

# No. 1 PULAU UBIN

One of a Kind



2007 AWARD

CATEGORY A

**Owner:**  
*National Parks Board*

**Architect:**  
*CPG Consultants Pte Ltd*

**Engineer:**  
*CPG Consultants Pte Ltd*

**Contractor:**  
*Precise Development Pte Ltd*

*L*ocated at the eastern tip of Pulau Ubin, House No. 1 is believed to be Singapore's only remaining authentic Tudor-style house with a fireplace. Its uniqueness fits in nicely with its new function as a visitor centre

## **Distinctive Style Restored**

Constructed in a post and beam fashion, complete with stucco-finished walls and gables framed by timbers treated with black creosote, the house built in the 1930s by Chief Surveyor, Landon

Williams, used to be a holiday retreat. However, it had been vacant for many years and when restoration began in 2005, the architects found that natural aging and the harsh coastal environment had affected the two-storey building.

The external elements of the main façades were all kept and restored to their original materials and finishes. Damaged roof trusses were removed and replaced while only termite-infested floorboards were replaced. Structurally, the second-storey supporting slabs were found to be too weak to support the proposed live load and had to be reinforced by grouting. Stone and brickwork that were painted/plastered over time were stripped and the original finishes reinstated. The original interior layout was kept throughout.

## **Attention to Detail**

Extra effort was taken while restoring the house's distinctive chimney and fireplace. Its honeycomb-shaped terracotta floor tiles were thoroughly



*Restored Tudor-style seaside cottage*

cleaned and retained, while the second level's ceiling was raised to offer visitors a peek at the chimney shaft as it headed skywards.

Equally charming was the 'cowboy' (single door leaf split into top and bottom leaves) timber door at the house's rear. While it could still be opened as two separate leaves, a flush bolt was added to hold the two leaves in place, to function as a fire exit door. Finer features were not forgotten.

Tapered hinges, door knobs, window handles and light switches were restored and reused.

Such sensitivity in restoration was extended onto other structures like the abandoned outhouse at the rear of the compound. A pitched roof was built over the existing old walls of the outhouse to create a new toilet block. Similarly, an old water tower that had become home for hundreds of fruit bats was left undisturbed. A new jetty following the original alignment of the old jetty which was beyond repair was built to retain the original setting of the house.

## **Natural Beauty**

The call for the conservation of Chek Jawa Wetlands is heard loud and clear. The preservation of these rare treasures - from Mother Nature's extraordinary wonders to irreplaceable architectural beauties - is indeed worthwhile effort that will benefit generations to come.



Old disused water tank kept



Existing courtyard



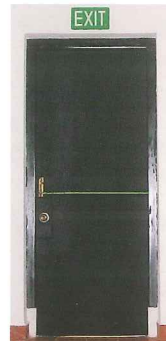
Timber elements and pilasters restored and painted black



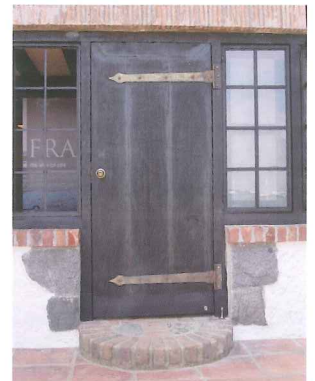
Fireplace and honeycomb-shaped terracotta floor tiles



Secondary timber staircase to second storey



Existing 'cowboy' timber door retained



Original main door stone steps



Timber column on stone base



Original electrical switches



'Camouflage' floor tiles retained



Restored house in its natural setting



Previously abandoned outhouse innovatively converted into a new toilet block

Chek Jawa Wetlands at the eastern tip of Pulau Ubin, is a unique natural environment that is unusually rich in biodiversity. The primary objective of the project is to provide better amenities and easier accessibility to this unparalleled nature area with its rich biodiversity. At the same time, the facilities must be user-friendly, safe for use by the young and old alike, as well as designed and specified appropriately for the harsh coastal environment to ensure that maintenance costs are kept as low as possible.

The project includes the restoration of the existing bungalow (House no. 1) to be adapted with minimal intervention, into a visitor centre and a research facility from which visitors will get an overview of the Chek Jawa Wetlands. Being well-positioned at the 'gateway' to Chek Jawa Wetlands, the House has very rich architectural and historical significance to Singapore. Beside this, other facilities include a network of boardwalk along the coastal and mangrove areas, a look-out tower, shelters, jetty and pontoon. The design concept is a showcase which endeavours to integrate the built environment with nature within the idyllic setting of Pulau Ubin with minimal impact on the ecology and minimal damage to the fragile habitats and ecosystems.

## **HISTORY**

### **House no. 1**

The compound consists of three main existing structures - a main 2-storey House, the remnant of an abandoned outhouse at the rear and a water tower. Other than the outhouse, the main 2-storey House, the jetty and the water tower was given conservation status on 1 Dec 2003.

The House with outhouses was built in the 1930's by the then Chief surveyor, Landon Williams, as a holiday or weekend retreat and added to over the years. The additions made were all proper and in keeping with the integrity of the original cottage.

The House has commanding views of Changi Point and the Straits of Singapore beyond which is also very visible and is a significant landmark seen from both Changi Point and from vessels entering the Straits.

The structure of the House is built in a style emulating an English country cottage. It was understood that such particular style was first introduced as tea planter's residences which were built during the British colonial era. As tea plantations were located at altitude and therefore had a cooler climate, they were often used as hill station retreats as well. The building sits on granite bedrock and is elevated above sea level by approximately 10m. There is a concrete jetty, probably a later addition, which extends about 100m towards Pulau Sekudu (Frog Island) in the straits between Ubin and Changi.

The structure is of post and beam construction of brick, granite stone and timber built in a vernacular style similar to that of the Tudor period of England. The 1<sup>st</sup> storey is of load bearing masonry, a mixture of brick and granite stone used with varying coursing including vaulting and quoining. Part of the wall is stucco finished. The 2<sup>nd</sup> storey is a combination of masonry and heavy timber frame with infill masonry. The gables are

exposed revealing interesting brick coursing patterns framed by the timbers which are treated with black creosote emphasizing the “Tudor” appearance.

The timbers are jointed with exposed square and morticed joints. The pitch roof is of Marseille clay tiles on timber trusses. The water tower and the outhouse are also built in masonry with the same degree of care and attention to detail commensurate with the main building.

A special feature of the House is its living room with a magnificent fire place. This again reflects its origins of the design as being from a cooler climate. The ceilings of the first storey expose the timber joists supporting the timber floor above. Terracotta tiles found at certain wall panels and floor further give the House its rustic appearance.

The windows are fenestrated such that when opened a grille and mosquitoes mesh screen are configured with the same fenestration so as not to be incompatible with the window design.

The building itself is quite unique and is believed to be the only one of its kind in Singapore. It is adapted for reuse as a visitor centre and with the insertion of a toilet block offers the facilities for visitors an insight into the great biodiversity of marine life at Chek Jawa.