



Media Release by My Community

MY COMMUNITY LAUNCHES TOUR MARATHON: TOURS TO TAKE PLACE IN GROUPS OF FIVE AT TANGLIN HALT EVERY HOUR FOR 24 HOURS OVER THE NATIONAL DAY WEEKEND.

Singapore, 5 August 2020 – A 24-hour tour marathon featuring back-to-back hourly tours of one of Singapore’s oldest neighbourhoods – the charming 1960s Tanglin Halt – will be one of the many island-wide activities taking place over the upcoming National Day weekend.

2 The special edition SG55 My Tanglin Halt Heritage Tour marathon is the first such initiative in the civic group’s 10-year history. It explores the lives of Tanglin Halt’s residents and the old world neighbourhood’s multifaceted character as it unfolds over the course of a day. To keep in line with Covid-19 regulations, multiple tour sessions of just five participants per group have been arranged.

3 Participants of the 2am tour slot might get to catch Tanglin Halt’s Original Peanut Pancake owner Teng Kiong Seng nursing a coffee before starting work on his famous batter built from a base of yeast which has been fermenting for more than 30 years. Meanwhile participants of the 5am session might get to pick up some fish-scaling tips from Tanglin Halt Market’s fishmonger or even witness newspaper packers rolling up to the estate in their vans and hurriedly scattering across the flats to drop-off news publications at the doorsteps of subscribers.

4 For a touch of nature, some guides might bring tour groups on a walk along the Rail Corridor. Participants of the morning and evening groups can look forward to a panoramic view of the sun rising and setting over the Singapore Strait from the 40th floor of a new high-rise in the neighbourhood. Tour pitstops for the SG55 My Tanglin Halt Heritage Tour will vary depending on the guide involved and the time of the day but the key landmarks participants will likely be taken to include: the first Housing Development Block (HDB) flats along Stirling Road, the mysterious water tanks of Portsdown as well as the charming black-and-white bungalows of Wessex estate.

5 My Community executive director and co-founder, Kwek Li Yong, noted that My Community has been marking National Day every year through special edition tours and walks where community stories and the community spirit are celebrated. He said: “This year should not be any different. Heritage work has to continue even though we can’t hold our usual 50-pax tours.” Mr Kwek added: “Our SG 55 My Tanglin Halt Heritage Tour marathon endeavours to help participants experience Tanglin Halt around the clock. Walking through Singapore’s oldest estate – home to early mass housing prototypes and beloved community landmarks – will be quite a meaningful experience over the National Day weekend. There is also an added urgency as a result of the ongoing Selective En bloc Redevelopment Scheme (Sers) exercise which will result in much of the area disappearing.”

6 Volunteer guide, Andrew Lin, who spent his childhood and teens at Tanglin Halt, said he will focus his 9am tour slot on the sea of change set to happen in the area. The Sers exercise will see 31 Housing Board blocks comprising 3,480 flats, and 200 market and hawker stalls, shops and eating houses in Tanglin Halt Road and Commonwealth Drive demolished. Some 7,000 residents will be impacted, marking the end of an era for one of Singapore’s early

public housing estates. Mr Lin, who is in his 50s, said: "Very soon, this place will become an empty plot of land. Its life will be gradually drained away. We've already had to say goodbye to Tanglin Halt stalwarts such as general practitioner Dr Chan Khye Meng who retired in 2019, the 10-storey Commonwealth Drive HDB flats depicted on Singapore's \$1 Orchid series which were demolished in 2015, and the Malayan Keretapi Tanah Melayu (KTM) Railway tracks which were removed in 2011."

7 But it is not all doom and gloom, notes Mr Lin. "With the old comes the new. Plus, I will share fun facts and point out to participants the area in which former politician Mr Goh Chok Tong's 3-room flat once stood, as well as filmmaker Eric Khoo's favoured wanton noodles store. Tanglin Halt has a special place in Singapore's history. This was where the trains came and halted. As Singapore's first satellite town, its buildings and town planning strategies served as prototypes which other estates such as Toa Payoh went on to replicate."

8 Tanglin Halt resident and volunteer guide Victor Li, 37, who will be guiding the 4am and 5am tours on August 9, added: "We welcome our fellow Singaporeans to join us as we share stories of the shops and stalls in operation and the evolution of the estate. Over the course of our history, we've developed a strong kampung spirit which some newer estates haven't yet had the opportunity to form. It is something special and worth witnessing especially over the National Day weekend as citizens reflect and ruminate on why we call Singapore home."

How the tour works

9 Participants will meet at Block 46-3 Commonwealth Drive, where the Museum @ My Queenstown is located. They must complete a health declaration form, check in using Safe Entry and take their temperatures before the tour. All individuals involved in the tour will be masked up for the course of the hour-long activity.

10 Each tour will comprise a maximum of five participants and a volunteer guide. All will have to practise social distancing and don a mask throughout the activity. For added precaution, My Community will not distribute radio guides, shared devices and any other materials.

11 Tour stops will vary depending on the time of day and the guide involved. More than 10 volunteer guides have been activated for the tour marathon to reduce overlaps between groups. The first tour session will take place at 9am on August 8 while the last one will start at 8am on August 9. For more information on the tour marathon, visit mycommunity.eventbrite.sg.

Highlights from the SG55 My Tanglin Halt Heritage Tour

12 The Tanglin Halt estate was among the earliest neighbourhoods built by the HDB. The estate was developed between 1960 and 1967, and derived its name from a railway stop in the neighbourhood. It is bounded by the former Malayan Railway line, Queensway, Commonwealth Avenue and Tanglin Halt. Some of its historical landmarks include Stirling Road's Blocks 45, 48 and 49. These were the first public housing blocks to have ever been constructed by the HDB. Completed in Oct 1969, the blocks comprised 331 one-room, two-room and three-room rental apartments with shops on their ground floor. The height of these buildings earned the neighbourhood a colloquial name, Qik Lao (Hokkien: 七楼; 7 storey).

13 Guides will also walk participants through the Tanglin Halt Neighbourhood Centre which was opened in 1962 by then assemblyman for Queenstown, Dr Lee Siew Chor. The neighbourhood centre initially comprised 26 shop units arranged around a quadrangle as well

as 84 stalls in the wet market. A hawker centre and three rows of shop houses were added in 1967.

14 Among some of Tanglin Halt's beloved businesses are the Kian Seng provision shop and the Poh Onn Tong Medical Hall. The provision shop is known for selling both grocery items and religious paraphernalia. Its wide-range of old school confections such as jam biscuits, continue to draw residents from far and wide. In the 1970s, the provision shop, which began to endear itself to the community, innovated and offered personalised services such as free delivery and shopping on credit. Meanwhile, the Poh Onn Tong Medical Hall is run by the Chong family who moved to Singapore from Johor, Malaysia in 1964. A key feature of the shop is its tall medicinal cabinet. Nine tins of herbs are stored in each of its drawers. If time permits, tour participants will be able to witness storekeeper Jasmine Chong at work weighing herbs with traditional scales and slicing them up with a hand-operated mechanical cutter.

15 Guides might also point out several defunct Tanglin Halt businesses such as the aforementioned 55-year-old general practice known as Meng's Clinic which shuttered in 2019. Up until its closure, Meng's Clinic remained one of two clinics in Singapore which had maintained its rustic 1960s layout. The other such clinic is located in Kebun Bahru.

16 Apart from the quaint Tanglin Halt Neighbourhood Centre, guides might take participants on a walk along the Rail Corridor – the former home of the defunct KTM railway. The Malayan Railways had two stations in Queenstown. The first station was located at a warehouse in the former Archipelago Brewery Company where Ikea now stands while the second station was located at the Tanglin Halt Industrial Estate. Mr Jimmy Ng, 62, a former Tanglin Halt resident notes: "Some boys would throw stones at the oncoming trains, lie flat between the tracks or jog along the railway line towards Queens' Crescent. The railway seemed to be a part and parcel of our lives." In 2010, the Malayan Railway tracks were removed after an agreement was struck between leaders of Singapore and Malaysia to jointly develop "the KTM land". Today, the dismantled stretch serves as a popular recreation site for families and friends.

17 Crossing the tracks, participants might be taken on a journey through the lush and delightful Wessex Estate. The estate is home to black-and-white bungalows constructed by the British from the 1930s to house personnel working at military installations in Alexandra and Pasir Panjang. Designed in the black-and-white Revival architectural style, these Anglo-Indian bungalows feature a thatched roof with long eaves protruding from the top of the exterior walls. Supported by timber pillars, the eaves form a veranda which shelters the house from rain and prevents its interior from overheating. With the withdrawal of British military forces in 1971, these bungalows were vacated. Today, they are home to art galleries and residences. These *ang moh chus* (Hokkien: 红毛屋) were the playground for many a Queenstown resident growing up in the vicinity. Tan Teck Wah, 62, recalls: "My brothers and I would always walk across the railway tracks and make our way to the *ang mo chus*. These houses were big and beautiful and it seemed like paradise. We would play catching and hide-and-peek there."

18 Finally, participants can look forward to a possible stop at Colbar or Colonial Bar at Jalan Hang Jebat. Opened in 1948, it once catered to British troops living in Wessex Estate. In 2003, the Colbar restaurant closed to make way for a flyover. The previous building was carefully dismantled and reconstructed at Whitchurch Road.

A list of photos and a timeline of Tanglin Halt's key milestones can be found in Annex A and B.

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About My Community

My Community is a registered charity and an Institute of a Public Character. The organisation documents social memories, celebrates civic life and champions community heritage. It also organises cultural and heritage activities to transform social spaces and ageing neighbourhoods.

Annex A: Photos of landmarks and possible pitstops along the SG55 My Tanglin Halt Heritage Tour

Site No.	Photo and caption
1	 <p>Tanglin Halt Original Peanut Pancake stallowner Mr Teng Kiong Seng with his wife.</p> <p>CREDIT: COURTESY OF CAROLINE CHIA</p>
2	 <p>The Tanglin Halt Community Plaza where the Tanglin Halt Market, honeycomb-shaped Commonwealth Drive Food Centre and Museum @ My Queenstown stands.</p> <p>CREDIT: MY COMMUNITY</p>
3	 <p>Meng's Clinic, a popular general practice in Tanglin Halt, shuttered after 55 years. Dr Chan Khye Meng is holding up a board with well-wishes at a farewell event organised by My Community. Dr Chan was known as the father of Tanglin Halt.</p> <p>CREDIT: MY COMMUNITY</p>

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A stunning, panoramic view of Tanglin Halt and beyond.
CREDIT: MY COMMUNITY

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Quaint black-and-white apartments at Wessex.
CREDIT: MY COMMUNITY

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Café Colbar, now at Whitchurch Road, has roots going back to 1948.
CREDIT: MY COMMUNITY

7	 <p>Volunteer guide Andrew Lin who spent his childhood and teenage years at Tanglin Halt. CREDIT: MY COMMUNITY</p>
8	 <p>Tanglin Halt resident and volunteer guide Victor Li who will be guiding the 4am and 5am tour sessions. CREDIT: MY COMMUNITY</p>

Annex B: Tanglin Halt Through The Years

No	Date	Event
1	12 June 1929	A railway station was built at Tanglin Halt along the Malayan Railway line.
2	31 March 1939	Final Malayan Railway train called at the Tanglin Halt railway station.
3	28 July 1961	Dr Goh Keng Swee, Mr Tan Kia Gan, Mr Lim Kim San, Mr Hon Sui Sen and others visit the Tanglin Halt industrial estate work site.
4	30 April 1963	Dr Goh Keng Swee was Guest-of-Honour for the opening ceremony of Daiwa (Malaya) Ltd.
5	7 September 1963	Queenstown Police Station was officially opened by Ong Pang Boon.

6	14 April 1964	A Commonwealth Drive flat was bombed during Konfrontasi.
7	21 June 1964	Mr Hon Swee Sen attended the foundation stone ceremony of Pan-Malaysia Paint Industry Ltd at the Tanglin Halt industrial estate.
8	25 August 1964	Dr Goh Keng Swee attended the foundation stone ceremony of the Malaya Tin Printing Company at the Tanglin Halt industrial estate.
9	October – November 1964	Dr Goh Keng Swee and Mr Lim Kim San officiated opening ceremonies of companies such as Sekisui Malaysia Co. Ltd and Celbuildings Ltd in Tanglin Halt industrial estate.
10	19 February 1965	The first public tenders were called for a shopping centre in Tanglin Halt.
11	23 March 1965	The Sultan of Terengganu and Mr Yusof bin Ishak, then President of Singapore, visited families in Tanglin Halt.
12	7 May 1965	The Church of the Blessed Sacrament was officially opened by Archbishop Michael Olcomendy.
13	22 July 1965	New Town Primary School was officially opened by Dr Goh Keng Swee.
14	Jan – April 1966	Mr Lim Kim attended the opening ceremonies of companies such as Sekisui Malaysia Co. Ltd, Fibreglass Reinforced Products Ltd, and Setron Ltd – the first electronics factory in Singapore,
15	26 June 1967	Dedication of Faith Methodist Church.
16	20 June 1971	Inche Othman Wok visited factories at the Tanglin Halt industrial estate, to examine the feasibility of physically handicapped individuals securing employment.
17	1 October 1971	Operation Broomstick was held at various locations in Queenstown, including Commonwealth Drive and Tanglin Halt to evict itinerant hawkers.
18	1 August 1987	The Queenstown Police Station was relocated to Clementi.

19	22 November 1994	The construction of Sri Muneeswaran Temple commenced at Commonwealth Drive. The opening ceremony of Sri Muneeswaran Temple in Tanglin Halt was held four years later.
20	13 January 2003	Blocks 50-54 Tanglin Halt Road and Blocks 57, 61 and 67-73 Commonwealth Drive were selected for Sers.
21	30 June 2011	The last KTM train from Tanjong Pagar railway station passed through Tanglin Halt.
22	27 June 2014	HDB announced that Blocks 24-38, 40-45 Tanglin Halt and Blocks 55, 56, 58-60 and 62-66 Commonwealth Drive had been selected for Sers.