

LAM SENG FATT



SECRET KUALA LUMPUR



JONGLEZ PUBLISHING

CONTENTS

Centre

THE MENU OF THE CAPITAL CAFE	14
THE COLONIAL SHIELD OF PANGGUNG BANDARAYA	16
THE STAINED-GLASS WINDOW OF ST MARY'S CATHEDRAL	18
THE VENTILATION PANEL OF LOKE CHOW KIT MANSION	20
HITCHING POSTS AT OLD ENTRANCE OF ROYAL SELANGOR CLUB	24
THE COAT OF ARMS OF KUALA LUMPUR CITY GALLERY	26
INDEPENDENCE PLAQUE	28
KILOMETRE O MARKER	30
THE COCONUT TREES OF MASJID JAMEK SULTAN ABDUL SAMAD	32
THE UNUSUAL VENTILATION VENTS OF LEBOH PASAR BESAR	34
THE RELIEF OF A CHINESE JUNK	36
JALAN YAP AH LOY	38
THE ORNAMENTATION OF NO. 13 JALAN TUN TAN SIEW SIN	40
PINEAPPLE MOTIFS ON SHOPHOUSE FACADE	44
PATRON DEITIES OF SIN SZE SI YA TEMPLE	46
DATUK GONG SHRINE AT SIN SZE SI YA TEMPLE	48
STREET ART BY ERNEST ZACHAREVIC	50
SURAU ABU SAID AL-KHUDRI: A MUSLIM PRAYER HALL IN CHINATOWN	51
MOTIFS AT ENTRANCE OF CENTRAL MARKET	52
POST BOX OUTSIDE CENTRAL MARKET	54
NARROW SHOPHOUSES ON JALAN TUN H.S. LEE	56
THE VENTILATION BLOCKS OF 150, JALAN TUN H.S. LEE	58
DORJE SHUGDEN SHRINE 60	60

West

LOOKOUT POINT OUTSIDE MAYOR'S HOUSE	68
PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT LOGO	70
GURDWARA SAHIB POLIS	72
ANCIENT ELECTRIC STREETLIGHT POLES	74

SRI MAHA MARIAMMAN DEVASTHANAM TEMPLE	76
"WAHDAH" SCULPTURE	78
THE INSCRIPTIONS OF THE CENOTAPH	80
THE NATIONAL COAT OF ARMS	82
THE FACES OF THE NATIONAL MONUMENT	84
COAT OF ARMS FROM HOUSE OF COMMONS	86
STATUE OF TUNKU ABDUL RAHMAN	88
THE 48 PILLARS OF THE NATIONAL MOSQUE	90
H.C. SYERS' MEMORIAL	92
THE GAUR HEAD	94
THE CRAZY BELL	96
MERDEKA SUN CLOCK	98
STATUE OF SIR FRANK SWETTENHAM	100
HANG TUAH MURAL	102
THE WREATH AT THE ENTRANCE OF THE NATIONAL MUSEUM	104
THE SEMAPHORE SIGNALS OF THE RAILWAY	
ADMINISTRATION BUILDING	106
THE MAJESTIC HOTEL FORMER ENTRANCE	108
GABLE OF THE NATIONAL HERITAGE DEPARTMENT	109

East

DR FLETCHER'S CAULDRONS	112
RUMAH PUSAKA CHOW KIT	116
LOGO OF THE NATIONAL ART GALLERY	118
THE LERSI STATUES OF WAT MEH LIEW THAI BUDDHIST TEMPLE	120
BIOMEDICAL MUSEUM	122
FRENCH ROAD NAMES IN CHOW KIT AREA	124
ST MICHAEL THE ARCHANGEL RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH	126
VENTILATION BLOCKS OF THE CONCORDE HOTEL	128
PINEAPPLE MOTIFS ALONG JALAN AMPANG	130
SELANGOR SILVERY LANGURS IN KL FOREST ECO PARK	132
THE GATE OF THE MUZIUM TELEKOM	134
COURT HILL SRI GANESAR TEMPLE	136
HOLY TRINITY BUKIT BINTANG CHURCH	138

CONTENTS

RUMAH PENGHULU ABU SEMAN	140
HSBC'S GUARDIAN LION	142
TAI YANG GONG'S SIGNBOARD	146
'KAWASAN JUALAN KINZIR' SIGN	148
PATCHED-UP HOLE ON REAR WALL	150
ZHONG WAN XIAN SHI TEMPLE'S GREEN MAN	152
MURAL ON DEWAN BAHASA DAN PUSTAKA BUILDING	154
MEMORIAL TOWER IN JAPANESE CEMETERY	156

North

MAY 13 CEMETERY	160
THE PYINSARUPAS OF THE SAMNAK SAMBODHI	
BUDDHIST TEMPLE	162
THE TUA PEK KONG DEITY OF CHOO SING TONG TEMPLE	164
THE FOUNDATION STONE AT SENTUL PASAR	166
PLAQUE OF LORD GANESHA	168
TOMB OF SHEIKH DATO' HARUN AL-RASHID ZUBAIDAH	170
BUDDHA AND GANESHA STATUES AT SUTRA HOUSE	172
SEVEN FAIRIES TEMPLE	174
SETAPAK HOT SPRING	176
TAMAN IBUKOTA MUSLIM CEMETERY	178
JALAN BOMOH, JALAN PAWANG AND JALAN NUJUM	182
KAMPUNG DATUK KERAMAT	184
RUBBER RESEARCH INSTITUTE MALAYSIA MOTIFS	186
KUALA AMPANG	188

South

ROAD SIGN INDICATING TURN-OFF TO JALAN	
DAMANSARA LAMA	192
SWETAMBER JAIN TEMPLE	194
THE DOLLS OF SRI NAGESWARY AMMAN TEMPLE	196
TORANA IN BRICKFIELDS	198
CREST AT VIVEKANANDA ASHRAM	200
STATUES OF THE SAGES OF THE THREE TEACHINGS	202

THE TAMIL INSCRIPTION ON THE OLD CHURCH BELL	
AT ZION LUTHERAN CHURCH	204
AUM SRI POOVADAI KALIAMMAN TEMPLE	206
THE RINGSTONE SYMBOL OF THE NATIONAL BAHÁ'Í CENTRE	210
MASJID JAMEK ABDULLAH HUKUM KL ECO CITY	212
HAJI ABDULLAH HUKUM'S HOUSE	214
SRI MAHA SAKTHI MOHAMBIGAI AMMAN TEMPLE	216
THE PINEAPPLES AND TURTLE SHELLS	
OF THE HOKKIEN CEMETERY	218
CRYSTAL-CLEAR STREAM	220
URBAN ORCHARD PARK (TAMAN DUSUN BANDAR)	222
THE RAILWAY SLEEPERS OF THE JAPANESE	
OCCUPATION MEMORIAL	224
THE BODHI HOMECARE CHERAS' TEMPLE	228
COMMONWEALTH WAR GRAVES	230
MASS GRAVE AT CHERAS CHRISTIAN CEMETERY	232
GRAVES OF AHMADIYYA FOLLOWERS	234
CORNERSTONE OF TULLIBARDINE TEMPLE	238
ALPHABETICAL INDEX	240

LOOKOUT POINT OUTSIDE MAYOR'S HOUSE

①

Head to the mayor's residence for the best view of the city skyline

Changkat Tunku

Outside the official residence of Kuala Lumpur's Datuk Bandar (mayor) in the upmarket and verdant Bukit Tunku area



Though entry to the mayor's residence is restricted (as well as the small car park outside the mayor's residence), the area outside the guarded gate is accessible to the public.

After parking your vehicle along nearby Jalan Dato Sri, you will be rewarded with a fabulous view of the city's impressive skyline with the skyscrapers spreading out along the horizon with a foreground carpeted with the canopies of trees.

Kuala Lumpur still boasts the world's tallest twin towers, the Petronas Twin Towers, which were the tallest buildings in the world from 1998 till 2004 when Taipei 101 took over the title. The Petronas Twin Towers are now ranked No. 21 and 22.

The city now boasts the second tallest building in the world, the Merdeka 118, completed in 2023 (2,227 feet tall). It also has the 19th tallest building, The Exchange 106, which is 1,488 feet tall and was completed in 2019. The tallest in the world is still the Burj Khalifa in Dubai which is 2,717 feet tall.

Kuala Lumpur is also home to KL Tower, which is the tallest telco tower in Southeast Asia and the seventh tallest in the world.

Kuala Lumpur is ranked seventh in the list of cities with the most skyscrapers in the world with 173 skyscrapers. In Southeast Asia, it is ranked number one.

There are several other lookout points in the city but these are on rooftop bars of luxurious hotels and nightspots where mixologists' cocktails are shaken, stirred and served with hefty price tags.

Bukit Tunku is an upper-class hilly and verdant residential area previously known as Kenny Hills. It was named after the first Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman as his residence was located there. It was a popular place for high-ranking colonial officials to reside in back then as the spacious bungalows have large gardens and the area was quiet, leafy and exclusive.

THE FACES OF THE NATIONAL MONUMENT

⑨

The soldiers' faces were not Malaysianized

Perdana Botanical Garden, Jalan Parlimen

Daily 7am-6pm

It has been a mystery all these years whether the faces of the soldiers on the National Monument were Malaysianized when it was repaired after being bombed by Communists in 1975. Now it can be confirmed that they were not.

After the monument was blown up, a team led by Chris Carney, then a lecturer at the Institut Teknologi Mara School of Art and Design, was formed to carry out the repairs. It was reported that he was told to Malaysianize the facial features of the soldiers. However, Carney – who was a rivercruise boat captain in Tasmania, Australia, when contacted in July 2021 – said in an e-mail: “Discussions were held at the time regarding this question which resulted in the consensus being that we would respect the original sculptor’s work and restore the monument to as original



condition as possible. So therefore, none of the features on the monument was changed or altered in any way.”

Soon after its unveiling on 8 Feb., 1966, the monument had been criticized by politicians and nationalists for having 19 ½-foot tall soldiers which looked too Caucasian. So when the monument was blown up on 26 Aug., 1975, some politicians felt it was opportune to Malaysianize the soldiers’ facial features while repairing the monument.

Austrian sculptor Felix de Weldon, designer of the National Monument, had explained: “The features are reduced to their classical proportions. It is a composite cross-section of the Malaysian soldier. The figures have high cheekbones which are typically Malaysian. They have no European features. Everything is idealised for the purpose of beauty.”

The uniforms were Malayan since a sample was sent to de Weldon – who also sculpted the famed Iwo Jima monument in the United States – for him to base his sculpture on, and a Malaysian embassy staff in the US had been his model in his Washington studio.

It is not widely known that a lot of Malaysian bronze castings, especially by Terengganu craftsmen, were used to repair the monument.

Carney said many parts of the monument were completely destroyed or so badly damaged that repair was not possible and these areas had to be completely re-envisioned and remade. The team also added internal reinforcing in some areas and used chemicals to artificially age the new bronze areas. The repaired monument was reopened to the public on 11 May, 1977.

It was symbolic that the monument, commemorating those who died battling the Communists during the Emergency, was blasted by Communists at 5am on 26 Aug., 1975. The figure holding a Bren gun was on the floor in pieces and the figures of two fallen Communist soldiers had lost their heads, which were found near the base.

At least four Communists, including one woman, said to be from the Malayan National Liberation Front faction of the Malayan Communist Party, had planted several bombs, but one exploded prematurely. Two other bombs which had been timed to explode when the morning guard parade took place were defused.



HANG TUAH MURAL

18

Countenance of Malay hero is a fusion of two Malay soldiers' faces

Muzium Negara, Jalan Damansara

Daily 9am–5pm except for first Monday of every month, closed on first two days of Aidil Fitri and Aidil Adha festivals

MRT Muzium Negara station, LRT KL Sentral station, KL Hop-On Hop-Off Stop No. 17



Every Malay in Malaysia would know the story of Hang Tuah, the quintessential Malay hero. Who would have guessed that the face of Hang Tuah in the bas-relief mural in Muzium Negara was based on the faces of two Malay soldiers?

According to Waveney Jenkins, the sculptor of the mural, she was taken by the museum director, Mubin Sheppard, in early 1963 to review soldiers from the First Battalion Royal Malay Regiment in Sungei Besi. Sheppard felt that earlier depictions of Hang Tuah were too gentle and not warrior-like enough.

He wanted a specific face. They reviewed the soldiers who stood in rows for about 30 minutes. “In the end, we couldn’t find one that combined exactly the right features, so we chose two,” said Jenkins.

She added that basically the features had to be manly, a strong face and yet look noble. “So it needed to have this bit of nobility, with strong facial features. It was basically to get the strength of character in the face. It was a good outcome because in some ways, we got over the slight unease of physically representing a Muslim. In fact, by choosing two, it meant you weren’t representing one. It was not a representation of one person, it was a combination of two. They then came to the workplace and posed, and I worked away.”

Jenkins found it quite difficult to fuse two faces into one. “It was a difficult process though because I had learnt to do direct portraits from a person, when you do a natural portrait, you really look at that face in detail, and draw how the eyes relate to the nose, relate to the mouth and everything. When you’re trying to put together two or three...I did find it quite difficult.”

Sheppard was not too happy with her first effort as Jenkins had made the nose too aquiline, so that was changed, and she also made the brow a little more drawn down, a little fiercer.

The Hang Tuah mural was meant to be the museum’s centerpiece, but as Malaysia became more Islamic towards the end of the 20th century, it was sent to the storeroom because depicting a human form is prohibited in Islam. However, about 15 years ago, it was put on exhibition again.

On top of the mural is the phrase *Ta’ Melayu Hilang Di-Dunia* which translates to “Malays will not vanish from the face of this earth.” Hang Tuah was said to have uttered this phrase and today it has become a slogan frequently used by Malay politicians to stir up Malay nationalism.

Observant viewers will notice that Hang Tuah in the mural holds two kris (asymmetrical Javanese daggers) – his right hand holds the hilt of one tucked into his waistband and his left hand holds the other.

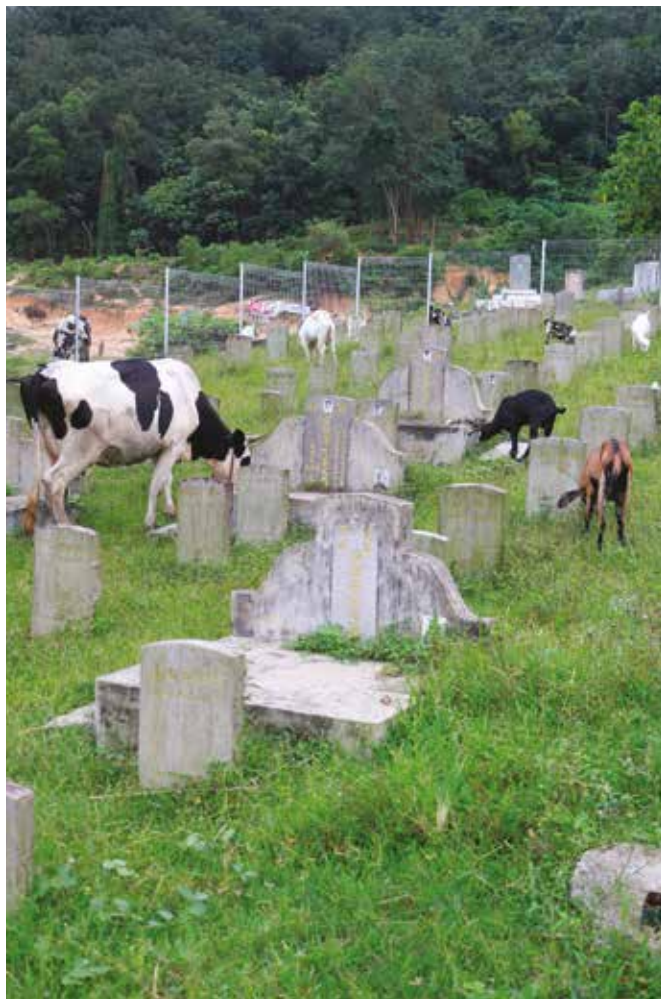
MAY 13 CEMETERY

①

Bodies of the victims of racial clashes buried in a remote corner of leprosarium grounds

Off Jalan Hospital, Sungai Buloh

Access: drive from the Sungai Buloh Hospital Mosque towards the hospital. About 656 feet away, you will see a nursery and a narrow lane on your left. Walk up the potholed lane for about 328 feet where there is a fork. Turn left and walk another 328 feet and the cemetery is to your left



A little-known small cemetery in a remote corner of the Sungai Buloh Leprosarium (officially called the National Leprosy Control Centre) is where most of the victims of the infamous May 13, 1969 racial clashes are buried.

Though the Leprosarium is just outside the border of Kuala Lumpur, most of the victims were killed in the Chow Kit and Kampung Baru areas of the city. For many decades, the authorities kept silent about where the victims were buried, and Malaysians and even many family members of the victims only knew about the existence of the remote cemetery when stories about it started surfacing online in 2017 after reports that the cemetery would be converted into a car park.

The cemetery is fenced up and is located on a forested hillside behind the Sungai Buloh Hospital Mosque. It is not visible from the main road and you will have to walk on a rough potholed track to reach it. Often, farmers nearby let their cows and goats inside the cemetery to graze on the tall grass.

103 victims (99 Chinese, two Malays and two Indians) are buried there in four rows of mostly basic graves with only the names of the victims and dates of death. Eighteen of the victims were unidentified, including 10 Chinese males, five Chinese females, two Chinese whose gender was unknown and one Malay male.

According to the National Operations Council report, 102 persons “thought to be non-Muslims were identified and individually buried, with identifications over the graves, in Sungai Buloh on 18th, 20th, 21st and 22nd May (1969)”. One body which was discovered later was brought to Sungai Buloh for burial on 2 June, 1969.

The actual total number of people who were killed during the racial clashes is still not known. The official death toll is 196 (172 in Selangor) but Western diplomats and reporters at that time believed the figure was much higher.

The authorities had been very secretive about the burials and some inmates of the Leprosarium were tasked with digging the four-foot-deep trenches and filling up the graves. Some of the bodies were buried naked without any coffins.

Interestingly, family members of Harun Mohamad, the only identified Malay in the cemetery, had their appeal to exhume his body for reburial in a Muslim cemetery turned down by the religious authorities in 2006.

For more information about the 1969 riots, see pages 180/181.

RUBBER RESEARCH INSTITUTE MALAYSIA MOTIFS

13

Motifs related to the rubber industry adorn the facade of a heritage building

260 Jalan Ampang
Monday to Friday 8am–5pm

Only those who are familiar with the rubber (*Hevea Brasiliensis*) industry will recognize the beautiful motifs adorning the facade of the Rubber Research Institute Malaysia (RRIM) building.

There are plaster cartouches depicting rubber sheets being dried, the herring-bone method of tapping rubber, fluted test tubes and cups to collect latex. These motifs make the Art Deco building with fair face red bricks, designed by British architect Arthur Oakley Coltman, even more interesting.

Opened in 1937, the RRIM building also features 14 bas-relief panels



on the exterior of the side walls of the library block just behind the lobby. Designed by Italian sculptor Rudolfo Nolli (who was based in Singapore), the seven panels on one wall are mirrored on the other wall. They depict the history of rubber from planting the trees; tapping them; smoking the sheets; British adventurer Henry Alexander Wickham who smuggled rubber seeds from Brazil to Kew Gardens; export of rubber products; and the uses of rubber.

Established in 1925, the RRIM set up its first laboratory on Jalan Damansara in 1926 before moving to the building on Jalan Ampang.

The first rubber trees in Malaya were not planted in Kuala Lumpur: nine rubber trees were planted in Kuala Kangsar in Perak in October, 1877. These seedlings were sent from Singapore's Botanic Gardens, which had received 22 seedlings from Kew Gardens in England on 11 June, 1877. Eleven were planted in the Botanical Gardens and two possibly in Malacca.

Little known is that there was an earlier shipment of 100 rubber seedlings from Kew Gardens to Singapore on 11 Aug., 1876 but due to a delay in freight payment, they died.

The British planters were initially reluctant to plant rubber as they had invested in coffee. It was only in 1897 when the world prices of coffee declined and that of rubber went up that the planters changed their minds. Henry Nicholas Ridley, who became director of the Singapore Botanic Gardens in 1888, was instrumental in boosting the rubber industry.

By the 1930s, Malaya was the largest natural rubber producer in the world.

The first rubber seeds in Asia were smuggled out of Brazil

Part of the wealth of Malaya and of its natural rubber industry finds its origin in a stunning theft at the end of the 19th century. At a time when world rubber prices were particularly high, the British adventurer, Henry Alexander Wickham, smuggled out about 70,000 rubber seeds from Brazil in March, 1876 by declaring to Customs that they were "exceedingly delicate botanical specimens specially designated for delivery to Her Britannic Majesty's own royal gardens at Kew". Of the 70,000 seeds planted at Kew Gardens, only 2,397 germinated. In August 1876, 1,919 seedlings were sent to Ceylon and an unknown number died due to delay over payment of freight; of these, 100 went to Singapore and they all died as freight was not paid. It was in late 1877 that Kew Gardens sent another 100 to Ceylon, of which 22 were sent to Singapore and nine were planted in Kuala Kangsar.

THE DOLLS OF SRI NAGESWARY AMMAN TEMPLE ③

Childless women hang plastic dolls for divine help with having children

Jalan Lengkok Abdullah, off Jalan Bangsar
Daily 7am–10am and 7pm–9pm
LRT Bangsar Station



Not many people know that the Sri Nageswary Amman Temple in Bangsar is the only Hindu temple in Kuala Lumpur that has a snake mound of earth (about six feet tall) as its centerpiece and that it is also the only temple where childless couples can seek divine help to have children by hanging plastic dolls at the shrine.

According to a temple caretaker, many devotees have given birth after praying and hanging dolls there. As for the cobra believed to be residing in the snake mound, the caretaker has not seen it since he started working there in 2015, but a few devotees have reported seeing a golden king cobra.

The standard practice for devotees is also to place raw eggs at the base of the mound and pour milk into two holes in the mound before reciting their prayers and expressing their wishes.

Although most snakes actually do not have nests, the female king cobra (*Ophiophagus hannah*), native to Southeast Asia, does indeed have a nest: it usually builds a pile of leaves in which it lays eggs and protects them by staying in the nest to keep predators away. However once the eggs are hatched, the female king cobra will leave and the baby snakes have to fend for themselves.

The temple started as a small shack built by squatters living on Jalan Abdullah in 1945 when they spotted a snake mound. It was originally located in another spot nearby and was relocated when a railway line was built on the site of the original temple. It is not known if the original snake mound was shifted to the current location or if the existing one was a totally different snake mound.

The main deity is Sri Nageswary Amman, the snake goddess who is one of the manifestations of the snake. According to hinduwebsites.com, ancient Indians both feared and revered snakes. The tradition continues. Hindus worship snakes in temples as well as in their natural habitats, offering them milk, incense, and prayers.

In Hindu ritual and spiritual tradition, a snake is not an evil creature, but a divinity representing eternity as well as materiality, life as well as death, and time as well as timelessness. It symbolizes the three processes of creation: namely creation, preservation and destruction.



MASJID JAMEK ABDULLAH HUKUM KL ECO CITY

⑩

A mosque built on top of a car park

KL Eco City – Jalan Bangsar
LRT Abdullah Hukum Station

Haji Abdullah Hukum, one of the pioneers of Kuala Lumpur, has two landmarks named after him: an LRT station and a mosque. The mosque is unique, as it is the only one in the entire nation that is built on top of a seven-story car park. And the car park is part of the KL Eco City commercial project that was built on the site of a village (Kampung Haji Abdullah Hukum) that was named after him. Opposite the mosque is a heritage kampung house that used to belong to Haji Abdullah Hukum which was reassembled there (see following double page). The LRT station named after him is connected by a walkway to KL Eco City.

Opened on 31 July, 2016, the white mosque looks quite striking. In keeping with the eco-themed concept of KL Eco City's overall design, it has lots of open spaces with emphasis on cross-ventilation to provide natural cooling. The surrounding area is also leafy with a row of coconut

trees making it a rooftop park.

The 13,000 square foot two-storey mosque was designed to accommodate a maximum of 3,000 worshippers. Since it is built on top of a multi-level car park, lack of parking bays (a problem plaguing many other mosques in Kuala Lumpur) is not an issue.

Mosques are normally built on high ground so that they would be an imposing sight visible from afar. This is a form of projection of power and influence to announce to all and sundry that the city where the spectacular mosque is located is rich and powerful.

The highest mosque (above ground level) in the country

Masjid Jamek Abdullah Hukum KL Eco City is also the highest mosque (above ground level) in the nation, but the highest mosque in the world (above ground level) is the King Abdullah Mosque on the 77th floor of the Kingdom Centre building in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, which is 600 feet above ground level and was completed in 2004.



SRI MAHA SAKTHI MOHAMBIGAI ⑫ AMMAN TEMPLE

*The only Mohambigai Amman temple in Malaysia
has a Bodhi tree that 'cried'*

Lingkaran Syed Putra

LRT Abdullah Hukum Station, KTM Komuter MidValley station

Daily 7am–10am and 7pm–9.30pm



Thousands of shoppers throng the Mid Valley Megamall daily but most are unaware of its link with the Sri Maha Sakthi Mohambigai Amman Temple, the only Hindu temple in Malaysia dedicated to the Goddess Mohambigai (known as Mookambika in India).

Goddess Mohambigai is regarded as the universal Mother Goddess manifested as a Tridevi of Parvati, Lakshmi and Saraswathi.

The temple began as a small shrine dedicated to Mariamman, the Hindu goddess worshipped by Tamils as the bringer of rain and prosperity, and among overseas Indians as their protector, too.

Temple caretaker Mahendran said the shrine was erected by his grandfather, Murugesu Pillai, in the 1950s when he found a Bodhi tree growing on the plot of land that he had bought. A bodhi tree has much religious significance to Buddhists and Hindus, as Buddha reached enlightenment (bodhi) after meditating under a bodhi tree for 49 days. Hindus believe worshipping a bodhi tree is paying respect to the trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva.

Mahendran's mother, Annapoornam, who was the temple's priestess for more than 40 years, was responsible for dedicating the temple to Mohambigai Amman in the 1970s. One night, she suddenly awoke from sleep in a trance after which she realized she had some kind of gift. After a trip to India to visit the famed Mookambika temple in Kollur, Karnataka, and consultations with spiritual teachers, she became the priestess and would go into trances or use conch shells to make predictions for devotees.

Mahendran said the original bodhi tree was growing some distance away near a railway line. In the 1970s, when the authorities wanted to realign the roads, the bodhi tree was in the way and had to be cut down.

When the branches were sawn off, sap dripped from the cut-off ends. Devotees claimed the holy tree was "crying" and they drank the "tears" they had collected in cups, believing it had healing powers.

The Public Works Department workers who felled the tree suffered insomnia and encountered bad luck. A few days later, they decided to salvage a root of the bodhi tree that had not yet withered and replanted it where it is still growing in the temple today.

Developer IGB Corporation Bhd bought the surrounding land in the 1980s to build Mid Valley City, which includes the mall, and decided to erect a new temple and a house for the caretaker in exchange for the temple's land. IGB Corporation offered to build the new temple on 30,000 square feet of land with a 90-year lease.

Construction of the mall and new temple, which was built around the bodhi tree, took place simultaneously. Mahendran said the contractors parked their excavators, lorries and machinery near the bodhi tree for a blessing ceremony before they started work on the world's first temple-within-a-mall project.

THE PINEAPPLES AND TURTLE SHELLS OF THE HOKKIEN CEMETERY

13

Symbols of prosperity and longevity

Jalan Kerayong
Tuesday to Sunday, 9am–5pm

Just beside the Kwong Tong cemetery, which opened in 1895, the Hokkien cemetery features two unique aspects: pineapples growing on the tumulus of graves and turtle-back graves.

To Hokkiens, the pineapple is a symbol of prosperity because it is called *ong lai* in the Hokkien dialect, which is a homonym for “prosperity comes”. Thus the pineapple features prominently in the cultural and religious practices of the Hokkiens.

Some Hokkiens, especially businessmen, plant pineapples on the graves of their departed parents to improve family fortunes and to ensure prosperity passes down the generations.

Turtle-back graves emerged during the Song Dynasty (960-1279) and feature a tumulus that is dome-shaped like the carapace of a turtle with the tombstone placed where the “head” is. Such graves are quite common in Fujian province in southern China where the Hokkiens are from. Most turtle-back graves have simple earth mounds, while others

have the mounds cemented over. The rare ones have the design of a turtle shell etched on the cemented mound.

Turtle-back graves are built based on the belief that turtles have long lives and thus the descendants of the deceased will be blessed with longevity.

Some scholars have noted that in ancient Chinese culture, the turtle with its flat plastron bottom and its domed carapace on top represent the shape of the universe.

The grave is usually surrounded by a horseshoe-shaped wall which, according to Chinese geomancy (the famous “feng shui”), represents a hilly ridge that protects the grave from winds with negative qi (life force) from three sides.

Hokkien graves are more elaborately decorated than those of other dialect groups. This is because many Hokkiens were successful entrepreneurs and made huge fortunes, and the large and well-decorated graves indicated their wealth.

Hokkien graves are often decorated with tiles depicting scenes from Chinese classics. There are also some tiles that have landscape scenes painted in the naive style which look European with windmills and are reminiscent of pictures on chocolate tins.

Very few people have noticed that some tiles depict churches, which suggest that the artisan who painted the scene copied it from a Western source without realising that a depiction of a church would be totally out of place on the grave of a person who was either a Taoist or Buddhist.



CRYSTAL-CLEAR STREAM

14

Unnamed stream in the middle of a graveyard

Hokkien cemetery
Jalan Kerayong



In a city filled with muddy rivers, a stream with crystal-clear water smack in the middle of, well, a cemetery, is a rare find indeed.

In the Hokkien cemetery on Jalan Kerayong is a stream with crystal-clear water, accessible from the side of a bridge. The source of the stream is a spring located about an eighth of a mile from the bridge, which is accessible but with some difficulty due to thick undergrowth and slippery slopes. A man who lives near the cemetery recalled visiting the spring when he was a child and said there were four holes from which water flowed out. This stream does not appear in maps and is unnamed.

The stream is so clear that aquatic plants can be seen and there are lots of small fishes swimming among them.

It is believed to be a minor tributary of Sungai (Malay for River) Klang which is a little over one-third mile away from the bridge as the crow flies.

To enjoy a paddle in such clear waters of a stream, one will have to drive quite a distance out of Kuala Lumpur to places like the Forest Research Institute of Malaysia (about 11 miles from the city centre), Templer Park forest reserve (about 18 miles from the city centre), Kanching Eco Forest Park (about 13 miles from the city centre) and Ampang Forest Eco Park (about 5 miles from the city centre).

It is not without reason that the city is named Kuala Lumpur, which is Malay for “Muddy Confluence”. It is simply because the Gombak and Klang rivers which meet in the center of the city are always muddy.

Not only are the rivers muddy, they are very polluted, too. Due to rapid urbanization, industrialization and lack of planning and supervision, the rivers are polluted with untreated sewage and industrial wastes.

Sungai Klang flows through Kuala Lumpur and Selangor to drain into the Straits of Malacca. It is about 74½ miles long and drains a basin of about 497 square miles. Some stretches resemble large storm drains while other stretches have been affected by siltation. Flash floods are also common.

In 2011, the government launched the River of Life project to rehabilitate the river. The project was divided into three components: river cleaning, river master-planning and beautification. The project was inspired by the successful rehabilitation of the Cheonggyecheon River in Seoul, South Korea.

URBAN ORCHARD PARK (TAMAN DUSUN BANDAR)

15

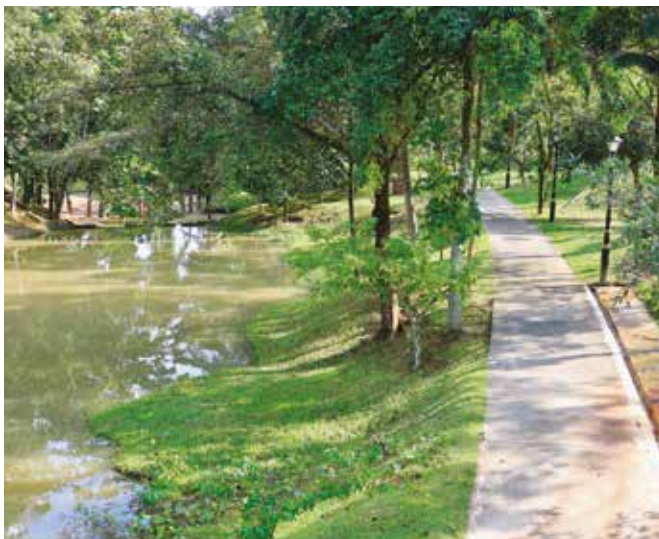
Little-known beautiful but deserted park in the middle of the city

Lorong Bellamy
Daily 7am–7pm

Taman Dusun Bandar (Urban Orchard Park) is situated in the hilly and verdant Jalan Bellamy and Bukit Petaling area of the city and theoretically should be drawing city residents by the thousands for their regular communion with nature. But the reality is that it is deserted every day.

Even on weekends and public holidays, only a handful of visitors turn up at the park, which is a shame because it is quite nicely laid-out and is well groomed with mown grass and trimmed hedges. Even the toilets are clean and functioning. One blogger said he was the only person there other than the gardeners when he visited the park.

The fact is that possibly all the residents in the city know of the famed park, now called Perdana Botanical Garden, near the Parliament House. And almost everyone still calls it by its original name: Lake Gardens. The Lake Gardens was opened during the colonial era and is the oldest and most popular park in the city.



The Urban Orchard Park was opened to the public on 1 Sept., 2013 and since then has not left any impression on city folks, many of whom do not even know of its existence, even though City Hall spent \$3.8 million to build the park.

The land on a ridge where the 19-acre park is located had some derelict colonial houses decaying in the rainforest. There was a creek with polluted water and the land became a place for dumping garbage.

The brief to the landscape architect was to promote locally-grown fruit trees and vegetables and provide education on fruit tree species, promote urban gardening and showcase sustainable landscape design. Some of the trees are labeled with explanations on their usage as food or medicine.

The park has a beautiful lake in the middle with lots of foot bridges. There are also well-designed buildings for holding events like weddings and parties, but they are empty.

The authorities have tried to lure more people to visit the park by having signages on roads in the vicinity, but even this effort has not borne fruit.



THE RAILWAY SLEEPERS OF THE JAPANESE OCCUPATION MEMORIAL

⑩

A symbol of the Thai-Burma Railway where 25,000 Malaysians died during its construction

Jalan Kerayong

Built in 2006, the Memorial to Malayan Victims of the Japanese Occupation – the name of the memorial in full – replaces the original one that was on the same spot.

There are several railway sleepers placed around the existing memorial: they symbolize the Death Railway (Thai-Burma Railway) where up to 73,000 Malaysians were abducted and sent to work in pathetic conditions in order to construct the railway from 1940-1943. About 25,000 of them died. In total, around 250,000 civilians from Southeast Asia were sent there as forced laborers and about 90,000 of them died. Another 12,000 allied prisoners of war also died working on the railway.



The Japanese attacked Malaya 40 minutes before Pearl Harbor

The Japanese Occupation began with Imperial Japanese Army landings at Padang Pak Amat beach in Kota Bharu in north-east Malaya at 1.45am on 8 Dec., 1941, 40 minutes earlier than the bombing of Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. The Japanese laid down their arms when Emperor Hirohito announced Japan's surrender on 15 Aug., 1945. For the record, the Japanese surrendered twice in Kuala Lumpur: commander of the 29th Army Lt. General Teizo Ishiguro surrendered on 13 Sept., 1945 and on 22 Feb., 1946 General Seishirō Itagaki, Commander of the 7th Area Army, attended the second surrender ceremony.

The skeletal remains of 800 Malaysians who were killed by the Japanese during World War II

Inside the memorial are the skeletal remains of about 800 unknown Malaysians who were killed by the Japanese during World War II. They were exhumed from the mass grave on the plot of land where the memorial was located. A small metal door at the rear, which is locked, leads to the chamber where the remains are kept in an urn. Most of these victims are believed to have been killed during the Sook Ching (Cleansing Purge) massacre targeting mostly Chinese which the Japanese kicked off in early 1942.



The original tablet

The memorial tablet placed at the top of the memorial was the original tablet erected in 1946 by an unknown benefactor which was later lost and then found in the late 1990s.

Unknown symbolism

The memorial has three levels and eight stairsteps to symbolize the three years and eight months of the Japanese Occupation.

Kuala Lumpur: a tin mining town with very few mining-related road names

One would have expected that a tin mining town would have plenty of buildings, sites or road names linked with mining activities. However, there is only one housing estate built on former mining land which has road names connected with mining.

On 12 Aug., 1957, the Street Naming Subcommittee of the KL Municipal Council decided to name roads in the Miharja area, off Jalan Loke Yew, with words related to tin mining.



There are two main roads: Jalan Lombong (*Lombong* is Malay for “mine”) and Jalan Palong. *Palong* is Malay for a long wooden sluice built slanting down from a high platform which is used in open cast mining with tin-rich alluvial soil.

Often used in hilly areas, the excavated rocks are broken into pieces with shovels or tractors and sprayed with jets of water to wash away the gravel that does not contain tin. The jets of water are also to break the tin-bearing stones and the slurry flows into a sump, which is a pit in the ground. The slurry is then pumped up to the top of the sluice where the gravel pump is placed in an attap hut and the slurry is allowed to flow down the sluice. Heavier stones with tin ore would be trapped by wooden beams nailed transversely on the bottom of the sluice, which act as riffles to slow down the flow of slurry. The tin ore is then collected for smelting.

Palongs were a common sight in tin mining areas in the States of Perak and Selangor back then, but little known is that this method was originally used for gold mining in Australia. A company based in Victoria, Australia, was the first to introduce this method at its tin mine in Sungai Raya, Kinta Valley, Perak in 1907. Other European and Chinese miners quickly switched to this more efficient method.

The other road names linked to tin mining are Jalan Kelian, a term for excavated alluvial mines; Jalan Logam (*Logam* means “metal”); Jalan Galian (*Galian* means “mineral”); and Jalan Bijeh, which is now spelled Jalan Bijih (*Bijih* means “ore”).

Jalan Bijih is a 70-metre-long road linking Jalan Lombong to Jalan Palong. Google Maps identifies it as Jalan Bijih, but there is no road signboard on the road. However, written on a garbage bin of one of the houses along the road is “Jalan Bijeh” which is the old spelling of the road.



THE BODHI HOMECARE CHERAS' TEMPLE

⑪

The most unusual Buddhist temple in the city

*Jalan Ikan Emas, Taman Ikan Emas, off 3½ miles Jalan Cheras
Daily 8am-8pm*



In the compound of the Bodhi HomeCare, the little known Cheras' temple is the most eclectic and eccentric Buddhist temple in the city.

The entire temple is made of terra-cotta with unusual clay finials on the roof edge and also on the parapets of the staircase.

Outside the stupa (built over the open prayer hall of the temple which houses statues of Sakyamuni Buddha and the Goddess of Mercy Guan Yin) is a wall with alcoves for Buddha statues from India, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Myanmar, Cambodia, Laos, Tibet, China and Japan. It is particularly interesting to note the differences in facial features and general style of the Buddha statues according to the country.

All around the temple are also inspirational sayings in Mandarin with English translations which are not exactly spot on. For example "The Precious Wealth In The World Is Breathing, Cherish You Are Still Alive At The Moment," "The Happiest Of All In The World Is Open The Heart, Be Happy," "Return To The Origin Nature, Discover Peace In Every Breath, Let Harmony Always In The Mind," and "Conquest Oneself Indeed Better Than Conquering Others, Purity & Impurity Depend on Oneself, No One Can Purify Another." There is also a nice touch of Zen with a statement to "Mind The Mind."

There are actually two parts to the Bodhi HomeCare Cheras temple. One part is a monastery, founded by a monk from China and opened in 1989 to provide shelter and care for disabled and abandoned children as well as poor, sick and elderly people who have been abandoned by their families. The other part is the temple which was built according to a design drawn by a Thai monk and was opened in 2016.

Bodhi HomeCare also provides a free kindergarten and free tuition for children, free traditional Chinese medical treatment every Sunday, a recycling collection center, and a monthly distribution of provisions for the needy. It also has a garden and a pond for unwanted pets.



LAM SENG FATT



SECRET

KUALA LUMPUR

The only hot spring in the city, beautiful and little-known motifs related to the rubber industry, weird-looking structures that were used for medical experiments on beri-beri, statues that have the reputation to cure spiritual illnesses, pineapples that were planted to deter enemies from attacking, a traditional Malay house relocated to the city center, the forgotten graves of Muslim victims of the 1969 racial clashes, roads named after the occult, a mysterious 'green man', the best view of the city skyline, a gaur that gored a police chief to death, an old railway tire to sound the alarm for the police, the place where childless women hang plastic dolls for divine help with having kids, a humble temple with a resident cobra, a mosque built on top of a car park, a crystal clear stream in the middle of a graveyard, a church housed in a former dance club, a forgotten symbol of the Thai-Burma Railway where 25,000 Malaysians died during its construction, the surprisingly rare mining-related road names of a tin mining town ...

Away from the modern shopping malls filled with designer brands, the towering skyscrapers and usual touristy sites with stalls selling kitschy souvenirs, there are still some interesting secrets to be discovered in Kuala Lumpur in the back lanes and byways of the concrete jungle.

This guide is essential for the experienced and intrepid travellers and adventurers who want a different flavor of Kuala Lumpur.

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