

The History of Gopeng

Gopeng was a principal mining town in the State of Perak during the late 19th century. In fact, it was regarded as the most important mining town in the Kinta Valley until about 1890. The town started as a small migrant Chinese settlement near Kota Bharu in the vicinity of the present tomb of the Raja Bendahara Alang Iskandar ibni Raja Ahmad, formerly the chief administrator of the *Mukim* (parish) of Teja. Through the years and due to mining activities, the town has shifted from its original position to the present-day Gopeng, which is about 20 kilometres south of Ipoh, in the newly-created District of Kampar.

In the 19th century, the town was bustling with tin mining and had attracted Chinese immigrants to live and work in Chinese-owned tin-mines belonging to the legendary Eu Tong Sen and also British and French mining companies like the Straits Trading Company, Osborne & Chappel and Tekka. The huge influx of Chinese migrants dwarfed the local Malay population. Apart from indigenous people living in the more mountainous terrain nearer to the Main Range, there were communities of Indians from South India and Rawa as well as Mandailing from Sumatra. Many of the Indians lived and traded in the town centre while the Rawa and Mandailing communities resided in the villages of Gunung Mesah Hulu, Gunung Mesah Hilir, Rawa, Jelintoh, Sungai Itik, Jahang, Pulai, Gunung Panjang and Kota Bharu Estate. In 1886, a theatre and 68 wooden shophouses in the town were destroyed by fire. A year later, new buildings were constructed by prominent tin-miner Yau Tet Shin from Ipoh. The population in the town grew to 10,000 in 1887 with 90% Chinese and Malays and 10% Indians. In 1893, H.W.C. Leech erected 28 wooden shophouses in Kampung Rawa to cater for the needs of the Malay merchants.

In 1897, rubber trees were successfully cultivated by Europeans in a 3,000 acre plantation called Gopeng Estate near Kota Bharu. In 1909, the Tekka Mines constructed three large water-pipes from Ulu Groh to the town, covering a distance of 24 kilometres. Man Ming was the first Chinese-medium primary school established in 1912.

Among the pre-war dignitaries who visited and resided in Gopeng were Dr. Sun Yat Sen, Eu Kong Pui (or Eu Kong), Eu Tong Sen, Imam Prang Ja Barumon and Captain Hubert Berkeley. Dr. Sun was a leader of the Chinese Revolution who stayed briefly while Eu Kong Pui was the founder of the traditional Chinese herbal medicine outlet Eu Yan Sang. His son, Tong Sen, imported the first motor car into Perak. Imam Prang, a Mandailing, was noted for his contribution to the agricultural industry in Gopeng. Captain Berkeley, who served as Assistant Magistrate and Chairman of the Gopeng Sanitary Board, founded the Gopeng Gymkhana Club for horse-racing.

Locally known as "Sup Yee Kongs", Osborne & Chappel was the foremost British magnate that built the European sector of the Malaysian tin industry. Started in Gopeng in the late 1880s, it had achieved success over the years in the promotion and management of many tin mining companies, and subsequently in the construction of dredges here and abroad. Towards the end of the 20th century, it had contributed almost 5% of the total tin produced from the Malay Peninsula.

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GOPENG HERITAGE TRAIL MAP



No. 23, Rest house, Gopeng.

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PERAK, MALAYSIA



MUZIUM GOPENG (GOPENG MUSEUM)

One of the recent attractions here, this pre-war shophouse is located at No. 28, Jalan Eu Kong (or Eu Kong Street which is named after tin-miner Eu Kong Pui) in the town centre. This museum houses a number of artefacts and photographs depicting the town from colonial rule days to modern history. A local businessman, Mr Bernard Yaw, was instrumental in the setting up of this museum which was officiated on 18 April 2009. The museum is currently run by the Gopeng Museum Management Society chaired by Mr Yaw. The curator is Mr Phang See Kong whose mobile is +6 017 578 5185.

The museum opens daily except Wednesdays and Thursdays from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm with a lunch break between 12:00 noon and 1:00 pm. Admission is free. For more information, contact the museum office at (60) 05 3597828.

GPS Coordinates: N 04 28.432' E 101 10'



Historical & Heritage Attractions



GOPENG HERITAGE HOUSE

The Gopeng Heritage House, which was officiated on 17 April 2011, is operated by the Muzium Gopeng. Its setting up was financed by Wong Kuan Cheong, a pioneer of the Muzium Gopeng.



This house is refurbished like a wealthy 'Nyonya' or Straits Chinese abode of the heyday of the tin mining industry of the early 20th century. The living room, bedrooms and kitchen are decorated with memorabilia and antiques from the British Administration era. There is a bar and the bedrooms are converted to display nostalgic business establishments such as a barber shop, night-club and a kopitiam (Chinese coffee-shop).

Compared to the Muzium Gopeng, there are more displays and exhibits in this Heritage House.

Located at No. 6, Jalan Sungai Itek, the primary intention to restore and refurbish the shophouse was to transport visitors back in time to the zenith of tin mining activities in the Kinta Valley. It also complemented the objective of the Muzium Gopeng in the promotion of the rich history of the Straits Chinese in the Perak State to the younger generation. It is open during the weekends from 9:30 am to 3:00 pm. Admission is free.

GPS Coordinates: N 04 28.444' E 101 10.042'



GOPENG HERITAGE TRAIL MAP

Walking Duration
approximately 2 hours

Important contact numbers:

Gopeng Police Station
(05) 3592222

Muzium Gopeng (Gopeng Museum)
(05) 3597828

Heritage House (Mr Phang See Kong)
+6016 542 1287



From Ipoh

To Kampar



1

Gurdwara Sahib ~ This impressive temple was built to cater for the Sikh community who came from the north-western region of India in the early 20th century. Many of them eventually became policemen under the British Administration. The original

wooden building, constructed in 1905, was replaced with a brick building in 1988.



2

Kuil Sri Maha Mariamman ~ Built two years earlier than the Sikh temple above in 1903, this Indian temple was said to be initially known as *Kuil Subramaniam*. Indians who emigrated from southern India to settle here were absorbed

as workers in rubber plantations in Kota Bharu, Kopisan, Lawan Kuda and Jeram. In 1988, the old building was replaced with a brick one. The temple underwent another major renovation in 1992.



3

Gabled Shophouses ~ These two shophouses have distinctive decorated, triangular gables. The gable apex of the inner building bears the year 1919. Locals here said these buildings were once used as offices for tin-mining companies.

Currently, the corner shophouse serves as the office for the *Rakan Muda* activity.



4

Straits Trading Company ~ In 1889, James Sword (a Scot) and Herman Muhlinghaus (a German) opened the first branch of the Straits Trading Company at the corner lot of a block of commercial shophouses on High Street (now *Jalan Tasek*). Many Chinese tin-miners sold tin-ore to this

company for smelting. These buildings were said to have been built by Yau Tet Shin, a wealthy tin-miner from Ipoh.



5

Kheng Chew Hainanese

Association ~ A few shops down from the Straits Trading Company is the Kheng Chew Hainanese Association. Completed in 1902, the association celebrates twice every year to commemorate the occasion. At the rear portion of the shophouse, there is a clan altar that shelves many small wooden plaques bearing names of clansmen who

came from Hainan, China since the late 19th century to work and settle in Gopeng.



6

Changkat, The Hillock

~ Historically, the hillock was developed by the British with a hospital, a police station with barracks, a court-house, government offices, a club house, a *penghulu's* court, a mines office, a church, a rest-house and residences of British administrative officers

from 1910 to 1915. Between 1920 and 1935, all the buildings on this hillock were demolished to make way for tin-mining. Today, all that remains is a huge ex-mining pond.



7

English School ~ This building was once an English School. Built in 1908 on the south-most point of the *Changkat*, the original wooden building was renamed in 1923 as the Gopeng English School when the government took over its management. The old building was

demolished and replaced with a brick building in 1935. The school was moved to Kopisan in 1964. Now, the former school building houses the *Giatmara* office.



8

Kon Yin Temple ~ Probably one of the oldest Chinese temples in the Kinta Valley, this temple was built in 1892 with Eu Tong Sen being the major sponsor. This temple was dedicated to the Goddess of Mercy. Many of the epigraphic plaques and statues in

the interior were contributed by Cantonese associations such as Lam Hooi, San Wooi, Ku Kong Chow and Hock San. The temple was modified and extended in 2006.



9

Temple Stage ~ Directly opposite the Kon Yin Temple divided by a road (*Jalan Padang*) is a stage for live performance of Chinese opera especially during the festive seasons of the

Chinese. Erected after the completion of the temple, it was originally made of wood. In the 1950s, a brick stage replaced the wooden one. Its facade is highly decorated with carvings and Chinese calligraphy. This is regarded as one of the most beautiful temple stages in the Kinta Valley.

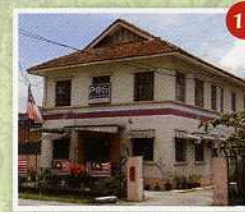


10

Gopeng Water Supply

Pipelines ~ In 1891, the Gopeng Tin Mining Company raised money to cut a 4-kilometre long ditch to feed water to a 200-millimetre pipeline some 8 kilometres long. In the 1930s, these slip-jointed, riveted steel pipes were upgraded

to a 60-centimetre pipe which fell into disrepair in the 1960s. Popularly known as the *Paip Air Besar*, this pipeline took its supply from Sungai Itik, fastened across the main trunk road to the Gopeng Mine. In 2008, the pipeline was removed leaving only a small section as a relic.



11

Post Office ~ In 1906, Osborne & Chappel built a double-storey building where all its technical operations were based. Later, this office closed and the building became the Post Office. Apart from selling postage stamps, the Post Office also acted as a

financial house to pay salaries to those in the civil service and a telegraphic post. The present building was probably constructed in the 1930s.



12

Hup Teik Soy Sauce Factory

~ This factory began processing soy sauce before the First World War (1914-1918). It is a small business belonging to the Lau family. Its customers comprise mainly of noodle sellers, hawkers

and housewives. To date, the factory has secured approval from the Health Department to continue processing soy sauce using a traditional formula and method.



Kampung Rawa Shophouses

~ There are 3 rows of single-storey wooden shophouses with tiled roofs, built in 1893, as a communal home for Mandailing tin-mine workers. There was a communal kitchen to prepare food for the miners and a communal bathrooms and toilets. Through the years, the buildings have remained largely unchanged.



Townhouses ~ This was the pre-war town centre where the old market and theatre were built. There were also rows of single-storey wooden shophouses along Eu Kong Street, Market Street (now *Jalan Pasar*) and High Street (*Jalan Tasek*). However, the

1886 inferno destroyed a total of 68 shophouses. New brick townhouses, resembling those found in larger towns like Ipoh, were built by Yau Tet Shin in the following year.



Muzium Gopeng (Gopeng Museum)

~ Formerly known as the Gopeng History Centre, this shophouse was built in 1887. Located at No. 28, Jalan Eu Kong, it was renovated and transformed into a museum exhibiting displays, old photographs and artefacts. It is interesting to note that there is also a roll of honour of historic personalities. It was officially opened to the public in 2009 and renamed as *Muzium Gopeng* (Gopeng Museum).



Pre-war Shophouses ~

This is one of the few rows of single-storey wooden shophouses built before the First World War (1914-1918) that have survived the great fire in Gopeng in 1886. These old buildings with tiled roofs

were supposedly used by Eu Tong Sen as horse stables. They are indeed relics of the past. To date, many of them are still carrying out trading and business.



Kwong Weng Por Kee Tukang Emas Shophouse

~ This shophouse, with Art Deco characteristics, was probably built in the early 1930s. Simple ornamentation, rectilinear lines and geometric motifs are reflected in its facade. Below the roof fascia is a row of

fixed louvres and at the bottom is a series of window-panes. Beneath the windows are three blocks of intricate engravings depicting flowers and small animals. Such engravings are also found on the frontal facade of many of the other shophouses.



Market Square ~ This was the site of the old market built in 1895 which was still in use until the late 1980s. The market was made of wooden beams and planks and with *attap* roofing that was replaced with an asbestos-sheeted jack-roof in the 1950s.

The circular road that ran around the market still exists today but the market building has been demolished. The site was subsequently paved with interlocking bricks and transformed into a public square called *Dataran Rafflesia*.



Heritage House ~ The Heritage House, painted pink, is located in this row of the shophouses built in 1906. The brainchild of Bernard Yaw, it houses an interesting spectrum of exhibits and artefacts depicting the history of Gopeng. It is managed by a team of volunteers headed by its curator, Phang See Kong.

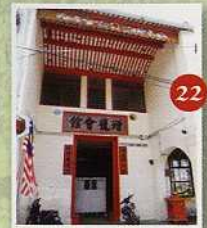


Man Ming Chinese Primary School

~ In 1912, a wooden primary Chinese school was established to provide elementary education for the poor. The school was founded by Cheong Soon Heng and Choy Choon Sew. In the 1950s, the original building was demolished and replaced with the current building.



Oi Low Association ~ This is one of the first Chinese associations in the State of Perak. Established by and for Chinese tin-miners and workers, it served as a recreational club where members met for a game of mahjong or to play cards. It was also the meeting place for businessmen to exchange information and discuss business. On the upper floor, there is an old wooden signboard with two distinctively engraved Chinese characters depicting the name of the association in the centre.



Chang Lung Hakka Association

~ This distinctive shophouse is painted white with blood red borders and Chinese decorative roof fascias. There are two engraved dragons above the front windows of the first floor. A signboard at the top of the front entrance depicts the Chinese name of the association. At the entrance, a Chinese couplet containing five characters each is hung at its sides. Inside, there are many old photographs of its clansmen. Its founding patron, Kapitan Chung Keng Kwee, was a respectable businessman and leader of the Han San Society.



Eu Yang Sang Shop and Office

~ This was the site where in 1879 Eu Kong Pui built his first medical shop, Eu Yang Sang, a Chinese pharmaceutical business dealing with herbs, medicinal plants and herbal remedies for the sick, aged and opium addicts. The original building was demolished and replaced with a new building in 1996, belonging to Chang Lung Association. Currently, the ground floor is leased to the RHB Bank.



Masjid Jamik Gopeng (Gopeng Jamik Mosque)

~ This mosque was built by the Mandailing shopkeepers in 1916 close to their shops and business outlets along High Street (*Jalan Tasek*) and Kampung Rawa Road. As the Muslim population grew and the original building became aged, a new mosque was constructed in replacement of the old mosque in 1927. Upon completion, it changed its name from Mandailing Mosque to *Masjid Jamik Gopeng*. A religious school was subsequently built beside the mosque.

Natural Heritage & Eco-Tourism ~ Apart from its rich tin-mining history, Gopeng is surrounded by natural heritage. These include limestone outcrops and lush equatorial rainforest on the eastern region with fast flowing rivers and rapids as well as a great abundance of interesting flora and fauna. Several resorts have been established to provide activities such as white-water rafting, caving, jungle trekking and camping. Indeed eco-tourism has flourished here, thus promoting the natural heritage as a haven for extreme adventure. In other words, Gopeng is a one-stop destination for nature lovers.

NOMAD ADVENTURE ~ An adventure training company, Nomad Adventure was established in 2003 as the first adventure operator in Gopeng capitalising on commercial white-water rafting sports along the Kampar River. Located close to Gua Tempurung, it offers a full spectrum of adventure activities from rafting to rock climbing, abseiling and caving. Its site consists of two locations: Earth Camp and Mountain School. The Earth Camp provides accommodation in green-house dormitories or tree houses while the Mountain School situated near Gua Kandu offers rock climbing, a unique high ropes course and free hanging abseil. Contact: Ms Chan Yuen Li (016-32267667).



GOPENG RAINFOREST RESORT ~ This resort, located in Ulu Geruntum which is about 6.5 kilometres from Gopeng, is popular for its outdoor activity packages. Formerly a durian plantation, it is hidden in the remote eastern side of the town where the terrain is hilly. Durian-loving tourists will find this resort an exceptionally wonderful place especially during the durian fruiting seasons. Apart from rafting, guides are also provided to take tourists for jungle trekking, observing *Rafflesia* sites and studying the peculiar habits of the Rajah Brooke's Birdwing Butterflies. For booking, contact David Foon (012-5107555).

RUMAH REHAT ADELINE (ADELINE RESTHOUSE) ~ Another outback-oriented resort, Adeline, offers good accommodation and food. Located opposite the Gopeng Rainforest Resort, visitors will get a chance to visit nearby Malay villages, especially of the Rawa community, and witness their unique culture

and lifestyle. The resort also provides a wide range of indoor facilities such as mahjong, carom and table-tennis and outdoor activities like mountain-biking, blow-piping, rafting and jungle hiking. Contact the sales office at 05-3592833, Ian (019-5561113) or Andrew (010-3667113).



MY GOPENG RESORT ~ Located in the vicinity of Adeline Resthouse, My Gopeng Resort also promotes eco-tourism and adventure. Visitors can relax and enjoy the green scenery and tranquillity of the natural environment away from the hustle and bustle of the towns. Or, one can opt for various activities like white-water rafting, caving adventures and jungle trekking to *Rafflesia* sites and exotic waterfalls. This resort also provides comfortable lodging close to nature. Contact Donny Hor (016-5493777 or 05-2423777) for more details and booking.

RIVERBUG ASIA ~ Riverbug Asia, renowned as the white-water rafting specialists in the Country, also operates in Ulu Geruntum.



Their staff and crew are known to deliver professional white-water rafting and river guiding with more than 10 years experience in extreme adventure activities. Their guides also conduct activities like kayaking, corporate training, water abseiling, river tubing, caving and jungle hiking at night. They even provide rafting assistance to neighbouring resorts. They have lodging houses and camping sites too. For enquires, contact 012-31310066 or write to RiverBug Asia, 19-C, 1st Floor, Jalan Kampung Rawa, 31600 Gopeng, Perak, Malaysia.

GUA TEMPURUNG ~ Gua Tempurung is a 400 million year old, karst cave system with five large galleries containing impressive formations of stalagmites and stalactites and an underground stream. These galleries include Golden Flowstone Cavern, *Gergasi* (Giant) Cavern, Tin Mine Cavern, *Alam* (Universe) Cavern and Fallen Warrior and Battlefield Cavern. The cave system is about 1.9 kilometres long while the highest point of the caverns is 120 metres from the ground. There are 2 entry points to the area from either Gopeng or

Gunung Mesah. Food stalls are found near to the main entrance of the cave. Its operator, APT Consortium (Tel: 05-3188555) offers 4 packages of cave tours from an easy and exciting to a challenging and strenuous adventure. Visitors or cavers can choose to experience a short tour of the cave or an adventure package into the darkest and narrowest ends of the cave and follow the stream that meanders through the cave system. These guided tours include the Golden Flowstone, Top of the World, River Adventure and Grand Tour. Visitors participating in the last two are advised to bring along torchlights and a change of clothing.



GUNUNG KANDU ~ Gua Kandu is another cave system in a limestone outcrop called Gunung Kandu. It is located near to the North-South Highway but is comparatively smaller than Gua Tempurung. According to the locals, this cave was used by the Japanese during the Second World War (1939-1945) as a depot for their weapons and magazines. After the war, Communist guerrillas used it as their hideout, especially during the Emergency. The ceiling of the cave is about 11 metres high with numerous stalactites that resemble pieces of ceiling board. Presently, Gua Kandu is open to amateur cavers with several different caving packages available. It is managed by Kandu Eco Adventure (Tel: (Mr) Mohd Marzuki 019-5101253 or (Ms) Norhayati Yusoff 019-4801253).

GOPENG HOMESTAY ~ Several local villages, viz. Kampung Sungai Itik, Kampung Pintu Padang, Kampung Baru Jelintoh dan Kampung Tersusun Jelintoh, offer homestay programmes. Gopeng Homestay is one of the many that have attracted many domestic and foreign tourists. Since these villages are inhabited mostly by the Rawa people, visitors will be privileged in observing the unique culture and customs called *Adat Berjojok*. A popular cuisine called *Kelamai* is also likely to be served to visitors during their stay.

