

TUESDAY **StarMetro**



NORTH

19 August 2003

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**Peace movement**

> 4



**Boost for centre**

> 5



**Giant flags**

> 7



# Heritage walk

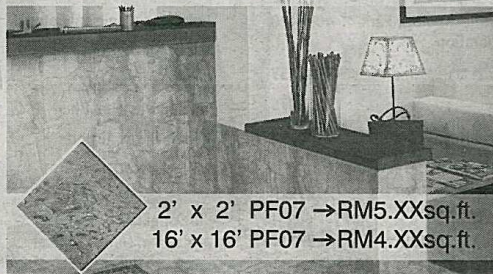
Forty people converged on Kampar in Perak recently to dig up the small town's past. And they were not disappointed.  
 > Story on pages 2 & 3

Saturday Save

Every Saturday of August

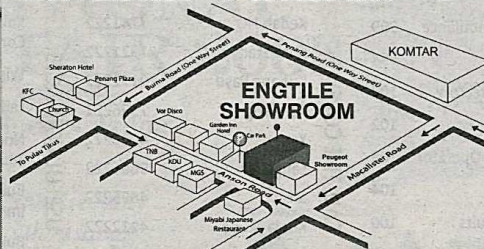
2<sup>nd</sup> 9<sup>th</sup> 16<sup>th</sup> 23<sup>rd</sup> 30<sup>th</sup>  
 am 9.00 to pm 5.30

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Chye standing in one of the preserved war trenches at Green Ridge as he relates the story of the Battle of Kampar to the heritage walk participants.

# Getting to know Kampar

Story and photos by CHRISTINA KOH

**S**TANDING in the middle of a foundry off the main road in Kampar, Perak, the forlorn looking house offers little hint that it once belonged to the enigmatic Tok Jabor, the founder of the town.

It is hard to imagine that the house once used to receive guests like Arab *imams*, diplomats and members of the royalty. Now it lies forgotten and surrounded by scrap metals.

The condition of the house came as a shock to those who visited it during the first Kampar

Heritage Walk, organised by the Perak Heritage Society recently.

About 40 participants from as far as Kuala Lumpur embarked on a journey to tour Kampar's various historical sites, led by local war historian Chye Kooi Loong.

Chye told the group that Tok Jabor, a successful miner who founded Kampar in 1886, was the grandfather of former Inspector-General of Police Tun Hanif Omar.

Highly respected by everyone he met, Tok Jabor was implicated in the murder of British Resident J.W.W. Birch but later cleared of the charge. That happened before



The participants exploring the San Sin Ngam Kuan Yin cave temple.

● SEE NEXT PAGE

## Base

IQ	7741222
ir	7321222
Pasu	9172222
g	7596222
vi	4655222
	9666222
uda	4695222
	4212222
	4906222

### USEFUL CONTACTS

Kedah Cultural Office	7315930
Kulim Technology Park Corporation	4032420
Wisma Darul Aman	7301957
Lada	9662875
Northern Region's Tourism Licensing	7308794
Bukit Kayu Hitam Immigration	9221621
Bukit Kayu Hitam Customs	9222170

### PUBLIC SERVICE

Alor Star Hospital	7303333
Kota Star Municipal Council	7332499
Public Works Dept.	7303555
Fire & Rescue Dept.	7344444
Tenaga Nasional Bhd	15454
Kepala Batas Airport	7144301
MAS (Airport)	7311186
Malaysian Consulate in Songkla	074-311062
Malaysian Liaison Officer in Songkla	074-311161

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Participants saw the preserved war trenches, former machine gun nests and other defence structures which took 250 men seven days to build

# Small town with many tales

● FROM PAGE 2

he came to live at the house. "Tok Jabor was very generous and he gave land to Chinese and Indian miners so that they could each build temples for their communities.

"Not only did he help to open up Kampar, he showed true *muhibbah* spirit.

"The Chinese and Hindu temples, built in the late 19th century, are still there in Kampung Abdullah which was named after his eldest son," said Chye.

He added that Tok Jabor had lived at the house, which was known as *Rumah Hijau* for its green paint with his wife and children until he died in 1921.

The four-hour Heritage Walk, which attracted participants of all races and ages, was aimed at opening the eyes of participants to the historical wonders in nearby villages.

Earlier, the group made their first stop at Sungai Siput South to visit the San Sin Ngam Kuan Yin cave temple which houses a 125-year-old temple bell with a fascinating history.

The bell, which was brought by early Chinese tin miners to Sungai Siput South was once stolen by drug addicts.

"I was once told by the villagers that someone in Kuala Lumpur offered RM70,000 for the bell, so we presume the addicts had been trying to sell it.

"The bell was, however, so heavy, weighing about 95kg, that they abandoned it on the bank of the nearby Sungai Dipang," he related.

Chye also told the group about the discovery of two skeletons - those of an adult and three-year-old child - when villagers were cleaning up the temple two years ago.

Museum authorities believe that the two might have died while taking shelter at the temple during the *Battle of Kampar* in 1941.

The skeletons were placed into urns and kept at the temple.

However, the child's skeletons went missing one day, presumably stolen by gamblers, said Chye.

Heritage Walk participants who visited the temple that day were moved to find toys around the now empty urn, left behind by devotees to appease the "wandering" child's spirit.

Chye later brought the group to Green Ridge, a former battle-



The 125-year-old bell which was once stolen and recovered.



Kampar, the town founded by Tok Jabor.



Chye standing in front of Tok Jabor's house which is now in a state of neglect.

field of the Battle of Kampar, which became one of the best defences put up by the British army during the Japanese invasion.

Participants saw the preserved war trenches, former machine gun nests and other defence structures which took 250 men seven days to build.

"Despite being outnumbered five to one, the defenders comprising British, Punjabi and Gurjar (Indian Muslim) soldiers bravely held off the Japanese, resulting in high casualties on both sides," he said.

Chye also regaled participants with stories of bravery and sacrifices, such as the account of Captain John Graham who continued to inspire his men against the Japanese although both his legs had been shattered by machine gun fire.

The group later visited the *Tsen Lung Fui Kuon*, a Hakka association, in Jalan Gopeng in Kampar, built in the 1920s, where they saw antique rosewood furniture, altars and ancestral tablets.

They also met the committee members who presented them with a history of the miners who came from China to Kampar and how the association was formed to help raise

funds for their families.

Chye said he hoped that more efforts could be done to preserve the heritage of Kampar which was in danger of being neglected or forgotten.

"As a historian, I am sad to see that there is not even a single road or lane named after Tok Jabor although he played such an important role in the founding of the town.

"Are we so short of names that we are reduced to naming our roads after fruits, for instance?"

"It is important to have places named after our own historical figures so that it can enrich the history of our town and promote local tourism," he said.

On Tok Jabor's old house, he hoped the town council could meet with the foundry management to discuss the possibility of relocating so that efforts could be made to preserve and restore the historic building.

The Perak Heritage Society is organising a Papan Open Day at the former mining town of Papan, Perak, on Aug 24 from 10am to 6pm.

Those who wish to contact the society may call its treasurer Chong Fong Loon at 012-5555369 or e-mail at perakheritage@hotmail.com.

## 3 more days to the



Venue : Penang International Sports Arena (PISA)

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