

# FACT SHEET

October 2013

## **CONSERVATION IN QUEENSTOWN**

Queenstown, as Singapore's first satellite town, is endearing to many. Besides illustrating the evolution of public housing in our nation's post-independence years, its social institutions and facilities serve as reminders of Singapore's early endeavours.

So far, Princess House, the Church of the Blessed Sacrament and a bungalow that was part of the Anchor Brewery, have been conserved in the Queenstown area. URA will conserve the Queenstown Library and the former Commonwealth Avenue Wet Market, as well as Alexandra Hospital – adding another layer to Queenstown's history.

## **CONSERVATION OF QUEENSTOWN LIBRARY**

The Queenstown Library is Singapore's first branch library. It was officially opened on 30 April 1970 by Mr Lee Kuan Yew.

Designed in the Modern style, the Queenstown Library is a two-storey building with what could have been a rather austere front façade relieved by an elegant 'bow-tie' motif as seen in the parapets and pre-cast concrete sun-shading block on its concrete frame structure. The building uses a pared-down palette of well-proportioned structural elements and design motifs to create a harmonious blend of form and function. More than just a library for books, it was also where many art and cultural programmes for the children and adults of Queenstown took place.

Besides being an established identity marker for Queenstown, the building's unique design makes it a fine showcase of a medium-scale public building designed for the tropics and for social use. A community touchstone and social hangout, it holds fond memories for past and present residents.

## **CONSERVATION OF THE FORMER COMMONWEALTH AVENUE WET MARKET**

The former Commonwealth Avenue Wet Market, opened in 1960, is a rare building. It is the only remaining market in Singapore designed by the Singapore Improvement Trust (SIT).

Fresh produce and cooked food used to be purchased from itinerant hawkers. Conditions were invariably unsanitary. When suburban public housing estates were set up to house the growing population, the situation improved as purpose-built covered markets and food centres were established in the neighbourhoods as hygienic and convenient amenities for residents. The former Commonwealth Avenue Wet Market/Food Centre was one of the first such buildings to be built.

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For many years, standing prominently along the main road through Queenstown, the Modern-style building has served as a well-known landmark to residents and visitors. Its most striking feature is the bold parabolic-vaulted roof that allows rainwater to drain quickly. It also responds well to the tropical climate with high internal spaces that allow for effective air flow through the market. Other design features such as the honeycomb screen wall at ground level, also help to promote the passage of light and air, while providing shade from the tropical sunlight.

The building is a good example of a well-planned building that shows careful consideration of the dynamic relationship between form and function. As an icon of Queenstown's past, it will continue to foster familiarity and identity in a changing landscape as the estate undergoes upgrading and renewal.

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## **CONSERVATION OF ALEXANDRA HOSPITAL**

Alexandra Hospital was built by the British Armed Forces in 1938 on the brink of World War II to serve the medical needs of its troops and their families. At that time, it was the largest and best-equipped military hospital in Britain's "Far East Command". It was built in a stripped-down hybrid of Modern and Classical styles in reinforced concrete, typical of hospitals of the 1930s.

On 14 February 1942, the hospital was brutally overrun by Japanese troops and more than 200 hospital personnel and patients were massacred. When WWII ended, the hospital served the British army as the main medical establishment for Commonwealth forces in the Far-East. It played an important role during the Malayan Emergency in 1940s and 1950s, when British troops engaged in jungle warfare against the Communist rebels and during the Indonesian Confrontation from 1962 to 1965.

In mid-1971, the last troops returned to Britain and the doors of the Alexandra Military Hospital were closed. The hospital was then handed over to the Singapore government. Despite being more than 30-years-old, it was still regarded in the 1970s as the most modern hospital of its kind in Southeast Asia. As a civilian hospital, it made history in performing the first successful limb re-attachment in Southeast Asia. In the 1990s, the hospital took on medical education when it became part of the campus of the National University of Singapore's Faculty of Medicine. Many doctors who served at the hospital went on to distinguished careers in Medicine, Academia and the Military.

Today, Alexandra Hospital remains a landmark at the junction of Ayer Rajah Expressway and Alexandra Road.