

# Queenstown

A HERITAGE TRAIL





Queenstown has the honour of being a true pioneer in many senses. It has the distinction of being the first satellite town, and amongst many others, the place where the Housing and Development Board (HDB) built their first flats. It was also in Queenstown that the first branch library of the National Library was opened and where the first neighbourhood shopping centre and sports complex were built.

Besides infrastructure, Queenstown was also the first modern home for many Singaporeans living in unhygienic and overcrowded slums. It became home to people from different walks of life thrown together by circumstances. To some, it was a traumatic experience, having to overcome the fear of high rise living and taking

# Queenstown

## COMMUNITY TRAIL





lifts. To others, it was an adventure to discover new things and experience a life that was different from the muddy dirt tracks, no flushing toilets and darkness they experienced at night. It was a new life to be lived, experienced and eventually treasured.

Whatever the case may have been, the pioneer residents of Queenstown demonstrated a 'can-do' spirit and the willingness to work, live and play together despite their initial inhibitions caused by a lack of a common spoken language, ethnic backgrounds or even common experiences.

This trail tells the stories of Queenstown, of how the early planners of the 1960s drew up the original seven neighbourhoods and how the town evolved to meet the changing needs of its residents. It will take you through more

than fifty years of Queenstown's history through the personal stories of older residents and the buildings and places that still stand today. More importantly, it also tells you what Queenstown hopes to be, as the town rejuvenates itself, a process mirrored also in the changing landscape of the larger Singapore story.

So bring along your friends and family on the trail and discover the rich stories beneath the quiet surface! Come in comfortable clothes, shoes and lots of water and arm yourself with a camera to capture the many interesting sights and people you will encounter on this wondrous journey in a place that started as a fairy tale and is now poised for an exciting future. As the grounds covered are large, this trail is grouped along location clusters and would require transportation to move around.



This Queenstown Community Trail is part of NHB's on-going efforts to document and present areas of our country that Singaporeans live, play and work in that have rich historical or social memories which many may not be aware of. Jointly presented by the National Heritage Board and the Central Singapore Community Development Council and supported by the Queenstown Citizen's Consultative Committee, this trail will bring back fond memories for older residents and will be an eye-opener for newer residents.

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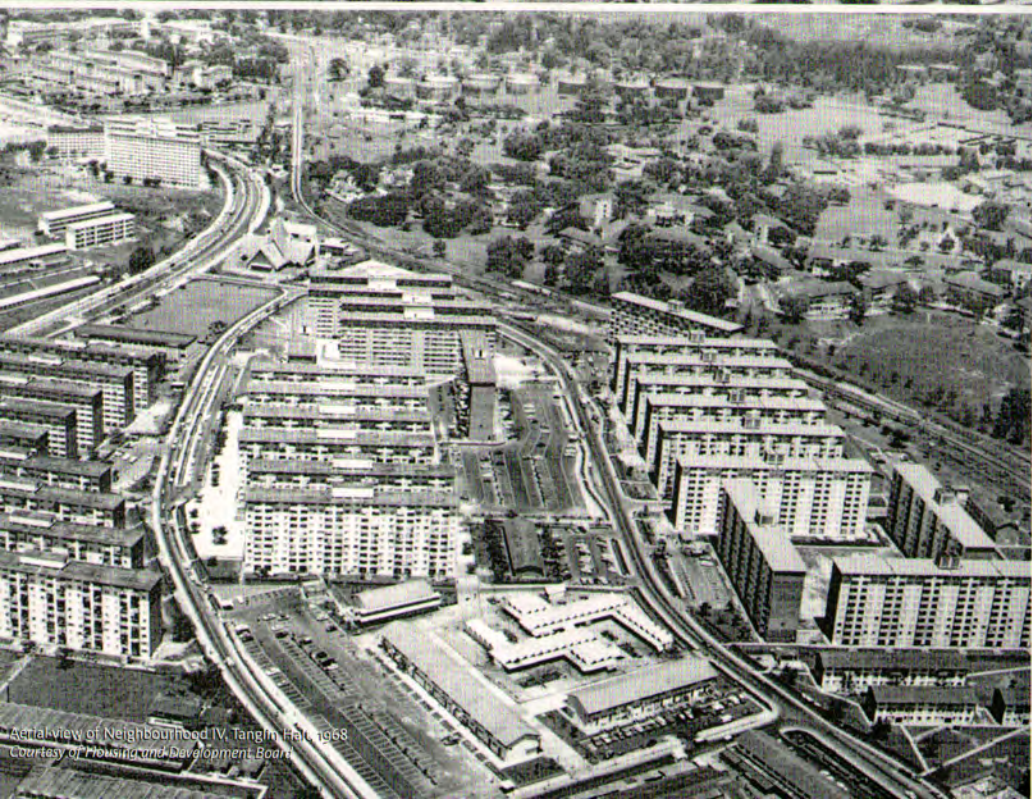
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# WHERE IT ALL BEGAN



Aerial view of Neighbourhood I, Princess Estate 1956  
Courtesy of Housing and Development Board



Aerial view of Neighbourhood IV, Tanglin Hall 1968  
Courtesy of Housing and Development Board



## The story of Queenstown began in the squalid slums of the city, where three quarters of the population of over 1.5 million were crammed into 1% of Singapore by the 1950s.

Under the British colonial government, the Singapore Improvement Trust (SIT) was formed in 1927 to carry out general improvement works, and later, housing. The SIT introduced the concept of satellite towns: self-contained communities with all the necessary residential and social amenities such as schools and markets for its residents.

The first such planned community was to be Queenstown. Bounded by Ridout Road, Alexandra Road,

Tanglin Road, the Malayan Railway, North Buona Vista Road and Holland Road, the new town was named in commemoration of Queen Elizabeth II's coronation in 1953. Although building works were started by the SIT in 1952, the town was eventually realised by the Housing and Development Board (HDB).

The former swamps, cemeteries and farmland of *Bo Beh Kang* village, literally "No Tail River" (*Hokkien*), soon gave way to modern housing estates. Out of the five neighbourhoods planned by the SIT, only Neighbourhood 1 (Princess Estate) had been completed by the time it was dissolved in 1959. Work had just begun on Neighbourhood

2 (Duchess Estate) and 5 (Queen's Close). The development of the rest of Queenstown fell on the shoulders of the HDB. It added another two neighbourhoods, (Neighbourhood 6 Mei Ling and Neighbourhood 7 Buona Vista) making a total of seven neighbourhoods that made up the original Queenstown.

Each neighbourhood came complete with its own amenities. Larger facilities such as the library and sports complex were shared by the entire town. Over time, each neighbourhood would develop its distinct character as people lived, played, schooled and worked in them.



FORMER QUEENSTOWN  
NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN



# QUEENSTOWN TOWN CENTRE



Queenstown Town Centre, 1970  
Courtesy of Housing and Development Board



Queenstown shopping complex, housing the former popular Tah Chung Emporium, Golden Crown Restaurant and a night club at the top floor  
Courtesy of Housing and Development Board





**Starting our walk in the heart of Queenstown, which is the town centre, it is hard to imagine today that this was one of the most popular spots in Singapore from the late 1960s for well over a decade.**

In its heyday, even visitors from beyond Queenstown flocked to the town centre. The three cinemas here screened to full houses. And *Tah Chung*, an emporium, was the hippest shopping place where one could buy almost anything from clothes and electronic goods to household items and appliances. The Golden Crown Restaurant, well-known for its Cantonese cuisine was THE place to hold a celebration dinner or wedding banquet!

In the evening, night markets (*pasar malam*) lined the streets, and the

crowd would spill over onto the sidewalks whenever there was a *wayang* (Chinese street opera). All these sights, sounds, smells and riot of colours created such a buzz that Queenstown was hailed as THE place to be.

By the mid-1980s, the town centre had quietened down considerably as young people moved out to other satellite towns that were developed in other parts of Singapore. Fond memories of this once-bustling centre, however, live on in those who grew up with Queenstown.

*"My mother used to bring us to watch the latest Taiwanese sentimental shows at the Venus and Golden City. Many housewives would bring their children, and some would buy one ticket for two children, and sit them on their laps!"*

*- Mdm. Huang Ming Zhen,  
long-time resident of Queenstown.*



# FORMER GOLDEN CITY & VENUS CINEMAS





*"I have many memories here. When Venus first opened, I was still very young then, and I went with my parents to the opening. So later I wrote a song ... 'Singapore Pie', and in the song, I mentioned stars coming to grace openings of cinemas in the sixties. Back then, black and white Hong Kong films were very popular, those Cantonese films."*

*- Liang Wern Fook, former resident of Queenstown.*



**Presently occupied by churches, the former Golden City and Venus Cinemas are the first two cinemas built in Queenstown. Planned by the SIT in 1958 to be at Dundee Road, the HDB moved them to the town centre for greater accessibility.**

Both cinemas opened in late 1965 and were well known for screening Taiwanese movies and *gongfu* flicks. The cinemas were also used for graduation ceremonies of neighbouring schools. As they aged, competition from newer cineplexes finally forced both to close in 1984.

### **Former Queenstown Cinema & Bowling Centre**

During its prime, this building housed facilities that few in Singapore could match: a cinema, bowling centre, restaurant, café and even a private lounge. The 18-lane bowling centre and 1,715-seat cinema were the favourite haunts of students from neighbouring schools.

Queenstown Cinema was one of the first cinemas in Singapore to

consider soundproofing and visibility for patrons in its design. For example, internal noise was minimised by the use of wood-wool slabs, acoustic ceiling boards and carpeting. Seats were arranged so that every patron could watch the movie without obstruction. Opened in 1977, it closed down in 1999, a victim of changing tastes amongst cinema-goers.

### **Did you know?**

Local writer, singer and musician Liang Wern Fook, the leading pioneer of *xinyao* (local Mandarin folk-pop) during the 1980s, called Queenstown home. Liang's works, which include five albums, have won him awards and accolades. Since he grew up in Margaret Drive, Queenstown was mentioned in several of his works



# COMMONWEALTH COOKED FOOD CENTRE





Since the days of itinerant hawkers pushing their carts and hawking their wares, street food has become an iconic feature of Singapore's culinary landscape, providing delicious and affordable fare. With economic progress, these mobile hawkers were resettled into hygienic hawker centres and this new permanence and concentration proved a boon for Singaporeans looking for good food under one roof.

Situated just behind the cinemas, this hawker centre has more than its fair share of 'heavyweights', many of whom started off as itinerant hawkers peddling from pushcarts around Queenstown. In fact, if you take a closer look, you will be able to spot many signboards which reflect their origins in Queenstown, such as 'Xin Lu' (Mandarin: colloquial name for Margaret Drive) and 'Jin Dou' (Mandarin: former Venus theatre).

Did you know that in the early days, the hawkers used to provide their own foldable tables and chairs for their customers as there was no permanent furniture provided? Today, this is the last cooked food centre in Queenstown in its original building.

Here are some popular dishes served at this food centre that you must try!

### Char Kway Teow

This popular dish of stir-fried kway teow (rice-noodles) with cockles, Chinese sausage, bean sprouts, fried lard and egg is served piping hot at *Hai Kee Teochew Cha Ku Teow* with an exceptionally generous portion

of cockles. The owner, Mr. Low, 57, has been serving up *char kway teow* in Queenstown for 40 years, initially from a pushcart along Commonwealth Avenue at twenty cents a plate! Today, he still helms the stall single-handedly. Be prepared for a long wait though!

### Popiah

*Popiah* literally means 'thin pastry' in Mandarin. This describes perfectly the translucent wheat flour skin wrapping the shredded turnip, bean-sprouts, egg, parsley and grounded peanuts in a roll. Mr. Lim, 67, started selling *popiah* to Queenstown residents in 1961 at ten cents each. *Queenstown Popiah* is best-known for its handmade 'melt-in-the-mouth' *popiah* skins. Come by in the mornings and you may catch a glimpse of *popiah*-skin making at work in Mr. Lim's other stall on the second level.

### Roast Duck & Meats

What makes the roast duck and meats of *Si Ji Ming* Roast Duck stand out is the owner's traditional method of roasting the meats over charcoal, marinated in a homemade



Mr Phoon's push cart in the 1970s  
Courtesy of Phoon Hon Sun

recipe that includes less common ingredients such as rice wine. Mr Phoon, 61, inherited *Si Ji Ming* from his father, who was one of the key petitioners for the construction of the cooked food centre when the Government started clamping down on itinerant hawkers.

### Shanghai Dim Sum

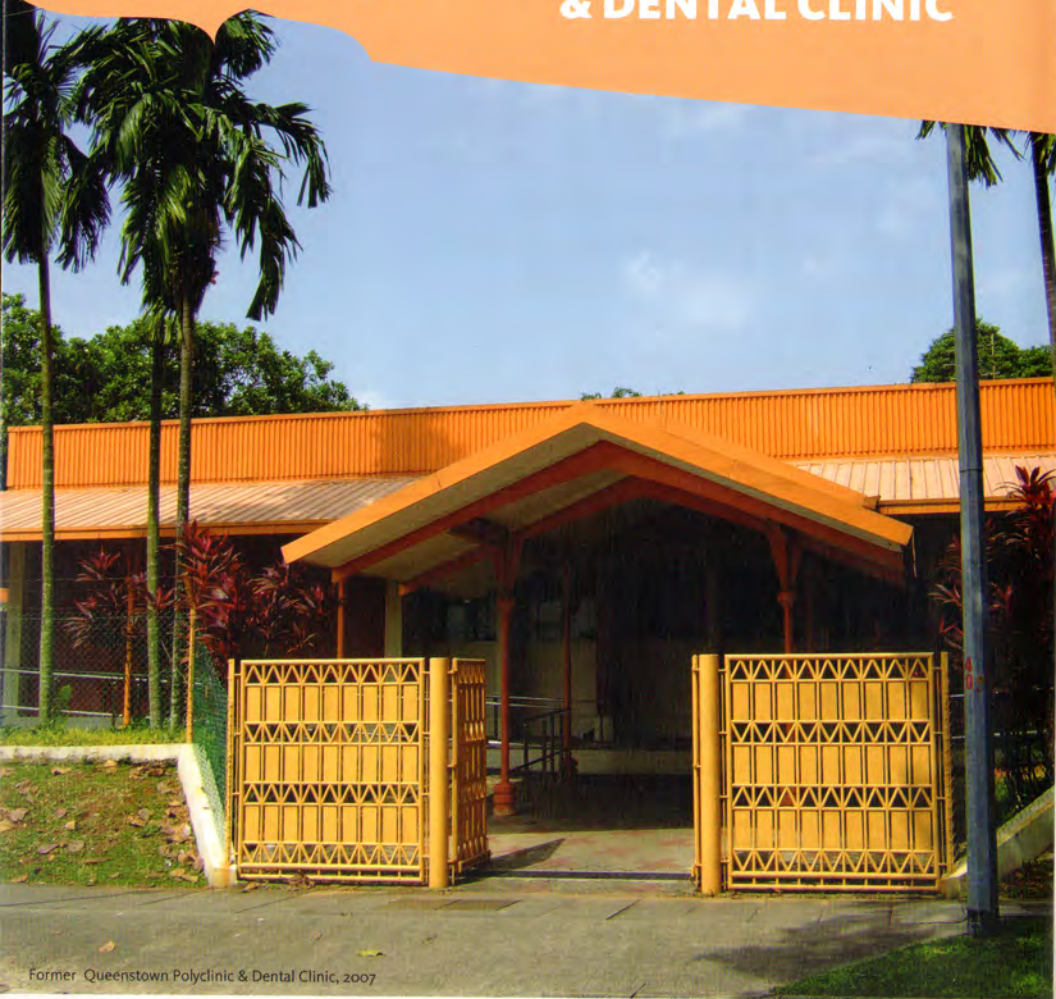
Long before Shanghai cuisine became popular in Singapore, Mr Hu's father had been peddling Shanghai dishes in Chinatown before moving to Queenstown in 1973. *Dim Sum* means 'Little Heart' in Mandarin, and refers to light snacks. At *Special Shanghai Tim Sum*, expect to find familiar Shanghai dim sum such as *jiaozi* (steamed meat dumplings) and *guotie* (pan-fried meat dumplings) as well as lesser-known dishes such as Shanghai rice cake, a dish of chewy fried flour cakes.

Do also try the cuisine from the other cultures such as the Malay food stall on the ground floor.

Once you have sampled the great food, proceed to Margaret Drive behind the food centre.



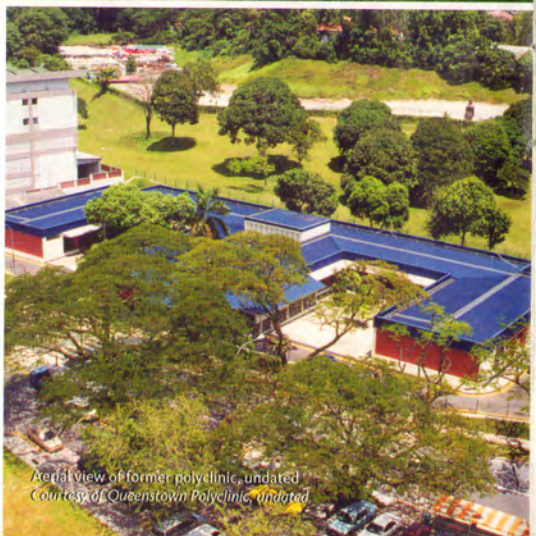
# FORMER QUEENSTOWN POLYCLINIC & DENTAL CLINIC



Former Queenstown Polyclinic & Dental Clinic, 2007



Patients' waiting area in the clinic, undated  
Courtesy of Queenstown Polyclinic



Aerial view of former polyclinic, undated  
Courtesy of Queenstown Polyclinic, undated



Opened by then Prime Minister Mr. Lee Kuan Yew on 13 January 1963, this clinic started as a combined clinic providing outpatient, maternal and child health care. In the late 1980s, these services were merged to form the polyclinic and dental clinic.

The most distinctive feature of the clinic was its open concept. Built in an era where air-conditioning was a luxury, the pavilion-like structures optimised airflow and kept the surroundings cool. For over 40 years, the clinic provided outpatient healthcare services to Queenstown's residents. Today, many still return for treatment despite having moved to other parts of Singapore. The clinic has since moved to its new location at Stirling Road from December 2007.

### Margaret Drive

The road between the Commonwealth Cooked Food Centre and the former polyclinic is Margaret Drive. Named after Princess Margaret, the younger sister of Queen Elizabeth II, Margaret Drive was more commonly known to residents as 'Xin Lu' (Mandarin: New Road) in the 1960s, as it was then the newest road in Queenstown. The major facilities of Queenstown can also be found along this road, such as the clinic, library, schools and places of worship. Residential blocks that used to line both sides of the road have since been demolished. If you look carefully, you may be able to see side roads that used to lead into those old blocks.

*"In the early days, around here, it was the newest road. Over other places, there were already roads.... During that time there were many ba wang che (unlicensed taxis). You just tell the ba wang che, 'Xin Lu'. They just say 'Xin Lu', you don't have to say where to go. From Alexandra Road or from Bugis, you just say 'Xin Lu.'"*

- Mr. Ong Her Leng, long-time resident of Queenstown.

*"The main thing about this place is, it's very open.... Everywhere you can see the sky... we have our fruit trees also, you can see the grass, field.. unlike any other polyclinic. The view out of the window, you can see grass, and when it rains, you can feel the rain, sometimes you see cobras."*

- Dr. Wong Song Ung,  
Director, Queenstown Polyclinic.



Margaret Drive, 2008



# QUEENSTOWN COMMUNITY LIBRARY



Queenstown Community Library, 1970  
Courtesy of National Library Board



Queenstown Community Library, 1970  
Courtesy of National Library Board



Children queuing up to register as library members, 1972



Then Prime Minister Mr. Lee Kuan Yew at the official opening  
of the library 1970



***"This branch library in Queenstown is a milestone in our rising standards of life. First, they provide a convenient access to books which most people cannot afford to buy. Next, they are sanctuaries of peace and quiet where concentration and better work is possible, particularly when neighbours are inconsiderate... This branch library marks one milestone along the road up the hill towards a more educated society."***

**- Mr. Lee Kuan Yew, then Prime Minister, at the opening of the Queenstown Branch Library, 30th April 1970.**

Back in the 1960s, reading was a luxury few could afford. Books were expensive and the only public library then was the National Library at Stamford Road. In order to bring books to a wider public, the National Library decided to build branch libraries in the suburbs. Queenstown was the first town to have one, along this stretch of tree-lined road.

Planning for the library started in 1966, with National Library librarians and local architects from the Public Works Department working together. The result was a library designed on a modular principle that allowed the librarians to customise internal spaces for different uses such as setting up booths and creating stack room. Features such as tinted glass to counteract sunrays were also included to reduce heat while high ceilings allowed ventilation at a time when air-conditioning was uncommon. These features set the standard for branch libraries to come.

Built at a cost of \$595,000 dollars, Queenstown Branch Library opened in 1970, to the delight of residents. The first storey consisted of the children's section while the second storey housed the adults' section.

Within the first year, a total of 293,316 books were borrowed and 12,597 readers were registered. By 1975, the number of members had shot up to 39,031 and the number of books borrowed increased to 668,501. During the 1970s and 1980s, the library provided much-needed spaces for students to read and study. Story-telling sessions were also very popular here.

In 1987, when the National Library began computerising, Queenstown Library was the first to roll out computerised services. It was renamed Queenstown Community Library in 1995. Upgrading works were carried out in 2003 and the library was officially re-opened by Associate Professor Koo Tsai Kee, Senior Parliamentary Secretary for the Ministry of Defence and Ministry of National Development, on 31 October 2003.



*Courtesy of National Library Board, 1970*

*"Some of the readers are our friends also, because they are regular customers ... so sometimes they will ask, 'So long never see you, where you go.' Every morning, we do greetings at the entrance. I remember when we first greet the readers, they were very shy. Now when you say 'Good morning', they will say 'Good morning' and smile back."*

*- Mdm Lee Siow Han,  
senior library officer at  
Queenstown Community Library  
since 1993.*



# QUEENSTOWN BAPTIST CHURCH





**Further down along Margaret Drive you will find this church which was established in 1962 by the Malaya Baptist Mission of the Foreign Board which has its origins in the Southern Baptist Convention of the United States.**

### **Did you know?**

*The number of churches in Queenstown today is a legacy of SIT's town planning master-plan. In the 1950s, the SIT set aside seven sites for religious use and advertised for religious organisations to ballot. Of the ten enquiries received, four withdrew, leaving six Christian organisations. These went on to build the first churches of Queenstown; Queenstown Baptist Church, Queenstown Lutheran Church, Faith Methodist Church, Church of the Blessed Sacrament, True Way Presbyterian Church and Church of the Good Shepherd.*

Despite its American origins, the first congregation of this Church was Cantonese-speaking, reflecting the dialect-speaking community in Queenstown then.

The original Chapel can be found on your left. The larger block on your right was built in 1992 to house the growing congregation. The church still conducts its Cantonese service and continues to be active in community work, providing volunteer services to institutions along Margaret Drive, and in-kind relief to the needy.

Hill. It was built in 1847 and by 1945, it was overcrowded with over 500 inmates living in unsanitary conditions. There was an urgent need for a new prison with better facilities and more space to house the prisoners.

Thus, in 1948, it was decided that the land at Pearl's Hill would be released for city developments and a new prison built elsewhere. However, it was only in 1963 that the final decision was reached to demolish Outram Prison and build a new one in Queenstown.

### **Queenstown Remand Prison**

Before Queenstown Prison opened in 1966, remand prisoners were held at Outram Prison at Pearl's

Situated off Margaret Drive at Jalan Penjara, Queenstown Remand Prison, built to accommodate 300 inmates, was officially opened on 23rd September 1966 by Inche Othman Wok, then Minister for Culture and Social Affairs.





# LEE KONG CHIAN GARDENS SCHOOL



**minds**  
Ministry of Education, Singapore

**LEE KONG CHIAN  
GARDENS SCHOOL**

**802**



## Special education in Singapore started with the founding of the Singapore Association for Retarded Children (SARC) in 1962. The association promoted the welfare and education of children with intellectual disabilities.

Established in 1970, this was the first school in Singapore for intellectually-disabled children. It was named after the late philanthropist, Lee Kong Chian, whose foundation contributed substantial funds towards its construction. Built at a cost of \$250,000, the school started with 25 students.

Under SARC, Lee Kong Chian Gardens School pioneered the establishment of special education schools.

In 1985, SARC changed its name to Movement for the Intellectually Disabled of Singapore (MINDS). Today, including Lee Kong Chian Gardens School, there are 5 MINDS schools in Singapore.

### Rainbow Centre

Also in the 1980s, a small number of schools in Singapore began providing an educational programme for young children with special needs, called Early Intervention Programme for Infants

and Young Children (EIYIC). In 1987, the then Singapore Council of Social Services (now National Council of Social Services) brought the EIYIC schools together into a centralised location, called Margaret Drive Special School. The school started with 47 children at its present location.

In 1992, the school became independent and was renamed Rainbow Centre. Today, it continues to provide education for young children with intellectual or multiple disabilities.





# MASJID JAMEK QUEENSTOWN





## Standing at the junction of Margaret Drive and Tanglin Road, this mosque stands out with its distinctive minaret and Javanese architectural elements such as the tiered roof.

By the late 1950s, the growing Muslim community in Queenstown saw the need for a place for worship. In 1958, the SIT made land available for the building of a mosque provided that the residents could raise the funds to lease it. This was met with great enthusiasm, even drawing a \$15,000 donation from the Federation of Malaya. Built at a cost of \$35,000, Masjid Jamek Queenstown was officially opened in December 1964.

Mr. Johari Bin Pardi, a long-time worshipper, recalled a lively mosque in the 1960s and 1970s. Many attended religious classes and Muslim workers in the area would come for noon prayers, with many spilling over onto the gallery as the main hall could not accommodate all. Today, the mosque remains a social and religious centre for Muslim residents of Queenstown.



Biscuit production at Thye Hong Biscuit and Confectionary Factory, 1952  
Singapore Press Holdings Collection, Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore

### Thye Hong Centre

In the 1960s and 1970s, the Thye Hong Biscuit and Confectionary Factory, with its bronze lion and flame-lit torch was a defining landmark for locals and visitors alike. Standing at the junction of Alexandra Road and Tiong Bahru Road, the factory was started by businessman Lee Gee Chong in 1935.

Thye Hong biscuits were popular in the region, and were served even on the former Malayan Airways.

At its peak, Thye Hong employed more than 200 people, with most workers from nearby Leng Kee, Kampong Henderson and Redhill areas. In the 1970s, business declined and the 1.42 hectare site was sold in 1981 for an office complex with the same name.



Flooding in Masjid Jamek during the 1980s  
Courtesy of Masjid Jamek Queenstown

*"The flood is quite high,  
when the flood happens  
... we encounter snakes,  
frogs, monitor lizards,  
snakes like cobras,  
pythons, they come to  
hide in the mosque."*

*Muhamad Saleh, a worshipper at  
the mosque, recalling frequent  
flooding during the 1970s.*

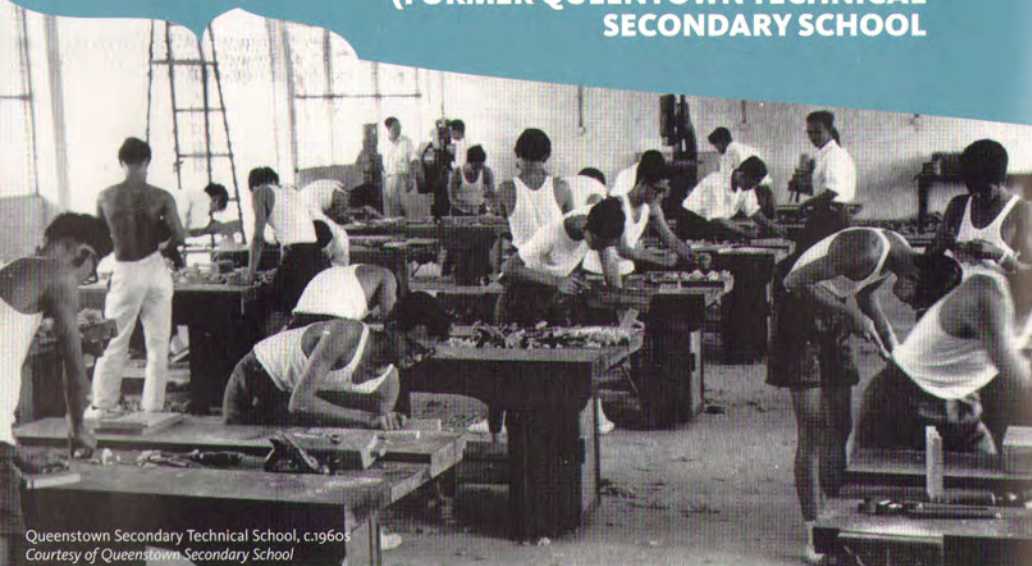
### Did you know?

When you walk along Margaret Drive, you will notice that some of the trees are surrounded by cement wells that are below the road level. Likewise, the

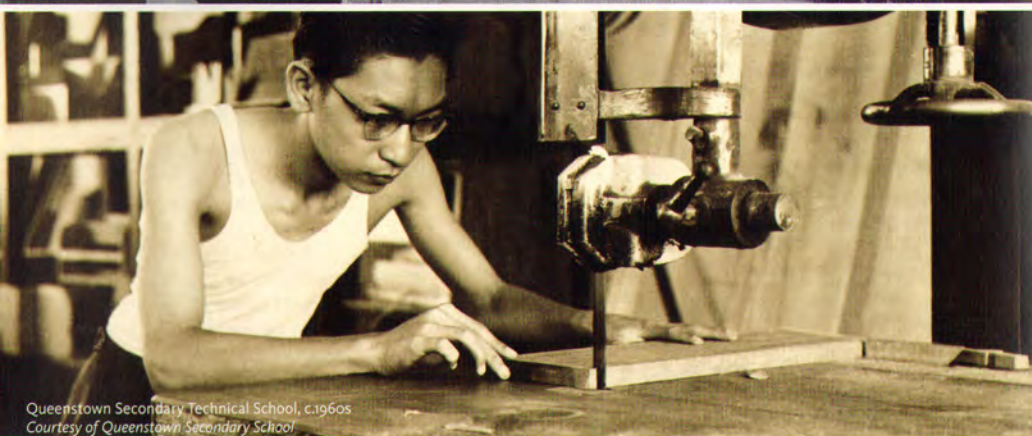
Masjid Jamek Queenstown is sited lower than the road. Frequent floods due to inadequate drainage meant that the road had to be raised several times leading to the scenario today. The large canal that parallels the road is the upper reaches of the Singapore River.



# QUEENSTOWN SECONDARY SCHOOL (FORMER QUEENTOWN TECHNICAL SECONDARY SCHOOL)



Queenstown Secondary Technical School, c.1960s  
*Courtesy of Queenstown Secondary School*



Queenstown Secondary Technical School, c.1960s  
*Courtesy of Queenstown Secondary School*



Queenstown Secondary School today

**Technical education was first proposed in 1953 to meet Singapore's need for skilled technical labour. However, it was only in 1956 that the first two technical schools, Queenstown Secondary Technical and Tanjong Katong Technical schools were established.**

*"It is interesting to recall that Queenstown Secondary Technical School was the first technical school built in Singapore to spearhead the development of the technical stream of education that has now come to play such a significant role in generating skill and expertise in the Republic."*

*- Mr. Jek Yuen Thong, then Minister for Culture, at Queenstown Secondary School, 11 March 1973.*

264 students from both schools initially shared premises at the former Jalan Eunus School and Kallang West School until 1957, when both acquired their own premises.

Queenstown Secondary Technical School was officially opened on 14 January 1957 at Strathmore Avenue. Such technical schools assumed great importance with the industrialisation programme in the 1960s, when they trained skilled technicians and engineers to meet the industries' demands. The school which started as an all-boys school became a co-education school from 1971 in response to changing needs. It was renamed Queenstown Secondary School in 1993 as the school had evolved to offer both academic and technical education.

### **Alexandra Road**

Built in 1864 to connect Pasir Panjang Road and River Valley Road, Alexandra Road was named after Queen Alexandra (1844-1925), consort to King Edward VII. Alexandra Road's industrial background arose from SIT's designation of the area for industrial development. By the mid-1950s, industries such as Diethelm and Singapore Steam Laundry lined the

road, engaged in businesses like the manufacturing of hats, shoes, ice, aluminium processing, vehicle assembly and printing etc. Today, the legacy can still be seen in the numerous factories found here.



*Courtesy of Jap Chong, The Quests*

### **Did you know?**

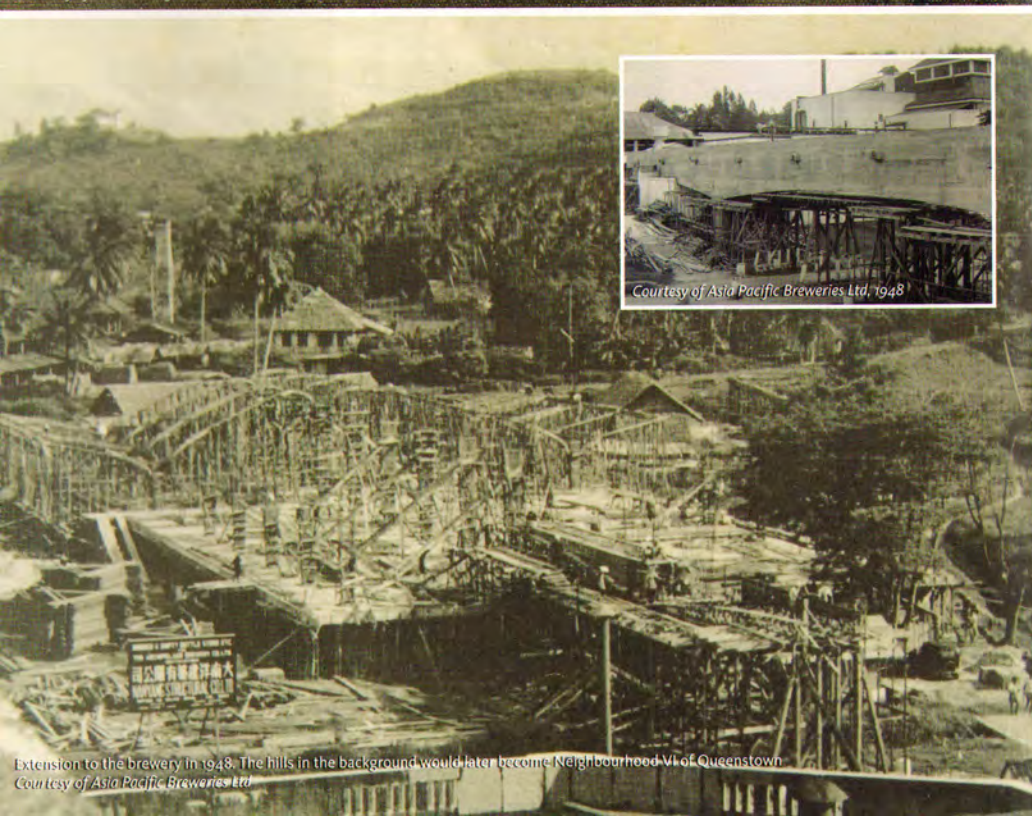
Singapore's top band of the 1960s started as a duo called *The Quest's*. Jap Chong and Raymond Leong, the founding members of the band first met as students in Queenstown Technical School in 1960. During the school's *Talentine*, Raymond was so impressed with Jap's performance on a guitar that he decided to make acquaintance with Jap. Naming themselves after the school magazine, "*The Quest*", the two went on to become Singapore's top-selling band of their era.



# FORMER ARCHIPELAGO BREWERY COMPANY



Anchor Brewery, the first commercial brewery in Singapore, located at Alexandra Road, c.1960s  
*Courtesy of Loo Oi Heng*



*Courtesy of Asia Pacific Breweries Ltd, 1948*

Extension to the brewery in 1948. The hills in the background would later become Neighbourhood VI of Queenstown  
*Courtesy of Asia Pacific Breweries Ltd*



**The very first commercial brewery in Singapore was established along Alexandra Road by German businessmen in 1931. Producing the popular Anchor Beer, the brewery was built here as it was near the Malayan Railway, which provided convenient transportation for exporting the beer.**

In 1939, with the onset of World War Two, the British colonial government annexed the brewery as enemy property, selling it later in 1941 to the Malayan Breweries Limited, a joint venture between Heineken and Fraser & Neave. From the 1930s right till the 1960s, the brewery was managed by Dutch expatriates. Gradually, locals were hired for key positions such as engineers. Jobs at the brewery were always sought after as the company was well-known for its work culture and employee welfare. Mdm Loo Oi Heng, who worked at the brewery for 36 years, recalled, "The management was very good too. Like a big family. They were very friendly, you didn't feel well, and you need to see a doctor, they

would tell you to see the company doctor. Every week, the company doctor would come to the brewery."

Brewing was carried out at the main plant, located where Anchor Point now stands. Bottled beer was then transported via a wooden conveyor belt across an overhead bridge to the canning line, where IKEA stands today. Production continued till 1990, when operations were relocated to Tuas.

The original site, together with the canning line and warehouse, made way for residential and commercial use. Today, the only reminder of the factory is the brewmaster's office, a two-storey bungalow which now houses a restaurant.

### Brick Works

South of Alexandra Road, along Jalan Bukit Merah is Brickworks Estate. This HDB estate got its name from the many brick factories which used to exist here. Factories, such as Hock San Brickworks and Alexandra Brickworks, were some of the earliest brick-making kilns to be established in Singapore.

The sticky red clay found in the area was used to manufacture the bricks, many destined for public housing. The brick factories lasted well into the 1970s and were a key source of employment for residents of Bukit Merah and Queenstown.

*"In those days, unlike today, the local people all drank Anchor. Only the British Armed Forces drank Tiger beer. We were selling Anchor, I think nine Anchors to one Tiger in those days. The tagline then was 'Life needs an Anchor!'"*

*- Mr. George Lim,  
former Chief Engineer,  
Asia Pacific Breweries.*





# QUEENSWAY SHOPPING CENTRE





## At the end of Queensway and at the junction of Alexandra Road, stands this landmark that bears the name of the road.

In satellite towns, neighbourhood shopping centres served the daily needs of residents. However, for more up-market purchases, one still had to make a trip downtown to Orchard Road or Chinatown up till the early 1970s. By then, suburban shopping centres had appeared, proving to be a hit with residents as they offered a large variety of goods at prices cheaper than in the city.

When Queensway Shopping Centre opened its doors in 1975, it was, as many of the residents here put it, 'as though Orchard had arrived on the doorstep', with over 160 shops providing goods from shoes and sporting gear to musical instruments and cosmetics. Today, Queensway Shopping Centre continues to be a favourite haunt for students, families and bargain-hunters from all over Singapore searching for sporting goods and other bargains.

### Alexandra Fire Station & Queenstown Neighbourhood Police Centre

Next to the Queensway Shopping Centre, you will spot a modern building. Opened in 2005, this complex was the first in Singapore to house both the Singapore Civil Defence Force (SCDF) and the Singapore Police Force (SPF) under one roof.

The first fire-fighting force in this area dates back to 1939. The Auxiliary Fire Brigade of 15 officers and 60 firemen was stationed at the Archipelago Brewery Company until February 1954, when Alexandra Fire Station opened.

Alexandra Fire Station played a vital role in fighting kampong fires common during the 1960s, such as the Bukit Ho Swee fire of 1961. It was eventually demolished in 2002 to make way for the current headquarters of SCDF's 1st Division

and its fire-fighters. It is housed in the right of the building.

Queenstown's former police station was opened in September 1963 along Queensway and housed the Royal Malaysia Police until Singapore's independence in 1965. Today, Queenstown Neighbourhood Police Centre (NPC) is situated on the left of this complex.

Over the years, the relationship between the community and the police has been close and it was partly due to this that Queenstown was chosen to pilot the Neighbourhood Police Centre (NPC) system in 1997. Based on the Japanese *Koban* system, NPCs allowed police officers on the ground to perform more duties, such as investigative work. The success of Queenstown's NPC was followed by other NPCs island-wide. Today, there are a total of 32 NPCs in Singapore.

### Did you know?

The junction of Queensway and Alexandra Road used to be a traffic circle known as *Rumah Bomba Circus* (Malay: Fire Brigade House), after the Alexandra Fire Station. Itinerant hawkers peddling wares were common and the area was well-known for Malay street food such as *satay*, *otak* and *mee rebus*.





# MEI LING HEIGHTS AND STIRLING VIEW



Block 160 and 161 at Mei Ling Street, the first two point blocks in Singapore, 2008



Behind Stirling Road is Mei Ling Street, with its blocks of HDB flats. As you walk around this estate, what is immediately obvious is its hilly terrain. Prior to its development in 1966, this area was dominated by two hills known as *Hong Lim* and *Hong Hin*, with a swampy valley and 'No Tail River' (Singapore River in the upper reaches) running in-between them, and dotted with farmlands and burial grounds.

*Hong Lim* Hill was a 17-hectare cemetery with over 9000 graves, bounded by today's Stirling, Queensway and Alexandra Roads. It was called Cheang Hong Lim Burial Ground as it belonged to this wealthy businessman's family. Hong Hin Hill, stretched from today's Mei Ling Heights to Tanglin Halt and was used for agriculture and also burial. When HDB began developing Queenstown, these hills were excavated and the earth was used to fill in the swampy valley.

In the centre of this estate, Blocks 160 and 161 at Mei Ling Street stand out for being the first two point blocks in Singapore, completed in 1970. They are the result of HDB's decision to vary building designs from the late 1960s and provide more privacy for the residents, with only four units per storey.

### Pioneer Businesses

Around the neighbourhood centre here, you can still see small businesses which have been operating since the late 1960s. Many of these shops have developed their own distinct character, such as Long Hwee Store at Mei Ling Street. It started out as a stationery store in 1969 and ran a brisk business catering to the large number of students in Queenstown.

As the population aged, the shop started diversifying and sold an array of other goods. Today, in order to meet rising rental costs, the shop shares its space with a seamstress offering alteration services. Look out for the original blue metal grilles and the cash register at the counter, a hand-cranked piece which dates from the 1960s.





# TIONG GHEE TEMPLE





**Along Stirling Road is a Chinese temple set amidst lush green rain trees. This temple has its origins in Bo Beh Kang, the village that gave way to Queenstown's development in the 1960s.**



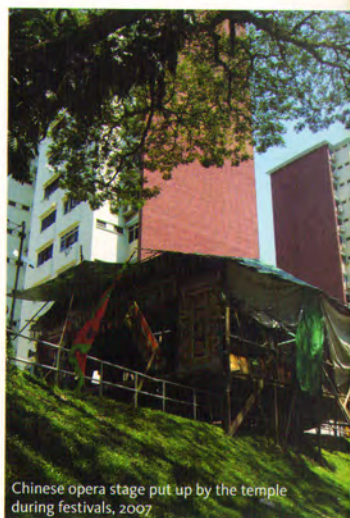
Demolition of the temple in 1968  
Courtesy of Tiong Ghee Temple

*"It was all graveyards then. So we went up to watch wayang, with my brother, normally, per year, two or three times, ... when they got tua li ji (Hokkien: festivals)... Sometimes we go there, a lot of people selling ice-cream lah, tik kam lah, then quite a lot of people watch."*

*- Mr. Kuan Swee Meng, long-time resident of Queenstown, remembering the popular wayang (street opera) shows put up by the temple during festivals.*

Tiong Ghee Temple started as a village shrine in an attap hut. Dedicated to the Taoist deity, Guan Gong, it was here that the villagers consulted mediums on health and husbandry matters, at a time when doctors and veterinarians were rare. It was also here that villagers caught up on the day's news in the evenings after their chores were done.

In 1931, a small warehouse was converted into a temple and more deities were added. The villagers then named it "Ghee Tiong Temple", meaning 'righteousness' and 'loyalty' in Hokkien, virtues embodied by its main deity. On the birthdays of Gods, puppet shows were held in Hokkien and Teochew. After World War II, the villagers purchased a plot of land to build a bigger temple at Hong Ying Hill (where Mei Ling Heights stands today). It was renamed Tiong Ghee Temple in 1966. As development



Chinese opera stage put up by the temple during festivals, 2007

picked up pace, resettlement was inevitable. The temple was demolished in 1968. Determined to keep the temple, the villagers registered the temple as a religious organisation after the demolition and began raising funds.

In 1973, the villagers finally built their temple at its current location at Stirling Road. At the altar, you can see the original statues dating from the kampong days. This place also remains as a gathering spot for former Boh Beh Kang villagers, a direct link back to its early days when villagers would gather in the night.

The medium's chair, spirit whip and sword are the original pieces dating from its earliest days although there has not been any Taoist medium for over 10 years.

Today, the temple stands as the last reminder of Queenstown's past.



# TRUE WAY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH





**Across from the Queenstown MRT station stands the True Way Presbyterian Church. The church originally started in Tras Street in 1939 through the work of a pastor, Reverend Tan Leng Tien from Fujian, China. Reverend Tan had arrived in Singapore as a Christian missionary in 1918.**

In 1956, the church started fund-raising for its own premises in Queenstown in response to the SIT's advertisement of available religious sites in the new satellite town. The Church was completed in 1961 at a cost of \$82,000. Many early members of the congregation were not residents of Queenstown, but coolies and their families from Tras Street in Chinatown as the church started from there. As with the other churches, services were conducted in Hokkien. In 1997, an extension was added to accommodate the growing congregation. This new hall is notable for the absence of central pillars in its construction.

### **Church of the Good Shepherd**

Founded in 1959, this Anglican Church was started by several local Anglican churches on a one hectare site leased from the SIT at Dundee Road. Services were initially held in Mandarin and Cantonese due to the large number of Chinese worshippers.

Since its establishment, the church has played a social role in the community. During the 1960s, latchkey children were a common phenomenon and the Boys' Brigade located in Queenstown provided such children with meaningful activities. The church's playing field was also a favourite hangout for home-grown soccer teams, a role which the church continues to play today. The church also contributes to bursaries and relief packages for needy families.



### **Did you know?**

*In Singapore, tree-worshipping is a blend of animist and local religious beliefs. This banyan tree along Commonwealth Avenue and Strathmore Avenue, near Queenstown MRT station, is dedicated to the 'Na Du' spirit, the Chinese translation of 'Dato' (Malay: Grandfather). 'Dato' is a reverent term given to guardian local spirits and dato-worship predates Islam in Southeast Asia, though most of its worshippers are Chinese today. The shrine's origins are unclear but it is believed to be fairly recent as former residents of the kampong did not practise 'Dato' worship.*



Laying of foundation stone for the Church of the Good Shepherd, 1959  
Courtesy of Church of the Good Shepherd



# FORFAR HEIGHTS AT STRATHMORE AVENUE







Forfar House, 1959  
Courtesy of Housing and Development Board

**A recent landmark in Queenstown is Forfar Heights standing at 30 and 40 storeys. Located at the junction of Margaret Drive and Dawson Road, Forfar Heights was completed in 2005. It was named after the former Forfar House, the SIT block built in 1956.**

Standing at 14 storeys high, Forfar House was then the tallest residential block in Singapore. Interestingly, its height gave rise to its Chinese dialect name of *Chap Si Lau* (Hokkien: 14 storeys), an apt description of this architecturally striking block. It was surrounded with four-storey walk-up flats that gave rise to yet another dialect name for Strathmore Avenue: *Si Lau Chu* (Hokkien: Four-Storey House) as well as *Lam Por Lay* (Hokkien: blue glass), a reference to its widespread use in windows. The legacy of this corner of Queenstown lives on today in the use of blue glazed glass for Forfar Heights and the estate's name.

### **The Scottish Connection**

When the SIT examined the issue of road names in the then new satellite town, it was obvious to connect these to royalty since it was the Queen's town. As a result, most of the places or road names came from locations in Scotland, where the Queen spent much of her childhood.

**Strathmore Avenue:** Strathmore means 'valley' in Gaelic. This is where the childhood home of Queen Elizabeth II is located.

**Forfar Square and Forfar House (since demolished) and today's Forfar Heights:** Forfar is a town near Strathmore.

**Dundee Road:** Named after Dundee, the city nearest Strathmore.

**Stirling Road:** Stirling is a city and ancient burgh (division of a large town) in Scotland.



Young residents along the corridor of a four-storey walk-up flat at Strathmore Avenue  
Courtesy of Yee Iock Yew



# BLOCK 45, 48, 49 STIRLING ROAD



These were the first blocks of flats built by the HDB in 1961, Neighbourhood II along Stirling Road  
*Courtesy of Housing and Development Board*

These blocks of flats along quiet Stirling Road, parallel to the East-West MRT line, would seem like any HDB blocks of the 1960s, slightly worse for wear. Yet, their importance lies in their role in the historic transition from the SIT to the HDB era.

The surrounding terrace houses along Stirling Road were built by SIT in the late 1950s, while Blocks 45, 48 and 49, were the very first blocks built by the HDB in the year 1960.

British planners kept population density low with these typical SIT terrace units. Building higher blocks would also require lifts, which SIT's budget did not allow. The HDB, however, built higher blocks in order to maximise land use. To cut costs, cheaper but slower lifts, were installed, stopping only on every fourth floor to compensate for the slow speed.

### Masjid Mujahidin

Across from the site of the former Baharuddin Vocational Institute is Masjid Mujahidin which has the distinction of being the first mosque designed by the HDB. The mosque was the result of 11 years

of hard work and planning by the Muslim community in Queenstown who came together to work with various agencies such as *Majlis Ugama Islam Singapura* (MUIS) and the HDB to build a mosque.

The mosque was completed at a cost of \$800,000 with some funds raised by the community. It was officially opened by Dr. Ahmad Mattar, then Acting Minister for Social Affairs, on 9 October 1977.

In building this mosque, the HDB architects faced an unusual constraint. In line with Islamic principles, the rectangular prayer hall must face Mecca. However, it was difficult to do so as it was not possible to align the building to Mecca and the adjoining roads at the same time since it was a corner site. The architects finally hit on a clever solution by housing the rectangular hall in a circular building.



Masjid Mujahidin, 2008

### Did you know?

#### LIM KIM SAN

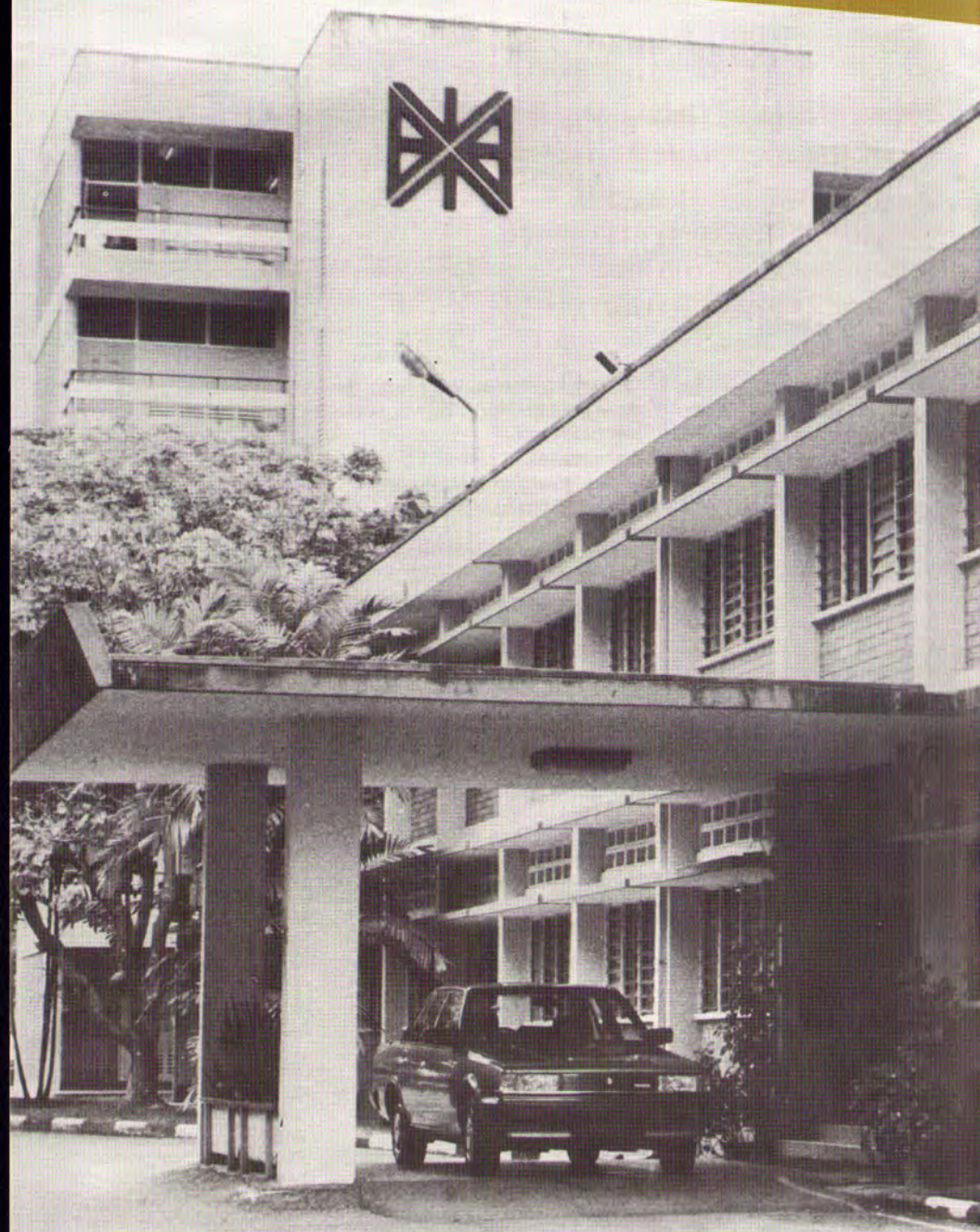
Dubbed 'Mr. HDB', Mr. Lim Kim San (1916 – 2006) was the driving force behind Singapore's public housing programme. A self-made millionaire, he was handpicked by then Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew and Minister for Finance Dr. Goh Keng Swee to head the HDB.

In his four years as the Chairman of HDB, he rooted out corruption and slashed building costs by breaking contractors' cartels which inflated construction costs. By 1963, 31,317 public housing units were built.

In recognition of his efforts, Mr. Lim Kim San was awarded the Order of Temasek in 1962 and the Ramon Magsaysay Award in 1965. Mr. Lim also served as Minister for National Development, Finance, Interior and Defence, Education, Environment, and Communications, before retiring from politics in 1980.



**FORMER  
BAHARUDDIN  
VOCATIONAL INSTITUTE**



Former Baharuddin Vocational Institute, undated  
Courtesy of Institute of Technical Education



At the end of Stirling Road where it joins Queensway, is the home of the former Baharuddin Vocational Institute, the first school in Singapore dedicated to manual and applied arts. As Singapore's economy developed, it became clear that industries would soon need people trained in design.



Students at Baharuddin Vocational Institute, 1971  
Courtesy of Singapore Press Holdings

Planning for this creative school began in 1966. It was to be called Queenstown Vocational Institute but was eventually named Baharuddin Vocational Institute (BVI) in 1968.

The school started with a few borrowed classrooms at other vocational institutes and the printing demonstration room of the East Asiatic Company located at Saiboo Street. It was only in January 1970 that the school moved into its own premises at Stirling Road. A printing school was established when the institute signed an agreement with Germany in 1970. The rest of the institute was funded by soft loans from the British Government Mitigatory Aid Scheme. Though it was absorbed by Temasek Polytechnic (TP) in 1990, BVI's legacy of creativity continues in the polytechnic's design faculty today.

## Queenstown Sports Complex

Built at a cost of \$1.5 million over 4 hectares of land, Queenstown Sports Complex was completed in August 1970. Its facilities include a 400-metre bitumen running track, a football field, five swimming pools, games courts and a gallery with a seating capacity for 3000 spectators. Since 1970, the complex has hosted major sports events such as the Pesta Sukan in 1970, and the National Day Parades in 1975, 1981 and 1983.

*"This morning we are also here for the opening of the Queenstown Sports Complex – the first of its kind in a housing estate. The opening of this sports complex is another milestone in the progress of public housing in Singapore. It marks the progress from merely providing a roof over one's head to that of providing other amenities which go for healthier and more gracious living."*

- Mr. Lim Kim San, former Minister for Education, at the opening of the Queenstown Sports Complex, 15 August 1970.

## "No Tail River"

This part of Queenstown used to be known as *Boh Beh Kang* (Hokkien: No Tail River), after the stream that flowed through the swampy valley formed by two hills. This was also the name of the kampong that once existed here.

The stream was called *Boh Beh Kang* because the villagers could not find its source. This stream flows southeast into the Alexandra Canal, and is actually the source of the Singapore River. Today, it has been turned into a canal and you can see stretches of the *Boh Beh Kang* along the Queenstown Sports Complex.

## Did you know?

In the mid-1970s and up till the mid-1980s, Queenstown Water Polo Club dominated the local and regional water polo scene. The team began with neighbourhood boys training under national player and coach, Kenneth Kee. The boys started as scrawny non-swimmers, with nothing more than enthusiasm to sustain them. In this light, it is astounding to realise that the national teams to the 1979 and 1981 Southeast Asian (SEA) Games, and the 1982 Asian Games were almost entirely made up of Queenstown players!



# SRI MUNEESWARAN TEMPLE





**At the end of Tanglin Halt Road, as you head towards Tanglin Halt Green, you will come across the impressive *Gopuram* (tower entrance to the sanctuary) of a Hindu temple.**

In 1932, Indian workers of the Malayan Railway built a shrine beside the railway tracks near Queensway to honour the Hindu deity, Sri Muneeswaran. The shrine, called Muniandy Temple, started out in a hut housing only a stone and a trident to symbolise the deity. In 1967, the temple was registered as a religious organisation.

As Queenstown's Hindu community continued to grow, the number of worshippers also increased as this was the only Hindu temple in the vicinity. The temple therefore bought bigger premises at its current location in 1991 to house its growing number of devotees. The new building was completed in 1998 and artisans from India were commissioned to work on the *Gopuram* and statues of the deities. One key feature of the temple is the lack of central pillars in the inner sanctum, which allows devotees to have full view of rituals.



Muniandy Temple was founded by Indian railway workers of the Malayan Railway. It became a full-fledged temple in 1967, undated. Courtesy of Sree Muneeswaran Temple.

Currently, this temple is believed to be the largest shrine for Sri Muneeswaran in Southeast Asia. The temple, which began as a religious centre for Hindu residents of Queenstown, has since developed a social role as well. It is active in organising services such as matchmaking and counselling.

### **Church of The Blessed Sacrament**

Next to the Sri Muneeswaran Temple stands a building that looks like a folded origami creation. This familiar landmark along Queensway has its origins in 1958, when the Archbishop Michael Olcomendy of the Archdiocese of Malacca saw SIT's advertisement of available religious sites in Queenstown. He sought help from the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary in Holland to establish a new parish in Queenstown.

Designed by Y. Gordon Dowsett of Van Sitteren and Partners, this striking church was completed in 1965. Its most iconic feature is its

blue slate roof, constructed in folds in the shape of a tent over the building, shaped like a cross. At points, the roof appears to touch the ground, thus resembling anchoring pegs. Look out for the interesting Celtic Cross, which combines a circle with the cross, on the exterior brick face wall of the main altar.

The best time to visit the church is at sunset, when there is dramatic play of light created by the coloured glass panels in the roof. The Church was granted conservation status in 2005 by the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) in recognition of its distinctive architecture.



### **Did you know?**

Sri Muneeswaran shrines are commonly found along the Malayan Railway. The Indian workers who were brought to work on the railway brought along their deities, usually Sri Muneeswaran. In the 1980s, as many as ten such shrines were reported along the railway in Singapore. Of these, only two remain today; this Sri Muneeswaran Temple at Queensway and another shrine at the Tanjong Pagar Railway Station.



# TANGLIN HALL GREEN



Sim Huat @ Company, 2007



Poh Onn Tong Medical Hall, 2007



Thin Huat, 2007



**Walking in from the main road along Tanglin Halt Road, you will come across one of the earliest neighbourhoods built by the HDB. The similar looking blocks, spaced closely, reflect an earlier period in our history when there was a pressing need to solve the endemic housing shortage in as short a time as possible.**

This area, bordered by Stirling Road, Queensway and the Malayan Railway, derived its name from Tanglin Road and the Malayan Railway, which used to have a stop (thus the word "halt") near the junction of Tanglin Halt Road and Tanglin Halt Close. "Tanglin" came from "*Tua Tang Leng*" (Hokkien: Great Eastern Hills), a name given by the Chinese to the hilly area around Tanglin Road.

Tanglin Halt was also known as "Tanglin Halt *Chap Lau*" (Hokkien: Ten Storeys), after the ten-storey blocks which make up the estate. Today it is called Tanglin Halt Green with three new 40-storey blocks towering over the original *Chap Lau* which are still standing.

### Starring Tanglin Halt

Tanglin Halt was one of the settings for local film "Perth", starring Lim Kay Tong and directed by Djinn. The film deals with the personal journey of a Singaporean man in his 50's, and features a poignant walk in Tanglin Halt. Says Djinn of the scene, "Harry's (the main protagonist played by Lim Kay Tong) walk to Tanglin Halt ... was a metaphor for the rigid social order which he feels has entrapped him. Yet it is not a bitter experience as it is also a throwback to his younger days where he felt the security of his mother's love and the comfort of home. And that to me is Tanglin Halt, an old familiarity which we all

too often overlook and reface, without thinking of its importance in the social and heritage context which it might carry for many."

### Tanglin Halt Neighbourhood Centre

Browse through the shops around this neighbourhood centre and you will see that most of the shops have been here since 1960 when Queenstown was built. These shops tell the story of small pioneer businesses which catered to residents before the onset of modern supermarkets and shopping malls. Today, their business is no longer as bustling as it was in the past.

### "Chap He Dám"

Hokkiens call these sundry shops '*chap he diam*', which literally means shops selling a mix of goods. *Thin Huat*, which owner Mr. Ang, 53, calls a typical '*Ah Gong Dian*' (Mandarin: Grandfather shop) has been selling goods such as spices, rice and biscuits by the weight since Mr. Ang's father opened shop in 1960. *Kian Seng* is another such shop selling groceries and religious paraphernalia. With the opening of supermarkets in Queenstown, business for such sundry shops has steadily declined, with some closing for good in recent years.

### Chinese Medicine Shop

This established traditional Chinese medicine shop, *Poh Onn Tong* Medical Hall, is run by a family who moved here from Johore in the 1960s when they heard about Queenstown, the upcoming satellite town. The wooden cabinet storing the herbs date from the 1960s. Each drawer holds nine tins of herbs, with the names of the herbs carved on each lid. Faced with competition and dwindling business, the shop now sells household goods on top of traditional Chinese medicine.

### "Lelong" Shop

This shop, *Sim Huat*, is a typical *lelong* (cheap goods) shop which sells almost everything from nails and threads to pots and pans. Run by a former *Boh Beh Kang* family, the shop tells the story of versatility. Mr. Ang's family used to run a workshop at Orchard Road dealing in wooden planks and charcoal, before the land was acquired by the government. Upon moving to Tanglin Halt in the 1970s, they had to change their business as charcoal production was not allowed in housing estates for health reasons. The shop started with hardware and over the years expanded its range of goods to cater to almost every single household need imaginable.



# FAITH METHODIST CHURCH







Faith Methodist Church in the early days, undated.  
Courtesy of Faith Methodist Church

**Walking along Commonwealth Avenue, you will come across this church that has been a familiar landmark of Queenstown since the 1960s. The church trustees first bought this piece of land in 1964 when it was surrounded by farms and swampland.**

The founding pastor, Reverend T.C. Nga recalls losing one of his shoes to the swampy ground when he visited the site.

The first open-air service was held on Easter Sunday of 1965 followed by regular open air services till the building was completed in 1967. Built at a cost of \$250,000, services were held in Foochow, Hokkien, Mandarin and English to cater to

the dialect-speaking residents. The church was named Faith Methodist Church in 1966 for two reasons. Firstly, it was in recognition of the congregation's faith, and secondly it was in memory of Faith Goh, the only daughter of Dr and Mrs Goh Kok Kee, who had generously donated \$100,000 to the church. Faith had passed away while the church was under construction.

In 2002, the original buildings were demolished to make way for the current structures. Today, the church houses two congregations; the Queenstown Chinese Methodist Church and Faith Methodist Church.



# SHUANG LONG SHAN WU SHU ANCESTRAL HALL





**From Commonwealth Drive, turn right into Commonwealth Lane. At the end of this road, you will spot a single storey structure with strong Chinese architectural elements. This is the *Shuang Long Wu Shu* Ancestral Hall.**



Residents of *Ying Fo Lut*, c.1960s  
Courtesy of Pok Kim Lan



Residents of *Ying Fo Lut*, c.1960s  
Courtesy of Pok Kim Lan

In 1887, the Hakka clan, *Ying Fo Fui Kun* bought 40.5 hectares of land bounded by Holland Road and what later became Commonwealth Avenue, as a burial ground for kinsmen from *Jia Ying* prefecture in Canton, China. Called '*Shuang Long Shan*' (Mandarin: Twin Dragons Hills), it had a hall at the foot of the hill which housed ancestral tablets.

By the early 1900s, a village had formed here. It was known as *Ying Fo Lut* (Hakka: Ying Ho Road), after the main road through the village. The village was made up of mostly Hakkas, with some Hainanese, Cantonese, Malays and Hokkiens.

In 1920, a clan member, Mr Huang Yun Hui founded the *Jia Ying Wu Shu* Hospital where Block 17 Holland Drive is today. Unfortunately, he passed away before the hospital

was completed. Due to an economic downturn, the hospital ceased operations by the end of 1920 and was then leased to a paper-making factory before becoming a hostel.

To provide education to the village children, the clan opened a branch of the *Ying Xin* School in the ancestral hall in 1926. There were about five to six classrooms, separated by wooden partitions. Subjects such as Maths, Science, Geography, History, Art and Music were conducted in Hakka and Mandarin.

As Queenstown developed, the burial land was acquired for public housing. The village was resettled in 1968 and the school closed a year later. Today, the 1.89 hectare site retains the relocated graves and the original ancestral hall.

## Buying an Office

During the Qing Dynasty, it was common for well-to-do Chinese families to buy a nominal government office for prestige. According to *Ying Fo Fui Kun*, these offices often came with the title '*Qing Tai Xue Shi*' (Qing Dynasty Scholar). On the ancestral tablets in the hall, most of those with '*Qing Da Xue Shi*' were purchased posts. The character '*Da*' was a wrong rendering of the Chinese character '*Tai*', which is only one stroke away. Tablets with the Chinese characters '*A Qi*' belong to individuals who were granted authentic official posts by the Dutch colonial government.



# FORMER TANGLIN HALT INDUSTRIAL ESTATE



Workers making vinyl records at Tanglin Halt Industrial Estate c.1960s  
Ministry of Information, Communications and the Arts Collection, Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore



Then Finance Minister Dr. Goh Keng Swee at the opening of Sekisui Malaysia Company Limited at Tanglin Halt Industrial Estate, 1964  
Ministry of Information, Communications and the Arts Collection, Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore



Setron (Singapore Electronics) Ltd, a familiar icon at Tanglin Halt Industrial Estate in the 1960s  
Ministry of Information, Communications and the Arts Collection, Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore



## Across Commonwealth Avenue, this now-empty piece of land along Tanglin Halt and Commonwealth Drive used to be the Tanglin Halt Industrial Estate.

Planning started in 1956 when the SIT set aside 4.8 hectares for the development of cottage industries. However, the HDB revised the plans in the 1960s and earmarked the area for light industries.

Constituting 17 hectares, companies could start up on land leased on easy repayment terms for manufacturing activities such as electronics, textiles, vinyl music records and even chocolate making! Familiar businesses such as Roxy-Electric, Van Houten, and Sime Darby operated from here. It was also from Setron Limited's factory that the first made-in-Singapore black and white television made its debut in 1964.

The industrial estate declined and ceased to operate by the late 1980s due to the restructuring of Singapore's economy from manufacturing to services.

### Block 115 The First Flatted Factory in Singapore

Further along Commonwealth Drive towards the direction of Commonwealth Avenue, there exists yet another first for Singapore's first satellite town. Our very first flatted factory presented an innovative solution to meeting the industry's needs in a land-scarce newly independent country.

The Economic Development Board (EDB) developed the concept of 'flatted' factories in multi-storey blocks, located in housing estates. Light industries such as apparel manufacturing, electronics and plastics production offered much-needed employment without taking up too much land while being near a ready labour supply.

This pioneer block was built in 1965 and continues to serve the needs of light industries, such as printing and photographic processing today.

### Did you know?

#### Dr. GOH KENG SWEE

Hailed as the economic architect of Singapore, Dr. Goh Keng Swee was Singapore's first Minister for Finance when Singapore achieved self-government in 1959. When he took office, the entire national reserves totalled \$300 million, a small sum in the face of severe unemployment. The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was only \$1,968 million then. To spur Singapore's economic growth, Dr. Goh founded the Economic Development Board in 1961 which actively sought investments from around the world to establish factories here to provide employment. By 1969, Singapore's GDP had risen to \$4,833 million with the industrial sector contributing \$827 million.

Dr. Goh left a remarkable legacy behind. Many institutions familiar to Singaporeans today, were started by him, such as the Singapore Armed Forces, the Monetary Authority of Singapore, the Development Bank of Singapore (DBS), even Jurong Bird Park and the Singapore Zoo. By the time he left politics in 1984, he had held positions as the Minister of Finance, Minister for Interior and Defence, Minister for Education, Deputy Prime Minister and First Deputy Prime Minister.





# QUEENSTOWN LUTHERAN CHURCH



709

Queenstown Lutheran Church

Divine Worship Services

Sunday 9.00 A.M., P.M.

Sunday School : 9.00 A.M.

Youth Ministry : 11.00 A.M.

SAT



DIVINE WORSHIP SERVICE

ALL ARE WELCOME

QUEENSTOWN LUTHERAN CHURCH



## As you walk down Commonwealth Drive, a building that stands out is Queenstown Lutheran Church.

With its striking art deco façade of striking geometry, one cannot miss this Church. Completed on 13 March 1966, this is the second Lutheran Church in Singapore.

The Lutheran Conference in Malaya obtained the site in 1962 and the development was driven by the Lutheran Church of Our Redeemer located at Duke Road, while funds for the building came from the Lutheran Church in America. Before the building was completed, missionaries would play the

accordion and tell stories on vacant land to neighbourhood children.

To the early residents of Commonwealth, the church was a centre for community activities and services. Kindergarten classes, taekwondo, language courses and sports meets were some of the activities organised while the community infrastructure of Queenstown was being developed. Today, the church continues to provide counselling and other social and tuition services.

### Did you know?

*Commonwealth Avenue, Lane, Crescent and Drive were named in 1955 in commemoration of The Commonwealth, the association of 53 countries of which Singapore is a member. The Commonwealth has its origins in the British Commonwealth of Nations, which was formed in 1926. Members of the British Commonwealth, comprising United Kingdom and its dominions, were deemed to be autonomous though "united by common allegiance to the Crown". In 1949, the modern Commonwealth was born with the London Declaration, which allowed independent states of the former British Empire to be its members.*



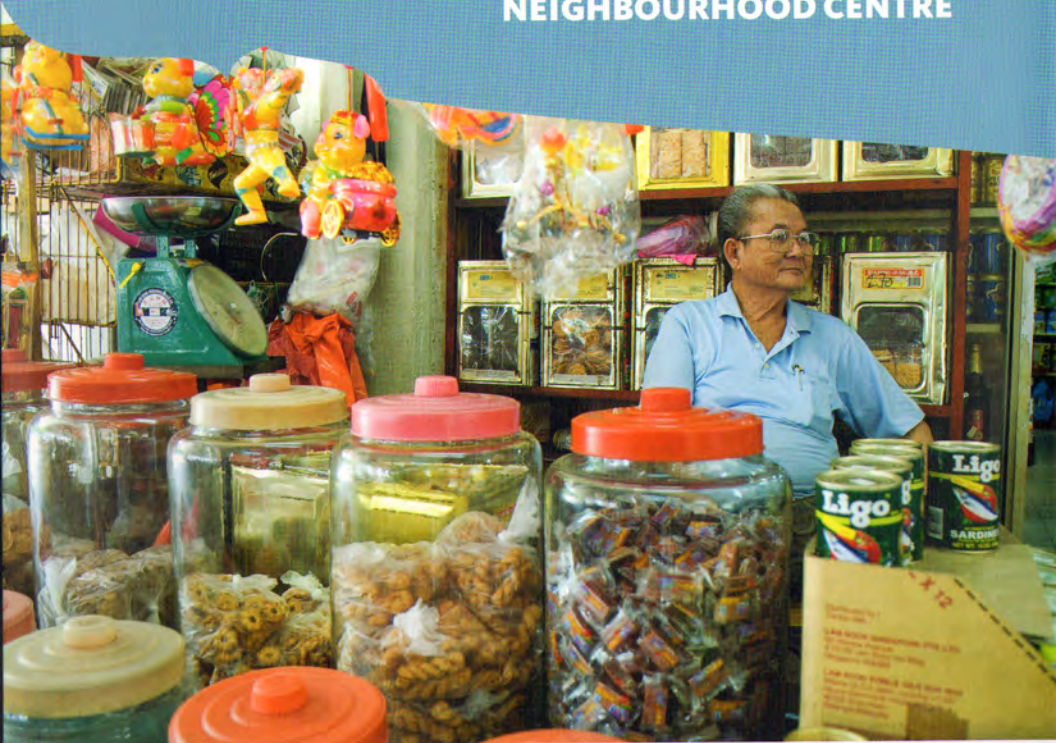
Queenstown Lutheran Church in 1981, with the original food centre and market in front of it.  
Courtesy of Housing and Development Board

**You have reached the end of the Queenstown Community Trail. We hope that you enjoyed discovering or rediscovering Queenstown and that you have learnt something new about Singapore's first satellite town.**

**You might wish to walk down Commonwealth Drive to the hawker centre. Today known as Commonwealth Heights, this area was known to the early housing planners as Neighbourhood III, one of the seven that made up the Queenstown of the 1960s.**



# COMMONWEALTH GREEN NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRE





## Commonwealth Heights

Across the busy intersection of Queensway and Commonwealth Avenue is Commonwealth Heights and Green.

To the residents who first moved here in the 1960s, it was 'Chap Lak Lau' (Hokkien: 16 storeys) named after the three 16-storeys blocks. Completed in 1964, blocks 81, 82 and 83's height and their commanding location gave rise to their colourful Hokkien name, serving as a clear location reference, especially to many coming in directly from the kampongs and slums. The ten-storey and 16-storeys blocks formed Commonwealth Estate and are typical of HDB architecture of the 1960s which exhibits little variation because of pressing demands to solve the housing shortage as quickly and cheaply as possible.

By the mid-1960s, visitors were often brought here to view Singapore's successful housing programme. Block 81 was the VIP block where distinguished visitors such as Mr. Spiro Agnew, former Vice President of the United States, and then Crown Prince Akihito of Japan, visited for a panoramic view of the model satellite town.

It was also in Commonwealth Estate that the 'Home Ownership For the People Scheme' was introduced in 1964. 2,068 two and three room flats were sold, a key first step in enabling Singaporeans to own their homes. Today, over 82% of Singaporeans live in public housing with 80% of Singaporeans owning their homes.

Between 2000 and 2003, Commonwealth Estate was upgraded to achieve what HDB termed as 'seamless living', with covered walkways, ramps and lifts for every floor. It was then renamed Commonwealth Green and Commonwealth Heights.

## Commonwealth Green

The next stop, Commonwealth Green will make you feel as if you are stepping back in time into a typical neighbourhood shopping centre of the 1960s. Completed in 1965, the neighbourhood centre has 26 shops arranged around a quadrangle. This core remains unchanged even today, apart from the recently-built market and cooked food centre.

Here are some places you can rest and relax or have something to eat and drink.

### Tau Sar Piah

These Chinese pastries, known as *tau sar piah*, have been freshly made here at *Chop Mui Lee* since 1977. However, the Teochew couple running it have been in the business at New Market Street since 1942 before moving here in 1977. These flaky pastry tidbits, with sweet or salty bean paste filling, are part of the traditional Teochew wedding gifts presented to family and friends.

### Cantonese Congee

Simmered over low heat with constant stirring for over an hour to get the right consistency, Mr. Hui's congee at Commonwealth Crescent Market is a popular way to start the day for many residents. The congee's smooth texture is typical of Cantonese cooking, as are its ingredients, such as century eggs, pork innards, minced meat, raw fish and parsley.

### Biscuits by the Weight

The sight of these cookies and biscuits in huge glass jars is a sure way to jolt your childhood memories. Mr. Ong, who has been running *Chip Aik Liquor Co.*, a corner sundry store, since 1965, still sells an assortment of Khong Guan biscuits by the weight from tins and jars, on top of various snacks and tidbits seldom seen on supermarket shelves today.

## For a Better Hearing

At *Sin Palace Air-condition Hair Dressing and Beauty Saloon*, you can get your ears cleaned with meticulous precision just for \$5, and for \$8, you can even get a decent hair cut. This shop has been grooming male residents of Commonwealth since 1965. Ear-picking, a fast-vanishing trade, is carried out by owner Mr. Ong with an assortment of at least eight tools, ranging from tweezers, brushes and picks.

### Fried Chicken Wings

Starting in the evenings, this little stall, *Eng Kee Fried Chicken Wings*, does a brisk business in deep-fried and barbequed foods of all sorts, the crowd-puller being the deep-fried chicken wings. Mr. Aw, the proprietor, has been marinating chicken wings with a secret homemade seasoning for 18 years. The wings are served with fried bee hoon.

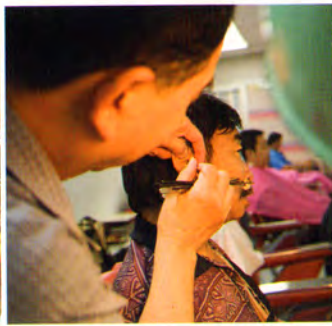
### Ridout Tea Garden

Across the estate are the Ridout Tea Garden and Ridout Road that runs behind the garden. Both are named after Major-General Sir D. H. Ridout, who was the highest-ranking military officer in Singapore and Malaya during the First World War. As landscaping and parks were important elements in satellite town planning, this garden was developed by HDB to meet the recreational needs of Queenstown residents.

Consisting of a pool with lights and fountains, pavilions and Japanese-themed landscaping, this Japanese garden was completed in 1970. It was a popular place for residents for photography and family outings. Today, the garden has been redeveloped and is occupied by a fast-food restaurant and a florist.

*Do also walk the National Heritage Board's other community trails in Balestier, Jalan Besar and Bukit Timah.*





# Colours of Queenstown







New residents at Queen's Crescent, 1963  
Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore



# LEGEND

- 1 Queenstown Town Centre  
Commonwealth  
Cooked Food Centre
- 2 Former Queenstown  
Polyclinic and Dental Clinic
- 3 Queenstown Community  
Library
- 4 Queenstown Baptist Church
- 5 Queenstown Remand Prison
- 6 Rainbow Centre
- 7 Lee Kong Chian Gardens  
School
- 8 Masjid Jamek
- 9 Thye Hong Centre
- 10 Queenstown Secondary School
- 11 Former Achipelago Brewery  
Company
- 12 Brickworks Estate
- 13 Queensway Shopping Centre
- 14 Alexandra Fire Station
- 15 Queenstown Neighbourhood  
Police Centre

- 16 Mei Ling Heights: First two  
point blocks, Blk 160, 161
- 17 Tiong Ghee Temple
- 18 True Way Presbyterian  
Church
- 19 Banyan tree Shrine
- 20 School of Church of the  
Good Shepherd
- 21 Stirling Road: Terrace  
Houses and Blk 45, 48, 49
- 22 Masjid Mujahiddin
- 23 Former Baharuddin  
Vocational Institute
- 24 Queenstown Sports Complex
- 25 Boh Beh Kang
- 26 Church of the  
Blessed Sacrament
- 27 Sri Muneeswaran Temple
- 28 Tanglin Halt Estate:  
Neighbourhood Centre
- 29 Faith Methodist Church
- 30 Ying Fo Fui Kun
- 31 Blk 115
- 32 Queenstown Lutheran Church
- 33 Commonwealth Heights  
and Green
- 34 Ridout Tea Garden

## MAP OF Queenstown COMMUNITY TRAIL







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CITIZENS' CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE