill were all located in the area. This trail explores WWII-related sites as well as places that carry the memories and legacies of the Japanese Occupation.



**3) Kampong Life Trail (1 hour; bus and walk)**

Buildings and institutions that were once part of Bukit Timah's kampong past can still be found in the area today. This trail features a former railway station as well as houses of faith that were once central to the religious and social lives of kampong residents and now serve the same function for their respective congregations.



*(Note: Most of the religious institutions are open to the public but be sure to follow any instructions on appropriate behaviour and attire.)*

### Five Things You Never Knew about Bukit Timah

1

While *bukit timah* translates to ‘tin hill’, no tin was actually discovered in the area. It is thought that the name came from locals who referred to the hill as *bukit temak* in reference to the Temak trees that grew in the area. In early British maps of Singapore from the 1800s, it has also been named as *bukit tima* and *bukit teemar*.

2

Alfred Russel Wallace, a naturalist from Britain, spent a significant part of his research observing the landscape of Bukit Timah when he was in Singapore to observe, collect and record plant and animal life. His work in Bukit Timah yielded insights that were instrumental in the advancement of his theory of evolution, and his findings was published in his 1869 book, *The Malay Archipelago*.

3

The Bukit Timah area was once an industrial hub. In the 1950s, it was home to factories, such as the former Ford and Yeo Hiap Seng factories, which manufactured a variety of industrial and consumer goods. Another prominent industry in Bukit Timah was the quarrying industry, which began with the opening of the former Bukit Timah Railway Station. The granite mined was used to build infrastructure such as the Causeway and our roads. There are three former granite quarries that can be found in Bukit Timah – Hindhede Quarry in the Bukit Timah Nature Reserve, and the Singapore Quarry and Dairy Farm Quarry in Dairy Farm Nature Park.

4

The former Beauty World was known as the Tai Tong Ah Sai Kai amusement park during the Japanese Occupation, and it housed one of Singapore’s largest gambling halls. Gambling was first legalised in Singapore during the Japanese Occupation for two reasons – banana notes were in short supply and the Japanese sought to combat inflation by encouraging gambling; and gambling was seen as a tool to distract locals and thus prevent uprisings.

5

Even before we had HDB, entrepreneur and philanthropist Lee Kong Chian in the 1950s developed the Fuyong Estate – a 142-household estate designed to provide affordable modern housing at a time when many in Singapore lived in overcrowded dwellings in town or in rural kampongs. One of its prominent residents was former Singapore President S. R Nathan.

**Heritage Trails Developed by the National Heritage Board**

1. Bukit Timah Heritage Trail
2. Yishun-Sembawang Heritage Trail
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

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