



Some concerned individuals at Naga Mas.
Photo : Liz Price

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Greetings!

Even though this last issue of Heritage News for 2008 is horribly overdue, we shall not fail you. The cause of the delay is the immensity of doing the special issue on the Kinta Valley as promised. Have we taken on too much? We have to push it to 2009, for more time to work on it.

The stylish modernity of Ipoh owes it to some landmark buildings by B M Iversen, a Danish architect who came to Malaya in 1928 and started his own practice in Ipoh in 1936. Over a period of 40 years, except during WW2 when he and his small family took refuge in Australia, he has created a significant body of work, what we may see as a treasure of Malaysian architecture. Among his better known projects are Federal House, Denmark House and Loke Yew Building, all in Kuala Lumpur. Once you have learned his trademark features, looking out for his architectural creations will be a rewarding experience. His work includes Ipoh's cinemas: Majestic, Ruby, Rex, Cathay and Lido. As for the Geosains Complex (Geological Department Complex) in Jalan Sultan Azlan Shah (Tiger Lane), we lament the new entrance to its museum which destroys the integrity of the architectural facade.

We should preserve the best of Iversen in their original form. PHS would like to form a special interest group to study and document them. A meeting will be called. Please spread the news, involve our architects!

Iversen's daughter, Ruth Iversen Baxter Rollitt, born in Batu Gajah, declares herself a second generation Malaysian. Even though she lives in London, she returns regularly to the country of her birth. Read her memories in this issue, page 3.

A trip was organized in December to see our national treasures: the rock paintings of Tambun and the fossil of Gua Naga Mas. Those of you who missed out, please let us know. Another trip can be organized in the near future. Read more about the sites in Rocks of Ages, by Liz Price, on page 4.

Ipoh, the city that tin built is getting a boost to its inner city re-development. The 'Renewal of Yau Tet Shin Bazaar' was initiated. Some three hundred people turned up in a forum organized by the City Council in the Syuen Hotel in mid-January. It concluded with an announcement that a competition will be held for the best re-development proposal. Somehow, the issue of town planning seems to have been lost among talking heads.

Have a great new year!

The latest Heritage News is a great issue, lots of interesting variety and great to see it in colour. Well done. Let's see whether Melaka and George Town get a divorce over their listing!
-- Liz, KL.

After a quick read, I get an overall impression of some wonderfully dedicated and passionate people – thank goodness for them as that means some of beautiful old Malaya will be preserved [for those of us old enough to be nostalgic (!) and those young ones to know what it used to be like].

It's great that Penang and Melaka have been declared heritage sites, but of course, there will always be those who want to commercially exploit these places and will not be happy with the restrictions. They'll just have to live with it, I say! There are many people with the right ideas in Penang, but I wonder if Melaka is as lucky. The way they have reclaimed the land and built those high-rise buildings in the "new" part of town is heart-breaking! Thank goodness they have left Heeren Street as it is.

There are some very interesting articles in the Heritage News. I liked the one on the caves.
-- O A, Sydney, Australia.

E-mail from Sydney, Australia

Dear Friends from Home,

For the past six months I have been active in the Convict Trail Project whose objective is to physically preserve and to collect records on an old road just north of Sydney. I have attached some photos showing two stone bridges on the Old Great North Road built by convict labour between 1826 and 1832. It is the oldest government-built road connecting Sydney to the northern farm lands and the port of Newcastle. Now, about 120 km of this old road falls inside National Park and is protected by it. It is only accessible on foot. Throughout its length, the supporting walls, culverts, drains, embankments and bridges are all of dry stone construction. That is, constructed without the use of cement, concrete or mortar.

All the photos are taken on the road including photo No.3 which shows the steep gradient the route took, from the river crossing in the background to the top of the escarpment where we are sitting.

Wishing you all the Season's Greetings and the Best for the New Year!

Fong Loon and Sai Cheng



Pre-historic Rock Paintings and Fossil

A trip was hastily organized to visit two limestone hills where important sites are suffering from neglect and perceived abuses, which were highlighted in the Press. The rock paintings (or rock art) at Gunung Panjang, previously erroneously referred to as Tambun cave paintings, are finally getting studiously documented by a team from Universiti Sains Malaysia. Incredibly, the authorities are finally taking action, too. The sites are being spruced up and promoted for tourism. However, this is dangerous. If the sites are not given permanent protection, ignorance, ill-informed and unenlightened visitors would cause irreversible damages. Security measures must be in place. The PHS is vigilant of the on-going site improvement at Gunung Panjang. All rock art, wherever they may be, are a major challenge to conservation.

Perak Tourism: Kampar battlefields, War Memorial & Dredge TT5

Siak Hong and Mohd Taib were invited to a meeting in the Kampar Land Office chaired by the state executive for tourism and NGO, Mohd Osman bin Mohd Jailu, to discuss the conservation of the Kampar battlefields. Harchand Singh, who made a documentary on WW2, made up the non-governmental presence at the meeting.

After the meeting, we 'inspected' some designated tourist spots, including Lata Kinjang, Gua Tempurung and Kellie's Castle. It was the last stop, the Dredge TT5 at Batu 7, Tanjong Tualang which capped the trip. The state promises to look into helping the conservation of the dredge, which is listing (grounded, leaning) as some pontoons which float the dredge are leaking. Urgent but costly repairs will involve underwater welding. For now, visit at your own risk.

By the way, we heard it straight from the horses' mouth: Harchand has initiated a war memorial at Sungai Siput. We expect short notice of the opening ceremony in Febraury, 2009.

A Girl From Batu Gajah

By Ruth Iversen Baxter Rollitt, London, June, 2000

Only last week I was in Ipoh. But now that I am back in UK, on a wet summer's day, and Ipoh seems so far away, my mind wanders, and I feel homesick for the sun, the heat and the smells which I so adore – and miss.

A child of the East, I always feel the pull to return. And with great luck I have been able to do so, year after year. For each visit I love the country even more. Not the modern high-rise buildings that appear and disappear so rapidly, not the wide tree-lined streets and shopping malls – I miss the beauty of my country.

Born in Batu Gajah a few years before WWII, I return to the little town as often as I can. Not so much to see the hospital where I was born, but to visit the lovely cemetery that lies down the road beside the church where my beloved Donald lies buried. A circle is completed each time. I weep at the cruel fate bestowed upon him by people in the country we loved so much.

My parents had a wonderful life in Malaysia – it was their home for 40 years. My father-in-law was a planter just outside Batu Gajah, arriving in Malaya in 1908. My father's big brother came in 1919 and at the age of 22 my father landed at Penang in 1928. They all grew to love their new country.

With the arrival of the Japanese in 1941 - when I was still too young to remember - we were evacuated and had to leave our home in Ipoh and the little house recently built in the Cameron Highlands. Things turned nasty and we managed to leave Singapore a week before it fell. We sailed on a Dutch ship in a convoy of seven, of which ours was the only one to survive and we landed in Australia – all four of us – and we know we were more fortunate than many. After 4½ years my father returned to Ipoh. One house had been totally looted, the other destroyed, his office had burnt down; there was nothing left – apart from his love for the country. Soon he started up his business again with an office in the Eastern Hotel – people started returning, trying to start a new life and soon things went well again. The rest of the little family returned from Australia, the country that had been so good to us during the war, we were happy to be home although so much had changed. My brother and I were packed off to



Choir in Ipoh, 1958.
Ruth Iversen Collection.



Above & below: Panoramas, front and back of Lam Look Ing Bazaar, 2008. This building marks the first involvement of Iversen in Malaya. Fire gutted the building in December, 2004. The toilet block at the back, demolished late 2008.



Past Event:

BM Iversen:

40 Years of Building in Malaysia

An illustrated slide talk by

Ruth Iversen Rollitt

Wednesday 19 November,

6:30 pm

Venue:

Badan Warisan Malaysia, KL

Ruth will share her recollections of her father's contribution to Malaysia.

BM Iversen worked for two architectural firms before he started on his own practice in Ipoh in 1936. After World War II, the practice had offices in Ipoh, Penang, Kuala Lumpur and Singapore under the name Iversen, van Sitteren & Partners. Iversen managed the Ipoh branch until he went into semi-retirement in 1966, and retired in 1970. According to Ken Yeang in *Architecture of Malaysia*, 'it became an indication of status among Ipoh's wealthy businessmen to own an Iversen-designed house'.

school in Europe and as it was the norm in those days, we only came out to see our parents once every two years. How exciting it was to fly all that way – how we loved coming home!

After our schooling and further education, my brother joined my father's office in Ipoh and I had the wonderful luck of meeting the man of my dreams – and to top it all – a planter in Malaysia! He had been born in Scotland while his parents were home on leave, but his younger sister - as my brother and I - had been born in Batu Gajah. Second generation Malaysians! We were married and settled on the estate where he worked – life was so full of promises, nobody could have been happier. All my nearest and dearest lived in the area, my parents, my brother and his family. And we were all in the country we loved most of all. My idea of heaven was to be a planter's wife, we had a lovely home, a lot of pets and life was fabulous.

Only five weeks after the birth of our son, also born in Batu Gajah, the young planter had to go out to pay wages to the staff – his car was ambushed, he was shot dead and burnt. It was a payroll robbery and the culprits were caught that very night. The funeral was held in the little church that has been replaced by a bigger and better one. The coffin with his remains was carried down the slope and lowered into the ground – the community was shattered and everyone wept.

I had to move out of our home on the estate and returned to my parents with my baby. Most of the people in the area were kind and sensitive and mourned with me.

After some years my little son and I returned to Europe and now after so long we have made new lives for ourselves. I remarried after 6½ years and have two more sons who are now grown up too. We have all been back to Ipoh several times. We have all been back to God's Little Acre and thought with love of the young planter who was so cruelly murdered in the land he loved so much.

Two years ago, my two sisters-in-law and I returned to Ipoh. One of them, the young planter's sister who is born in Batu Gajah, the other my brother's widow (she had spent several years in Ipoh). We joined in the ceremony at God's Little Acre to mark the 50th anniversary of the commencement of the Emergency in June 1948. It was a moving experience for us. We saw many graves with names of dear departed friends. It was lovely to see faces from the old days - we were amazed to see how many had stayed on - and, it was a joy to see how much the Perak Planters' Association does to keep the cemetery so beautiful. We look forward to our next visit.

Rocks of Ages: Treasures of Malaysia

Text and photos by Liz Price

Perak should be proud of its cultural and natural heritage. There are 2 sites in the Kinta Valley which are not very well known to the local inhabitants, but both are important not just to Perak, but to Malaysia, as they are unique treasures. They are the Tambun rock paintings, and the fossil bones at Gua Naga Mas, Gopeng.

On 14 December, PHS members and friends enjoyed a FREE guided tour of both these sites. The object of the trip was to spread the knowledge of these special places. Neither site has been protected since they were discovered, although the authorities have advertised them, prematurely perhaps. Would these people be able to start the ball rolling, and work with the authorities who have begun promoting them as tourist attractions before proper protective measures are in place?

On my earlier visits to both sites, I had found the access steps to be very overgrown (See photo). So, it was a pleasant surprise on this trip to find that the staircases to both places had been very recently



cleared. There was even a new gravel path leading to the staircase, so we were able to avoid the mud in the swampy land as we strolled to our first site: the Tambun paintings.

This ancient rock art is found on a limestone cliff on Gunung Panjang, and is thought to be 2000 or maybe even 3000 years old. No accurate dating has yet been done. The paintings were discovered in 1959 by Lt. Rawlings and at the time were the only known coloured paintings in Malaya; they differ from the more recent charcoal drawings made by the Orang Asli. The material used for making the red and orange colours is not yet known, but is thought to be hematite, which is found locally. Other possibilities are ochre, or other natural pigments.

The paintings show men, animals and symbols, some of which are easily identified such as a civet, deer, turtles, wild boar and a tapir. There is also a prominent painting that looks like a dugong, although others suggest it could be a giant catfish. There are not many paintings of people, although one man is shown with long genitalia.

Fortunately, the paintings are high above ground level, and as such, relatively safe from damage by people. But of course, they are still vulnerable to environmental damage: wind, rain and sunlight. Although only 30-50 of them were described at first, there are, in fact, many more. The paintings are all much higher than the present day floor level. How was the ancient man able to reach so high up on the cliff? In Australia, it is thought that the Aborigines built scaffolding to do their rock art. Nonetheless, the Tambun paintings show that humans were living in the Kinta Valley during this period. They may have been farmers rather than hunters and gatherers who drew the animals they saw and probably ate.

From art we turned our attention to ancient bones. These are the fossil bones of a mammal, thought to be a large cat, embedded in the rock of Gua Naga Mas. They were found in 1992 by members of the Malaysian Nature Society and although studies were done, no results have been published.

The bones are embedded in travertine about 5m above the cave floor. Dr Davison, formerly of World Wildlife Fund, suggests that the animal is a cat such as a tiger or a leopard. He thinks it is more likely a tiger, while respected paleontologist, Lord Cranbrook, who revisited last year, declares it a leopard. An early rough estimate implies they are 10,000 years old, dating back to the Pleistocene (1.8 million to 10,000 years ago). But, in 2000, H D Tjia suggested that the fossil could be more than 700,000 years old!

Sometime between 2001 and 2003, reflective markers were placed around the skeleton. In 2003 there were 9 markers, now there are only 2. Also comparing my photos from 1990s parts of the bones seem to have been removed – Davison suggested that bits of bones were shaved off around 1995, possibly for magic.

This fossil is the only one of its kind known in Malaysia and they must be protected and preserved. Together with the Tambun paintings, they are an important part of Malaysia's heritage and are national treasures which must be safeguarded for the future generations.

Editor: In January, 2009, a team from the University Sains Malaysia came to study and document the rock paintings. Tests' results and other findings will be published in due course. Until then, we just have to be patient. Coincidentally, at the same time this research was being done, the Jabatan Warisan Negara and MBI collaborated and worked on the access path and steps to the site. Signboards will be updated and replaced.



A dugong or a giant catfish.



Fossil bones in the ceiling of the caves.

Top photo: Bernard Lee



Cave entrance. Photo: Bernard Lee



Ipoh New Market, circa 1950.

Ipoh: Pride & Prejudice

The buildings of Ipoh are our cultural heritage, the city's visible link to our past. The heritage buildings of Ipoh are not confined to Old Town and certainly not limited to monumental edifices. Those in New Town, developed in the early decades of the 20th century, are no less important to the life of the city and its communal history.

What about the streets where they are found? They, too, require protection from our city fathers and town planners.

You and I know that a few isolated buildings do not our true heritage make. We are concerned about losing the heritage of numerous 'lesser' buildings, which are being ignored. We are concerned with sustainability and how best to re-use our old buildings while preserving the physical evidence of our cultural and social history, which is the real money spinner for the business community, if only they learn how to maximize it!

WHAT THEY SAY ABOUT US

Lonely Planet is the bible of travellers. Read below its observation on Ipoh. Be warned, but be objective, for it can rile you up and make you cry screaming of injustice. Inaccuracies aside, what can be done to change this unflattering perception? (Source: *Lonely Planet: Malaysia, Singapore & Brunei*, by S Richmond, M Cambon, D Harper, R Watkins, 2004.)

The City of Millionaires made its fortune from the rich tin mines of the Kinta Valley. Some of the mines around Ipoh are still producing today, and the city's elegant mansions testify to the success of many Chinese miners. With a population of 390,000 (over half a million if the surrounding districts are included) Ipoh is Malaysia's third-largest city, but it's not as bustling as its size might indicate, and has retained many of its historic buildings.

For the visitor, Ipoh is mainly a transit town, a place where you change buses if you're heading for Pulau Pangkor or Tapah. It may be worth a longer visit to explore outlying sights like the Buddhist temples cut into the limestone outcrops, the royal town of Kuala Kangsar of the eccentric Kellie's Castle. Ipoh itself has some fine old colonial architecture, but it's a seedy city, with a notorious prostitution problem, and you're unlikely to want to linger longer than necessary.

'Old Town' Ipoh is west of Sungai Kinta, between Jalan Sultan Idris Shah and Jalan Sultan Iskandar, and is worth a wander for the old Chinese and British architecture. The grand civic buildings close to, and including, the train station give some idea of just how prosperous this city once was. At the end of the 19th century the city expanded east over the river into 'New Town', which is another repository of colonial shophouses. While the city centre remains largely preserved and free from development, it is rather lifeless in the evenings.

Left : Yau Tet Shin Market
Right : Ipoh Railway Station
Source : Old postcards



GAZETTED HERITAGE BUILDINGS OF IPOH

Back in 1986, the Draft Ipoh Structural Plan proposed twenty-five buildings and sites for preservation. We have been told by the city town planning unit that the buildings have now been gazetted. The list, below.

1. Perak River Hydro Building, Jalan Maharaja Lela (Jalan Stesen)
2. Birch Memorial, Jalan Dewan (Pejabat Pos)
3. Ipoh Railway Station, Jalan Panglima Bukit Gantang Wahab (Kelab)
4. Ipoh Town Hall, Jalan Panglima Bukit Gantang Wahab
5. High Court, Jalan Panglima Bukit Gantang Wahab
6. Banguanan Pejabat Hal Ehwal Agama Islam dan Adat Istiadat Melayu Ipoh, Jalan Panglima Bukit Gantang
7. Ipoh Anglo Chinese School, Jalan Lahat
8. Ipoh Convent School, Jalan Sultan Idris Shah
9. Ipoh Anderson School, Jalan Ashby
10. Ipoh St Michael School, Jalan S P Seenivasagam
11. Wesley Church, Jalan Lahat
12. Masjid Panglima Kinta, Jalan Masjid
13. St Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Jalan Race Course
14. Masjid India Muslim, Jalan S P Seenivasagam
15. 'Tambun Cave', Gunung Panjang, Tambun
16. Masjid Kg Paloh, Jalan Datoh
17. Ipoh Club, Jalan Panglima Bukit Gantang Wahab
18. HSBC Bank, Jalan Sultan Yussuff
19. 'Balai Bomba', Jalan Sultan Idris Shah (Brewster)
20. Ipoh Education Office, Jalan Tun Razak (Maxwell)
21. St John the Devine Church, Jalan St John
22. Markas Regimen, Jalan Raja DiHilir
23. Bulan Bintang Building, Jalan Chin Hwa
24. FMS Bar & Restaurant, Jalan Sultan Idris Shah
25. Ipoh Padang, Jalan S P Seenivasagam



HSBC Building.
Source : Old postcard, c. 1950

ISSUE**A Rose by any other Name? - think before we act**

In letters to the editor of both the STAR and NST, linguist Dr S Nathesan of Muar commented on Kedah government's revert from 'Alor Star' to the original spelling of 'Alor Setar'. He believes that 'names of places should not change according to the whims and fancies of people'.

'The name Alor Setar came into being in 1735 when the tow was founded by the 19th ruler of the state, Sultan Muhammad Jiwas Zainal Abidin Adilin Mu'azzam Shah. This name was used until Dec 21, 2003, when the name was officially changed to Alor Star when the city obtained city status.

'The name Alor Setar derives form Alor (alur) which means groove, furrow or main stream of a channel, and Setar which is 'a tree with small, sour fruit (Bouea macrophylla), which is also known as either kundang or remia in Malay'.

'Likewise, we have many places which are spelt differently from the actual spelling. For examples, we have names of places with 'bahru', 'bharu', 'baru' instead the correct spelling 'baharu' for places like Johor Bahru, Kota Baru, Kala Kubu Bharu, and so on.'

He concludes, 'I hope due consideration will be given to the history of the names of places by concerned authorities. We should preserve the old or original names for the sake of history and not change names arbitrarily.'

Understand etymology. Understand our history.

Quotable Quotes

Passion adds fire to the Law of Attraction.
Passion is one of the key principles of change.
Passion is the guidance system that leads you to change.
Being ruthlessly honest with yourself helps you discover your passion.
Passion is a fuel that brings you new levels of success.
-- Anonymous

MAP OF PERAK

We Care About Our Past

PHS, as we call ourselves, is a non profit-taking non governmental organization.

Our main aim is to promote heritage preservation and raise awareness of our natural and cultural heritage.

An elected committee runs a programme of activities for members and friends.

We network with individuals, groups and local communities for local knowledge.

We support information-gathering on 'hometown heritage'.

Heritage News (HN) is the vehicle for news, views and information to reach our readers.

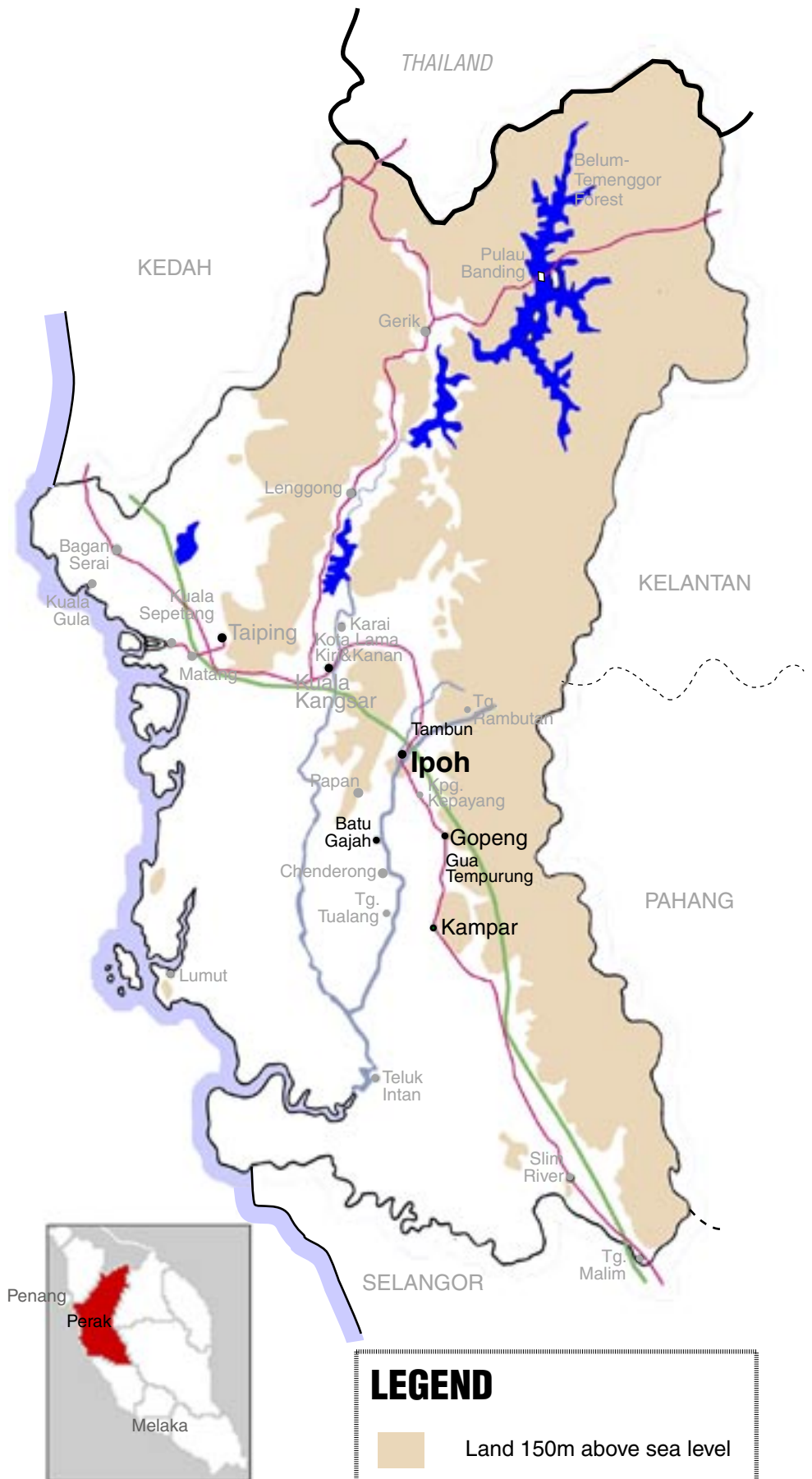
Membership has its privileges; more information and application forms are available from our office.

Persatuan Warisan Perak, the Perak Heritage Society (Reg No:1254) was registered with the Registrar of Societies in August, 2003.

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Location of the state of Perak in Peninsular Malaysia

LEGEND

- Land 150m above sea level
- North-South Expressway
- Main Road