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TAMPINES

Tiong Bahru

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World War II

» CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

View of Changi Beach, 2024
Courtesy of National Heritage Board

For centuries, Changi has been a site for cultural, social, economic and military activities. In the early 19th century, its coastal attractions and natural beauty facilitated rare interaction between the elites of colonial society and the working-class residents of the kampongs. The establishment of Changi Cantonment (now known as RAF Changi) and its supporting amenities from 1927, further influenced the livelihoods and lives of the people of Changi.

Changi's landscape has also undergone significant transformations, with primeval forests being cleared for timber, plantations, and settlements. Land reclamation and kampong redevelopment began in the 1920s and dramatically reshaped the eastern coastline from the 1970s. The departure of the British military in 1971 and the subsequent growth of Changi Airport further altered the area's geography, and economic and social dynamics.

Over time, the stately barracks, officers' bungalows, and grand messes of Changi Cantonment transitioned from military to governmental and then to commercial ownership. Today, many of these buildings have been repurposed into hotels, restaurants, and resorts, including the iconic Changi Cottage.

Explore the diverse narratives of Changi, from the hardships endured by prisoners-of-war and civilians during the Japanese Occupation to the vibrant cultures of the kampongs in the area. Uncover the memories and experiences of the different communities that once called Changi home, and the commonalities they shared.

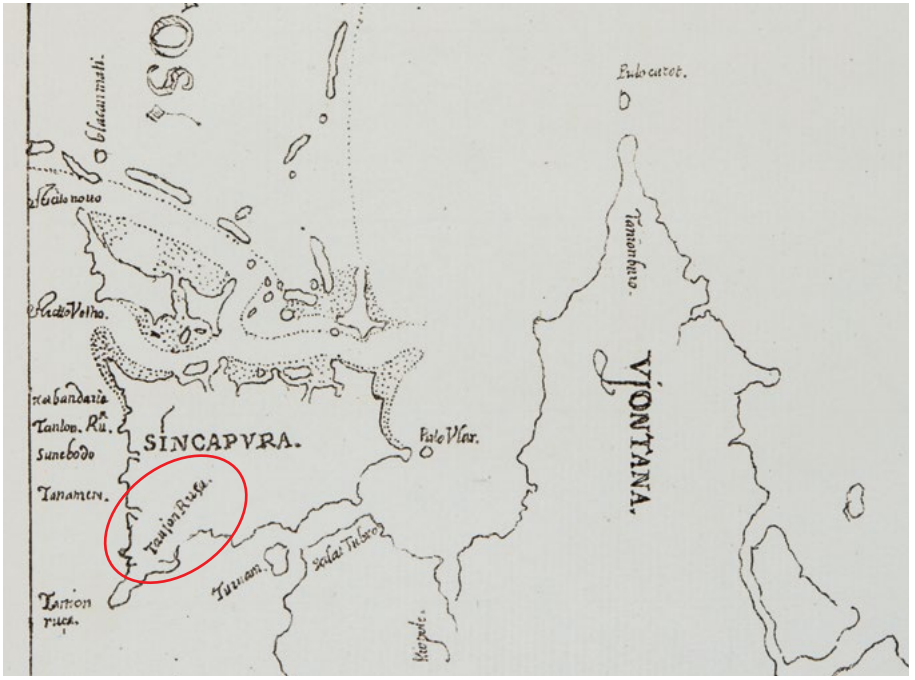
EARLY HISTORY

Before the British arrived in Singapore in 1819, Changi had already been a site of contestation between colonial powers. The early 17th century witnessed significant naval battles off the Changi coast between the Dutch and Portuguese, highlighting the strategic significance of this gateway to Sungei Johor and the Singapore Strait. The Dutch capture of the Portuguese vessel, Santa Catarina, in 1603 also had enduring implications on international maritime law.

In the early 19th century, various areas across Changi saw expanded settlement, with kampongs opening along the eastern coast, at Changi Point, and to the west near the Selarang River. Over the decades, British colonial authority became more established through the construction of roads and police stations, and accurate surveying of the Changi district.

ETYMOLOGIES AND PLACE NAMES

The earliest known name of the Changi area is Tanjong Rusa, which appeared on cartographer Manuel Godinho de Eredia (1563-1623)'s 1604 map of Singapore titled *Chorographic Description of the Straits of Sincapura and Sabbam*. On this map, the Changi area is labelled "Tanion Rusa", which is likely a Portuguese transliteration of the Malay place name Tanjong Rusa ("deer cape" in Malay). Other familiar place names from Singapore's eastern coast that appear on the map include Sungei Bedok, Tanah Merah and Tanjong Rhu.



Detail from Eredia's map of Singapore, showing the Changi area being labelled as Tanjong Rusa, 1604
Courtesy of National Library Board

Detail from Franklin's map of Singapore, showing Tanjong Changi and Franklin Point, 1828
Singapore Land Authority collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore

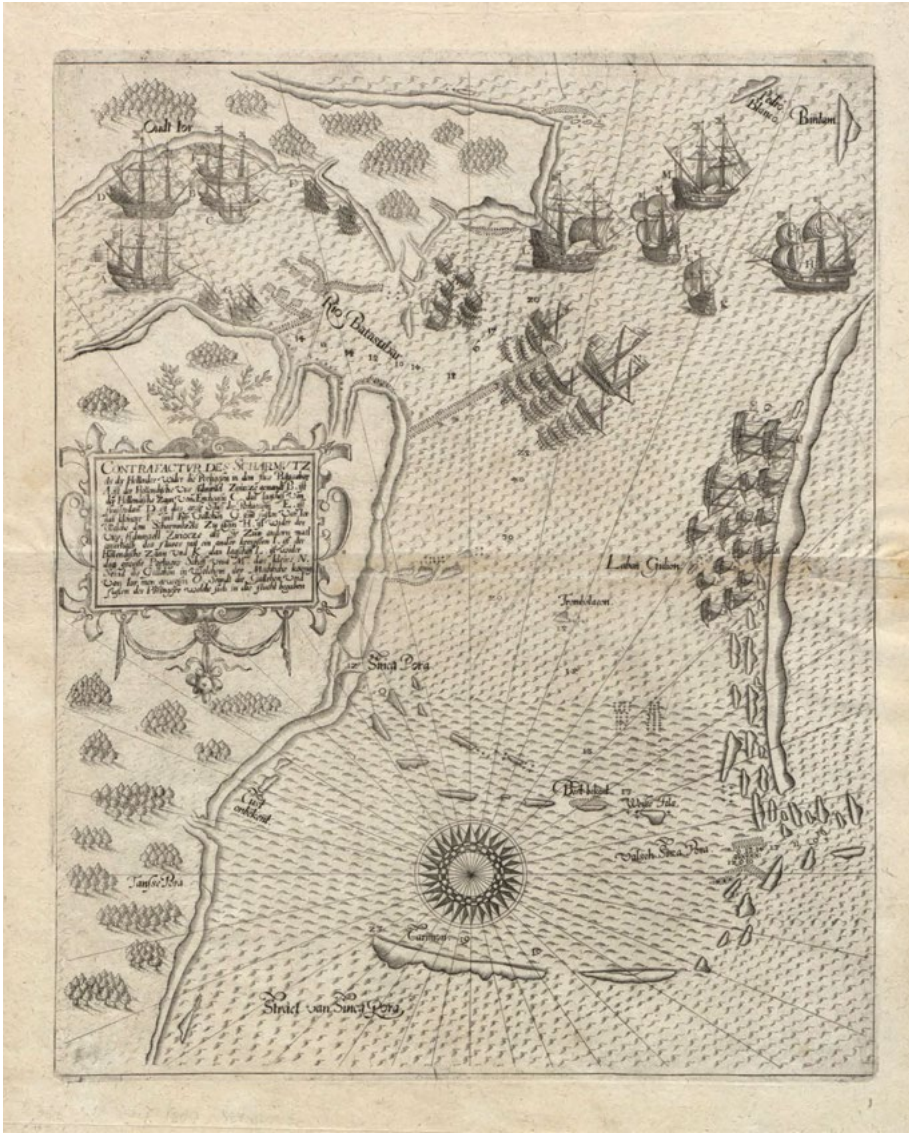
The name, Changi, first appeared on the 1828 map *Plan Of The Island Of Singapore Including The New British Settlement And Adjacent Islands.* This map was drawn from surveys done by Lieutenant Colonel William Farquhar, J.F. Bernard, with the coastal areas on the map surveyed by Captain James Franklin. Locations shown on this map include R. Changee (Sungei Changi), Tg. Changi (Tanjong Changi) and Franklin Point (Changi Point), although the name Franklin Point was no longer used after the early 1800s.

As a place name, Changi is said to be derived from a tree in Changi, although there is no definitive agreement on its exact species. A number of tree species, many of them still found around Changi, have been suggested, including Changi ular *(Apama orymbose)*, Chengai or Chengal *(Neobalanocarpus heimii)*, Chengai or Chengal Pasir *(Hopea sangal Korth.)* and Sepetir *(Sindora wallichii).* Over the years, the name Changi has been transliterated in numerous ways on maps, in newspapers and official documents. These include Changee, Changhi, Changie, Changei and Changhee.

PRE-COLONIAL CHANGI

Before the arrival of the British and the subsequent establishment of a colonial state in Singapore, Changi had been noted by regional and European powers as a strategic location since at least the 17th century. Changi's location at the north-eastern tip of Singapore island places it south of the mouth of Sungei Johor, which hosted various capitals and villages of the Johor Sultanate in the 16th century.

In the early 17th century, the Johor Sultanate was in conflict with Portuguese Melaka and the Sultanate of Aceh, with the three polities vying for control over the Melaka Strait and its lucrative trade route. The entry of Dutch merchants seeking trading opportunities and their military escorts added another player into these conflicts. Given that much of 17th century regional and international trade was conducted via sea, Changi's strategic location with its proximity to Sungei Johor and its settlements was well recognised by all parties.



Engraving depicting the Dutch-Portuguese naval battle, with Changi located on the top left, 1603
Courtesy of National Library Board

This strategic potential was underlined in what has become known as the Santa Catarina incident. In 1603, the 1,400-ton Portuguese carrack (a three- or four-masted sailing ship) was seized by Dutch privateers of the Veerenigde Nederlandsche Geoctroyeerde Oostindische Compagnie ("Dutch East India Company" in Dutch, also known as the VOC). The seizure, which some present-day scholars have also termed an act of piracy, occurred in the waters off Changi Point, while the Santa Catarina was enroute from Macau to Melaka laden with goods from China and Japan.

The cargo seized from the Santa Catarina included porcelain, sugar, silks, precious timber, and incense (including agarwood, known to Europeans as *pao d'aquila*). When auctioned in the Netherlands, the booty from the Santa Catarina brought 3.5 million florins, a sum that was equivalent to half the paid-up capital of the VOC. The scale of the booty and the privateering incident received much public attention in Europe, and its consequences and implications were felt and discussed in Goa (where the Portuguese colonial state of Estado da India was based), Macau, Lisbon, Amsterdam, Melaka and Johor.

The incident raised the VOC's awareness of the potential for profit from freebooting in this region, and how the region represented a vulnerable point for the trade routes of Portuguese colonial possessions in India.

The strategic importance of the Changi area was later highlighted by a proposal to build a fort there, which was based on the Portuguese need for control and security over their trade routes. In a series of memorials to Philip IV, King of Spain and Portugal, in the 1620s, the Flemish gem trader Jacques De Coutre proposed that the Iberian Union (the united kingdoms of Portugal, Castile and Aragon) construct forts at Changi and Blakang Mati (present-day Sentosa) and maintain fleets at both locations to protect the Portuguese trade routes. De Coutre's proposals were ultimately not taken up by the Spanish-Portuguese kingdom, with the viceroy of Goa eventually deciding to maintain a naval presence in the Singapore and Melaka straits rather than construct the forts.

The Santa Catarina incident also led to developments in maritime and international law, with some of the legal principles formed in its wake still relevant within these fields today. The VOC engaged legal theorist Hugo Grotius (also known as Huig de Groot) to publish a legal defence against accusations of piracy. Grotius' expansive treatise on the Santa Catarina incident was later included in his publication of *Three Books on the Laws of War and Peace*, which continue to have ramifications in present-day debates over maritime and conflict law. In particular, the book *Mare Liberum* ("Freedom of the Sea" in Latin) continues to be cited as a precedent for legal frameworks of maritime trade and warfare.

CHANGI IN THE EARLY COLONIAL ERA

The historical accounts of early settlement in Changi are largely obscured, even during the initial decades of British colonial rule in the 1800s. However, the presence of numerous locales within Changi bearing early place names on maps, along with Changi's strategic position as a crossing point between Singapore and Johor, suggests the existence of untold stories of settlements.

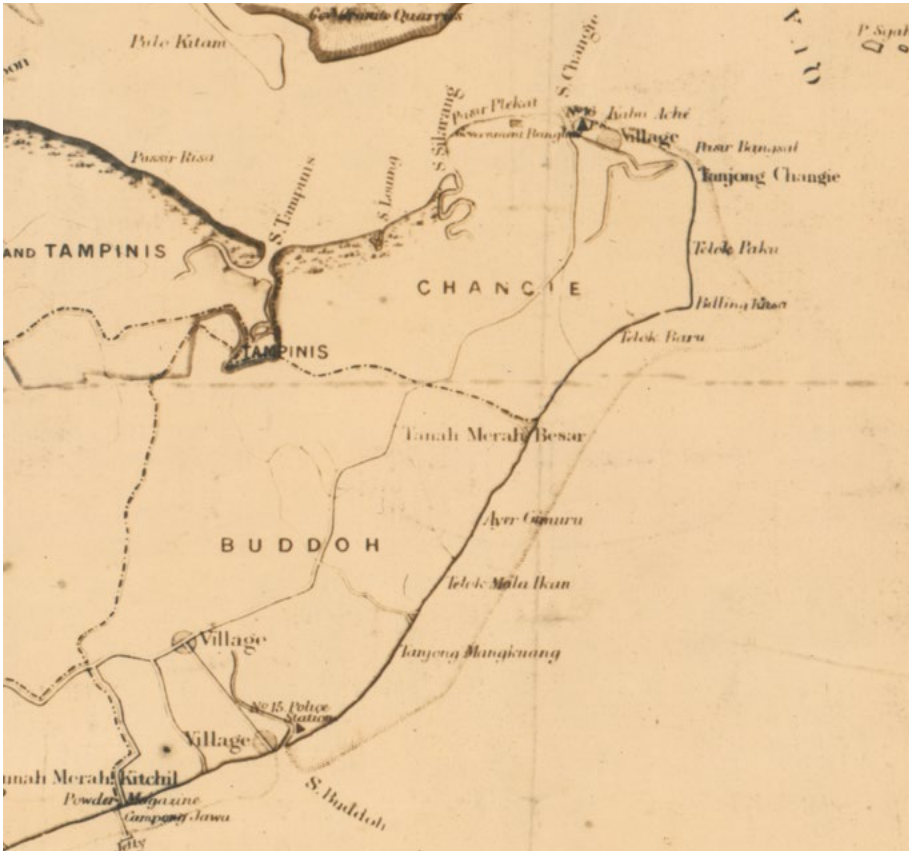
These named places could have served as landmarks, geographical features, navigational markers, or villages. 19th-century maps of Changi depict place names such as Batu Putih, Pasir Pelekat, Kubu Achi, and Pasir Bangsal, names that may be unfamiliar even to long-time residents of Changi today. Other names would likely be recognised, such as Tanjong Changi, Beting Kusah, Tanah Merah Besar, Ayer Gemuroh, Telok Paku, and Telok Mata Ikan, all of which developed into established kampongs that persisted into the 1970s.

The place names themselves present intriguing possibilities. Kubu Achi is a term transliterated from Malay into English; it may refer to *kubu* ("stronghold" in Malay) or *kubur* ("grave" in Malay), while Achi likely refers to Aceh. The area may have a connection to the conflicts in the 16th and 17th centuries between Aceh, Portugal, the Netherlands and the Johor Sultanate, as the waters off Changi were an important maritime passage where a number of naval battles were fought. The area was also later known as Prigi Aceh (*perigi* Aceh means "Acehnese well" in Malay), possibly referring to a freshwater source used by Acehnese vessels.

Pasir Bangsal meanwhile is derived from the words *pasir* ("sand" in Malay) and *bangsal*, a term that refers to plantation work areas and their accompanying communal dwellings. These place names reference settlement and economic activities, which were mainly coastal and riverine in the early 1800s. For more on the kampongs of Changi, please see page 14.

In the early decades of the 19th century, the British colonial authorities did not have a strong presence in outlying areas of Singapore, including Changi. Lacking a local presence or knowledge, the authorities were unable to exert control over these areas. Reflecting this official uncertainty, most newspapers of the era mentioned Changi only in the context of security, in the form of reports of banditry and piracy. While details of settlements and the peoples of the area are scarce, a number of economic activities can be discerned: woodcutters, fishermen, and manufacturers of lime building materials were among those reported to have been victims of robbery in Changi.

Newspapers of the day advocated for a police presence in Changi, seen as crucial for ensuring the area's security and asserting colonial control over it. By 1849, a police post had been established in Changi, serving as a precursor to a later police station that became a longstanding landmark in the area.



Map showing place names such as Pasir Bangsal, Beting Kusah, Tanah Merah Besar, Ayer Gemuroh, Telok Paku and Telok Mata Ikan, 1873
Singapore Land Authority collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore

Changi Police Station, undated
Courtesy of Royal Airforce Changi Association

Other elements had to be in place to enable colonial administration of Changi and the outlying areas of Singapore. Accurate maps of the locality were essential, as was the infrastructure for communications including roads. In 1821, Captain James Franklin of the East India Company's Bengal Army began a survey of Singapore island, starting from Tanjong Changi. The map he produced was the first to accurately represent the shape and size of Singapore island, but it did not cover the interior of Changi beyond major land features including Tanjong Changi and Franklin Point, the easternmost tip of Singapore island that later became known as Changi Point.

Later, more detailed surveys of Changi's interior were made by John Turnbull Thomson, following his appointment as Government Surveyor in 1841. The maps that Thomson created from his surveys were the first to depict Singapore's interior and to demarcate the boundaries of districts, thereby laying the foundation for governmental land administration, leading to the subsequent registration and sale of land.

Detail from Thomson's map, showing Changi Road (in red) extending to what is Changi Point today, as well as a smaller road leading to Tanah Merah Besar, 1855
Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore

Thomson's surveys also enabled colonial authorities to construct a 17.5-kilometre trunk road to Changi in 1849, which stretched between the town area and Changi. This road started from Victoria Street and had different names along certain stretches, from Kallang Road and Geylang Road to Tanah Merah Road, and Changi Road from the 5th milestone (Still Road today). The milestone system, which defined wayfinding and the local identity of places in Singapore for more than a century, was also first implemented on Changi Road. The first granite milestone markers were laid on this road in 1854 for public conveniences and police purposes as well as allowing people to communicate their specific locations more accurately.

Painting by Eugen Von Ransonnet titled "Path Across the Swamp (Changi)" which depicted the natural landscape of the area, 1876
Singapore Botanic Gardens Library, National Parks Board

CHANGI FOREST RESERVE

In 1884, as part of efforts to conserve forests across the island, the colonial authorities established a forest reserve in Changi comprised of zones of primary forest, former plantations and mangroves. Incorporating plots of privately-owned land, Changi Forest Reserve spanned approximately 1,393 acres in 1886, with some 900 acres covered with trees and 493 acres with ferns and grasses. The tree species here included Brangan *(castenopsis sp.)*, Rengas *(gluta velutina)*, Meranti *(hopea meranti)*, Kledang *(arthocarpus sp.)* and Samah, and a forest station was set up at the 12th milestone of Changi Road (between Tanah Merah Besar Road and Cosford Road today), serving as a base for forest rangers.

While forest conservation was one of the reserve's objectives, the reserve also allowed for the management and economic exploitation of forest resources, through the issuance of licenses for timber and other resources. In 1897, the reserve brought in revenue of $151.05 from eight licenses for *bakau* cutting for firewood ($32), fees for 1,903 "kelong rollers" (likely logs for kelongs or fishing traps, $95.15), fees for 100 rollers (logs) for house building ($1), fees for 100 nibong timber (nibong was used for construction and flooring, $10) and the sale of 30 trees ($12.90).

By 1911, leases had also been issued for the exploitation of sand and nibong timber among other resources from Changi reserve, and by 1927, approximately 332.5 acres of the reserve had been leased on temporary permits for the cultivation of vegetables.

Map showing Changi Forest Reserve shaded in green, 1900
Singapore Botanic Gardens LIbrary, National Parks Board

LEISURE IN CHANGI IN THE COLONIAL PERIOD

Photograph of Changi Beach, 1929
Stanley T. Tanner Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore

In the colonial period, Changi had a lot to offer to those who enjoy the sea, sunshine and leisure. The beaches were not overcrowded, the Johor Strait was normally calm with sea breezes, and boat operators provided visits to nearby islands or popular fishing locations. Newspapers emphasised Changi's suitability as a site for sanatoriums or health resorts; the area had "...long been regarded as the healthiest spot on the island, and as Singapore's Lido," alluding to the well-known Lido di Venezia in Italy, because of its fresh air and forested environment.

INSPIRATION TO ARTISTS

The natural beauty of Changi also inspired European artists and writers. On 20 February 1869, Baron Eugen Von Ransonnet arrived in Singapore as a diplomatic attaché for Austria-Hungary, as part of a trade mission to East Asia and South America. While awaiting the arrival of other members of the mission, Von Ransonnet visited various sites in Singapore and made paintings and drawings, mainly of the natural environment. These, along with descriptions of various areas, were published in the 1876 book *Skizzen aus Singapur und Djohore* (Sketches: Singapore and Johore), including two paintings of scenes in Changi and a description of the area. Von Ransonnet wrote:

"[We] came to a small promontory of the island of Singapore, which was covered with a beautiful forest of majestic trees. The partly hidden roof of the Changi bungalow became visible among the greenery, and soon we stopped at the mouth of a small river nearby. From here a path led over a bridge to the North-Eastern tip of the island where a police station had been built in a small clearing among a plantation of palms. This place was especially convenient for us to await the arrival of the boat from Singapore, as it had to pass close by..."

Painting by Eugen Von Ransonnet titled "View in Changi (Singapore)", 1876
National Museum of Singapore collection, courtesy of National Heritage Board

Several accounts from other European visitors to Changi in the 19th century provided descriptions of the area and underlined its appeal as a resort for colonial society. A diary entry from 1860 detailed a visit to Changi by a party of eight European men:

"...two bullock carts were chartered in which all our clothes and provisions for three days were sent out in charge of our respective boys [colloquial colonial term for servants], overland, and two Malay sampans were sent out to Serangoon—a village about six miles off, to convey us from there to our destination, Changhee, a little place about 7 or 8 miles further on.

Changhee is a sort of Singapore Brighton—a place where everyone goes to for a picnic. It only consists of a few small fishermen's huts, a Government traveller's bungalow, and another bungalow a little higher up belonging to a Joint Hock Company.

I don't think I ever enjoyed a swim so much—there is a large place staked off to guard against sharks, etc, which has lots of water in it, and is tolerably shady even at the height of the sun."

By 1845, a "Changhee Hut" had been built in the area, making Changi "the fashionable resort for pic-nic parties". This hut was most likely a wooden bungalow built by the colonial government, or by a private owner. By 1856, another government bungalow had been built on Changi's north coast, beginning a longstanding tradition of state-owned holiday retreats in the area. The bungalow was located in the vicinity of today's Changi Cottage and had initially been built for use by government officers on duty in the rural areas of Singapore's east. Members of the public were allowed to use the bungalow for short stays when it was not being occupied by an officer. Colonial society soon took to Changi and its scenic surrounds for their holidays.

The popularity of Changee Hut and the government bungalow led to several private investors constructing other bungalows in the area and renting them out as sanatoriums and resorts. One such resort was known as Faery Point, built by lawyer Felix Henry Gottlieb around the 1860s and rented out for 30 dollars per month. A club named Fairy Point Club was founded within the resort in the years after World War I (1914-18) and was one of the earliest clubs in the Changi area (1914-18). Established by Supreme Court Registrar Maurice Rodesse, the club operated out of a wooden bungalow and was a focal point for fishing, swimming and yacht races for the colonial elite. Later renamed Fairy Point, this area came to be linked with Sungei Selarang and was used as a recreation space for decades by colonial society in the 19th and early 20th century, British and Singaporean troops in the 20th century, and the general public in the modern era.

Another prominent bungalow in Changi was owned by Jewish entrepreneur Ezekiel Saleh Manasseh, which is believed to have been built before the 1920s. After the development of a military base known as Changi Cantonment from the late 1920s (read more about Changi Cantonment on page 32), the area was acquired by the British military, and in 1933 the bungalow was converted into a school for children of the military personnel. Rebuilt and expanded in 1939, the building was then used as a transit hotel for Royal Air Force personnel, before being privatised and converted into the Changi Creek Hotel in 1972. Today, it serves as the clubhouse of the Civil Service Club@Changi (CSC@Changi).

Apart from Fairy Point and Manasseh's bungalow, the appeal of Changi for wealthy landowners continued into the 20th century. Among those who owned residences here were lawyer and author Song Ong Siang, cinema owner Tan Cheng Kee, as well as lawyer and Legislative Councillor P. Sammy. In the early 1930s, the area between Sungei Changi and Telok Paku was mainly privately-owned and said to have bungalows "every few yards". Lee Phan Hock, a Straits-born Chinese government clerk and investor, owned a bungalow located at Beting Kusah and another building named Sandringham Villa located at the 13 1/2th milestone of Changi Road.

Bungalow in Changi, c. 1880s
Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore

Former bungalow belonging to Ezekiel Saleh Manasseh, which is the clubhouse of CSC@Changi today, 2024
Courtesy of National Heritage Board

Beyond the colonial officers and well-resourced entrepreneurs, the 20th century also saw more associations and community groups holding retreats, parties, and celebrations at Changi. These groups spanned the Young Women's Christian Association, the Soon Hoe Kok Association, the Oleh Oleh Party and the Roseray Badminton Party, among numerous others. Some of these associations relied on the favour of wealthy patrons who owned bungalows and villas on the Changi coast, holding their events at grandly named residences such as Sandringham Villa.

While swimming, sailing and fishing have remained evergreen charms at Changi, some of the games and entertainments of the colonial era would be less familiar to holidaymakers today. The parties of commercial firms and social clubs featured games such as tug of war and egg-and-spoon races, while entertainments included open-air cinemas and band performances. *Ronggeng*, a Javanese dance with poetry recitals accompanied by violins and other instruments, was also popular across different communities.

While colonial hierarchies of ethnicity and class held sway in colonial Singapore, the leisure landscape of Changi was among the few settings in which people of different cultures and classes might interact. A newspaper report from 1920 describing a *towkay* ("business owner" in Hokkien)'s party at Beting Kusah noted a multicultural cast of attendees, including Malays, Chinese and Europeans. People across the hierarchies of commercial firms were also engaged in games, from the European *tuan besar* ("big boss" in Malay) to the Chinese assistants and female European employees.

Other groups such as the Methodist Mission purchased houses in Telok Paku, Beting Kusah and nearby areas for their members to use, while the Boy Scouts of Malaya established the Purdy Camp within the Wing Loong estate. The St. Andrew's Mission Hospital also rented a bungalow at Telok Mata Ikan to run the first tuberculosis sanatorium in Singapore and Malaya in 1936. Many of these homes remained in the associations' possessions into the 1970s.

Aerial view of bungalows in Changi, 1965
Aerial photographs by the British Royal Air Force between 1940 to 1970s, from a collection held by the National Archives of Singapore. Corwn copyright.

Beach and houses along the coast of Changi, 1948
Courtesy of Royal Airforce Changi Association

Swimming pagar *("enclosure" in Malay) at Changi Cantonment, 1927-30*
Courtesy of Royal Airforce Changi Association

KAMPONGS AND SETTLEMENTS

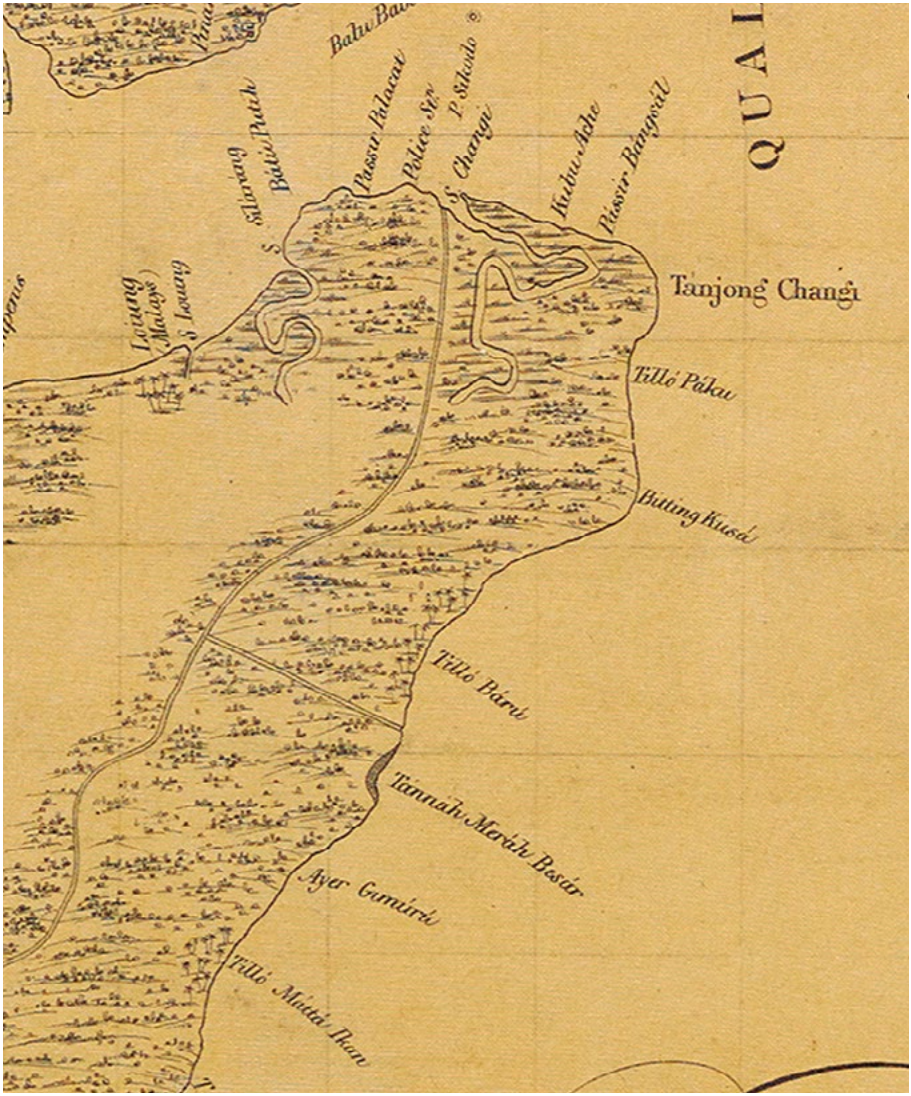
Named places on early colonial maps of Singapore frequently indicated villages, commercial centres or other notable location. Numerous place names in Changi were depicted on maps created by government surveyor John Turnbull Thomson in the late 1840s and some of these names would become well-known kampong names a century later.

Many of these place names drew on local geographical features, with several settlements bearing evocative and lyrical names. These included Kampong Ayer Gemuroh, named for a nearby hilltop spring that flowed regularly, with residents building drainage channels to manage the thunderous flow of water. The Tanah Merah area took its name from the famous red cliffs that served as a navigational landmark for centuries, while Kampong Beting Kusah is thought to have been named for the reefs and sandbanks that troubled sailors in nearby waters. The Malay names of the fishing villages of Kampong Telok Mata Ikan and Kampong Padang Terbakar translate to "Fish Eye Bay" and "Burning Field" respectively, while the Telok Paku area was named for the *paku pakis* ("fiddlehead fern" in Malay) that was harvested as a delicacy by kampong residents.

Malay villagers in Changi, 1909
Edward William Newell Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore

Kampong house in Changi, early mid-20th century
Collection of National Museum of Singapore, courtesy of National Heritage Board

Historical record and even oral tradition have also lost track of several Changi place names from the 1840s, including Pasir Bangsal and Kubu Achi (located on the northern coastline near Sungei Changi), Pasir Pulakat (near Batu Putih) and Tanjong Meng Kwang (near Padang Terbakar). Other place names including Batu Puteh and Telok Bahru were later noted as kampongs but were cleared following the establishment of Changi Cantonment in the 1920s and other developments.



Names of areas along the Changi coast starting from top left: Liong (Loyang), S. Liong (Sungei Loyang), S. Silarang (Sungei Selarang), Passir Palacat (Pasir Pulacat), police station, Sungei Changi, Kubu Achi, Passir Bangsal (Pasir Bangsal), Tanjong Changi, Tillo Paku (Telok Paku), Billing Kusa (Beting Kusah), Tillo Baru (Telok Bahru), Tannah Merah Besar (Tanah Merah Besar), Ayer Gemuru (Ayer Gemuroh), Tillo Mata Ikan (Telok Mata Ikan), 1852
Courtesy of The National Archives, United Kingdom

Newspaper reports and other records also reveal details about villages and kampongs in Changi, and the people who lived here. An 1855 government-commissioned survey of plantations in Singapore found small-scale gambier and pepper operations in Mata Ikan (today part of Changi Airport) and noted approximately 40 plantation workers in this area. A newspaper report that same year named a resident of Mata Ikan who worked in the manufacturing of *kapur* whitewash from coral and shells, known at the time as lime burning. The report also noted the presence of "fishing stakes" near Tanah Merah Kechil; these were likely kelong ("palisade fishing traps" in Malay) that could be found along the coast to Changi Point.

Reports into the 20th century reveal other economic activities and livelihoods that sustained the residents of Mata Ikan and nearby villages, including coconut estates and a smokehouse for the processing of rubber. However, fishing and the manufacture of *kapur* whitewash would remain key livelihoods for these coastal villages up to the 1970s.

FISHING AND *KAPUR*: CHANGI'S COASTAL TRADES

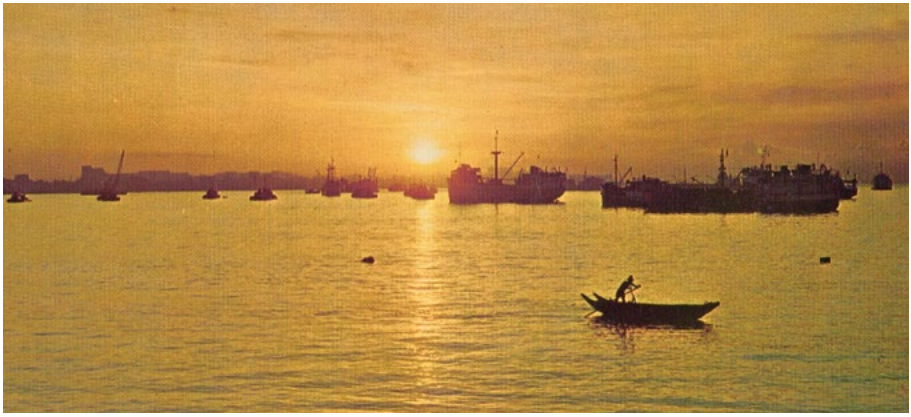
Across centuries, fishing and other maritime activities shaped the economy, society and cultures of coastal areas in Changi. For the people of kampongs Ayer Gemuroh, Mata Ikan and Beting Kusah among other kampongs, fishing was livelihood and way of life, as were *berkarang* ("coastal foraging" in Malay) and the making of *kapur* ("lime-based whitewash" in Malay).

These activities drew on deep knowledge of the seascape, weather patterns and monsoon winds, which was transmitted through traditions and which underlaid numerous aspects of community life. Having read the weather, the fishermen of the Changi coast generally headed out to sea after dusk, often in groups of six to 10 boats. Those with engine-powered boats could travel to deeper waters, while sampans and other small boats plied the coastline. The fishermen utilised numerous techniques for different sea conditions and catches, from *bubu* and *bemban* (fish traps of different designs) to various types of *jaring* ("nets" in Malay) and baited lines.

Their return in the mornings brought the villages to life, as Isiah Majid (b. 1962), who grew up in Kampong Ayer Gemuroh, recalled: "[The atmosphere at the beach was] just like a fish market, with people [gathering around each] boat to buy their fish. It's a joyful moment, with children swimming and [playing] in the sea...while the adults are bargaining for their fish." The catch along the Changi coast included *ikan tamban* (silver-stripe round herring) and *ikan mempinang* (trumpet emperor fish), generally available throughout the year and forming part of the villagers' staple diets. Other fish such as *ikan parang* (dorab wolf-herring) and *selar hijau* (yellowtail scad) were seasonal.

The Malay fishermen also learned that the fish they knew as *dengkis* was called the *peh tor her* ("white bellied fish" in Hokkien, or rabbit fish) by the Chinese and particularly prized during the Lunar New Year celebrations. "The season for *dengkis* was when we could earn a little more money, because the Chinese loved this fish for the New Year," remembered former Ayer Gemuroh resident Rahmat Bani.

Timber structures known locally as kelongs dotted the coast and palisade fish traps herded fish to awaiting nets and traps. Kampong residents chose between investing in their own fishing boat or working on the kelongs and could either sell their catches within the village or to middlemen who then transported the fish to markets in Somapah or Geylang.



Fisherman off Changi coast, c. 1970s
National Museum of Singapore collection, courtesy of National Heritage Board

As educational levels grew in the post-World War II period, more kampong residents took up diverse jobs including as teachers and technicians. Many continued to fish to support their families, including Isiah's father. She remembered: "After returning from his work as a telephone technician, he would go out in his boat with his *sondong* ("pole net" in Malay) and headlight. When the moonlight was bright, he could target squid and prawns easily, before returning home at 2am or 3am."

People of Changi also practised an age-old tradition known as *berkarang* ("coastal foraging" in Malay), with the beaches, intertidal zones, *beting* ("shoal or sandbank" in Malay) yielding rich harvests at *air tohor* ("low tide" in Malay). Ayer Gemuroh resident Isiah recalled the women and children of her kampong venturing out with a *serampang* ("trident" in Malay) to forage for shellfish including *gonggong* ("dog conch" in Malay), *lokan* ("mud clam" in Malay) and *lala* clams. Occasional treats included *ikan sembilan* ("catfish" in Malay) caught by the low tide and *buah stu*, a rambutan-shaped sea fruit.

Painting by Cultural Medallion recipient Chua Mia Tee titled "Malay fisherman at Changi Beach", 1977
Donated by Times Publishing Limited, National Gallery Singapore collection, courtesy of National Heritage Board

Foraged during specific seasons, the agar-agar seaweed was made into jellies that doubled up as home decorations, particularly during Ramadan, the Muslim month of prayer and reflection, and its festive culmination of Hari Raya Puasa. "During Hari Raya, we would have the agar agar laut as the 'kepala major'. It's a jelly shaped and nicely presented as [a dining table decoration]. Only after two weeks would it be sliced and eaten," remembered Isiah.

By the mid-20th century however, the fishers of Changi faced increasingly precarious and uncertain economic prospects. Fishing days were dependent on the weather, and capital was required for boats, nets, sails, floats, anchors, lamps and other equipment. Curfews and sailing and movement restrictions during the Malayan Emergency (1948-60) also severely affected fishing livelihoods.

Anjang Kahar, a resident of Kampong Banjar, characterised the life of a fisherman: "[As fishermen], it's difficult to taste a comfortable life. Our lives can be said to be [like] 'labour in the morning [to] eat in the morning, labour in the evening [to] eat in the evening'. Nevertheless, fishermen get satisfaction from our catches being the result of our own sweat and efforts, without depending on other people." Beyond their daily labours, the people of the coastal kampongs also came together to help build and sustain schools including Malay-medium institutions at Ayer Gemuroh and Telok Paku and mosques, as well as cultural groups such as the Badan Kebudayaan Timor.

Another coastal livelihood, the manufacture of *kapur*, was mainly practiced by Teochew residents of Kampong Telok Mata Ikan and Kampong Padang Terbakar. A newspaper report from 1935 described the *kapur* production process, noting that *kapur* makers dug pits of six to seven feet (1.8 metres to 2.1 metres) on the beaches to gather shells including those of cockles. The shells were then burned in brick enclosures housed within attap structures, with kampong residents using charcoal, coconut husks and plant material for fuel. After being burned, the shell residues were crushed into powder and poured into processing pools with water added.

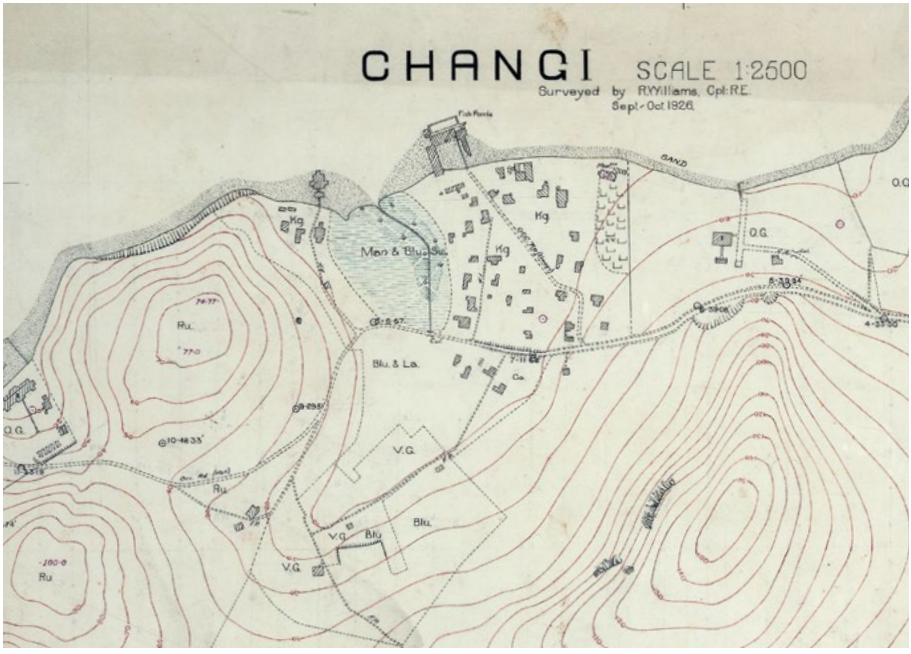
After three days of mixing and filtering, calcium sediments were then drained of water, with the viscous mixture sold as whitewash. A newspaper report from 1980 noted that five litres of whitewash sold at the time for S$5, but also that the local whitewash industry was declining after the introduction of emulsion paints. While well-established as an industry in Changi, *kapur* making was also a marginal economic activity for the people of this area and reflected their hardscrabble lives. Quoted in a newspaper report from 1935, two sisters from Kampong Mata Ikan said that the *kapur* factory inherited from their father brought an income of $200 in some months, but in other months they "hardly [made] enough to buy rice".

Kelong off Changi Beach, 1958
Courtesy of Royal Airforce Changi Association

Detailed surveys made by the British War Office in the early 1920s, in preparation for the establishment of the military base, also provide a snapshot of the social and economic landscape of Changi at the time. The kampongs of Batu Puteh, Changi, Telok Paku, Beting Kusah, Tanah Merah Besar and Ayer Gemuroh are named, with the map also showing buildings of timber construction, most of which were likely kampong houses and quarters, and those built of brick and concrete, which included schools and private bungalows, reflecting growing populations and the increased need for social infrastructure.

Rubber estates and plantations, including those belonging to Chinese dentist and property tycoon Look Yan Kit, and rubber companies Bukit Sembawang and Bee Hoe, were also indicated in maps. These plantations brought jobs and may have spurred the formation of residential areas nearby. For instance, Yan Kit Village was a kampong whose residents worked in such plantations and was later named for Look Yan Kit.

Map showing Kampong Changi with buildings of brick and concrete construction marked in red, along with Kampong Banjar, Kampong Telok Paku and Kampong Beting Kusah, 1923
Courtesy of The National Archives, United Kingdom



Contoured sketch plan of Changi and Fairy Point detailing the kampongs and landscape of the area just before the construction of Changi Cantonment, 1927
Courtesy of The National Archives, United Kingdom

While many kampongs in Singapore were redeveloped during the great shift to public housing from the 1960s, several villages in Changi and their residents had experienced the upheaval of redevelopment much earlier. Perhaps the first was Kampong Batu Puteh, which stood on Changi's northwestern coast in the vicinity of where the Changi boardwalk is today. The kampong was within the area acquired by the British War Office for the development of Changi Cantonment and was cleared by the colonial authorities by the late 1930s.

An account by Royal Engineer Colonel Leslie Noel Malan in 1938 put the clearance of the kampong in euphemistic terms: "Some of the coveted coastal strip had been acquired, the Malay village had disappeared and the reclamation of the swamp was well underway." Kampong Banjar, which stood off the 14th milestone of Changi Road and may have been settled by a Banjarese population, is also likely to have been cleared during this period for the same project.

In the mid-20th century, the people of Kampong Beting Kusah and Kampong Tanah Merah Besar also had to abide with moving from their coastal homes. During the Japanese Occupation (1942-45), the Japanese military moved several Kampong Beting Kusah households to make way for the construction of an air strip, which would decades later be developed into Changi Airport.

In 1948, the British authorities decided to expand the air strip for what would become the Changi Royal Air Force base, necessitating another move for some 70 families from Kampong Beting Kusah and 30 families from Kampong Tanah Merah Besar. The Kampong Beting Kusah families were paid compensation of $30,000 then by the colonial government and moved to Kampong Ayer Gemuroh.

KAMPONGS IN THE POST-WORLD WAR II PERIOD

By the post-World War II period, the kampongs of Changi stood in three broad clusters. Somapah Village, located at the 10th milestone of Changi Road, Kampong Darat Nenas next to Changi Prison and Yan Kit Village at the 11 1/2th milestone. These kampongs were characterised by plantations and agriculture. Meanwhile, the coastal settlements of Kampong Padang Terbakar, Kampong Mata Ikan, Kampong Ayer Gemuroh and Kampong Telok Paku were home to fishermen, people who had longstanding connections to the sea. On the northern coast, the economies of Changi Village and Kampong Changi were greatly shaped by their proximity to leisure resorts and the British military base.

Inland from the coast, lives and livelihoods revolved around agriculture, shopkeeping and services. Standing at the 10th milestone of Changi Road, Somapah Village was a hub for the kampongs and small residential areas within its orbit, with its market, cinema and other amenities including medical and dental clinics. Stretching east from Changi Road towards the coast and northwest towards what is today Tampines, the area was also referred to by residents as Jalan Tiga Ratus or simply as *chap kor* ("10th milestone" in Hokkien).

The Somapah area and Somapah Road were named after a major landowner and philanthropist, Hunmah Somapah, who established plantations and rented out residential land here in the early 20th century.

Entrance to Wan Tzu School at Somapah Road, which was later renamed Red Swastika School c. 1950s
Wong Sin Eng Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore

Classrooms of Wan Tzu School at Somapah Road, 1950s
Wong Sin Eng Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore

Later landowners included Quek Shin, who donated land and funds for Wan Tzu School in 1951, with the school later being renamed Red Swastika School. Other schools that stood in this area were Nong Min School, founded by the kampong's residents, and Min Chong Public School.

Somapah Village was also known for Xin Zhou Cinema, it being the only other cinema open to the public in Changi other than the one at Changi Village. "Xin Zhou Cinema had [shows] at 7pm and 9pm. It was an outdoor cinema and we [sat] on long benches," recalled former resident Wang Tin Min (b. 1946).

"At the entrance, there was a [zinc] shelter. If it rained, everybody would run…there. Some would watch the movie in the rain with their umbrellas. We watched Cantonese [movies from Hong Kong] and Japanese movies dubbed in Mandarin. We watched a movie maybe once in two to three months…you would have to get money from your parents, they would scold you even though it was just 30 cents. 30 cents could buy you many things then…one kati *of pork cost around 60 cents."*

Xin Zhou Cinema at Somapah Village, 1986
Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore

The communities in Somapah and Yan Kit Village largely practised agriculture for their livelihoods, although this began to change in the post-World War II period. Wang recalled that his family reared chickens and pigs, with capons, or castrated chickens, being a speciality:

"At the beginning of the year, we would rear chicks and castrate them three months later. We would then continue to rear them until [the following] Chinese New Year, when they [weighed] about five to six katis. *[If] a normal chicken [sold for] $2 per* kati, *a castrated chicken would be five times the price at $10 per* kati. *The capons, being reared for a longer period, were larger] and the meat was tougher, but was more fragrant. Chicken rice cooked with castrated chickens [would be] more fragrant.*

"Hainanese loved to eat these and [the capons were also] provided as an offering to the gods... and to pay respects to the ancestors. We had relatives and friends who stayed in town and we would put a [live] chicken in a bag and take a bus to Hainan Street [the Middle Road area] and give them [as gifts]."

Lee Kui Lan (b. 1949), who grew up in Somapah Village from the 1940s, remembered:

"My mother raised chickens, and before the New Year, people would come to the kampong to make orders [to buy them]. The capons [could grow] to a big size, [up to] 12 kati, *and could be sold for around $100. People would come from Chinatown or Tanglin to order them. We didn't [need to] promote [the chickens]. Also, when the Hainanese temple in the kampong had festive days, people would come from all over, and they would order chickens. Sell a few chickens and we could have soft drinks for the New Year.*

"People from Somapah would also go to Changi Point where they had a weekly 'Amah's market'. Some vendors would be selling items from their cars, and I sold children's clothes there as well.

Milk from the dairy farm at Somapah Village being brought to the market, 1986
Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore

Street and shophouses at Jalan Somapah Timor, 1986
Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore

Located near the mouth of Sungei Changi and the jetty point to Pulau Ubin, Pulau Tekong and other islands, Changi Village most likely had its roots in a small residential area established in the 19th century. This locale likely grew from the economic activities prevalent at the time and housed boat operators, caretakers for the holiday bungalows in Changi and plantation workers, as well as police and customs officers working at the nearby stations.

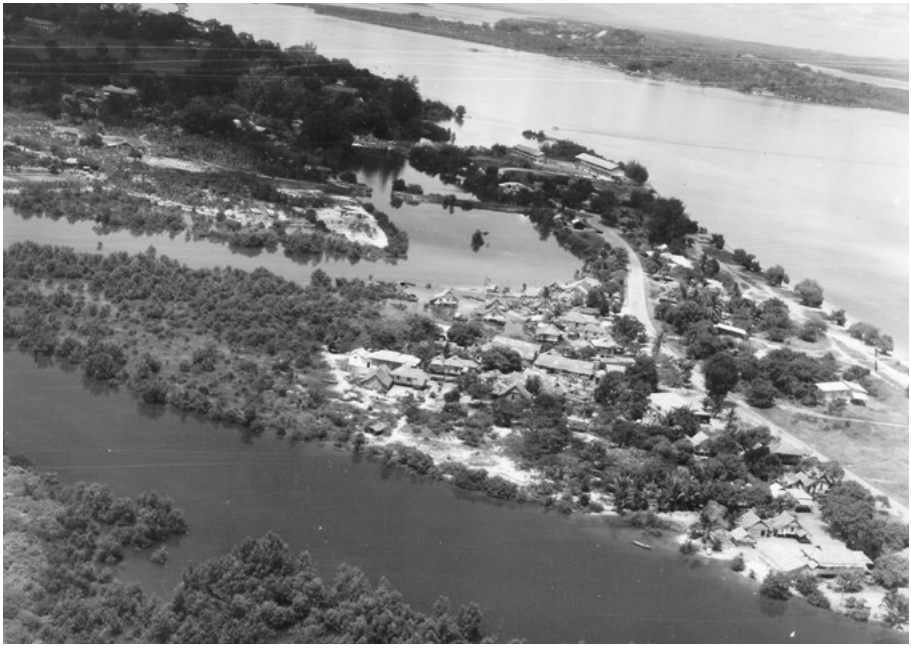
The area only became known as Changi Village after the development of Changi Cantonment from the late 1920s, with the growing number of non-military jobs at the base drawing Indians, Malays and Chinese to the area. By the 1950s, kampong residents were increasingly entering teaching, clerical work and other growing professions, even as their households maintained small-scale agriculture or fishing to supplement incomes.

Former Changi Cinema at Changi Village, 1972
The Straits Times © SPH Media Limited. Reprinted with permission

Shops at Changi Village, c. 1950s
Courtesy of Bruce Smith, Singas.co.uk

Mirroring the diversity of Changi's natural and socio-economic landscapes, this part of Singapore also stood as a cultural crossroads. Different communities of colonial society, set apart by wealth, ethnicity and culture, met in Changi, as the area served as a meeting place for the mainly Asian kampong residents, the British servicemen of the military base and the affluent elite of the island, who vacationed in their bungalows.

The British population of the base also attracted numerous traders and service providers to set up shop at Changi Village, cementing its reputation as a retail haven between the late 1940s and 1970s. The village grew to encompass some 200 shops, bars and restaurants across two famous shophouse rows, and also included kampong houses, quarters built by the British military to house workers, small coconut, papaya and sugarcane plantations, coffeeshops as well as a market and a cinema.



Aerial photograph showing Sungei Changi with Changi Village and RAF Changi in the background to the left, 1960
Aerial photographs by the British Royal Air Force between 1940 to 1970s, from a collection held by the National Archives of Singapore. Crown copyright.

Fanny Lai, who grew up in Changi Village, recalled in a television documentary: "Because my father could speak a little English, it became natural for him to come here to open a shop. In the 1950s and 1960s, business was good. I remember when I was a child, my dad had a car and chauffeur to bring him to the city to purchase goods."

During the colonial era, a significant proportion of Hainanese operated coffeeshops and restaurants, or worked as cooks and waiters. Wang Ting Min remembered his father working as a cook in RAF Changi, earning $108 per month in the 1950s. A number of restaurants and cafes in Changi Village, including Changi Milk Bar, were also owned and operated by Hainanese cooks, who created fusion dishes that remain local favourites today, including Hainanese pork chops.

Charlie Han (b.1945), whose father co-founded Changi Milk Bar, remembered:

"My dad was working on a British merchant ship [during World War II]...and the ship captain sent him to a culinary school in the United Kingdom. He [returned to Singapore] and started a restaurant, Changi Milk Bar, with my grandfather."

As a teenager, Han worked at the restaurant and recalled that:

"If [the RAF personnel] liked your restaurant, you always see the same faces. If they didn't like [yours], they went to one of the other three restaurants.

"We [served] pork chops, lamb steaks, filet steaks and then you got ham steaks and chicken chops. You have sausages, eggs and chips, those are the English guys' favourites—bangers and mash. We also had Chinese food, sweet and sour pork, sambal prawns, chicken or beef curry.

"Sometimes we had soldiers eat and 'hit and run' [leave without paying]. Once a sergeant refused to pay for a filet steak and punched my uncle, I was young and hot tempered [and I felled him with a blow]. The restaurant was full of [soldiers] and everybody stood up, and I quickly went to the coffeeshop next door to call [RAF Changi's] military police.

"Other times we had soldiers steal whole barrels of draft beer - which they couldn't drink [without equipment to open] anyway - and often we had soldiers coming into the bar [and starting fights after drinking]. They [would then] throw the drinking glasses everywhere, and there would be broken glass all over the restaurant. [All we can do] is call the military police, sometimes they would be banned from coming to the village.

"We had a jukebox in the restaurant and I would get [tips from a record seller] at the Changi Village night market [about popular songs] to draw the customers. [That was after] I saw all the British guys singing along to Elvis Presley songs."

Changi Milk Bar, 1947-48
Courtesy of Royal Airforce Changi Association

Servicemen's Christmas dinner in Changi Milk Bar, 1955
Courtesy of Royal Airforce Changi Association

REDEVELOPMENT OF KAMPONGS IN CHANGI

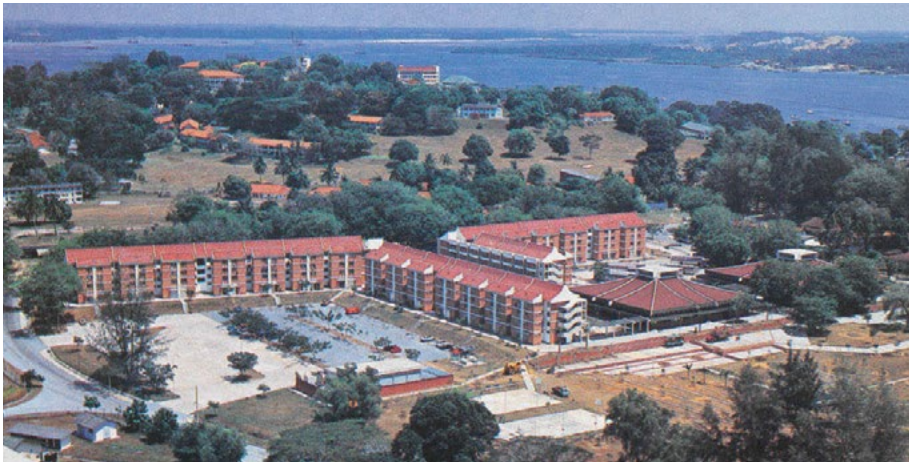
After the withdrawal of British military forces from Singapore was completed in 1971, business in Changi Village suffered from the departure of approximately 2,000 RAF families. The temporary presence of Australian, British and New Zealander soldiers under the ANZUK force (1971-74) helped traders, as did visits to Changi Village by oil rig workers that had Loyang as their port of call and others involved in the development of Changi Airport. Han credits the business of the latter for the growth of Charlie's Corner, a food and drinks establishment that continues to operate at Changi Village Hawker Centre today. Most of the village's shops had to reshape their businesses however, to appeal to a new clientele of local shoppers.

By the early 1970s, the landscape and social environment of Changi began to be transformed. Residents of the kampongs were increasingly better educated and turning from traditional occupations such as fishing and agriculture towards jobs in factories, as teachers and other professional roles. The landscape was irrevocably changed, with the government's land reclamation projects reshaping the eastern coast of Changi and bringing about the redevelopment and resettlement of kampongs such as Kampong Ayer Gemuroh, Kampong Padang Terbakar and Changi Village for various projects.

One such project was part of the East Coast reclamation scheme from 1970, which extended the foreshore from Bedok to Changi Point out into the sea, claiming numerous public and privately-owned bungalows and beach spots. The decision taken in 1975 to establish Changi Airport brought another wave of reclamation and redevelopment. At Tanah Merah, the new coastline extended some 1.6km out to sea.

Goh Kim Chun, a former Kampong Mata Ikan resident who was a grassroots leader and a member of the Changi Citizens' Consultative Committee, recalled:

"[The reclamation of the Changi coastline] directly affected the fishermen, kelong workers and owners of kelongs. They had always been fishing. So when the kelongs were cleared, the government needed to help them find new jobs. [The government and grassroots officials] helped most of them apply for market stalls and hawker licenses. Some became hawkers, some sold fish, some sold meat or vegetables.



Aerial view of redeveloped Changi Village, 1976
Courtesy of Housing & Development Board

"I [myself] owned a kelong specialising in catching 'New Year fish' (peh tor her, *rabbit fish favoured as a Lunar New Year dish). I was also tasked with liaising with the resettlement committee…I told them to demolish my kelong first. [All of the kelong owners] knew which kelongs collected the most fish. [I tried to arrange it] that the kelongs with more fish were [kept as long as possible], to give them a chance to harvest more fish and earn more. A kelong [could] cost [up to] S$40,000 to construct. But the compensation [for resettlement] was based on the timber [used and came up to] several thousand dollars."*

Changi Village too was redeveloped, with Housing & Development Board (HDB) building flats, a market and hawker centre and shops to replace the mainly zinc-roofed shophouses. This was the beginning of concerted government efforts to establish Changi as a leisure destination and residential area, with later projects adapting the heritage buildings of Changi Cantonment as hotels, restaurants and recreational facilities, as well as the construction of a ferry terminal, parks and beach areas.

By 1980, HDB had completed 170 three-room flats, a two-block hawker centre and market with more than 150 stalls and approximately 50 shops, the foundations of the Changi Village familiar to most Singaporeans today.

Flats and shops at Changi Village, 1976
Courtesy of Housing & Development Board

Changi Village Hawker Centre, 2024
Courtesy of National Heritage Board

YAN KIT VILLAGE CHINESE TEMPLE

130 Mariam Way

Founded in 1939 in Yan Kit Village, Yan Kit Village Chinese Temple enshrines deity Shui Wei Sheng Niang, 108 Brother Deities, Hong Xian Da Di and other deities. The temple was a religious and social focal point for the residents of the village, who were largely of Hainanese descent. Today, the temple continues to sustain religious and cultural practices important to the Hainanese community, even as it has welcomed worshippers of other Chinese dialect groups and ethnicities.

According to oral history, the temple's patron deity, Shui Wei Sheng Niang, was "invited over" to Singapore from a temple in Wenchang, Hainan, China. In Taoist tradition, invitation to the deities involves a conveyance of incense from the mother temple to the new temple. The earliest incarnation of the temple was a small shrine within Yan Kit Village, before a larger temple was built in the 1950s.

With many of Yan Kit Village's residents working as sailors or fishers, worship of Shui Wei Sheng Niang became popular, as she was regarded as a protective maritime deity. Wong Sang (b. 1953), the temple's manager and former resident of Yan Kit Village, said: "In the past, when residents of village went out to sea, they would be counting the years and months [due to the uncertainties and potential dangers of the voyage]. They would come to the temple to pray for protection and a safe return home."

The temple also gained a reputation for protective powers during the Japanese invasion of Singapore from 1941. Yan Kit Village was located at the 11 1/2th milestone of Changi Road, in the vicinity of Changi Cantonment and the artillery batteries that surrounded it. Despite this proximity, the village did not suffer bombardment during numerous Japanese bombing raids from December 1941. The temple's worshippers attributed this to divine protection, and many people are said to have sought refuge in Yan Kit Village.

During the resettlement of Yan Kit Village in the 1980s, the temple's worshippers negotiated for a nearby site for their temple. As many of the kampong's residents moved to Bedok, Tampines, and other HDB towns, the temple committee secured a site at its present-day location along Mariam Way. The Yan Kit Village Chinese Temple was consecrated in 1996.

Today, the temple's major festive periods include the Lunar New Year, Qing Ming festival and the celebration of Shui Wei Sheng Niang's birthday. Lunar New Year celebrations include the welcoming of Cai Shen Ye, the God of Wealth, and the distribution of *hong bao* ("red packets" in Mandarin) with a token of cash symbolising good fortune. During Qing Ming festival, the temple stages *ge tai* ("song stage" in Mandarin) theatrical performances, as a means of thanksgiving and paying respect to the ancestors.

Temple in Yan Kit Village, undated
Courtesy of Yan Kit Village Chinese Temple

Devotees walk along a path of burning incense papers during the birthday of Shui Wei Sheng Niang, undated
Courtesy of Yan Kit Village Chinese Temple

Yan Kit Village Chinese Temple, 2024
Courtesy of National Heritage Board

For the birthday celebrations of Shui Wei Sheng Niang, held from the 15th day of the 10th lunar month, the temple gathers former residents of Yan Kit Village and other volunteers for its festive preparations. The events include the crossing of the *jin huo lu* ("golden fire road" in Mandarin), a ritual where worshippers walk across a path of burning incense papers before offering prayers to Shui Wei Sheng Niang. For worshippers, this ritual symbolises personal purification and the casting aside of ill-fortune and requires a period of abstinence from material pleasures before the walk.

SREE RAMAR TEMPLE

51 Changi Village Road

Sree Ramar Temple traces its history back to a shrine to the Hindu deity Lord Ramar in Changi Village. The exact founding date of the shrine is unknown, but it was located under a sacred fig tree (*ficus religiosa*, also known as bodhi trees or *arasa maram* in Tamil) revered by Hindus and Buddhists.

According to oral history, the shrine and an image of Sree Ramar were installed by a group that included Tamils, Gurkhas and Sindhis. In 1946, a temple at its present location was built by residents of Changi Village and members of the British military led by Ram Naidu to house the shrine. The site was said to have been allocated to the Hindu community by the British authorities, likely in recognition of their efforts in constructing and maintaining Changi Cantonment.

Janakiammah (b. 1938), a long-time worshipper at the temple and former resident of Changi Village, recalled that her husband Sivanagam Thevar was among the group that help construct Sree Ramar Temple. Thevar was a driver for the Royal Air Force and worked to gather the building materials for the Ramar sanctum. Other deities enshrined during this time include Sree Seetha, Sree Lakshmanar and Sree Hanuman.

For Janakiammah's family and the Hindus of Changi, the temple has been a vital social and religious space for decades. Residents helped with the temple's upkeep and the selection of priests and gathered there each evening for bhajan (devotional singing). Marriages and other festive occasions were also celebrated in the temple. Janakiammah

Shrines of non-Hindu deities Buddha and Guan Yin at the temple, 2024
Courtesy of National Heritage Board

remembered religious celebrations such as Shivaratri bringing devotees together for overnight vigils at the temple, with films being projected onto a cloth screen to help them stay awake.

In 1992, images of the deities in each sanctum were replaced with granite statues and a *kumbabishegam* (consecration ceremony) was conducted. The temple also incorporated three temples and shrines displaced by urban development: Sri Manmatha Karunaya Eswarar Temple (previously located at Cantonment Road), Sri Muthu Mariamman Temple (previously at Eng Neo Avenue) and Sri Palani Aandavar Shrine (previously in Kranji) in 1999. In addition, Temple also installed shrines for the non-Hindu deities Buddha and Guan Yin, the Goddess of Mercy. To accommodate the growing number of worshippers, renovations and expansions of the temple were conducted in 2005 and 2012.

Sree Ramar Temple's charitable activities extend to various communities. Its monthly Akshaya food distribution project serves people of all communities and religious backgrounds, with volunteers working with social service agencies to identify families in need. The temple also distributes sweets and savoury snacks during Deepavali and contributes funds to various community and social organisations and causes.

Today, the major festival celebrated at Sree Ramar Temple is Sree Rama Navami, marking the birth anniversary of its patron deity. During Rama Navami, devotees perform the Rama Katha recital, while also reciting verses from Hindu scriptures including Shrimad Bhagavatam and Ramayana. Other festivals on the temple's calendar include Sree Hanuman Jayanti and Mahanyasa Ekadasa Rudhrabhishegami.

Today, Sree Ramar Temple continues to practice diverse cultural and religious traditions. The temple adheres to Vaishnavite precepts for its rituals and ceremonies which honour the deity Vishnu, but also enshrines deities from the Shaivite traditions which honour the deity Shiva. The inclusion of Shaivite deities and priests accommodates worshippers from both traditions, and facilitates post-funerary prayers for Hindus, which must be performed to Shiva.

Original temple building, 1946
Courtesy of Sree Ramar Temple

Priest performing a ritual at the Sree Ramar sanctum, 2024
Courtesy of National Heritage Board

DEFENCE AND SECURITY IN CHANGI

From the 19th century, the physical environment of Changi underwent significant changes due to expanding settlement and economic activities, including plantations and timber logging, from the early 19th century. Another major transformation of the landscape followed in the early 20th century when Sembawang was confirmed as the location for the United Kingdom's new naval base in 1922. This necessitated another site for a military cantonment and artillery emplacements to house the troops and guns that would protect the naval base. Changi, commanding the eastern approach to the Johor Strait, was a natural choice for the defence of the naval base and northeast Singapore. Additionally, Changi was chosen for the expansion of a penal institution in the form of Changi Prison. This marked a significant shift in the use of the area, from one of leisure and settlement, to a strategic military and penal hub.

THE GILLMAN COMMISSION

Planning for a cantonment in Changi began in 1927, with the selection of Changi due to its distance from the city and major residential areas, and largely undeveloped apart from rubber plantations and kampongs. British military planners recommended troops be housed in a self-contained cantonment with its own amenities, "in view of local conditions such as the enervating climate, endemic malaria and venereal disease among the local population and a high level of 'murders, robberies and strikes'."

In 1927, the Army Council formed the Gillman Commission, headed by Lieutenant General Sir Webb Gillman, to study proposed defences protecting the naval base and decide on the planning principles and layout for Changi Cantonment. Having visited Changi for surveys, General Gillman described the area in several letters to his son. He noted extensive mangrove swamps, trees that had grown to 100 feet high, forested areas with thick undergrowth, as well as a prominent landmark, a 150-foot-tall tree, which became known as the Changi tree. This tree was conspicuous enough to appear on maps produced by the British Admiralty and survived until 1942 when Allied sappers detonated it to prevent the tree from serving as an artillery ranging target.

Gillman also noted a private bungalow owned by Ezekiel Saleh Manasseh, a government bungalow under Public Works Department (PWD), and a seedy Japanese hotel said to

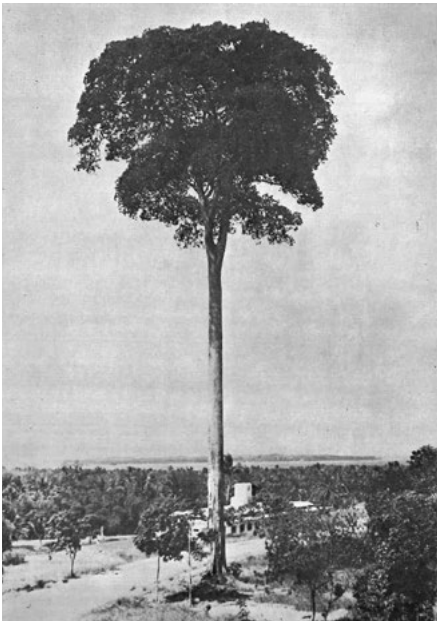


Image of Changi Tree, 1969
Courtesy of Malaysian Nature Society

be used as a brothel. This hotel was an attap and timber structure and stood on piles over the sea. After the conversion of Changi into a military base, the site became the base's first officers' mess.

Following the formation of the Gillman Commission, the War Office began acquiring land in Changi and transforming its landscape from 1927. Swamps were filled, forested areas were cleared and an extensive network of subsoil drainage pipes was laid to minimise mosquito breeding and malaria. A pier was built and electricity and water lines were laid, with Chinese and Indian contracted workers constructing roads and workshops, starting a quarry for stone, a concrete factory and laying railway tracks to supply the 15-inch Johore Battery guns that were to be stationed at Cosford Road.

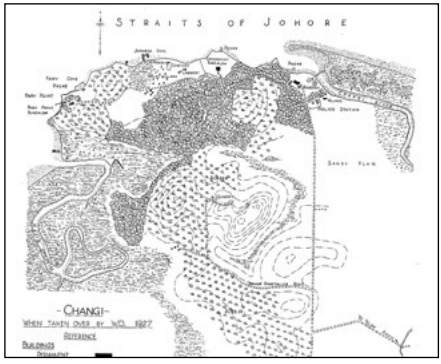
After a pause in the project in 1929 following a change in the British government, work resumed in 1933. By the early 1940s, concrete gun emplacements, airfields, hangars, workshops, stores, pumping stations, power stations, hospital, barracks blocks, housing and other facilities were built. New roads were laid in the area, including those still extant today such as Netheravon Road.

Changi Cantonment incorporated three main hills: Fairy Point Hill, Battery Hill and Temple Hill (also known as Changi Hill). There were four sets of barracks within the cantonment: Kitchener Barracks housing the largest Royal Engineers station outside the United Kingdom, Roberts Barracks housing the Royal Artillery Regiment, India Barracks for Anti-Aircraft regiments and the Hong Kong and Singapore Battalion, Royal Artillery (HKSRA), and Selarang Barracks housing the Gordon Highlanders infantry battalion.

Forested areas and trees deemed aesthetically pleasing were retained to provide an attractive backdrop to the base's buildings. The natural environment of Changi was the backdrop to what was termed "one of the finest natural settings of any military base anywhere in the world" and "...almost a garden city". To maintain the self-sufficiency of the cantonment and to keep British troops within its boundaries as much as possible, recreational amenities included "palatial" messes, an air-conditioned cinema and a golf course that was being constructed when the Japanese invaded in 1942.

PLANNING AND DESIGN OF CHANGI CANTONMENT

Built in the late 1920s and 1930s, the buildings within Changi Cantonment were designed according to plans from the British War Office and with design principles learned from the construction of earlier military bases at Pulau Blakang Mati, Tanglin and Fort Canning. The masterplan for the cantonment was laid out by the Gillman Commission, and the officer in charge of its design was Colonel Leslie Noel Malan, Chief Engineer.



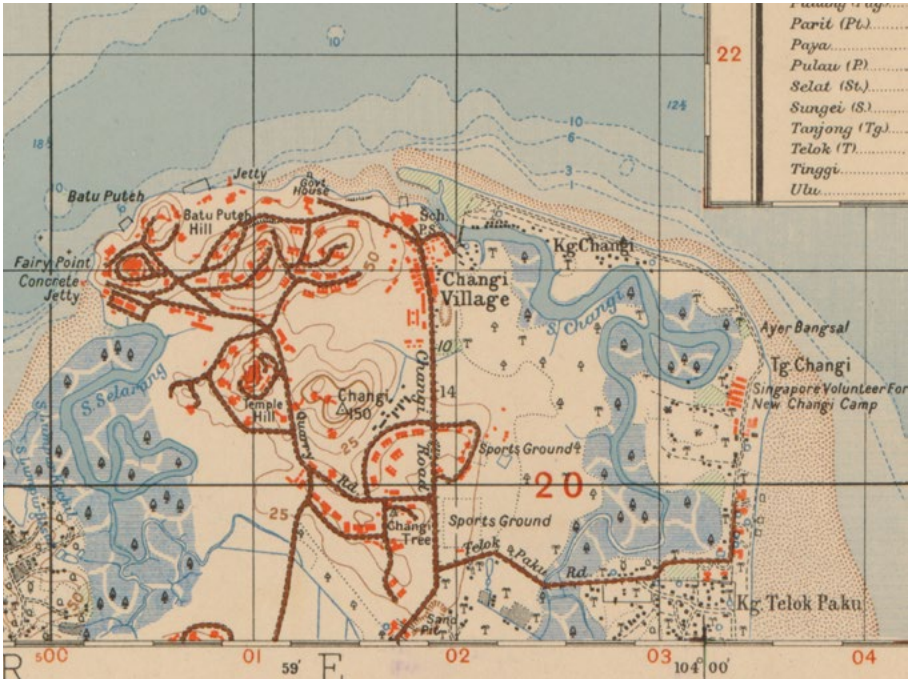
Sketch made by Colonel Malan of the Royal Engineers of the Changi Point area, 1927
Courtesy of The Institution of Royal Engineers

The construction of Changi Cantonment came during a period when the planning and design of British military bases in the tropics was moving away from converted Palladian villa type designs to buildings designed specifically for the health and wellbeing of British soldiers. This included planning and architectural adaptations for the tropical environment and represented perhaps the first formal adoption of tropical building principles by colonial authorities.

These tropical design principles, applied through space standards, planning principles and environmental technologies, helped bring about uniformity in British military bases built in different tropical areas across the world from the Caribbean to Southeast Asia. For example, barrack blocks were lined with wide verandahs, with beds placed between openings, and the ground floor was used for dining rooms, offices, stores and study rooms. The reinforced concrete barrack blocks at Changi also represented an evolution in British military construction in Singapore, from earlier timber buildings at Tanglin in the 1860s to double-storey timber and masonry buildings at Pulau Brani and Pulau Blakang Mati.

The planning of Changi Cantonment included urban residences, amenities and services for civilians who would be working for and with the military, including the development of what would become Changi Village. This urban planning included careful delineation of economic and social roles to distinct communities, consistent with British colonial practice. A newspaper article in 1928 noted: "Already the whole town is mapped—the Chinese shops, the Malay quarters, the barracks and the civil lines. ...It will not be a military town alone, and every measure is being taken for the installation of a civil population and the general welfare and prosperity of all the inhabitants."

View of Changi Cantonment from the Johor Strait, 1938
RAFSA Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore



Map showing Changi Cantonment, Changi Village and other landmarks of the area, 1939
Singapore Land Authority collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore

ARTILLERY BATTERIES IN CHANGI

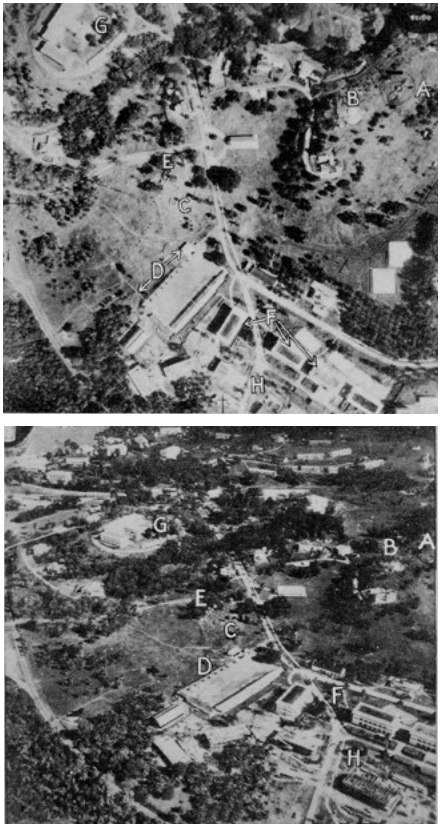
During the 1920s, there was a debate within the British government and its military departments over the best way to defend the naval base at Sembawang. Principally, the base could be defended by a combination of heavy, medium and light artillery (with the installation of fixed artillery positions and camps for soldiers among others), or with the use of torpedo bombers, fighters and seaplanes (with air warfare infrastructure).

In July 1926, the British government decided on fixed artillery defences at Ulu Pandan, Buona Vista and Tanah Merah among others. The Tanah Merah emplacement would have three 15-inch guns with a range of about 32 kilometres, and cover the Causeway, Johor Bahru and the eastern entrance of the Johor Strait. In May 1935, Sultan Ibrahim of Johor donated 500,000 British pounds as a gift for the Silver Jubilee of King George V and towards the military defence of the United Kingdom. Part of his donation, 400,000 British pounds, was used by the British War Office to finance two more 15-inch guns at Changi. In honour of the Sultan's donation, the battery at Cosford Road off Upper Changi Road North was named the Johore Battery.

By 1939, the completion of the naval base and the construction of numerous artillery batteries had made Singapore one of the most heavily armed territories in the British empire. The artillery in the northeast consisted of Changi Battery's two six-inch Mark VII BL guns, Beting Kusah Battery's two six-inch Mark VII BL guns, and Johore Battery's three 15-inch Mark I BL guns, as well as the nearby batteries of Sphinx on Pulau Tekong Besar and Pengerang in Johor. There was also an Anti-Motor Torpedo Boat (AMTB) battery at Changi Outer (Palm) equipped with two Twin six-pounder QF guns. Beyond the batteries, associated artillery infrastructure included Range Finders, Observation and Command posts and magazines.

The three artillery guns of Johore Battery fired shells that were 15-inch (38 centimetres) in diameter and had barrels of 16.5 metres. The guns were positioned above bunkers and tunnels that extended three storeys underground, with the ammunition brought up with hydraulic lifts. During the Japanese invasion of Singapore in February 1942, two of the three guns were destroyed by the British. In 1948, the sole surviving gun here was demolished for 200 tons of scrap metal.

Following the withdrawal of the British military from Singapore in 1967, aviation facilities were built over two of Johore Battery's gun positions in the 1960s, before the battery was rediscovered in 1991. In 2002, a replica 15-inch gun was mounted at the site. Presently, only one underground ammunition bunker remains of the original Johore Battery.



Aerial photographs of artillery positions and barracks in Changi, 1938
Courtesy of The National Archives, United Kingdom

Beting Kusah Battery was dismantled after the British military withdrawal from Singapore between 1967 and 1971, and the site is within the Changi Airport complex today. Meanwhile, Singapore Air Traffic Control Centre today sits on the site of Changi Battery.

CHANGI PRISON

Completed in 1936 and operational from 4 January 1937, Changi Prison was the last penal institution built by the colonial government. Its establishment was a response to overcrowded conditions in Pearl's Hill Prison and Outram Prison by the early 1930s.

Constructed by the Public Works Department (PWD), Changi Prison's design incorporated features intended to minimise re-offence and introduced programmes including education, rehabilitation and training. During the colonial era, this maximum-security prison was also known as Changi Gaol or Changi Jail.

Entrance to Changi Prison, 1946
National Museum of Singapore collection, courtesy of National Heritage Board

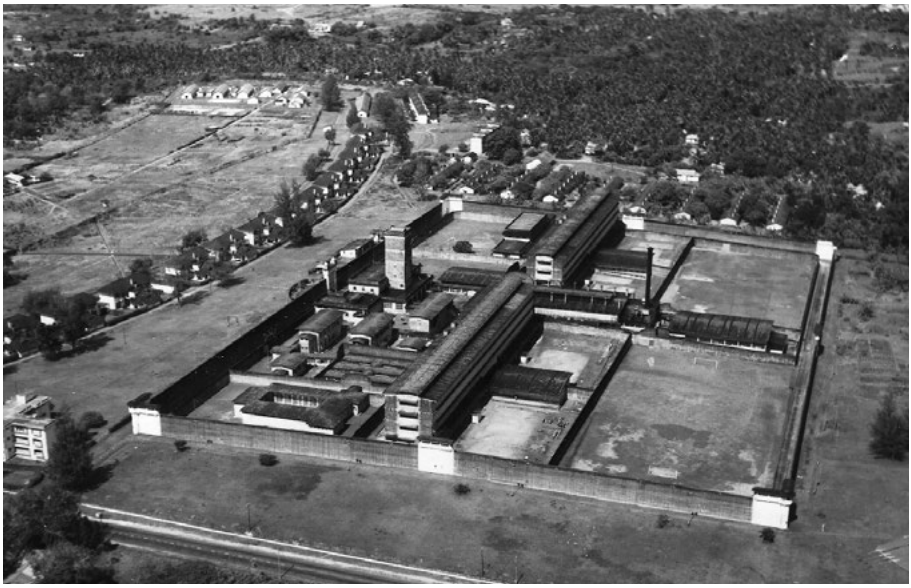
The original Changi Prison comprised two main buildings of four storeys each and was able to house 600 people altogether. Work rooms were located on the ground floor, while cells were in the upper floors, with European and Asian prisoners segregated into different blocks. The prison's layout followed the "telephone-pole" plan common for jails in the late 19th century and 20th century, with the cell blocks branching out from a covered central corridor, resembling telephone poles of the era. The layout facilitated speedy access to the cell blocks for wardens and other staff.

Across the 13-acre site, the prison also incorporated punishment cells, an alarm system, a hospital, a modern sewage system, a central laundry and a kitchen. Cells were furnished with electric lights and latrines, while the prison was enclosed by a six-metre-high wall with four corner turrets serving as watchtowers. Quarters for the warders, medical officers and attendants were located outside the prison walls.

During the Japanese Occupation, Changi Prison was used for the internment of approximately 2,800 Western civilians, and after May 1944, approximately 7,000 prisoners-of-war after the civilians had been moved to Sime Road Camp (see Page 39 for more information on World War II and the Japanese Occupation).

In the 1950s and 1960s, several politicians and activists were also detained at Changi Prison, including those arrested during Operation

Changi Prison (lower left of image) and residences, likely quarters, around it, 1936-46
Arthur Scurry Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore



Aerial view of Changi Prison, c. 1950s
RAFSA Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore

Cold Store, an internal security operation executed in Singapore. These detainees included Lim Chin Siong, Fong Swee Suan, Lim Hock Siew, James Puthucheary, Said Zahari and Devan Nair, a trade unionist who later became President of Singapore. Nair recalled: "While we were in prison, the debate began. Where should we be heading? To a Chinese Communist Malaya, or to a multiracial, democratic socialist Malaya? What should be the meaning of Malayan nationalism? We carried on the debate in the prison."

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, the prison was expanded with new blocks before a decision was taken to redevelop the Changi Prison complex at the turn of the 21st century. The new complex was planned to house prisoners from other incarceration facilities in Changi and elsewhere on the island. A 180-metre stretch of the original prison wall, its entrance gate and two turrets were preserved for their historical significance. These elements were gazetted as a National Monument in 2016. The rest of the original prison was demolished in 2004.

In August 2004, the first portion of the redeveloped complex was opened. Known as Cluster A, it housed inmates formerly held at Changi Prison, Moon Crescent Prison, Jalan Awan Prison and Changi Reformative Training Centre. Cluster B opened in January 2010 and took in inmates from Queenstown Remand Prison, Sembawang Drug Rehabilitation Centre (DRC), Khalsa DRC, Selarang Park DRC and Tanah Merah Prison. By this time, Changi Prison could accommodate 11,000 inmates.

Changi Prison tower, c.1950s
RAFSA collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore

CONSEQUENTIAL CONVERSATIONS IN CHANGI PRISON

In late 1958, with Singapore's general elections for the Legislative Assembly on the horizon, Changi Prison was the setting for a series of conversations that had great importance in Singapore's political history. The government elected from the 1959 vote would find themselves in charge of most of Singapore's internal government functions, for the first time in the island's history.

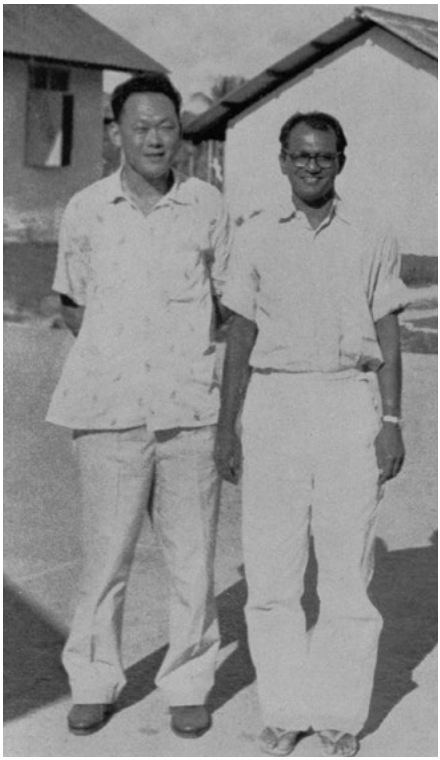
At the time, the People's Action Party (PAP) was an opposition party with three seats in the previous Assembly. The party faced a major decision ahead of the elections: should it continue as an opposition party and gradually grow as a political institution, or contest for as many seats as possible to win and form the government? The party's leaders were split on the question, as there were several potential perils and pitfalls in becoming the party to herald in Singapore's era of self-governance.

Among these issues was the potential for communist-leaning candidates to be elected as part of the party's slate, leading towards the eventual takeover of the PAP by communist leadership. On the other hand, some PAP leaders urged a push to win the elections, arguing that the PAP had to be in power to clean up a corrupt government.

At this point, several PAP members were held in Changi Prison, having been detained under the Preservation of Public Security Ordinance (which later became the Internal Security Act) by Chief Minister Lim Yew Hock. The arrests had been made in October 1956, in the wake of riots following a series of protests by students of Chinese-medium schools. The PAP had 14 office-bearers and members among the 259 people arrested, including prominent leaders Lim Chin Siong, Fong Swee Suan, James Puthucheary, Devan Nair and Sandrasegaran Woodhull, all of whom were unionists and had significant support among the grassroots public.

The five PAP leaders in Changi Prison were aware that their future was tied to the upcoming elections. Nair said: "We all knew that if the PAP did not form the next government, we would not be released by the British and Malayan governments, whose representatives would sit on the Internal Security Council of Singapore."

From 1956 to late 1958, the PAP's leader Lee Kuan Yew and other party members carried on dialogues with Nair and the others in Changi



Lee Kuan Yew photographed with James Puthucheary during one of the former's visits to Changi Prison, 1959
Ministry of Culture collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore

Prison. As Lee recalled in his autobiography: "...I had been seeing Devan Nair, Lim Chin Siong, Fong Swee Suan, Woodhull and Puthucheary in their new detention camp... once every three or four weeks. I would bring them a large pot of delicious chicken curry that my cook had prepared, freshly baked bread bought from a bakery on the way to Changi and, when permission was granted, some large bottles of Anchor beer."

Well aware of the popular support enjoyed by the unionists but suspicious of their potential links with the proscribed Malayan Communist Party (MCP), Lee issued an ultimatum to the five members: that the PAP would only seek a victory at the elections if they agreed to accept the democratic socialist political platform of the party, seek political power only through peaceful constitutional means and disavow the armed struggle of the MCP. Lee also sought a written confirmation from the five of this agreement, and their consensus on national independence through merger with Malaya.

With S. Rajaratnam, co-founder of the PAP, also in conversation with the PAP leaders in Changi, the five members eventually agreed to Lee's conditions and signed a document authored by Nair titled "The Ends and Means of Socialism". On Lee's part, he agreed to have all PAP political detainees freed if the party came into power. Through messages smuggled out of Changi Prison, the detained leaders told unionists and their supporters outside to refrain from protests and to support PAP at the elections.

This paved the way for PAP's victory in the 1959 general elections, with the party winning 43 of 51 seats in the Legislative Assembly. Lee became Singapore's first Prime Minister, while Nair was later a member of parliament and President of Singapore. The newly elected PAP members refused to form the government until the party's political detainees were released from Changi Prison, and their members were freed in front of a large crowd of supporters on 4 June 1959.

From the left: Devan Nair (black pants), Lim Chin Siong and Sandra Woodhull on their release from Changi Prison, 1959
Ministry of Culture collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore

WORLD WAR II AND THE JAPANESE OCCUPATION

During World War II and the Japanese invasion of Malaya from December 1941, the British divided the island of Singapore into three defence commands. Changi was part of Southern Area, with James Force stationed at the northeast tip near Changi Battery and the 2nd Malay Brigade further south along the Tanah Merah-Changi coast.

The artillery defences were grouped under Changi Fire Command, with the purpose of guarding the eastern approaches to the Johor Strait and the naval base at Sembawang. The command comprised Johore Battery (manned by the 7th Coast Royal Artillery), Changi Battery (manned by the HKSRA), Beting Kusah (manned by the HKSRA), Tekong Battery (manned by the Royal Artillery), Sphinx Battery (on Pulau Tekong, manned by the HKSRA) and Pengerang (on the south Johor coast).

Changi Fire Command also included the Anti Motor Torpedo Boat (AMTB) batteries of Calder Harbour, Pulau Sajahat (two miles north of Changi Point), Palm and School (both in the Changi area), Pulau Ubin and Ladang (Pulau Tekong). Changi Fire Command's main command post and observation post, equipped with a 100-foot Barr and Stroud rangefinder, were located on Changi Hill, as were the battery and fortress plotting rooms.

With Allied forces retreating from Malaya into Singapore and the demolition of the Causeway on 31 January 1942, artillery batteries in Changi began to exchange fire with Japanese artillery in Johor. On 12 February, Lieutenant-General Arthur Percival, General Officer Commanding Malaya, issued orders to demolish all the defences in Changi and the withdrawal of all troops from Changi and the south-east coast to Singapore. Over this period, the Johore Battery had expended approximately 194 armoured-piercing shells. An intelligence report in 1944 found that the Nos. 1 and 2 guns had been demolished with some 159 kilograms of gelignite explosives in the breech of each gun.

SOOK CHING AND CHANGI

Following the British surrender of Singapore on 15 February 1942, the Japanese military carried out an inspection and execution campaign known as *Sook Ching* ("purge through cleansing" or "purification by elimination" in Hokkien and Teochew, also known as *Dai Kensho* ("great inspection" in Japanese)). Executions were carried out at various areas across Singapore, with sites including Changi Beach, Tanah Merah and Telok Mata Ikan.

On 18 February, the Japanese 25th Army headquarters issued orders for the Kempeitai (military security police) to "purge" Malaya and Singapore of "all anti-Japanese elements". The following day, Chinese men aged between 18 and 50 were ordered to assemble from 21 February at five locations to be screened by the Japanese military. Those identified as "anti-Japanese" (a classification that was vague and ill-defined) were brought to be executed at various locations, including at Changi Beach. One account places the Changi Beach massacre on 20 February, with 70 people shot, four who survived and fled and a further survivor who was discovered by POWs the following day.

At the beach, Chinese civilians were bound with rope and arranged in rows with between eight and 12 in each row. They were ordered to walk into the sea and Japanese soldiers shot them in

the process. Those that survived the shootings were bayoneted by the Japanese. The bodies of the dead at Changi Beach were buried by a work party of British and Australian POWs.

Another known Sook Ching massacre site in the Changi area was Tanah Merah Beach (now part of Changi Airport). This incident involved 400 to 600 civilians being executed by Japanese machine gunners at the beach. Another group executed in Changi comprised 66 Chinese military volunteers who had taken part in the defence of Singapore.

There were a handful of survivors of the Sook Ching executions, including Yap Yan Hong (b. 1918) who was among those at Changi Beach. Yap recalled:

"I swam outwards regardless of what was happening. It was then that I heard a whistle. And after the whistle, the machine gun opened up. I took a deep breath and went underwater and I could hear the bullets ricocheting above me.... When the firing stopped I was telling myself, 'these people will come out to find those who are still wounded to finish them off. They will not leave any wounded". And I was right. I heard the chug-chug of a motorboat. And then I just swam underwater, not outwards the sea but towards my right, towards the Bedok area.

"When the sound of the motorboat came nearer to me, I stayed underwater. Immediately after that, the searchlights came on, and it was searching the sea. From [underwater], I could see rays of searchlights coming along. When the rays moved away from me, I just put my nose up to take a deep breath again."

In 1947, three members of the Japanese military were sentenced to death for their roles in the Sook Ching massacres after a war crimes trial held at Changi Prison. Major-General Kawamura Saburo (commander of Japan's Singapore garrison), Lieutenant Colonel Oishi Masayuki (commander of the Kempeitai) and Captain Kosaki Goshi were found guilty by a British military court, and subsequently hung at the prison.

Gallows house in Changi Prison where convicted Japanese war criminals were executed by hanging, 1946
Courtesy of Australian War Memorial

INTERNED AT CHANGI

During the Japanese Occupation from 1942 to 1945, British military facilities at Changi and Changi Prison were turned into an internment camp for prisoners of war (POWs) and civilians. British, Australian and other allied European POWs were placed in the Kitchener, Roberts and Selarang barracks and their adjacent spaces, together referred to as Changi Camp, while European, Eurasian and Jewish civilians were interned at the prison.

Changi Camp was also used as a transit camp to gather POWs and civilian internees from Malaya, the Dutch-ruled areas of Indonesia and elsewhere, before they were transported to labour projects including the infamous Thailand-Burma railway. Over three years, an estimated 87,000 POWs from various locations across Asia passed through Changi, while the size of the civilian population reached 4,500. The civilian internees comprised a wide range of nationalities, as the Japanese included among their number the wives of any

British or Allied European. As such there were female internees of Armenian, Chinese, Greek, Polish, Javanese, Thai, Malay, Iraqi, Indian and Turkish descent among others, as well as a Japanese internee.

On 17 February 1942, British, Australian, New Zealander, Dutch and other European residents and civilians in Singapore, along with Allied POWs, were ordered to assemble at the Padang. In the early afternoon, they were then ordered to march 24 kilometres to Changi, with the 45,562 troops arriving at Selarang Barracks around midnight. The civilians, with the former colonial governor Sir Shenton Thomas and his wife Daisy Thomas leading the procession, were allowed to stay overnight at Katong and arrived the following day. This group comprised some 2,400 men, women and children.

The march to Changi was a symbolic overturning of the colonial and social order. A civilian internee, Mary Thomas, recalled:

"Though the walk was hard on the older and more delicate women, its real sting lay in being thus publicly compelled to do something so foreign to all the ordinary standards of European activity."

In early 1942, the Western civilians and POWs were generally allowed to organise themselves, and officers and administrators were able to freely move throughout Changi. The officers of Malaya Command

Main entrance to Changi Prison during the Japanese Occupation, c. 1942-45
Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore

Allied POWs marching on the road to Changi, 1942
David Ng Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore

headquarters organised allocation of accommodation and decided to use Roberts Barracks as a hospital. By 11 March, Australian troops were allocated Selarang Barracks, while other military units involved in the defence of Singapore were housed at Kitchener Barracks. Additionally, the III Corps of the Indian Army were situated at Temple Hill , and the 11th and 18th divisions at Changi Village. Japanese officers supervising the POWs were quartered at Half Moon Crescent near Changi Prison.

Lieutenant-General Arthur Percival, the General Officer Commanding of Allied troops, detailed the camp's administration at the outset of the Japanese Occupation:

"The Changi camp was not like an ordinary POW camp surrounded by barbed wire with a staff and guards of the detaining power. It covered a considerable area of ground, bounded on one side by barbed wire and on the other sides by the sea and was divided into sub areas each under a British commander assisted by a British staff. The whole was under my general administrative control assisted by the staff of headquarters, Malaya Command...the Japanese commander had an office at the entrance to the area and issued his instructions through my headquarters."

Hospital constructed by POWs at Changi Prison, c. 1942-45
Courtesy of Australian War Memorial

Huts within Roberts Barracks, part of Changi Camp, c. 1942-45
Courtesy of Australian War Memorial

Cookhouse within Roberts Barracks, part of Changi Camp, c. 1942-45
Courtesy of Australian War Memorial

SELARANG BARRACKS SQUARE INCIDENT

On 1 September 1942, the Japanese ordered some 15,000 POWs to gather at Selarang Barracks. The barrack square was meant to accommodate 1,200 people, and the POWs had access only to a couple of taps connected to a water tower. Ordered to sign forms declaring that they would not attempt to escape the camp before they were allowed to leave the square, the majority of the POWs initially refused.

They remained at the square for four more days, until 5 September. By then, dysentery and other diseases had set in among the gathered POWs. Allied officers issued orders for the forms to be signed, with all troops doing so and returning to their original quarters within the camp. Most considered their declarations to have been made under duress and thus not binding.

The Japanese demands had partly been prompted by an earlier incident. Four POWs, (two members of the Australian Army's Ordnance Corps and two British POWs) had been captured after an escape attempt in May 1942. The four POWs were executed by the Japanese at Beting Kusah beach on 2 September, with the firing squad comprised of soldiers of the Indian National Army (INA).

After the Japanese Occupation, Lieutenant-General Fukuei Shimpei, who was believed to have given the orders for the execution of the four POWs, was found guilty of a war crime. While previous convicted Japanese war criminals had been hung at Changi Prison, Fukuei was taken to Beting Kusah beach and executed by firing squad on 27 April 1946.

Photograph of Allied prisoners-of-war concentrated at the Selarang Barracks parade square, 1942
Courtesy of Australian War Memorial

LIFE IN CHANGI CAMP

The life of an internee in Changi Camp and Changi Prison was akin to a daily series of trials. Besides hunger, deprivation, disease and malnutrition, internees endured separation from their families and loved ones as well as occasional physical and mental abuse from the guards. For many, the loss of their freedom may well have been the most difficult to bear.

From late 1942, the Japanese tightened their controls over the camp and guards included Sikhs and other Indians who had joined the Japanese-aligned INA, as well as Korean and Japanese guards. The quality and quantity of food also deteriorated, mirroring conditions in Singapore outside the camp.

Among the difficult conditions faced by the internees at Changi was overcrowding. Changi Prison was built to house 600 inmates but it held four times that number of civilian internees during the Occupation. An estimated 40,000 to 50,000 POWs in 1942 were crammed into barracks meant for a fraction of that number, with people spilling out into open ground and makeshift shelters. Denis Russell-Roberts, a British POW, recalled in an oral history interview:

"Some of the men...found themselves sleeping in malaria-ridden sandpits. Some lived in ambulances, some in shacks which they built with attap leaves and corrugate iron, and others made themselves a home by upturning lorries and old motor cars."

From mid-1944, the civilian internees were moved to Sime Road Camp, and the POWs, numbering approximately 7,000 at the time, were ordered into Changi Prison. With the overcrowding at the 600-inmate capacity prison growing to a new magnitude, attap huts were erected within the prison grounds to accommodate POWs. Australian David Griffin described:

"...if the Gaol were depressing the immediate surrounding were more so. From piles of dusty rubbish the huts were emerging, some finished, some mere roofless shells, some lying strewn in broken sections. Thousands of men laboured between stacks of broken furniture and heaps of clay from the new latrine holes. Carpenters cursed and built huts without nails or hammers....

Deep in the Gaol the men were settling in, three to a cell in the long multiple-storied wings, sixty or more in the workrooms, and a couple of companies in the de luxe European block. Even now the air was filled with a stinking density, the atmosphere of steam laundries plus the interior of other people's socks. The corridors resounded with shouts and the clang of boots on iron staircases."

Griffin also recalled the meals at Changi Prison, improvised like so many other things, and how these rations occupied the minds of POWs between the hours of manual labour:

"[At dawn]...the mess orderlies would begin their irritating chant, "Come and get it". They were referring to a pint of hot water, said to resemble tea, half a pint of ground rice stewed overnight, and a small object...made of compressed rice fried in palm oil—the ubiquitous "doover". This hearty "break" of a fast...was consumed by slow eaters in two minutes. Thereafter it was the main topic of conversation until...it was replaced by anticipations of lunch.

"Without doubt the evening meal...was the big event of the day. The hours of solid discussion which preceded it had keyed the eaters to concert pitch. Five ounces of rice, half an ounce of fish...six ounces of greens, half an ounce of tapioca, and a particle of oil.... Would there be one "doover", would there be two? Would it be a thick stew, would it be thin?...when you are starving, the world, the universe is food. Food is...almost all there is of life."

Watercolour by Murray Griffin of the kitchens and huts outside the walls of Changi Prison, c. 1942-45
Courtesy of Australian War Memorial

POWs, including members of the 2/9 Field Ambulance and 2/10 Field Ambulance units, in quarters within Changi Prison, c. 1942-45
Courtesy of Australian War Memorial

Overall, however, the conditions at Changi were relatively better than at similar camps elsewhere in Asia during World War II. Instances of cruelty and abuse of POWs were lower at Changi than at the Thailand-Burma Railway and other camps, with the camp's lack of manpower for guards and the efficient management of the camp by Allied soldiers said to be major factors. Kenneth Harrison, a POW who had been interned at Pudu Prison in Kuala Lumpur before being moved to Changi, described how "Changi itself was rather incredible to us Pudu men, and in many ways [the camp] could have been called a POWs' paradise".

Eurasian Volunteer Victor Rudolph Grosse (b. 1922) contrasted life in Changi with the deprivations of civilians outside the internment camp:

"We looked after our own backyard and everybody had his own unit to look after, clean up the place, we had our kitchen. [The Japanese] supplied food...tapioca most of the time, fried fish. But it was good enough, more than what our civilians got outside. Civilians like my mother [outside the camps], they struggled for food, [had to] sell things for money for food."

Bamboo toothbrush fashioned from bamboo and coconut fibre in Changi Camp, c. 1942-45
Gift of the family of Forbes Wallace, National Museum of Singapore collection, courtesy of National Heritage Board

For the POWs, the prospect of being sent from Changi to work on the Thailand-Burma Railway was a potential threat to life and limb however, with the punishing conditions there bringing about its nickname of the "Death Railway".

Faced with shortages in Changi Camp, POWs and civilian internees had to make numerous adaptations to meet the needs of daily life. In the process, they came up with inventive

solutions. Nutritional deficiencies were mitigated with juice from lallang grass and spoonfuls of palm oil. Toothbrushes were fashioned from bamboo, coconut fibre and put together with melted bitumen from roadways.

Some of these adaptations may well have been inspired by kampong lifestyles; brooms were made from bamboo and palm fronds, as were shelters and makeshift dwellings. Other items required improvisation, such as soap being made from mixing palm oil and potash in boilers rigged from storage drums and stolen pipes.

De Souza recalled:

"In those days, there was no such thing as abhorrent taste, wanting to survive we have to do it. Palm oil was distasteful as you take a spoonful, just raw like that. And then we had fellows manufacturing 'tobacco'. They [plucked yellow] papaya leaves...mix them up with gula melaka *[palm sugar], dried it in the sun and chopped it up...then probably mixed it up with a few cigars. [Pages from] the Bible, very thin paper, [made] very good cigarette paper.*

Organising themselves by their capabilities, the internees set up kitchens and bakers, workshops, laundries, vegetable gardens, blacksmiths, hospitals and even a dental surgery. A library formed in Changi Prison had some 5,000 titles and a bookbinding service. The camp also came to be known informally as "Changi University", as it featured more than 100 teachers and lecturers from a diverse range of expertise and academic fields. Personnel giving lecturers were excused from military duties, and topics included architecture, poultry keeping, yachting, literature, advertising, language classes and motor engineering.

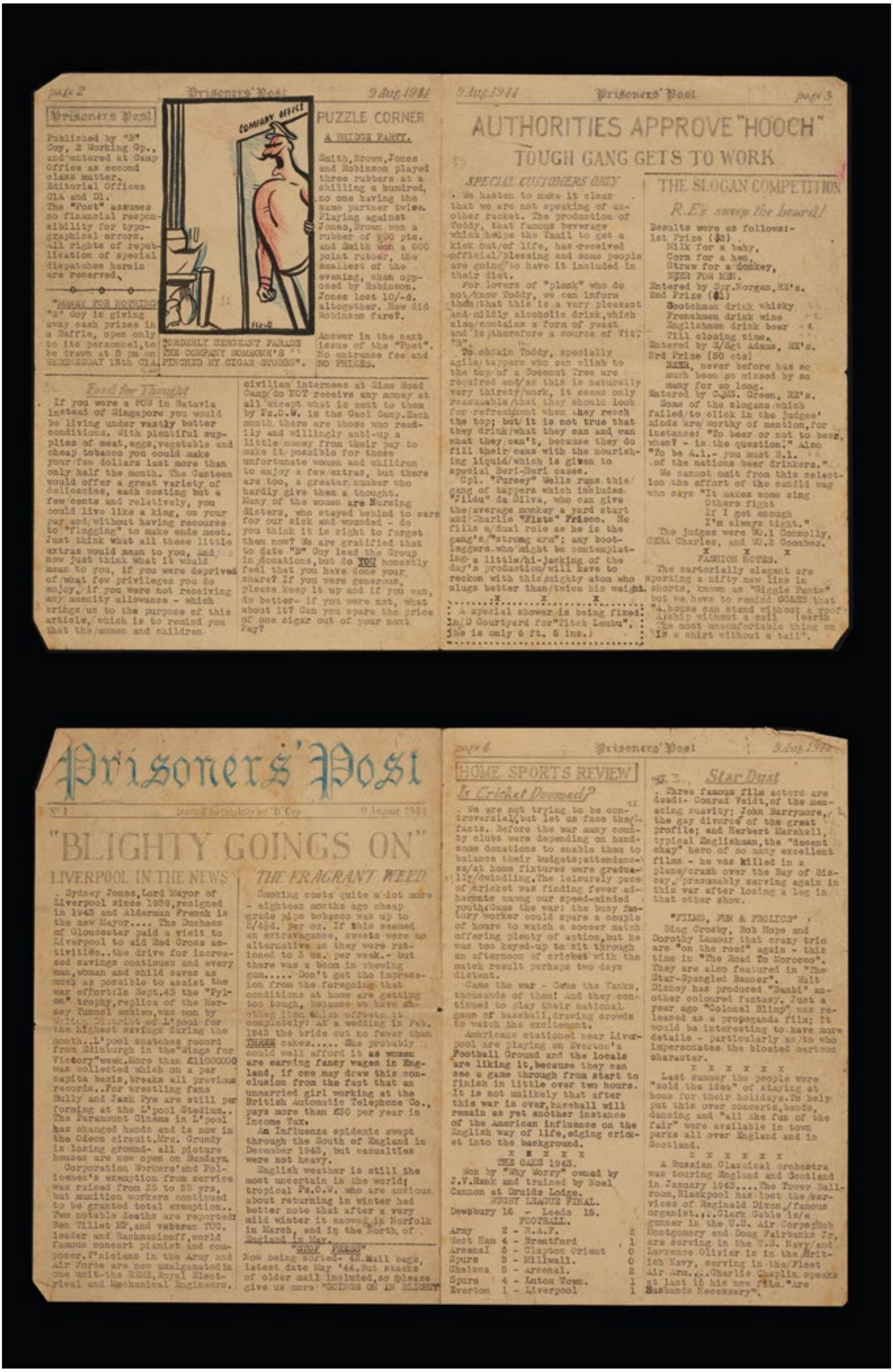
POW holding a ukelele, c. 1942-45
Courtesy of Australian War Memorial

Sketch titled "Changi Prison (Child at Play)" by Mary Angela Bateman, who was interned at Changi, showing the conditions of the prison, c. 1942-45
National Museum of Singapore collection, courtesy of National Heritage Board

To cope with adversities of internment, the POWs and civilian internees also organised theatrical plays and musicals, concerts and vaudeville acts among other performances. Within days of their internment in Changi, five performance groups had been formed in Changi Camp. Their productions were elaborate affairs with committed performers, musicians and artists who painted stage backdrops.

The performances and other activities were a vital means for the internees to persevere through the daily reality of internment. David Griffin, a member of the Australian Imperial Force, remembered:

"Each man created for himself a microcosm into which he could crawl: flowers, hobbies, poultry, painting, writing, what you will. And the most contented prisoner was he who could build the most perfect microcosm and disappear most effectively into it."



page 2 — Prisoners' Post — 9 Aug 1944

Prisoners' Post

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"MONEY FOR NOTHING" "B" Coy is giving away cash prizes in a Raffle, open only to its personnel, to be drawn at 8 pm on WEDNESDAY 13th C1A.

COMPANY OFFICE

"ORDERLY SERGEANT PARADE THE COMPANY SOMEONE'S PINCHED MY CIGAR STUBBS".

PUZZLE CORNER

A BRIDGE PARTY.

Smith, Brown, Jones and Robinson played three rubbers at a shilling a hundred, no one having the same partner twice. Playing against Jones, Brown won a rubber of 990 pts. and Smith won a 600 point rubber, the smallest of the evening, when opposed by Robinson. Jones lost 10/-d. altogether. How did Robinson fare?

Answer in the next issue of the "Post". No entrance fee and NO PRIZES.

Food for Thought

If you were a POW in Batavia instead of Singapore you would be living under vastly better conditions. With plentiful supplies of meat, eggs, vegetable and cheap tobacco you could make your few dollars last more than only half the month. The Canteen would offer a great variety of delicacies, each costing but a few cents and relatively, you could live like a king, on your pay and without having recourse to "flogging" to make ends meet. Just think what all these little extras would mean to you, and now just think what it would mean to you, if you were deprived of what few privileges you do enjoy, if you were not receiving any amenity allowance - which brings us to the purpose of this article, which is to remind you that the women and children civilian internees at Sime Road Camp do NOT receive any money at all except what is sent to them by Ps.O.W. in the Gaol Camp. Each month there are those who readily and willingly anti-up a little money from their pay to make it possible for those unfortunate women and children to enjoy a few extras, but there are too, a greater number who hardly give them a thought. Many of the women are Nursing Sisters, who stayed behind to care for our sick and wounded - do you think it is right to forget them now? We are gratified that to date "B" Coy lead the Group in donations, but do YOU honestly feel that you have done your share? If you were generous, please keep it up and if you can, do better - if you were not, what about it? Can you spare the price of one cigar out of your next Pay?

9 Aug 1944 — Prisoners' Post — page 3

AUTHORITIES APPROVE "HOOCH"

TOUGH GANG GETS TO WORK

SPECIAL CUSTOMERS ONLY

We hasten to make it clear that we are not speaking of another racket. The production of Toddy, that famous beverage which helps the Tamil to get a kick out of life, has received official blessing and some people are going to have it included in their diet.

For lovers of "plonk" who do not know Toddy, we can inform them that this is a very pleasant and mildly alcoholic drink, which also contains a form of yeast and is therefore a source of Vit. "B".

To obtain Toddy, specially agile tappers who can climb to the top of a Coconut Tree are required and as this is naturally very thirsty work, it seems only reasonable that they should look for refreshment when they reach the top; but it is not true that they drink what they can and can what they can't, because they do fill their cans with the nourishing liquid which is given to special Beri-Beri cases.

Cpl. "Pursey" Wells runs this gang of tappers which includes "Jildu" da Silva, who can give the average monkey a yard start and Charlie "Fists" Frisco. He fills a dual role as he is the gang's "strong arm"; any bootleggers who might be contemplating a little hi-jacking of the day's production will have to reckon with this mighty atom who slugs better than twice his weight.

X X X

A special shower is being fixed in D Courtyard for "Titch Lembu". (he is only 6 ft. 5 ins.)

THE SLOGAN COMPETITION

R.E's sweep the board!

Results were as follows:-

1st Prize ($2)
Milk for a baby,
Corn for a hen,
Straw for a donkey,
BEER FOR MEN.
Entered by Spr. Morgan, RE's.

2nd Prize ($1)
Scotchmen drink whisky
Frenchmen drink wine
Englishmen drink beer
Till closing time.
Entered by S/Sgt Adams, RE's.

3rd Prize (50 cts)
BEER, never before has so much been so missed by so many for so long.
Entered by CQMS. Green, RE's.

Some of the slogans which failed to click in the judges' minds are worthy of mention, for instance: "To beer or not to beer, when? - is the question." Also "To be A.1.- you must B.1. of the nations beer drinkers."

We cannot omit from this selection the effort of the candid wag who says "It makes some sing
Others fight
If I get enough
I'm always tight."

The judges were WO.1 Connolly, CERA Charles, and WO.2 Coombes.

X X X

FASHION NOTES.

The sartorially elegant are sporting a nifty new line in shorts, known as "Giggle Pants" but we have to remind CCAES that "A house can stand without a roof A ship without a sail (earth The most uncomfortable thing on Is a shirt without a tail".

Prisoners' Post

No 1 — Issued fortnightly by 'B' Coy — 9 August 1944

"BLIGHTY GOINGS ON"

LIVERPOOL IN THE NEWS

Sydney Jones, Lord Mayor of Liverpool since 1939, resigned in 1943 and Alderman French is the new Mayor.... The Duchess of Gloucester paid a visit to Liverpool to aid Red Cross activities..the drive for increased savings continues and every man, woman and child saves as much as possible to assist the war effort: In Sept. 43 the "Pylon" trophy, replica of the Mersey Tunnel emblem, was won by Walton District of L'pool for the highest savings during the month..L'pool snatches record from Edinburgh in the "Wings for Victory" week. More than £11000000 was collected which on a per capita basis, breaks all previous records..For wrestling fans Bully and Jack Pye are still performing at the L'pool Stadium.. The Paramount Cinema in L'pool has changed hands and is now in the Odeon circuit. Mrs. Grundy is losing ground - all picture houses are now open on Sundays.

Corporation Workers' and Policemen's exemption from service was raised from 25 to 35 yrs, but munition workers continued to be granted total exemption.. Two notable deaths are reported: Ben Tillet MP, and veteran TUC. leader and Rachmaninoff, world famous concert pianist and composer. T'nicians in the Army and Air Force are now amalgamated in one unit - the REME, Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers.

THE FRAGRANT WEED

Smoking costs quite a lot more - eighteen months ago cheap grade pipe tobacco was up to 2/4½d. per oz. If this seemed an extravagance, sweets were no alternative as they were rationed to 3 oz. per week.- but there was a boom in chewing gum..... Don't get the impression from the foregoing that conditions at home are getting too tough, because we have another item which offsets it completely: At a wedding in Feb. 1943 the bride cut no fewer than THREE cakes..... She probably could well afford it as women are earning fancy wages in England, if one may draw this conclusion from the fact that an unmarried girl working at the British Automatic Telephone Co., pays more than £30 per year in Income Tax.

An Influenza epidemic swept through the South of England in December 1943, but casualties were not heavy.

English weather is still the most uncertain in the world; tropical Ps.O.W. who are anxious about returning in winter had better note that after a very mild winter it snowed in Norfolk in March, and in the North of England in May.

"STOP PRESS"

Now being sorted - 42 Mail bags, latest date May '44. But stacks of older mail included, so please give us more "GOINGS ON IN BLIGHTY"

page 4 — Prisoners' Post — 9 Aug 1944

HOME SPORTS REVIEW

Is Cricket Doomed?

We are not trying to be controversial, but let us face the facts. Before the war many county clubs were depending on handsome donations to enable them to balance their budgets; attendances at home fixtures were gradually dwindling. The leisurely pace of cricket was finding fewer adherents among our speed-minded youth. Came the war: the busy factory worker could spare a couple of hours to watch a soccer match offering plenty of action, but he was too keyed-up to sit through an afternoon of cricket with the match result perhaps two days distant.

Came the war - Came the Yanks, thousands of them! And they continued to play their national game of baseball, drawing crowds to watch the excitement.

Americans stationed near Liverpool are playing on Everton's Football Ground and the locals are liking it, because they can see a game through from start to finish in little over two hours. It is not unlikely that after this war is over, baseball will remain as yet another instance of the American influence on the English way of life, edging cricket into the background.

X X X X X

THE OAKS 1943.

Won by "Why Worry" owned by J.V. Rank and trained by Noel Cannon at Druids Lodge.

RUGBY LEAGUE FINAL.

Dewsbury 16 - Leeds 15.

FOOTBALL.

Army	2	R.A.F.	2
West Ham	4	Brentford	1
Arsenal	6	Clapton Orient	0
Spurs	3	Millwall.	0
Chelsea	5	Arsenal.	2
Spurs	4	Luton Town.	1
Everton	1	Liverpool	1

Star Dust

Three famous film actors are dead:- Conrad Veidt, of the menacing suavity; John Barrymore, the gay divorcé of the great profile; and Herbert Marshall, typical Englishman, the "decent chap" hero of so many excellent films - he was killed in a plane crash over the Bay of Biscay, presumably serving again in this war after losing a leg in that other show.

"FILMS, FUN & FROLICS"

Bing Crosby, Bob Hope and Dorothy Lamour that crazy trio are "on the road" again - this time in "The Road To Morocco". They are also featured in "The Star-Spangled Banner". Walt Disney has produced "Bambi" another coloured fantasy. Just a year ago "Colonel Blimp" was released as a propoganda film; it would be interesting to have more details - particularly as to who impersonates the bloated cartoon character.

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Last summer the people were "sold the idea" of staying at home for their holidays. To help put this over concerts, bands, dancing and "all the fun of the fair" were available in town parks all over England and in Scotland.

X X X X X X

A Russian Classical orchestra was touring England and Scotland in January 1943....The Tower Ballroom, Blackpool has lost the services of Reginald Dixon, famous organist....Clark Gable is a gunner in the U.S. Air Corps; Bob Montgomery and Doug Fairbanks Jr. are serving in the U.S. Navy and Lawrence Olivier is in the British Navy, serving in the Fleet Air Arm....Charlie Chaplin speaks at last in his new film "Are Husbands Necessary".

Prisoners' Post newspaper, produced by POWs during their internment in Changi, c. 1942-45
National Museum of Singapore collection, courtesy of National Heritage Board

CHANGI MURALS

Before World War II, Englishman Stanley Warren (1917-92) had been employed as a film poster artist. After serving with 135th Field Regiment, Royal Artillery, he became a POW following the fall of Singapore. Warren was part of a work party that built the Syonan Chureito, a Japanese monument to the war dead at Bukit Batok. The POWs were allowed to build their own attap-roofed chapel in the vicinity, and Warren crafted two religious murals in the chapel. After contracting amoebic dysentery, he was taken to the POW hospital in Roberts Barracks.

Through his period of medical treatment and despite his ill health, Warren worked on a series of murals at St. Luke's, a chapel established at Block 151 of Roberts Barracks by POWs. He gathered materials like camouflage paint, oil paint and chalk used for billiards, and eventually completed five murals.

The first, the Nativity Scene, included wise men of Asian, Middle Eastern and European appearance, underlining Warren's themes of universality, while the Crucifixion mural has figures reminiscent of the POWs and themes of compassion and forgiveness. The Last Supper includes furniture and dining implements like those used by the POWs.

In May 1943, the chapel was closed after Japanese air forces took over the building, and the murals were painted over. After the end of World War II, the murals were known only to a limited number of military personnel and former POWs. In 1958 and 1959, the existence of the murals became more widely known after they were featured in the Royal Air Force Changi magazine and the Daily Mail newspaper in the United Kingdom. Invited back to Singapore by the British military, Warren restored the murals from December 1963 to January 1964 and on later visits in 1982 and 1988.

Today, while the original murals within the barracks are not open to the public, people can still see replicas at the Changi Chapel and Museum and explore the original murals with a digital dollhouse feature within the gallery.

Bunk in Block 151, with one of the Changi Murals visible on the wall, undated
Courtesy of Royal Airforce Changi Association

Crucifixion section of the Changi Murals, 2005
RAFSA Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore

Artist Stanley Warren during a restoration of the Changi Murals, 1988
Singapore Tourist Promotion Board Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore

PLACES OF WORSHIP AND SPIRITUALITY IN CHANGI CAMP

Within Changi Camp, POWs and civilian internees built places of worship for their religious and spiritual needs, some of which were constructed from scratch while others were installed in existing buildings.

St. George's Church was established by Reverend Eric Cordingly, a POW who was part of the Royal Northumberland Fusiliers, and named after the saint depicted on that military unit's crest. The first version of St. George's Church was constructed within the part of the camp known as India Lines.

St. George's Church hosted religious services conducted by Rev. Cordingly, talks and lectures held as part of what was known as "Changi University", as well as evening social discussions. In April 1943, Rev. Cordingly was sent to Kanchanaburi as part of "F" Force to work on the Thailand-Burma Railway and helped establish a second St. George's Church with makeshift materials.

Chapel within Changi Prison, c. 1942-45
Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore

Rev. Cordingly returned to Changi in April 1944, and a third version of the church was started within Changi Prison. This version had a 14-feet-by-10-feet shelter to cover the altar and benches that could seat 200 people. When the Japanese closed the area of the camp that the church was located in, it was moved to the Officers' Area of Changi Prison. Set among chicken coops, the church was nicknamed "St-George-in-the-Poultry" that drew up to 400 people on some Sundays and had a choir that was trained by an organist from St. Andrew's Cathedral.

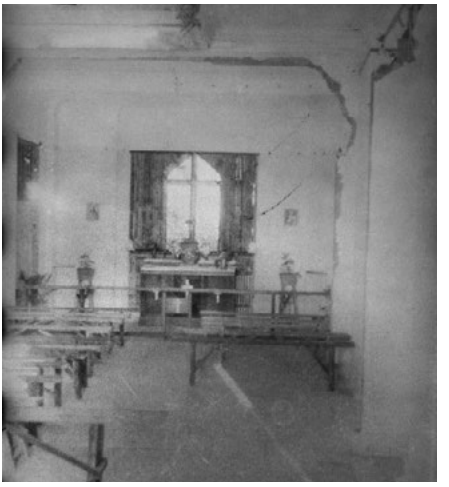
Today, a replica of the church based on its third and fourth versions stands in Changi Chapel and Museum. This replica church includes the Changi Cross, an original element of the wartime institution. Designed by Rev. Cordingly and crafted by Staff Sergeant Harry Stogden of the Royal Army Ordnance Corps (RAOC) from a 4.5-inch howitzer shell and strips of brass, the cross was also engraved with the badges of the RAOC, the Royal Engineers, the Northumberland Fusiliers and the Royal Army Service Corps by a trained stonemason.

Replica of chapel at Changi Chapel and Museum, 2024
Courtesy of National Heritage Board

The Changi Cross travelled with Rev. Cordingly and other POWs from Changi to Kanchanaburi and back, before being moved to Leckhampton in the United Kingdom when Rev. Cordingly returned home after World War II. After the reverend's death in 1992, his family loaned the cross to the Changi Chapel and Museum.

A Roman Catholic chapel, Our Lady of Christians, was built in Changi by Australian POWs belonging to the 8th Division. In 1945, Max Lee, a member of the War Graves Commission, received permission from the British authorities to dismantle the chapel and move it to Australia as a memorial. The elements of the chapel removed to Australia included tiles, the altar and cross, and timber. After being kept in storage for some four decades, the chapel was reconstructed at the Duntroon Military College in Canberra, Australia.

Other places of worship in Changi Camp included the Chapel of St. Luke the Physician, located within Roberts Barracks and decorated with the Changi Murals painted by Stanley Warren, and the Synagogue of Ohel Jacob. In the post-World War II years, numerous former POWs and internees returned to visit Changi Prison, and a floor of the prison hospital was converted into a memorial chapel to accommodate visitors. The returning POWs contributed towards the furnishing of this chapel, which was dedicated in 1957 and 1963.



Catholic chapel established by POWs within Roberts Barracks, part of Changi Camp, c. 1942-45
Courtesy of Australian War Memorial

Watercolour of the Catholic chapel by Murray Griffin, c. 1942-45
Courtesy of Australian War Memorial

The camp also included Changi Cemetery, which housed the remains of 809 POWs who had died while in Changi. In 1946, after the return of the British military, the area was being turned into a Royal Air Force base and the cemetery was exhumed by the Army Graves Service. The Changi burials were reinterred at Kranji War Cemetery, which brought together war dead from various locations. These included 66 Chinese military volunteers who were executed by the Japanese in Changi, with the War Graves Commission recovering their remains in 1947 before their reburials in Kranji.

Changi Cemetery was maintained by POWs, and a wooden lychgate constructed by the POWs marked the entrance to the cemetery. Designed by Captain C. D. Pickersgill of the 18th Division, Royal Engineers, the lychgate was moved into storage at Kranji before being installed at the St. George's Garrison Church in Tanglin Barracks in 1952. The lychgate was said to be constructed of hardwood from a "Changi tree", although it is not known which species specifically was used.

After the withdrawal of British military forces from Singapore in 1971, the Changi lychgate was moved to England and reassembled at Bassingbourn and later at the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire.

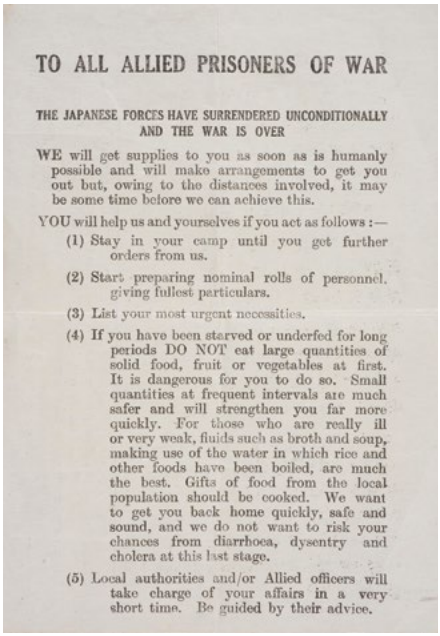
POWs gathered around a grave during a remembrance service, c. 1942-45
Courtesy of Australian War Memorial

END OF THE OCCUPATION

At Changi Camp and elsewhere, several internees at Changi had access to hidden radios, and closely followed news of various developments in the war across the world, while others exchanged information with civilians surreptitiously. In these ways, news of Allied victories spread quickly in the POW and civilian camps, as did rumours and expectations of the defeat of the Japanese.

As early as July 1944, some POWs were said to be sleeping with their boots on in expectation of a Japanese defeat. From November 1944, Allied air forces bombed locations in Singapore and Malaya to disrupt Japanese supply lines. On these bombing raids, American and Allied planes also dropped air raid warning leaflets printed in English and Jawi, warning civilians to stay away from Japanese military installations including the aerodrome at Changi.

Japan eventually announced its surrender on 15 August 1945, and the news filtered through to the POWs and internees in the



TO ALL ALLIED PRISONERS OF WAR

THE JAPANESE FORCES HAVE SURRENDERED UNCONDITIONALLY AND THE WAR IS OVER

WE will get supplies to you as soon as is humanly possible and will make arrangements to get you out but, owing to the distances involved, it may be some time before we can achieve this.

YOU will help us and yourselves if you act as follows :—

(1) Stay in your camp until you get further orders from us.

(2) Start preparing nominal rolls of personnel, giving fullest particulars.

(3) List your most urgent necessities.

(4) If you have been starved or underfed for long periods DO NOT eat large quantities of solid food, fruit or vegetables at first. It is dangerous for you to do so. Small quantities at frequent intervals are much safer and will strengthen you far more quickly. For those who are really ill or very weak, fluids such as broth and soup, making use of the water in which rice and other foods have been boiled, are much the best. Gifts of food from the local population should be cooked. We want to get you back home quickly, safe and sound, and we do not want to risk your chances from diarrhoea, dysentry and cholera at this last stage.

(5) Local authorities and/or Allied officers will take charge of your affairs in a very short time. Be guided by their advice.

Leaflet airdropped to POWs announcing the surrender of the Japanese and the end of World War II, 1945
Donated by Allan and Shane Riley – Sons of Albert Riley RAMC, National Museum of Singapore collection, courtesy of National Heritage Board

following days. Leaflets were airdropped by the Allies into POW camps announcing the end of the war, and the imminent arrival of supplies, instructions that POWs should remain in camp and prepare nominal rolls of personnel, as well as instructions for nutrition and recovery of health. Across more than four years of internment, the official death toll for POWs and civilians at Changi was 905 people.

In the post-World War II period, Changi Prison and other camps were used to detain Japanese POWs, while the former Allied POWs and civilian internees provided information on their wartime experiences through affidavits and witness accounts at the International Military Tribunal for the Far East in Tokyo. War crimes trials were also held in Singapore, at the Goodwood Park Hotel and Changi Prison. Japanese POWs interned at Changi included officers, soldiers and civilians from various locations worldwide, transferred to Singapore for trials for crimes committed in Malaya, Burma, Siam, Indochina and Indonesia among others. In the months following the end of the war, there were an estimated several thousand Japanese at Changi Prison.

As the British colonial state rebuilt its administration of Singapore, the experiences of the POWs and civilian internees during the Occupation influenced various fields of public life. Before the end of the Occupation, the United Kingdom had begun planning the post-World War II reconstruction of Malaya and Singapore. Some of the information leaflets dropped during Allied air raids from 1944 had messages targeted at former members of the Malayan civil service interned at Changi, urging them to preserve records and assuring them of roles in post-World War II administration.

While in Changi Camp, civil servants as well as civic and religious leaders discussed the future of education and other areas. Dr. Hobart Baumann Amstutz, superintendent of the Methodist Mission in Singapore, spoke of having long discussions about the educational system with Harold Robinson Cheeseman, the post-World War II director of education for the Malayan Union, and Thomas William Hinch, the principal of Anglo-Chinese School, while the trio were interned in Changi. Cheeseman, who led a post-World War II review of the colonial education system, also acknowledged the influence of the "Changi Gaol education group" in a speech in 1946.

In the post-World War II era, having been interned in Changi became seen as a testament of character and resilience, almost growing into a criterion for positions in the Malayan civil service. Oswald Gilmour of the Malayan Planning Unit reflected on the "comradeship in adversity" among the internees, and added that "where a name was proposed for office…immediately it was asked: 'Is he an ex-internee?'"

POST-WORLD WAR II DEVELOPMENTS IN CHANGI

Following World War II, Changi continued to be an important area for the military, with the Royal Air Force (RAF) taking over Changi Cantonment and Changi Village becoming a social space for British officers and their families. Besides this military presence, the legacies of Changi's past as a leisure destination continued into the postwar period and beyond. From 1891, Changi Airport then transformed this area into a gateway to the world, adding another layer to Changi's multifaceted history.

FROM COASTAL FORTRESS TO RAF CHANGI

After the Japanese Occupation (1942-45), the RAF occupied Changi Cantonment. The army was said to have been reluctant to give up the breezy, coastal surrounds of Changi, but the existence of the airfield that the Japanese had begun constructing with POW labour during the Occupation made it a natural fit for an airbase.

The airbase came to be known as RAF Changi from April 1946 and hosted the headquarters of Air Command, South East Asia, which later became Far East Air Force (FEAF) Command in June 1949. Air Headquarters Malaya was also based at Changi, while the army maintained a presence at Selarang Barracks. In the 1950s and 1960s, RAF Changi served as a key transport and logistics hub in the United Kingdom's military efforts during the Malayan Emergency, Konfrontasi and the Korean War among others.

Aerial view of quarters and other buildings in RAF Changi, 1965
Aerial photographs by the British Royal Air Force between 1940 to 1970s, from a collection held by the National Archives of Singapore. Crown copyright.

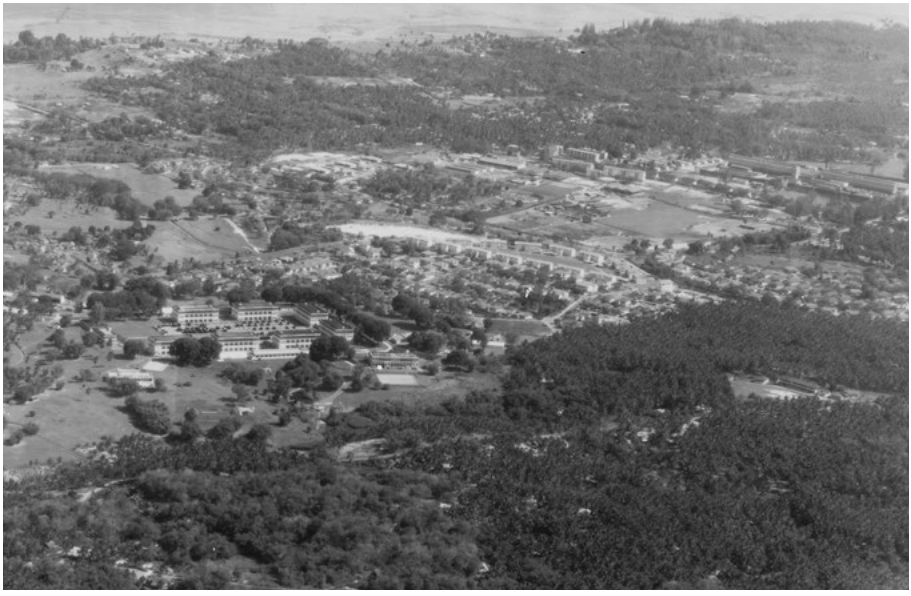
During the Japanese Occupation, the Japanese military had installed an intersecting, cross-shaped earth airstrip utilising POW labour. Some 800 POWs formed what was known as the Ground Levelling Party in September 1943, but the airfield project soon came to encompass almost all of the POW labour then interned at Changi Prison. The POWs excavated low hills and filled swampy areas with the earth and rock, before levelling the ground for the runways. Hangars and dispersal areas were constructed, while barrack blocks were converted into workshops and stores, and the airfield was operational in 1944.

Upon taking over the airbase, the RAF upgraded the runway, expanded the base with more barracks and quarters, and added more roads, naming them after RAF bases in the United Kingdom and elsewhere. Barrack Hill, where the earliest military buildings were completed in the 1920s and the centre from which Changi Cantonment had grown, was renamed FEAF Hill, with the FEAF headquarters based there. RAF Changi evolved into a town in all but name, with Changi Village as its commercial centre, and military quarters extending towards areas like Ayer Gemuroh and Mata Ikan.

Like a British town transplanted to Southeast Asia, RAF Changi included primary and secondary schools, offices and workshops, clubs, hospitals, churches as well as sports and recreational facilities including pools and a golf course. The officers' quarters were extensive enough to form housing estates, from the Lloyd Leas Estate between Selarang Barracks and Tanah Merah Road, to Toh Estate between Tampines Road and Selarang.

In an oral history account, former RAF technician David Penberthy (b. 1936) described the sprawling nature of RAF Changi:

"...[RAF] Changi [was] sprawling, vast. [It was] a long walk from Changi Village down along the old Telok Paku Road till you get to the point on the coast where you join the old Nicoll Drive. [It was] quite unknown for Royal Air Force stations in Britain to have golf courses in the middle of them



Aerial view of Selarang Barracks with parade square in RAF Changi, 1967
Aerial photographs by the British Royal Air Force between 1940 to 1970s, from a collection held by the National Archives of Singapore. Crown copyright.

[like] at Changi. And it is this space, the distances between the administrative blocks, the messes, the accommodation, that was so strange. … there was the added factor that no air force base in Britain had the equivalent of Changi Village in the old days."

The growth of the airbase brought jobs as technicians, drivers and military personnel for residents of the kampongs nearby, while entrepreneurs, cafe owners and hawkers ran a thriving trade at Changi Village. The profusion of air force families also meant numerous domestic worker jobs, providing another alternative to traditional kampong livelihoods.

LEGACIES OF MILITARY-ERA CHANGI

Across Changi's shifting landscape, sites and buildings have long been adapted and repurposed for changing times. When the Royal Engineers set about establishing Changi Cantonment from the late 1920s, one of their earliest actions was to convert a Japanese-owned hotel that extended on stilts into the sea into Changi's first military mess. In that tradition, barracks and bungalows, messes and clubs in Changi, especially within the cantonment, have all served various purposes over the years until today.

Former Royal Engineers Command Building

351 Cranwell Road (formerly 1 Fairy Point Hill)

Completed in 1935, this two-storey building is one of the most architecturally distinguished in Changi Cantonment. During the colonial era, it served as the Generals' Mess, the Royal Engineers' Mess and the Engineers' Command Building, before being known as the Fairy Point Officers' Mess in the post-World War II years. After the British military withdrew from Singapore in 1971, the building housed the headquarters of the Singapore Armed Forces' Commando formation. In 1993, the Commandos moved to the nearby Hendon Camp, and the building later became part of Changi Cove hotel and resort.

Accorded Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) conservation status, the building has

Former Royal Engineers' Command Building was completed as part of Changi Cantonment, c. 1970s-80s
National Museum of Singapore collection, courtesy of National Heritage Board

a five-bay central portico marked by Doric pilasters, while the flanking side wings feature three bays and Tuscan pilasters. The semi-circular arches of the verandah are topped with protruding keystones, above which are the patterned balustrades of the second storey, as well as a central panel bearing the insignia of the Royal Engineers with their torch symbol, the letters R. E. and 1935, the year of its completion.

Fairy Point cluster

Fairy Point Chalet 2
(7 Gosport Road)

Fairy Point Chalets 3 and 4
(3 and 4 Catterick Road)

Fairy Point Chalets 1 and 5
(10 and 14 Leuchars Road)

Married Officers' Quarters
(Fairy Point Chalet 6, Fairy Point Bungalows 1A/1B, 2 and 3, Chalet F)

Fairy Point Officers' Quarters

Fairy Point Chalet 7
(former Officers' Club, 5 Andover Road)

Fairy Point cluster includes the first buildings completed in Changi Cantonment in the late 1920s by the Royal Engineers. Fairy Point Chalet 3, a two-storey bungalow said to be completed in 1928, housed the cantonment's Chief Engineer and later the Royal Engineer's Commander-in-Chief. The bungalows in this area feature hip roof balconies and Marseille-tile main roofs, rectangular layouts, and outhouses.

The Married Officers' Quarters, comprising today's Fairy Point Chalet 6, Bungalows 1A/1B, 2 and 3 and Chalet F, housed military officers and their families, with the single-storey buildings constructed in the 1940s after World War II. Chalet 7 meanwhile was previously the Officers' Club and stands on the site of the bungalow built by Felix Gottlieb in the early 1900s.

Today, these buildings are part of the Civil Service@Changi (CSC@Changi), where they are open for rental by members of the public.

Fairy Point Chalet 3 at Catterick Road, 2024
Courtesy of National Heritage Board

Fairy Point Chalet 7 at Andover Road, 2024
Courtesy of National Heritage Board

Former Changi Hospital
37 Hendon Road

Former Changi Hospital comprises three buildings: former Detention Hospital (37 Hendon Road), an Engineers' barracks (24 Halton Road) and a six-storey block 121 constructed in 1962 to connect them. The hospital served personnel from the RAF and other British and allied military units. During the Korean War (1950-53), the hospital dedicated a ward for the use of wounded United Nations Command soldiers awaiting repatriation to their home countries.

Following the withdrawal of the British military from Singapore by 1971, parts of the military base were occupied by the ANZUK Commonwealth forces, and the hospital became known as ANZUK Hospital before becoming the United Kingdom Military Hospital in 1975. The hospital came under the charge of the Singapore Armed Forces in December 1975, before coming under the Ministry of Health a year later.

The ministry then formed Changi Hospital by merging the former military facilities with the former Changi Chalet Hospital run by the British. In 1997, Changi Hospital was merged with Toa Payoh Hospital and moved to Simei.

After the cessation of hospital operations, these stately buildings were put up for commercial rental, as well as featuring in local films and television shows. Former Changi Hospital also gained a reputation for paranormal sightings and was often a site investigated by urban explorers.

Former Changi Hospital, 1950s
Courtesy of Bruce Smith, Singas.co.uk

Former Changi Hospital today, 2024
Courtesy of National Heritage Board

Former Kitchener Barracks
33-49 Hendon Road

The former barracks and office buildings along Hendon Road were completed between 1928 and 1937, forming what was known as Kitchener Barracks, and were occupied by Royal Engineers units. During the Japanese Occupation, they housed POWs and later Japanese military units.

After World War II, these buildings were home to operational military units including signals and ordnance platoons as well as military offices and the headquarters of the Far East Air Force (FEAF). Eventually, the area became known as FEAF Hill.

During the British military withdrawal in 1971, these buildings were handed over to the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF), with the Commando Formation using them as part of the Commando Camp until the development of Hendon Camp in 1993. From the 2000s, these buildings were adapted for commercial use, and have housed educational campuses and hotels among others.

Former Selarang Barracks and former Roberts Barracks

After the British military withdrawal in 1971, several buildings within RAF Changi came under the charge of the SAF. Today, these buildings are within operational military camps and generally restricted from public access. They include the former Temple Hill Officers' Mess and Block 151 of the former Roberts Barracks, both of which are today within Changi Air Base (West). Block 151 housed the wartime St. Luke's Chapel, and today preserves the Changi Murals (see page 48 for more information on the murals).

Aerial view of Temple Hill Officers' Mess, 1967
Aerial photographs by the British Royal Air Force between 1940 to 1970s, from a collection held by the National Archives of Singapore. Crown copyright.

Former Kitchener Barracks along Hendon Road, 2024
Courtesy of National Heritage Board

LEISURE IN CHANGI IN THE POST-WORLD WAR II PERIOD

From colonial day-tripping and carriage-drawn honeymoons to society parties, fishing trips and hawker favourites by the sea, the course of leisure in Changi has evolved over two centuries. These changing leisure trends mirror the shifting of social and economic tides in Singapore, across Changi's incarnations from colonial playground to well-loved resort and gateway to diverse experiences.

The large vacation bungalows of Changi were converted into retreats and homes during the post-World War II era. These were operated here by social welfare and religious organisations such as the Cheshire Home, Red Cross Crippled Children's Home and Children's Society Convalescent Home, as well as a retreat owned by the Catholic Redemptorist Fathers of Singapore.

Telok Mata Ikan also hosted bungalows that could be rented by staff of the Municipal Commission from 1950, with the holiday area including playgrounds, a clubhouse, a campsite and sporting facilities. Other government agencies later acquired or built bungalows along the Changi coast to provide chalet stays for their staff, while companies like Fraser and Neave offered similar benefits for their staff.

Long enjoyed by colonial day-trippers and the men of nearby RAF Changi, the pleasures of Changi Beach began to draw a wider cross-section of Singapore society in the post-World War II era. The Changi Bus Company operated a bus route from Capitol Theatre in town to Changi Village, from which it was a short walk to the beach. Entrepreneurs rented out small attap houses on the beach for a couple of dollars per day, for beachgoers to change, rest and have meals in.

In 1950, a newspaper report mentioned approximately 13 attap huts at Changi Beach, where food and drinks were sold, and small boats and rubber rafts were rented out. Some of these huts also served as the residences of the stallholders. By 1950s, the construction of Nicoll Drive, linking Tanah Merah with Changi Village, led to a surge in visitors, with thousands arriving on weekends in buses and lorries. The growing popularity of Changi Beach also spurred the establishment of resorts in the vicinity, such as Kelong Taliho, a kelong fishing resort near Telok Mata Ikan in 1962, and the Hawaiian-themed Aloha Rhu in 1972.

There were also bungalows in Telok Mata Ikan that were privately owned. Louise Clarke (b. 1953), who spent weekends and holidays at a seaside bungalow there owned by a group of relatives and friends remembered, "families

Telok Paku Resthouse, a government bungalow opened for public rental, 1976
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Minibus plying the Changi route, c. 1930s
Courtesy of Royal Airforce Changi Association

Children at the beach at Telok Mata Ikan, 1950
Margaret Clarke Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore

would pack their car with food, water, clean bedding, clothes, swimsuits, inner rubber tubes and then make the long journey to Changi. The car had to meander through the wooden houses of the kampong with the sound of the tyres crunching on fragments of shells," referencing the shells used to manufacture *kapur* in Kampong Telok Mata Ikan (see page 16 for more about *kapur* making).

She remembered the house as being raised on concrete pillars and having a zinc roof, with interior lighting provided by kerosene lamps. "Food was cooked or heated up on small portable gas cookers... [including] remis (a species of clam in Malay) which was found on the beach. Fresh fish was bought from the daily catch of the fishermen."

Family on a day out at Changi Beach, 1958
Courtesy of Margaret Clarke

Private operators also started restaurants, coffeehouses and chalet businesses along Changi Beach in the 1970s, some of which had moved from Changi Village after the redevelopment of the village's two rows of shophouses rows and the former Kampong Changi from 1973 (see page 22 for more details on Changi Village). The expansion and establishment of Changi Airport as Singapore's main civilian airport from 1976 then brought another wave of redevelopment, which affected some two-thirds of Changi Beach.

Family with a group of children on an outing to Changi Beach, 1950
Nachiappa Chettiar Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore

In the 1980s and 1990s, the landscape of eastern Changi would be further transformed through land reclamation for the continued development of the airport. Despite these transformations however, Changi Beach continued to hold a place in the popular imagination. In 1988, a newspaper report noted that people were braving chain barriers, drains and construction worksites to make their way through to a closed-off section of beach along Changi Coast Road, to enjoy the evergreen activities of fishing, swimming and barbecues.

Day-trippers at Changi Beach, swimming and rowing boats in the ocean, c. 1970s
Courtesy of the National Museum of Singapore

CHANGI COTTAGE AND CHALETS

Built on the site of the government bungalow first constructed in the 1850s (see page 11 for more information on the first bungalows in Changi), Changi Cottage has become known as a place of respite for ministers and senior civil servants, including Singapore's first Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew.

Completed in 1950 at a cost of S$24,943, Changi Cottage was part of a group of chalets constructed for the use of government officials. In the 1950s, Changi Cottage and bungalows at Telok Paku were reserved for government officers of Division I (the most senior civil servant tier), those at Tanah Merah and Ayer Gemuroh were for Division II officers, while other civil servants were allocated bungalows at Tanjong Rhu. These bungalows later became popularly known as holiday chalets, and by the 1980s, the government managed 44 chalets at Changi, including officers' quarters vacated by the British in 1971.

After becoming Prime Minister in 1959, Lee visited Changi Cottage for short stays. In a book about Lee, Jagjeet Singh, a grassroots leader who grew up in Changi Village, recalled:

"My father worked as a civilian for the British at the nearby airbase. Our quarters were at the edge of the nine-hole golf course in Changi....we used to peer over the fence at Mr Lee playing golf with world leaders. I saw him there with Malaysian Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman.

When Mr Lee came to play golf, he and Mrs Lee would stay at the Changi Cottage. When they were "in town", everybody in the village knew. In those days, there was not much security around them. They were free and easy and walked around the village. Their particular interest was this Hainanese bakery...[from which] the aroma would pervade the whole village. All the [Royal Air Force] service wives would come out with their perambulators and babies, and queue up for the French loaves. Mr Lee once made a speech about that bakery and its impact on the whole village."

Changi Cottage, 2024
Courtesy of National Heritage Board

Perhaps the most famous of Lee's stays at Changi Cottage came in the aftermath of Singapore's separation from Malaysia and independence in August 1965, the culmination of a testing, tumultuous time for Lee and the people of Singapore and Malaysia. On 9 August, the Prime Minister held a televised press conference that has become remembered for his display of emotion at the separation from Malaysia, which he termed "a moment of anguish". Toh Chin Chye, Deputy Prime Minister of Singapore from 1959 to 1968, recalled that period:

"[Mr Lee] held two successive press conferences, and in both of which he cried. On the third morning I went to work, and saw the press boys again. I asked Lee Wei Ching, his press secretary, "Why are they hanging around here?" Another press conference! I told Lee Wei Ching, "You ought to tell the Prime Minister to go to Changi and take a rest. Call the press conference off!...So he went to Changi, staying at the government bungalow for six weeks.

I could not summon Parliament. The opposition came at me. Why is there no Parliament sitting? So I had to hold the fort. I was not appointed to act for him while he was away. When he went off to Changi, Parliament did not meet. So Singapore had a Parliament in suspended animation. [Cabinet ministers Goh] Keng Swee and Lim Kim San saw me and asked me what was the constitutional position. Has he recovered? What if he does not recover? So what happens? I said I thought he was getting better, although I could not get to see him and telephone calls were not put through."

Other government leaders also saw Changi as a fitting place for a retreat. In an oral history interview, Bernard Chen, a civil servant who later became Minister of State for Defence, remembered:

"In the old days, Dr. Goh [Keng Swee], when he was the Finance Minister, every budget, before the budget, he would hide himself in a Changi chalet for three weeks."

At other times, Changi Cottage and chalets in the area were used for short visits by ministers, dignitaries, government officials and members of various missions from foreign countries. Some of the government chalets and bungalows in Changi began to be made available for rent by the public from 1962. Currently, the Changi chalets are run by the Civil Service Club and can be rented by members of the public.

GATEWAY TO NEIGHBOURING ISLANDS

Long before Changi Airport turned this area into a global gateway, Changi served as a place of connections. Its location as one end of a triangular region between southern Johor in Malaysia and the Riau islands of Indonesia, as well as its proximity to Pulau Ubin and Pulau Tekong, made this area a natural stepping-off point.

One of Changi's beloved gateways is the Changi Point Ferry Terminal. This facility was constructed in 2005, but people have been using jetties at Changi Point to reach nearby islands for generations. This tradition may have begun before the colonial area, with people moving within the region. By the mid-1800s, colonial visitors vacationing in the bungalows of Changi hired boatmen from the area's kampongs for trips across the water. Residents of Pulau Ubin and Pulau Tekong also landed here for work, to attend school or to trade.

By the 1960s, the jetties were being used by local fishermen and boatmen, as well as serving as a landing place for traders bringing poultry, vegetables and other foodstuffs from Johor. An estimated 20 to 30 boats moved between Changi Point and the above-mentioned places each day, and the jetties became so busy that they were nicknamed "Kampong Changi Port".

Children in the area earned tips by reserving berths at the jetties for boat operators, as well as serving as translators. Ng Yin Kim, a former resident at Changi Village, recalled in a television documentary: "British soldiers often hired boats to go out to Pulau Sajahat, Pulau Serangoon [and other islands]. They would go to these islands because the beaches [there] were beautiful. The boatmen [here] mostly couldn't speak English. We [children] could speak a little English, [so we could ask:] 'Hello John, where [do] you want to go?'. They could be generous and [tip us] $10 or $20."

For the people of Pengerang, located at the south-eastern end of Johor, it was faster and cheaper to travel by boat to Changi for trade and work than to take the overland route to Johor Bahru. During the colonial era and Singapore's time within Malaysia, most of these travellers did not use passports to cross borders. During the Malayan Emergency (1948-60) and after Singapore's independence in 1965, some 5,000 frequent travellers from Pengerang were affected by stricter border controls.

Trade did recover by the 1980s, and some of the live fish from Johor were transported to Changi before being exported to Hong Kong, Taiwan and China. This trade has dwindled in recent decades however, and Changi Point today does not see as much traffic as Singapore's other fishery ports. From the Ferry Terminal however, boat operators continue to ply the well-loved route to Pulau Ubin. Another terminal, completed in 1993 at 30 Changi Ferry Road, connects Singapore with Tanjung Belungkor in Johor.

Another landmark in the area is the Changi Village footbridge, a concrete bridge across Sungei Changi and today leading to Changi Beach Park. This bridge was completed in the 1930s, replacing a wooden bridge. The old bridge was said to take a somewhat irregular course and had a railing only on one side. The river and the mangroves around the bridge were also the site of urban legends, including stories about white crocodiles and a flat white rock in the river. In regional mythology, white crocodiles are associated with supernatural powers, and this area may have been a *keramat* or locus of these beliefs.

The bridge was also a place from which children could dive off, launching themselves into Sungei Changi. In a television documentary, Lim Fung Meng, a former resident of the area, remembered:

"The British [army personnel would] always throw coins into the river. As a young boy, I [would dive down into the river] to pick up the coins. On average, I collected about 80 cents per day."

One of the two jetties at Changi Village where passengers could hire boats to Pulau Ubin, Pulau Tekong, Johor and elsewhere, c. 1930s-40s
The Hebblewhite Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore

Jetty at Changi Point, 1958
National Museum of Singapore collection, courtesy of National Heritage Board

Changi Point Ferry Terminal, 2024
Courtesy of National Heritage Board

Changi Point Footbridge
Courtesy of National Heritage Board

Changi Sailing Club
32 Netheravon Road

As recreation and as a competitive sport, sailing has a longstanding heritage in Changi. From the fisher-folk of the kampongs racing their *koleh* (Malay canoe) and other boats in regional contests to the establishment of yacht clubs in the early 20th century, the waters of Changi have always drawn sailors. Changi Sailing Club, founded in 1936, is a mainstay of this tradition.

By the late 1930s, the Royal Engineers and Royal Artillery garrison at Changi Cantonment had grown. Sailing was among the sports that engaged the troops, who found that the waters off Fairy Point were well-suited for sailing, being sheltered by Pulau Ubin from the annual north-east monsoon and from thunderstorms known as "sumatras" by a nearby hill. The placid Johor Strait offered a safe sailing environment for novices, while the South China Sea presented more of a challenge for accomplished sailors.

Sailing soldiers of Changi Cantonment enjoyed a boathouse constructed at Fairy Point for them by the Thornycroft shipbuilding company. A group including Captain Sterling Wilkinson formally established the Changi Garrison Yacht Club in 1936, with a regatta, or boat race, held the following year with competitors from the British army, navy and air force as well as other clubs.

Their first clubhouse, an attap-roofed, timber building with a lounge, bar and changing rooms, was constructed near a former cemetery at former Kampong Batu Puteh. A pier in front of the clubhouse, used as the starting point for races, was built in 1938. The boats used during this period included *koleh* constructed by local boatbuilders and 4.2-metres-long, teak pram dinghies made by Thornycroft to a standardised design for the British military in Singapore.

Besides races, the boats were also used for recreational sailing trips to Kota Tinggi and other parts of Malaya (now Malaysia), and during the Japanese Occupation, for escape attempts by prisoners-of-war (POWs). Among these attempts was a 14-day escape attempt to the Sunda Strait in the Dutch East Indies (now Indonesia), which was unsuccessful with the POWs being recaptured by a Japanese warship. Another attempt, by Lieutenant Colonel John Daniells and Ivan Lyon, was successful, with the pair making it to the Dutch East Indies and then to Sri Lanka.

In 1946, after the end of the Occupation, the club was restarted as the Royal Air Force (RAF) Changi Sailing Club, as the cantonment was turned into an RAF airbase. The club had an all-ranks membership and included civilians working for the RAF. Competitive races included sailing trips around Singapore island, round Pulau Ubin and 24-hour races around the Horsburgh Lighthouse.

Following the withdrawal of the British military from Singapore in 1971, the club came under the National Sports Promotion Board (now Sport Singapore) and was renamed Changi Sailing Club. A new clubhouse, with sporting and recreational facilities, was completed in 1981, before the club was privatised in 1988. Today, the club continues to organise and participate in sailing championships and regattas, as well as conduct sailing programmes for schools.

RAF Yacht Club, the predecessor of Changi Sailing Club, 1954
Courtesy of Royal Airforce Changi Association

Changi Sailing Club, 2024
Courtesy of National Heritage Board

Changi Beach Club
2 Andover Road

Established in 1950 as the Royal Air Force (RAF) Officers' Club at Fairy Point, this beach club was among the facilities handed over to the Singapore government following the British military withdrawal in 1971. It came under the purview of the National Sports Promotion Board (now Sport Singapore) and renamed Changi Swimming Club, with its membership opened to the public. In 1988, the club was privatised and took on its present name.

The clubhouse, which extended out over the sea, and a bathing *pagar* (a swimming enclosure in the sea) were constructed in 1950 at a cost of $150,000, while a swimming pool was added in 1956. With a lounge, ballroom and a bar among other amenities, it functioned as a social and recreational club with membership open to officers of the three services of the British military in Singapore.

Together with Changi Sailing Club and other sporting infrastructure handed over following the British military withdrawal, the facilities became part of the government's drive towards greater public participation in sports in the 1970s. Membership fees for Changi Swimming Club were kept affordable to encourage Singaporeans to use its facilities, with these set at a S$25 entrance fee and a S$10 monthly subscription in 1972. By the time of its privatisation in 1988, the club had approximately 3,000 members.

Clubhouse and swimming pool at Changi Officers' Club, the predecessor of Changi Beach Club, c. 1957–58
Courtesy of Royal Airforce Changi Association

Changi Beach Club, 2024
Courtesy of National Heritage Board

CHANGI ENTERS THE AGE OF AIR

In the 21st century, Changi Airport is one of the world's foremost air hubs, not only connecting Singapore with some 150 cities but also serving as an interconnecting point for travel between many others with close to 100 airlines operating more than 6,400 flights weekly. While Changi had been an area for maritime crossings and connections for centuries, its aviation history began during the Japanese Occupation with the construction of an air strip completed in 1944.

Following the end of World War II, Japanese POW labour was employed on infrastructure works in Changi, including clearing debris-laden areas and developing the airfield. In 1946, the Japanese POWs built a pierced-steel planking runway over the east-west airstrip as a temporary measure, to accommodate the frequent air traffic of the RAF. A taxiway, parking apron and additional hangars were also constructed during this period.

Japanese prisoners-of-war supervised by RAF personnel laying pierced steel planking runway of the Changi airfield, 1946
Courtesy of Royal Airforce Changi Association

Aerial view of the cross-shaped runways of the airfield originally constructed by the Japanese military during World War II, using Allied POW labour, 1945
RAFSA Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore

RAF Changi's air traffic control tower and air crash bays, 1958
Courtesy of Royal Airforce Changi Association

Air traffic at Changi grew rapidly in the post-World War II era, with the airfield being used as the terminal point for the RAF Transport Command's service, which moved aircraft and troops by air between various British military operational areas. With the civilian airport at Kallang inadequate for jetliners in the 1950s, the British Overseas Airways Corporation also landed its Lancastrian and Constellation jetliners at Changi, with passengers transferred by bus to Kallang Airport. Various RAF transport squadrons also operated from Changi during this period, with regular flights connecting locations across Asia, while other squadrons airlifted troops and supplies, flew search and rescue operations and anti-piracy patrols.

With Kallang Airport deemed unsuitable for further development, Changi was considered as a site for a new civil airport in the late 1940s, which would have stood alongside the RAF airfield. Quarters at Wing Loong Road were even built in preparation to house airport staff. The cost of developing the runways, reclaiming land and other infrastructure at Changi was eventually adjudged to be too high however, and Paya Lebar was selected as the site for the new civilian airport. The Changi runway was expanded and strengthened with a bitumen surface, so that it could handle the RAF traffic, and construction was completed in 1950.

CHANGI AIRPORT

By 1971, it was apparent that Paya Lebar would soon become inadequate for the growing air traffic passing through Singapore. Passenger traffic, which was 1.57 million people in 1970, was forecasted to grow to 3.64 million people by the middle of the decade and more than 15 million by 1980. The Department of Civil Aviation (DCA) and various consultant teams agreed that a second runway would be required by 1980.

Any expansions of Paya Lebar Airport however, would require the resettlement of thousands of residents and the airport had several other disadvantages. Its flight paths lay over densely populated areas like Kallang, Mountbatten and Katong, creating significant noise pollution for residents.

On the other hand, flight approaches to Changi were largely over the sea, the area was not densely populated and there was potential for expansion of the airport, including with the use of land reclamation to the existing airfield's east. The RAF had also confirmed its withdrawal from Changi by the end of 1971. While the case for Changi as the main civil airport seemed compelling, hundreds of millions of dollars had already been invested in the development of Paya Lebar Airport since 1955, and the government was reluctant to write the heavy investment off.

Aerial view of Changi Airport during the RAF Changi era, 1965
Aerial photographs by the British Royal Air Force between 1940 to 1970s, from a collection held by the National Archives of Singapore. Crown copyright.

As such, the government's position in 1971 was to expand Paya Lebar Airport's facilities to meet the growth in air traffic, even as Changi remained a better long-term solution. At this point, the government was considering having two civil airports, at Paya Lebar and at Changi, much like New York City. Even as development at Paya Lebar Airport went ahead, with land acquired and earmarked for a second runway, the government continued with feasibility studies on expanding Changi's 1,828 metre runway and adding a second runway there.

End of Changi Airport runway and Sungei Changi, 1965
Aerial photographs by the British Royal Air Force between 1940 to 1970s, from a collection held by the National Archives of Singapore. Crown copyright.

The Changi option was strongly supported by the State and City Planning project, a team of foreign consultants under the United Nations' auspices who drew up a master plan for Singapore's urban development. In 1975, the government made a firm decision in favour of Changi as Singapore's main civil airport. A second runway for Changi was confirmed, while the Paya Lebar runway development was cancelled.

The question was not solely between Paya Lebar or Changi, but rather one of timing. The oil crisis of 1973, which saw large increases in the price of oil and a subsequent slowdown in air traffic, also delayed Singapore's need for a second runway and afforded time for the development of Changi Airport.

In July 1975, Parliament voted in favour of the reclamation of 607 hectares of foreshore at Changi to accommodate the development of Changi Airport and a second runway. Howe Yoon Chong (1923-2007), who chaired the Special Committee on Airport Development that confirmed the feasibility of developing Changi, said at the airport's opening in 1981:

"Changi Airport became a reality because further extension of Paya Lebar starting with the second runway had to be reviewed in the aftermath of the oil crisis of October 1973 and because the [Port of Singapore Authority, PSA] had ready plans to reclaim large tracts of land at Changi for an airport and seaport complex. [At Paya Lebar] land clearance, resettlement, air and noise pollution were only some of the complicated and messy problems.

"...[At Paya Lebar, with the increased air traffic from the 1980s] the pressures would still remain [and] further expansion would be almost impossible. ...we would be accumulating problems for the future and in the long run Paya Lebar Airport could even damage [Singapore's] position as an important communications centre."

PSA oversaw the reclamation in July 1975, and in September of the same year, additional 168.8 hectares of land were reclaimed from Telok Paku to Ayer Gemuroh, including a popular beach strip and the Telok Paku School.

Considered as a whole, the various phases of land reclamation spanned 745 hectares by March 1976. The reclamation used an estimated 40 million cubic metres of sand and earth dredged from the sea around Changi, and created some 6.2 kilometres of foreshore. The reclamation was broken into phases: the first covered 132 hectares and was for the airport's second runway, the second was 96 hectares for the terminal building complex, the third of 354 hectares for the parking aprons and the fourth for a buffer zone of 163 hectares between the East Coast Parkway and the airport. By mid-1976, Public Works Department (PWD) had also begun work on reconstructing and extending the former RAF runway from 2,000 metres to 4,000 metres, building a new parking apron, taxiways, earthworks and drainage.

From 1975, two senior civil servants headed the development of Changi Airport. Sim Kee Boon, the permanent secretary at the Ministry of Communications, led the Executive Committee for Airport Development, while Howe Yoon Chong, who had led the feasibility study for Changi Airport, was the project's link to the Cabinet and the Prime Minister. Their involvement was an indication of the importance placed on Changi Airport as Sim was the head of the civil service at the time, while Howe was his predecessor in that position.

In a newspaper article from 1981, Sim recalled the early development of Changi Airport, including two key features of the airport (the control tower and the terminal layout) that would go on to become icons for many Singaporeans.

"What you see today is a far cry from what was originally planned by our consultants from Holland...they gave very little consideration to aesthetics. The airport must be functional, it must be efficient. At the same time, it should be something the people of Singapore could be proud

of. We finally decided that the airport should be an extension of our garden city. ...the first point of contact for the tourist visiting Singapore...is the airport. So we took great care to combine the aesthetics with the functional aspects.

The consultants had [originally] put the administration building right in the middle of where the car park [was eventually located]. The control tower was supposed to be on top of this administration building. We realised there was no focal point in that plan. Finally, we decided to have the control tower as the focal point and to put the administration block over the finger piers which jut out from the sides of the passenger terminal. There were [multi-storey carparks] in the middle. They may be functional, but [would have been] a terrible eyesore.

A group of us discussed [the changes]. Mr Ong Teng Cheong, the Communications Minister, was also involved. [Ong was an architect and later the President of Singapore]. We brought him in and asked his opinion...Mr Howe [as well]."

Changi Airport officially began operations on 1 July 1981, following several test flights including SQ 100, the first commercial flight that landed on 31 May with 246 passengers. The first official flight to land at Changi was SQ 101 from Subang Airport in Kuala Lumpur, while the first flight to take off was SQ 192 to Penang.

Having opened with a single runway and a single terminal, Changi Airport's second runway was completed in 1983 and went into operation the following year. Terminal 2 opened in 1990, while Terminal 3 was opened in 2007. Having been managed by the Civil Aviation Authority of Singapore (the successor to the DCA), Changi Airport was corporatised in 2009 with the establishment of Changi Airport Group. The Budget Terminal, which had opened in 2006 catering to low-cost carriers and passengers, was redeveloped into Terminal 4, a full-service terminal which opened in 2017.

Changi Airport control tower and Terminal 1 behind it, 1996
Civil Aviation Authority of Singapore Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore

Changi Airport's Terminal 1, c. 1980s
National Museum of Singapore collection, courtesy of National Heritage Board

Terminal 1 departure hall and fountain, 1980s
National Museum of Singapore collection, courtesy of the National Heritage Board

CHANGI CONTROL TOWER

Planned as the focal point for Changi Airport in its original configuration, this 81-metre-tall air traffic control tower and its ball-shaped radome has become an icon of post-independence Singapore. PWD held an in-house design competition among its architects, and Changi Control Tower was the result of a team effort incorporating the short-listed concepts.

Joshua Woo (b. 1986), whose father, Woo Chee Yong, was involved in the construction of the tower, remembered:

"In the past, [my father] did not have foreign talent manpower and [he] had to rely by word of mouth, friendships and connection to gather a group of capable workers to work on the construction projects in Changi."

Upon completion, the tower featured a fountain pool and garden areas at its base and a three-floor, glass-clad structure at its summit housing the control cabin, equipment rooms and an emergency operations room. The glass-clad structure afforded air traffic controllers a 360-degree view of Changi Airport.

In the 21st century, Changi Control Tower handled up to 1,000 aircraft movements each day. The Changi area was also home to another air traffic control facility, the Singapore Air Traffic Control Centre, which provided approach and area control services to aircraft within Singapore's Flight Information Region.

Woo Chee Yong and his colleagues at the construction site of Changi Control Tower, 1977
Courtesy of Joshua Woo

Changi Control Tower during its construction, 1979
Courtesy of Joshua Woo

Night view of Changi Airport's control tower and carpark, c. 1980s
National Museum of Singapore collection, courtesy of National Heritage Board

CHANGI INTO THE FUTURE

In the 20th century, major infrastructural projects such as Changi Cantonment and Changi Airport reshaped and distinguished Changi. Their legacies continue in the present century, with projects including the Terminal 5 expansion of Changi Airport and the Long Island land reclamation scheme set to redefine Changi even further.

As of 2024, Terminal 5 is under construction, together with the addition of a third runway and cargo facilities.

These developments will expand the airport's capacity to 50 million passengers each year, while the existing Changi Aviation Park, housing aviation businesses, will be scaled up with the addition of the new Changi East Industrial Zone. To support these developments, land reclamation currently underway will push the eastern coastline further out into the sea.

Another reclamation scheme in the works is the Long Island project, which is envisioned to stretch from Marina East. Beyond the existential need for coastal protection against rising sea levels in the face of climate change, the Long Island scheme is also slated to afford Singapore more space for housing and leisure developments.

While the tides of change will continue to sway the rhythms of communal life, business and culture in Changi, the area's quintessential character bears protecting. In 2021, URA and Singapore Land Authority held a design competition to conceive fresh uses for the former Changi Hospital, as well as to propose new planning concepts for the 42-hectare Changi Point area.

The competition emphasised innovation and the capitalisation of Changi's advantages, including the area's characteristic village feel and natural beauty, and encouraged proposals for less intensive redevelopment. Among the winners were proposals to adapt the former Changi Hospital into a stargazing observatory and aviation viewing deck, with the proposals set to be incorporating into future planning parameters and design principles for Changi. The area's natural environment will continue to be safeguarded, with the Changi section of the URA's Greater Rustic Coast masterplan likely to entail the planting of more native coastal forests and landscaped beachfront for visitors to enjoy.

Changi Airport, 2024
Courtesy of National Heritage Board

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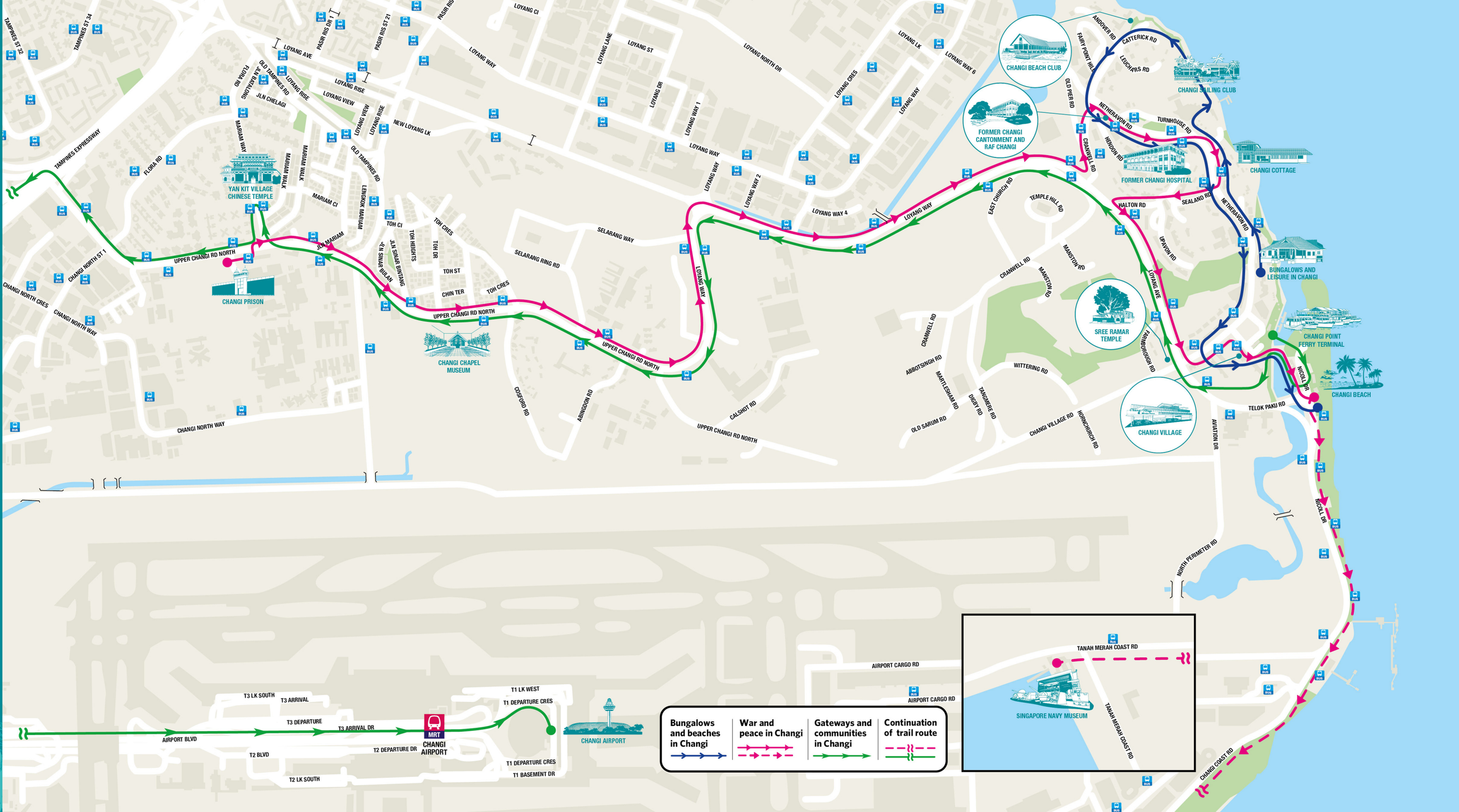
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T3 ARRIVAL DR
AIRPORT BLVD
T2 BLVD
T2 DEPARTURE DR
T2 LK SOUTH
T1 LK WEST
T1 DEPARTURE CRES
T1 DEPARTURE CRES
T1 BASEMENT DR
Bungalows and beaches in Changi
War and peace in Changi
Gateways and communities in Changi
Continuation of trail route

Night view of Changi Airport's control tower and carpark, c. 1980s
National Museum of Singapore collection, courtesy of National Heritage Board

The Changi Heritage Trail is part of the National Heritage Board's ongoing efforts to document and present the history and social memories of places in Singapore. We hope this trail will bring back fond memories for those who have worked, lived or played in the area, and serve as a useful source of information for visitors and new residents.

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One of the two jetties at Changi Village where passengers could hire boats to Pulau Ubin, Pulau Tekong, Johor and elsewhere, c. 1930s-40s
The Hebblewhite Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore