Interview with Dr Chua Ai Lin

Dr Chua Ai Lin (right) with Mr Chua Yong Liang (left) during a tour by Singapore Heritage Society in 2019 (photograph taken prior to COVID-19)

Dr Chua Ai Lin (bottom left) with her Singapore Heritage Society team and tour participants at Ah Ma Drink Stall during Ubin Day, 2019 (photograph taken prior to COVID-19)

What sparked your interest in advocating heritage conservation on Pulau Ubin?

Pulau Ubin is the last inhabited offshore island in Singapore! Others have been given over for industrial uses and are not accessible to the general public. I remember travelling to Pulau Ubin twenty years ago in the back of an open truck, which was the mode of transport for visitors back then, and visiting a large Thai temple that is no longer there. Nonetheless, even after two decades, I am glad the island remains so different from the urban mainland, with its laid-back sense of time and rich cultural landscape. I was amazed to witness thousands of people from the mainland attending the Pulau Ubin Tua Pek Kong Festival, as well as the temple celebrating its 150th anniversary in 2019. I hope Ubin continues to maintain its unique character.

What changes have you observed on Pulau Ubin over the past years, and what would you hope to see on Pulau Ubin in ten years?

From the 1980s, the character of Ubin began shifting away from an island where people worked and lived, to an outdoor recreation and nature area for visitors, with plans for urbanisation in the long term. Fortunately, the establishment of The Ubin Project by the Ministry of National Development (MND) and Friends of Ubin Network (FUN) in 2014 put the brakes on that trajectory. In ten years, I hope Pulau Ubin will once again serve as a home for Singaporeans who desire a way of life in harmony with nature, with a strong network of multi-generational families from Ubin as custodians of its living heritage.

As a Friends of Ubin member, how do you contribute to sustaining living heritage on Pulau Ubin?

Through regular meetings, the Singapore Heritage Society — which I represent — exchanges knowledge and recommendations, collaborates with other FUN members and agencies and, most importantly, stays on top of follow-up actions over the long term.

With reference to The Ubin Project vision, what would you like to say to future generations of Singaporeans about Ubin?

Let us respect and be inspired by Ubin's people and heritage. To pursue our shared vision of conserving Ubin as a special place different from the rest of urbanised Singapore, we must see things from the perspective of life on the island, which might be very different from our assumptions as mainlanders.

For more information on Pulau Ubin, visit **www.nparks.gov.sg/pulau-ubin** or contact us at **nparks_pulau_ubin@nparks.gov.sg**

Ubin Tides

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PULAU UBIN

Rebuilding House No. 22-E

The Siglap Citizens' Consultative Committee (CCC) has embarked on a community project to rebuild House No. 22-E, a Malay kampung house in Pulau Ubin. The project is led by grassroots leaders of the CCC and a team of volunteers, consisting of an architecture historian, an architect, professional engineers, a Design for Safety Professional and an architecture graduate.

House No. 22-E was chosen for rebuilding because of its rich history. House No. 22-E, which is no longer being occupied now, was built in 1982 with structural frames from an older house in Kampong Darat Nenas. The structural frames were carried over to Pulau Ubin by sampan. The wood material used for House No. 22-E were chengal posts and kapur for the rest of the house. In 2012, House No. 22-E also underwent repainting works.

By bringing this kampung house back to its former state, it is hoped that our community, especially the younger generation, can visit this place and continue to appreciate our heritage, especially the kampung way of life. It will serve as a demonstration Malay kampung house, a community space for our residents and the general public, and a venue for community events.

Unfortunately, as the condition of the house had deteriorated over time, it was no longer structurally sound and had to be demolished in early 2021. House No. 22-E will soon undergo reconstruction and rebuild to its original design.

This article is contributed by Siglap Constituency Office.

House No. 22-E in June 2017

House No. 22-E in February 2021, prior to demolition (Photo credit: Siglap Constituency Office)

NATIONAL PARKS
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Enhancing Firefighting Response

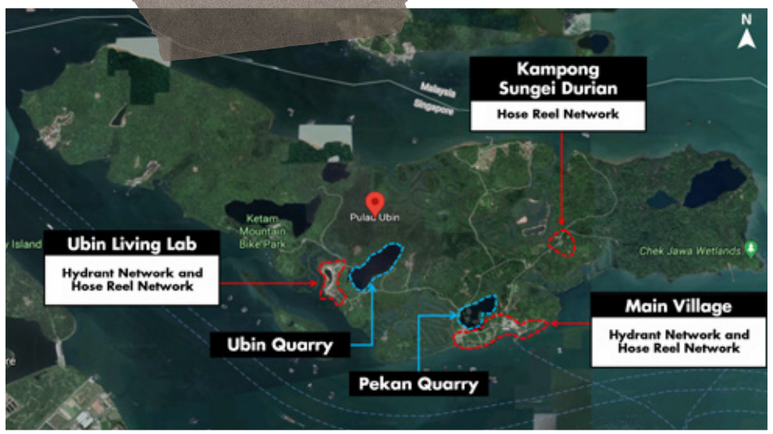
Since NParks' appointment as the central management agency for Pulau Ubin in mid-2016, we have been looking to enhance first responder capabilities in case of a fire. In addition to identifying hotspots and conducting regular tabletop and ground deployment exercises with the Singapore Civil Defence Force (SCDF), we have installed fire extinguishers in the Ubin villagers' premises as well as at all shelters and public toilets. The SCDF has also held demonstration sessions on using fire extinguishers for the villagers. Beyond these efforts, we are embarking on a project to strengthen the firefighting infrastructure on the island.

SCDF firefighters using water from a quarry during a simulation exercise at Pulau Ubin

Fire extinguishers installed in the villagers' premises

Fire Hydrant and Hose Reel Networks

New hydrant and hose reel networks will be installed at the Main Village, Ubin Living Lab and Kampong Sungei Durian to provide both community first responders and the SCDF with improved firefighting infrastructure. The networks at the Main Village and Ubin Living Lab will draw water for firefighting from the nearby quarries, while the hose reel network at Kampong Sungei Durian will have standalone water tanks.



Locations of Ubin Main Village, Ubin Living Lab, Kampong Sungei Durian and the quarries that serve as water sources for firefighting

A typical firefighting scenario at the Main Village (Image courtesy of Adlab)

Firefighting Scenario

In the event of a fire, first responders from the community will locate the closest hose reel box and attempt to put out the fire till the SCDF firefighters arrive and take over. Portable pumps can be connected to the hydrants for better reach to other areas.

Outreach and Engagement with Villagers

As a crucial part of the community first responders' team, apart from the NParks staff and contract workers stationed at Ubin, the island's villagers were also consulted to determine the locations of the hose reels. This way, NParks ensured the infrastructure enhancements met the community's needs. NParks will continue working with the villagers on this project and with the SCDF for training on the use of the hose reels.