

The History of Batu Gajah

Batu Gajah is a town located in the Kinta District of Perak, approximately 20 km south of Ipoh. The town lies on the bank of the Kinta River, with an estimated 2010 population of 46,000.

The name Batu Gajah means "elephant stone". There are various legends as to the origin of the name including one from Malay folklore which refers to two elephants crossing the Kinta River who were turned to stone by a small pixie-like creature.

Batu Gajah started out as one of the many small Malay villages of mukim Sungai Terap, developed under its chief, the Dato' Seri Amar Di-Raja from the early 1800's.

Batu Gajah rose to prominence in 1881 when it was chosen as the river port for the nearby Papan tin mines.

Land was sold to traders who built shophouses near the port along Jalan Sungai, which later came to be known as Batu Gajah Old Town. Many of the original shopkeepers were Malays and Mandailings.

In 1884, Batu Gajah was chosen as the new capital of the Kinta District. The commercial town continued to grow, and by 1888 Batu Gajah had 127 lots already built on or about to be built on. New Government offices were established in 1892.

The first English school was founded in 1907 by K. Malai Perumal Pillay. In 1910, this became the Government English School and later the Sultan Yussuf School. The Sultan of Perak, HRH Sultan Azlan Shah, who was born in Batu Gajah, is a noted alumnus.

The land between Old Town and Changkat was further developed and by 1917 the town had been substantially laid out. By 1921, the town's population had increased to 5,000.

In addition to being the capital of the Kinta District, Batu Gajah's location in the rich tin-bearing Kinta Valley made it a natural centre for economic growth. This was further supplemented by vast rubber plantations in the surrounding region.

By the 1930's the continuing expansion of Ipoh had become a strong competitor to Batu Gajah. This was exacerbated during the Japanese Occupation 1941-1945 when Ipoh was made the capital of Perak, in place of Taiping.

While Batu Gajah continues to this day to be the capital of the Kinta District, some of the administrative duties of the Kinta District are now carried out in Ipoh.

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BATU GAJAH HERITAGE DRIVING TRAIL



RUBBER TAPPING



Government Offices Batu Gajah

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PERAK, MALAYSIA

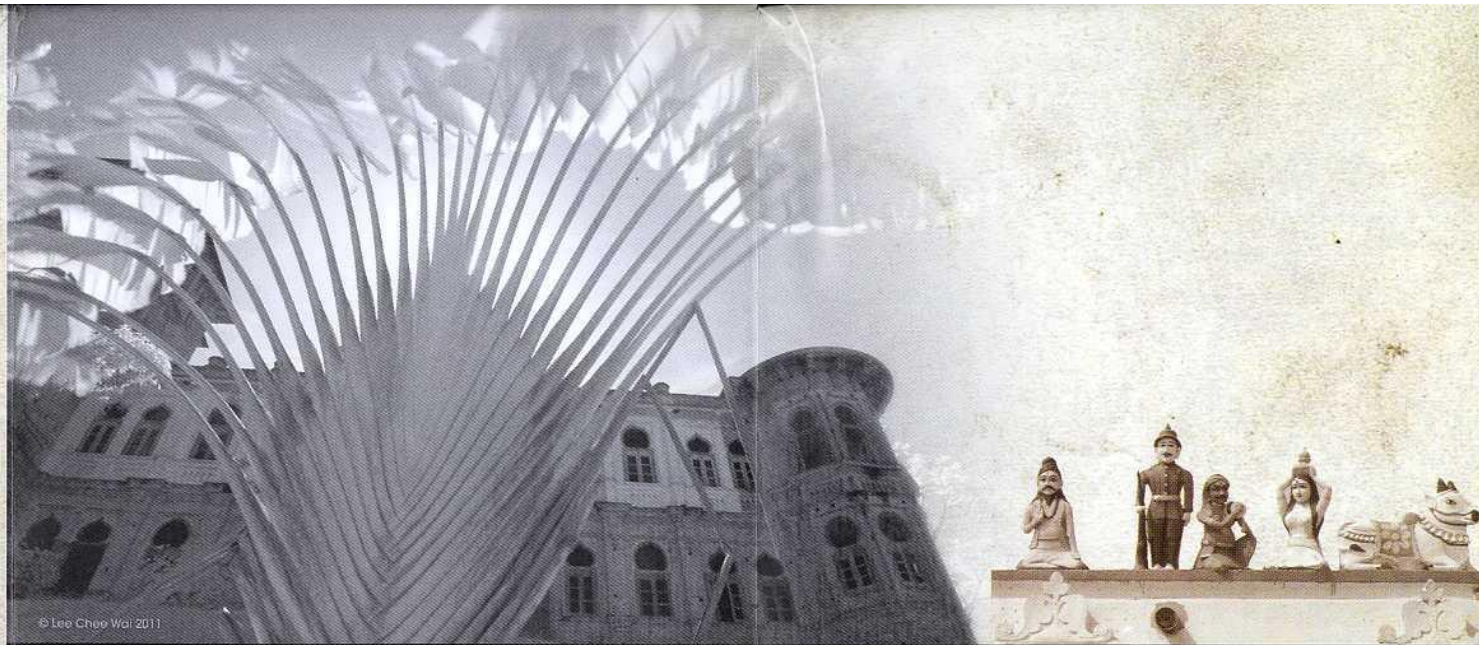
William Kellie Smith was born on 1 March 1870 in Scotland, and came to Malaya in 1890 as a twenty year old civil engineer. He soon teamed up with Charles Alma Baker, a New Zealander, to carry out survey work for the Kinta Land Office and make roads in Southern Perak.

With profits made from his venture with Charles Alma Baker, Smith acquired 1,500 acres of land near Batu Gajah, which he named the Kellas Estate, initially for growing coffee and then rubber.

Smith returned to Scotland for a short visit in 1903. He met his future wife, Agnes, while travelling back to Malaya by ship later that same year.

Agnes, an heiress, was due to inherit a substantial sum of money in 1906. Smith borrowed against his wife's inheritance in order to further develop Kellas Estate. In 1904, he built a new residence, known as Kellas House, for Agnes and their newly-born daughter Helen.

In 1905, Agnes was informed that her inheritance would be delayed until 1908. As a result, in 1906, Smith was forced to sell Kellas Estate to British agency house Harrisons & Crosfield. The estate was incorporated as Kinta Kellas Ltd., with Smith kept on as managing director. He and his wife retained their residence and old coffee estate, which he renamed Old Kellas Estate.



The History of Kellie's Castle

When the inheritance finally came through in 1908, Smith decided to extend Kellas House, building the addition commonly referred to today as Kellie's Castle. This extension was designed to replicate the great British Raj palaces in India, with Moorish-style arches and windows and intricate plasterwork. The plans included 14 rooms, a tower with a lift shaft, a rooftop tennis court and a wine cellar with a secret tunnel. The residence was designed to surpass the splendour of the British Residency in Taiping. Smith obtained a license to manufacture bricks and imported skilled craftsmen from Madras, India.

Work progressed slowly over the next few years, stopping in 1914 due to supply problems caused by the outbreak of the First World War. By 1915, with the birth of his son Anthony, Smith was more determined than ever to complete his mansion.

In 1918, the Spanish Flu pandemic struck down many of his Indian bricklayers and plasterers. The workers requested that Smith build a temple dedicated to the deity Mariamman to ask for forgiveness and protection for the people living and working on his estate. Smith agreed, and transferred his remaining Indian workers to build the Sri Maha Mariamman Temple just a short distance away from his yet completed mansion. As a gesture of gratitude, a statue of William Kellie Smith was incorporated into a row of deities on the roof of the temple.

By 1920 the Spanish Flu pandemic had subsided, and work once again progressed on the mansion.

In 1926, although still unfinished, his new mansion had taken on its final shape. Large and imposing as it was, this extension to Kellas House was not independent, but designed to be used with the existing mansion built in 1904, which was connected to it by a covered walkway.

In the middle of 1926, Smith went to Europe to visit his wife Agnes and to take delivery of the lift he had commissioned. On his way home he visited Lisbon to finalise the leasing terms of a new estate in Portuguese Timor. While there, he developed pneumonia and died after a short illness.

His family did not return to Malaya. Agnes sold Old Kellas Estate to Harrisons & Crosfield, and it was amalgamated into Kinta Kellas Estate. The new management was not interested in the uncompleted mansion and it was left to deteriorate.

A very informative 3-part documentary on Kellie's Castle is available on youtube.com.

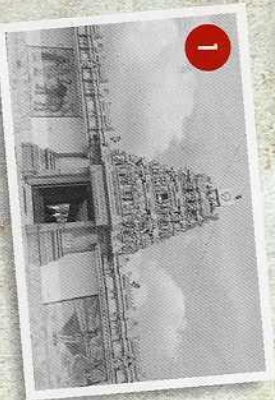
▪ **Opening Hours** : 9am to 6pm Daily

▪ **Admission Prices**

Foreign Tourists	RM5.00	
Adults	RM5.00	Children RM3.00



Selamat Datang (Welcome)



1

Sri Subramaniyar Temple

Built on land donated by K Malai Perumal Pillay, the current temple buildings date from the mid-1920's. The main entrance tower is multi-tiered and features a vast array of colourful sculptured deities. This is the main Hindu temple in Batu Gajah.



7

Batu Gajah Stone

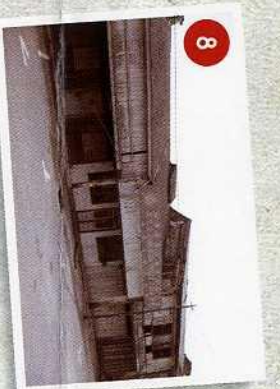
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2

Wah Onn Theatre

The Wah Onn Theatre was built on land belonging to the Sri Subramaniyar Temple. The theatre provided movie entertainment to the residents of Batu Gajah for decades. Only the front ticket office remains, as the rear wooden theatre structure was destroyed in a fire.



8

Old Town

This row of wooden shophouses along Jalan Sungai forms part of the original Batu Gajah Old Town. The area was established from the early 1880's, when Batu Gajah was chosen as the river port for the nearby Papan tin mines. Many of the original shopkeepers were Malays and Mandailinges.



3

Station Master's Quarters

Built in an Anglo-Malay architectural style in the 1890's, these two bungalows housed both the Railway Station Master and the Assistant Railway Station Master. The bungalows are still owned and used by the Malaysian Railway for their staff.



9

Kuan Tay Temple

The Kuan Tay Temple is the oldest Chinese temple in Batu Gajah, founded in 1895. The temple is dedicated to Kuan Ti Kong, the god of chivalry from the epic "Romance of the Three Kingdoms".



4

Old Railway Station

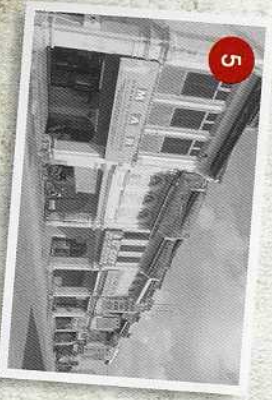
With the railway line between Ipoh and Batu Gajah completed in 1894, a new railway station was built at Batu Gajah, housing a ticket office, waiting room and restaurant. The station is no longer used for rail services, having been superseded by another new station just south of Batu Gajah.



10

Teruna Club

This was the first Malay Men's Club in Batu Gajah, which was established in 1921 for the purpose of promoting sports, drama and music among its male members. The club used to have a music troupe called "The Seri Malay Youngsters". As of 2011, there are 72 club members.



5

New Town

The commercial area surrounding Jalan Pejabat Pos and Jalan Besar may be considered the centre of Batu Gajah New Town, having been developed from the 1890's. Many of the original buildings were constructed in typical Chinese Shophouse architectural style.



11

Former Royal English School

This house, built in 1916, features various aspects of Colonial, Malay and Chinese architecture. It belonged to the family of Dato' Sulaiman, who held the title of Dato' Seri Amar Di-Raja and, at one time, was the former premises of the Royal English School.



6

Mosque

This site has always had significance to Muslims since the establishment of Batu Gajah, partly due to its proximity to the Kinra River. Maps from the early 1900's show that a Mosque was located here. The current Mosque was completed in 2011.



12

Charles Alma Baker Residence

The remains of the former residence of Charles Alma Baker (1857-1941), built in 1894. Baker, a New Zealander, initially worked as a surveyor for the British Administration, then later became one of the first to establish vast rubber plantations in Perak, the most famous being the Kinra Valley Estate.

come) to Batu Gajah



13

Kinta Gymkhana Club

Now the Kinta Golf Club, this was the original site of the Kinta Gymkhana Club. The Club organised its first horse races in Feb 1893. By 1907, the club had over 300 members. The horse races were often attended by Malay Royalty, the Resident of Perak and the sizable expatriate community.



19

God's Little Acre

This Anglican cemetery dates back to 1891. In it are more than 600 people; many of whom were the early pioneers of Perak, including Charles Alma Baker. There are also a large number of planters, miners, police and military personnel who lost their lives during the Malayan Emergency 1948-1960.



14

Government Rest House

The fine two storey bungalow overlooking the Golf Course and Changkat Road was built as accommodation for members of the British administration. The bungalow now serves as Batu Gajah's official Government Rest House.



20

Holy Trinity Church

The original Holy Trinity Church was established in 1895, the second Anglican Church in Perak after the All Saints Church in Taiping. The Church was originally established for the European community but by 1918, Chinese and Indian worshippers outnumbered Europeans.



15

District Officers' House

The District Officer's Residence was built in the early 1890's to house the Kinta's first District Officer Mr J.B.M. Leech. The two-storey bungalow is strategically located on Changkat Road with sprawling grounds and lawish gardens.



21

District Hospital

The District Hospital was established in 1884, when Batu Gajah was made the new district capital of Kinta. The Hospital served the general population and continues to operate as the main hospital in Batu Gajah.



16

Government Offices / Court House

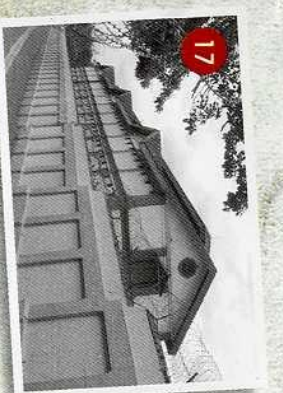
This complex was completed in 1892 at a cost of 20,000 Straits Dollars and originally housed several government departments including the District Office, Land Office, Public Works Department and the Court House.



22

Nurses Residence

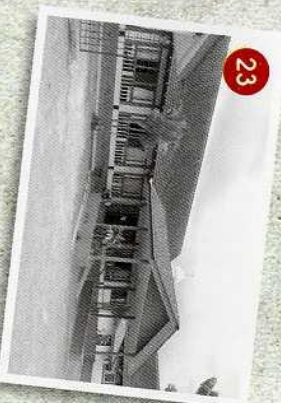
The Nurses Residence is a two-storey wooden building surrounded by verandas that housed many of the senior nurses working in the adjacent hospital. The building has been restored and is now the hospital administration offices.



17

Gaol

The Kinta Gaol was built in 1888 at a cost of 5,000 Straits Dollars and initially provided for up to 300 prisoners. In 1901, an additional block of 156 cells was built. Convicts were engaged in hard labour, such as stone-breaking, public works and craft making.



23

European Hospital

The European Hospital was established at a similar time to the District Hospital, catering for the increasing numbers of Europeans settling in Batu Gajah. Changkat Road divides the District Hospital from the European Hospital.



18

Former Childhood Home of HRH Sultan Azlan Shah

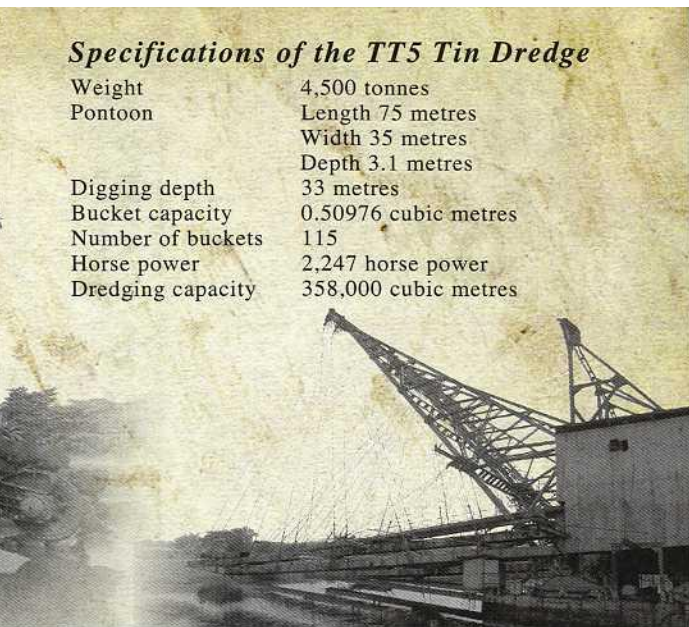
This single-storey home was the former residence of HRH Sultan Azlan Shah during his early school days between 1939-1949. It was restored back to its original condition in 2009, to acknowledge that Batu Gajah was the birthplace of HRH Sultan Azlan Shah.



24

St. Joseph's Church

Established in 1882 by Father Allard, a French missionary, this was the first Catholic parish in the Kinta District. In 1891 a wooden church, St Joseph's, was built and this was later replaced by the current building in 1928. Donors' names are inscribed on two panels at the main entrance.



Specifications of the TT5 Tin Dredge

Weight	4,500 tonnes
Pontoon	Length 75 metres
	Width 35 metres
	Depth 3.1 metres
Digging depth	33 metres
Bucket capacity	0.50976 cubic metres
Number of buckets	115
Horse power	2,247 horse power
Dredging capacity	358,000 cubic metres

The History of TT5 Tin Dredge

The first tin dredge was introduced in Malaya in 1913 by Malayan Tin Dredging Ltd and started operations in Batu Gajah, Perak. It was steam-powered, using 280-litre buckets that could dig to a depth of 15 metres.

The company acquired four dredges and by 1924 was the largest tin dredging company in the world.

In 1926, a sister company, Southern Malayan Tin Dredging Ltd was formed, and operated a further five tin dredges between Batu Gajah and Tanjung Tualang.

This fifth tin dredge, the Tanjung Tualang Dredge No.5 (TT5) was designed and built by F.W. Payne in 1938 in England. It is located approximately 9 kilometres south of Batu Gajah on the Tanjung Tualang road. The dredge was in operation for 44 years, until August 1982, when a drop in tin prices made the dredge uneconomically viable.

The dredge would run on diesel generated electricity 24 hours a day, in two shifts with approximately 20 workers per shift. The conveyor buckets would dig the tin-bearing soil and transport it upwards, emptying the contents into an oscillating drum. The tin would then be extracted through a system of jigs and screens, leaving the excess material to be disposed of via a system of chutes at the back of the dredge.

The TT5 tin dredge is currently owned by the Perak State Government. It is of enormous heritage value as the last remaining tin dredge of its kind in Malaysia.

A committee was formed at the end of 2010 to save, preserve and enhance TT5 tin dredge so that it could showcase Malaysia's tin mining past through tourism and education. This has resulted in a "Save the Dredge" campaign in order to raise funds for restoration of the dredge. Further information can be found at www.malaysiaminerals.com.

- **Opening Hours**
8.30am to 6pm Daily (Lunch Hour 12pm – 1pm)
- **Admission Prices**
Adults RM5.00 Children RM3.00

