



THE KALLANG STORY

A Sports, Arts and Heritage Trail



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Introduction

Mention “Kallang” – what comes to mind? The river of the same name? The airport which used to exist there? The National Stadium?

As this guide to **The Kallang Story: A Sports, Arts and Heritage Trail** will reveal to you, there is so much more waiting to be discovered in the Kallang area. At every turn, there are stories to be told and something to explore.

Trace the origin of one of Singapore’s oldest place names from more than 400 years ago. Discover the role Kallang played in our struggle for independence – and the creatures who symbolise that struggle. Be inspired by the sportsmen and sportswomen who made this area their stage for the pursuit of dreams and uncover little-known trivia about the crown jewel of Kallang - the Singapore Sports Hub complex.

We hope you can use this booklet to begin a journey of discovery, starting with the following chapter, *Kallang Transformed*, which sketches a broad, overarching history of the area. Use this chapter as an entry point into the finer aspects of what makes Kallang – and Singapore – so fascinating. Subsequent chapters will cover architecture, sporting history, notable personalities, important objects, and works of art.

This booklet can also be used as a guide to walk the grounds of the Singapore Sports Hub. It complements **The Kallang Story: A Sports, Arts and Heritage Trail**, which comprises 18 markers as well as the guided walking tour. Make use of the Pull-out Map at the back of this booklet to search for the markers, and other landmarks mentioned in this booklet. The markers can be explored in three separate trails or if you have the time, as one complete trail.

We hope you have an enjoyable exploration of the Sports, Arts and Heritage of Kallang!

Kallang Transformed

The story of Kallang can be seen as a microcosm of the story of Singapore - a transformation from ancient kingdom to 21st century city-state. Through the centuries, Kallang has seen nature retreat and return, human communities come and go, and architectural icons rise and fall.

Three Rivers and a Cape

In precolonial times, Singapura (Sanskrit for "Lion City") was an important trading settlement, strategically located at the crossroads of maritime trade routes between India and China.

Southeast Singapura was largely low-lying marshland. Three major rivers, the Kallang, Rochor and Geylang, drained into what is now known as the Kallang Basin. At around 10 km, the Kallang is the longest river in Singapore, originating from two hills in the centre of the island - Bukit Mandai and Bukit Kallang.

At the southern perimeter of the Kallang Basin, there was a cape covered with casuarina trees, known as *pokok ru* in Malay. The trees must have caught the eye of Portuguese-Bugis explorer Manuel Godinho de Erédia, who published a map of the region that included Singapura in 1604. In the map, the cape was named "Tanjon Ru" (Tanjong Rhu) or "Cape Casuarina", making it one of the oldest place names in Singapore.



The 1604 map by Portuguese-Bugis explorer Manuel Godinho de Erédia. "Tanjon Ru" (Tanjong Rhu) and "xabandaria" (shahbandar) are marked out with arrows. (Source: Courtesy, National Library Board, Singapore, 2019)

The People of the Sea

On the map, Erédia had also marked out "Xabandaria" to the west of "Tanjon Ru", near the mouth of Kallang River. "Xabandaria" was a reference to "shahbandar", the Persian word for "Lord of the Harbour". This is significant as it points to the presence of a Harbour Master at the Kallang River who administered the maritime trade of the area. This is not surprising as Singapura was then part of the maritime Johor Sultanate at the time.

Further evidence of Kallang's significance in maritime trade came to light when blue porcelain sherds from the late Ming Dynasty were found in the Kallang Basin. These were recovered in the course of dredging work in the basin in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Taken together, Erédia's 1604 map and the archaeological finds are compelling evidence that the Kallang River was a site of major economic activity from as early as the 17th century.

Into the early 1800s, Singapura remained under the Johor Sultanate. By 1819, the Temenggong (the Malay noble in charge of security) was Abdul Rahman. He was residing in Singapura with his followers, away from the royal court in the Riau Islands, due to a dispute between factions in the royal household.

The Temenggong and his followers were not alone. The island was also well known for its populations of *Orang Laut*, or "Sea People". They led nomadic lives residing near rivers and the sea or in boats. There were about 1,000 *Orang Laut* living around various rivers of Singapura.

The largest group of *Orang Laut* was the *Orang Biduanda Kallang*, comprising half of all the Sea People in the area. These expert seamen resided around the mouth of the Kallang River. They lived in boats and fished with the aid of fishing stakes. They collected



Some of the blue porcelain sherds recovered from the Kallang Basin. (Source: Courtesy of the National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board)

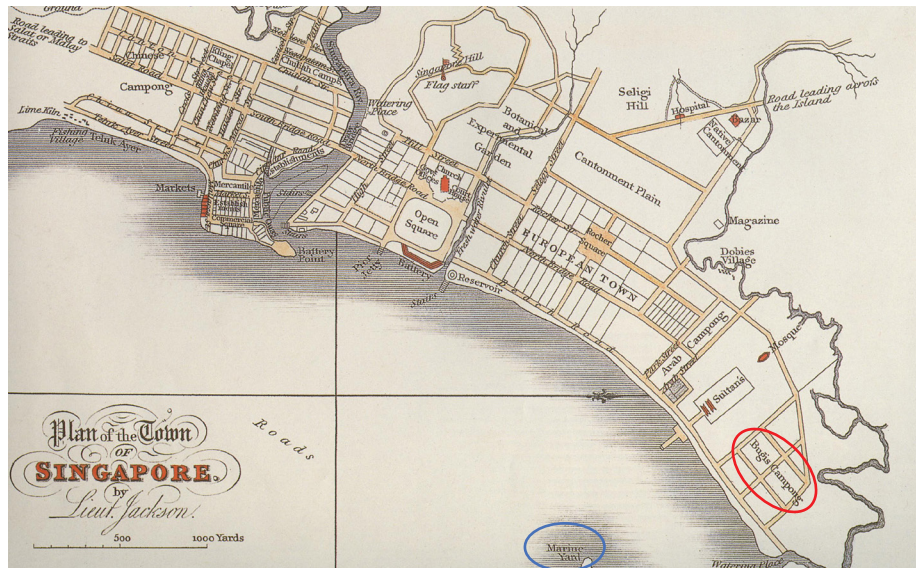
forest produce and provided fish for the Temenggong.

From the time of the Sri Vijaya Empire (7th to 13th century CE), the term “*Biduanda*” referred to court followers who served a ruler. The *Orang Biduanda Kallang* probably acquired this name as they similarly served the Temenggong, a high official of the Johor Court.

Indeed, the mangroves of the Kallang Basin allowed several maritime communities to thrive. They provided food such as shellfish and crustaceans, while plants such as the *nibong* and *nipah* palms, and the *bakau* tree, offered material for making shelters, firewood, and charcoal. The mangroves themselves served as protection against storms and cover from enemies.

The British Arrive

History took a momentous turn with the arrival of the British East India Company in 1819.



The Raffles Town Plan of 1822. The land allocated to the Bugis is circled red. The river to the right of the circled area is the Rochor River which drains into the Kallang Basin. The “Marine Yard” to be set up in Tanjong Rhu is circled blue. The Kallang River is further to the right, outside the map.

Seven years before, Sultan of Johor Mahmud Shah III had died, leading to a succession dispute between his two sons. The British, led by Lieutenant-Governor of Bencoolen Sir Stamford Raffles, and former Resident of Malacca William Farquhar, exploited the situation to their advantage. Raffles recognised the Temenggong’s protégé, the older son Tengku Long, as the new Sultan of Johor and promised him British protection and support. In return, Tengku Long, henceforth known as Sultan Hussein, gave the British permission to set up a trading post in Singapura.

The trading post prospered and grew rapidly into the Town of Singapore, and by 1824, had a population of 10,683.

That year, Sultan Hussein ceded the whole of Singapore Island to the British. Thereafter, Temenggong Abdul Rahman relocated 100 families of *Orang Biduanda Kallang* to the Pulau River of Johor. Sadly, smallpox decimated the community. By 1847, there were just eight families left.

As for the Sea People who remained in the Kallang area, they gradually settled on land around the mouth of the Kallang River.

The Spread of Agriculture and Industry

Raffles Town Plan

In 1822, Raffles oversaw the drawing up of a Town Plan to guide the future growth of Singapore town. The Kallang area lay just outside the town limits, making it a suitable site for subsequent agricultural and industrial development.

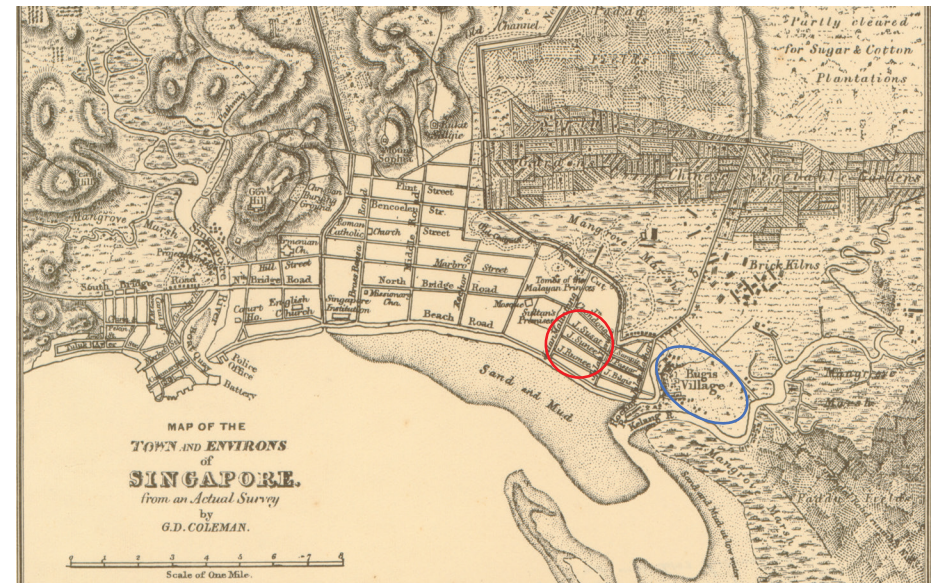
In the Raffles Town Plan, Tanjong Rhu was intended to become a “Marine Yard”. In 1822, William Flint, the first Master Attendant of Singapore and Raffles’ brother-in-law, set up a shipbuilding business there. Other shipyards soon followed.

Similarly, in the Town Plan, land adjacent to the mouth of the Rochor River was allocated to the Bugis. They were a seafaring people from present-day Sulawesi, Indonesia, who comprised close to a fifth of the population in Singapore then. Like the British, the Bugis were trade rivals with the Dutch who dominated trade in the Malay Archipelago.

The Dutch also opposed British expansion in the region. Thus, reflecting the old adage – “the enemy of my enemy is my friend” – the Bugis were considered useful allies of the British in possible conflicts with the Dutch.

Development in the 1830s and 1840s

By the 1830s, the Bugis along with the *Orang Laut* had settled further east, to an area between the mouths of the Rochor and Kallang rivers. The area became known as Kampong Bugis.



(Source: Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore)

This 1836 map shows the Town of Singapore and surrounding areas. The area circled in red was originally demarcated for the Bugis under the Raffles Town Plan of 1822. However, by the 1830s, the Bugis had settled further east, to an area between the mouths of the Rochor and Kallang rivers, circled in blue. The area was later known as Kampong Bugis.

Further up the Kallang River, marshes and forests were cleared mostly for agricultural use. Taking advantage of the abundant supply of water, land for sugar and cotton plantations was cleared next to paddy (*padi*) fields while Chinese settlers planted vegetable gardens.

Brick kilns were also opened in the area to supply the burgeoning town with a steady source of building material.

By the 1840s, Kallang Road and Geylang Road were completed, allowing people to travel between the town and the eastern part of the island. This enabled the spread of farms and communities to regions such as Bedok and Changi.

Kallang Gasworks

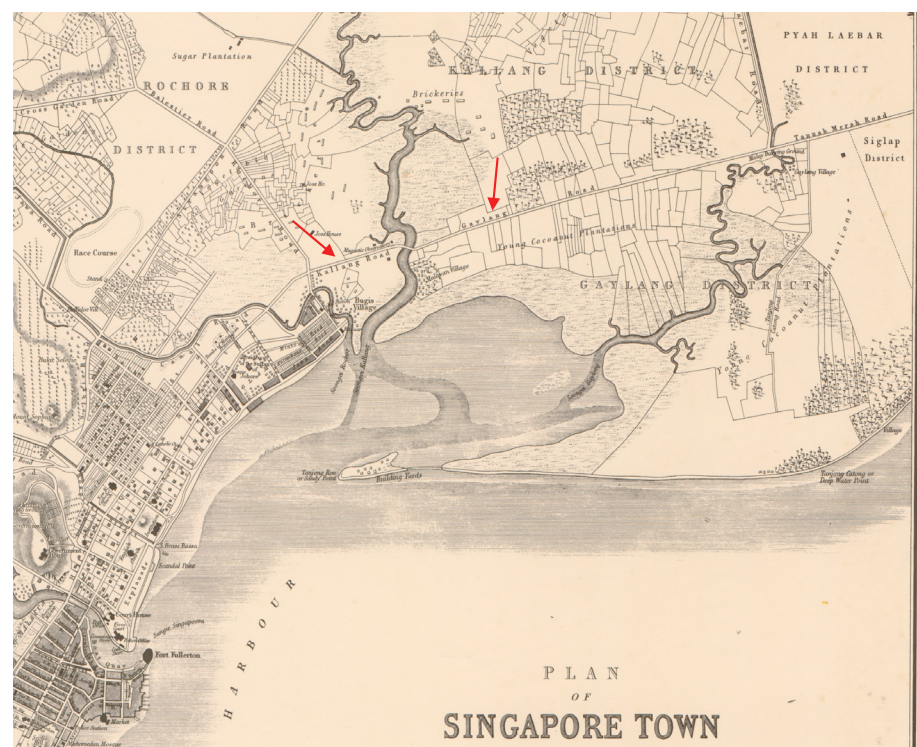
In the 1860s, Kallang became crucial to meeting the town's growing energy needs. Prior to that, street lighting in the town was

abysmal. Only major roads were dimly lit by feeble lamps fuelled by coconut or animal oil.

In 1862, a private firm founded in London, the Singapore Gas Company, started work on a gasworks to supply piped gas. A 3.14-hectare site in Kampong Bugis – around the size of three football fields – was chosen for the gasworks. The technology of the day made it possible to acquire gas from coal. The gasworks was therefore located next to the Rochor River to allow coal to be shipped in conveniently. Completed by 1864, Kallang Gasworks made possible the availability of piped gas, which made street lighting more reliable.

Shipyards, Sawmills, and Cheroots

By the end of the 19th century, the Kallang Basin, including Kampong Bugis and Tanjong Rhu, had become a centre of shipbuilding



An 1846 map of Singapore town showing the development of the Kallang and Geylang areas. The arrows indicate Kallang Road (west of Kallang River) and Geylang Road (east of Kallang River). (Source: Urban Redevelopment Authority Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore)



A ship under construction on a slipway in the Kallang Basin in 1911. (Source: Arshak C Galstaun Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore)

and saw milling. Shipyards such as Riley, Hargreaves and Company (now United Engineers), and Singapore Slipway (now Keppel Singmarine) established themselves there. Sawmills were also common because logs could be easily transported by water.

Riverine Communities

Alongside the shipyards and sawmills, there were numerous riverine communities.

Most of these villages comprised houses on stilts, connected by pathways which were narrow bridges made from local palms. Below the pathways were sand and mud which were submerged at high tide.

Villages included Kampong Kallang, located just south of Grove Road, which connected Geylang Road and Tanjong Katong Road. Further south was Kampong Rokok, or "Cigarette Village", whose villagers specialised in using leaves from the *nipah* palm to make wrappers for Malay-style palm-leaf cigarettes, or cheroots.

Southwest of Kampong Rokok, there were two more villages: Kampong Batin (Malay for "Chief Village") and Kampong Laut (Malay for "Sea Village").



Riverine communities: Kampong Kallang in the early 1900s. (Source: Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore)

Pulau Geylang

A geographical curiosity sat in the middle of the Kallang Basin, between these villages and Tanjong Rhu – a little-known island called Pulau Geylang, named because it was near the mouth of the Geylang River. It was first mapped in 1846 and named by 1906. At low tide, this island was joined to the mainland.



A map of the Kallang Basin in 1913. The Tanjong Rhu area (labelled A) was replete with shipyards, while the Kallang River mouth hosted sawmills (circled in blue). Some of the riverine communities are marked with red arrows. Pulau Geylang is labelled B. The dotted lines reflect areas under water at high tide. (Source: Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore)

Riverine Communities Take Flight

In land-scarce Singapore, a constant narrative is of the old having to make way for the new. This rang true as early as the 1930s for Kallang.

The Need for a Civilian Aerodrome

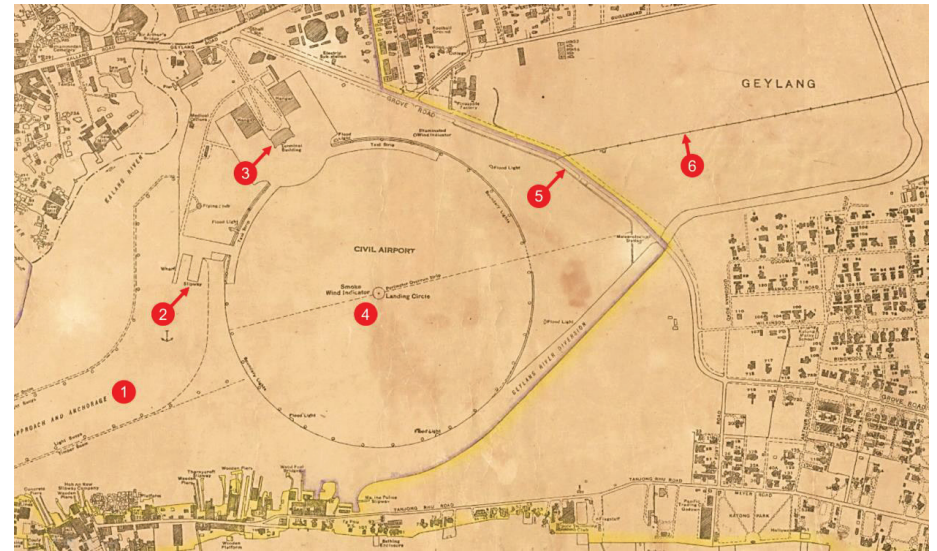
By 1931, Singapore was a booming metropolis of more than 557,000 people. Civilian air travel was becoming commonplace. Governor of the Straits Settlements Sir Cecil Clementi suggested a purpose-built civilian airport for Singapore – to be sited at the mouth of the Kallang River.

There were three reasons for its location: It was close to the town, the immediate area had no obstructions that would impede approaching

aircraft, and the basin allowed the airport to handle seaplanes.

To make way for the aerodrome, the residents of Kampongs Kallang, Rokok, Batin, and Laut had to be resettled, and 339 acres of marshland reclaimed. A circular bund was gradually built up above the level of high tide, creating the foundation for the aerodrome. To accommodate the circular bund, the Geylang River was straightened and canalised.

Much of the earth for filling in the marshland came from hills to the northeast of the Eunos area. These hills were cut down, and the earth transported to Kallang via a specially-constructed railway line.



A 1938 map of Kallang Aerodrome and surrounding areas. (1) Seaplane approach and anchorage. (2) Seaplane slipway. (3) Kallang Aerodrome Terminal building. (4) Kallang Aerodrome landing grounds. (5) Grove Road. (6) Railway line transporting earth from hills in the Eunos area to reclaim land for the aerodrome. (Source: Survey Department Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore)

A World-Class Aerodrome Opens

Kallang Aerodrome, also known as Singapore Airport, was officially opened to great fanfare by Clementi's successor, Sir Shenton Thomas, on 12 June 1937. It was one of Singapore's largest infrastructural projects at the time, costing \$9 million, and was rightly hailed as a world-class airport.



An Imperial Airways seaplane on the Kallang Basin, off Kallang Airport, in 1946. The airline was the forerunner of today's British Airways. (Source: Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore)



Invited guests gathered at Kallang Aerodrome on 12 June 1937, the day of its official opening. (Source: From the Edwin A. Brown Collection. All rights reserved, Celia Mary Ferguson and National Library Board, Singapore)

Kallang Aerodrome Landing Ground

Instead of a runway, the aerodrome had a circular landing ground 1,000 yards (914.4 metres) in diameter, allowing planes to land in any direction.

Kallang in Wartime

World War II came to Malaya and Singapore just four years after the opening of Kallang Aerodrome.

The aerodrome was used by Allied military aircraft to combat the invading Japanese. Royal Air Force (RAF) and Royal New Zealand Air Force (RNZAF) squadrons, as well as a Dutch fighter unit, operated from Kallang.

However, the Allied forces were routed in the air. By early February 1942, the last Allied planes were pulled out of Singapore to airfields in Sumatra. The British surrendered on 15 February 1942.

During the Japanese Occupation from 1942 to 1945, the Japanese decided to lay down a runway to accommodate larger aircraft. However, they surrendered before it was completed. The RAF then completed the one-mile (1.61 km) runway in 1946 before returning it to civilian use.



Japanese soldiers posing outside the Kallang Airport Terminal Building on 1 March 1942, just after the Fall of Singapore. (Source: David Ng Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore)

The End of an Era of Aviation

The rapid growth of air traffic in Singapore soon rendered Kallang Airport too small for daily use. Hence, Paya Lebar Airport was constructed as its replacement, opening on 20 August 1955. Kallang Airport closed the next day.

The vacant, windswept grounds were put to good use. Part of the grounds was turned over to housing. The Singapore Improvement Trust, a colonial organisation set up in 1927 to handle Singapore's housing needs, built Old Kallang Airport Estate. Part of the former runway became Old Airport Road. Two roads inside the estate were named Dakota Crescent and Dakota Close, after the Douglas DC-3 "Dakota", a propeller-driven aircraft that used to frequent the airport.



A 1958 map of the area formerly occupied by Kallang Airport. The grounds east of Mountbatten Road have been turned into Old Kallang Airport Estate, indicated by a red arrow. Part of the runway was now Old Airport Road. (Source: Singapore Land Authority)



A Malayan Airways DC-3 Dakota aircraft parked at Kallang Airport in 1948. (Source: Civil Aviation Authority of Singapore Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore)



Guests watching a judo display during the official opening of the Singapore Youth Sports Centre in the former Kallang Airport Terminal building on 12 October 1956. (Source: Ministry of Information and the Arts Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore)



Old Kallang Airport Estate in 1962. (Source: Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore)

As for the airport's Terminal Building, it was converted into the Singapore Youth Sports Centre, a headquarters for youth sports organisations and activities, one of Singapore's earliest post-war sports hubs. In 1960, the People's Association took over its functions, assets, and property, and moved into the building.

The Highway to Merdeka

After World War II, a strong desire for decolonisation and independence, or *merdeka*, swept through the Malayan Peninsula. Singaporeans had witnessed how swiftly the British had capitulated in the face of Japanese aggression, and became disillusioned with British rule. The road to *merdeka* would wind through the Kallang area.

The Merdeka Talks

First came the Rendel Constitution of 1955, which granted Singapore partial internal self-government. Then, the Legislative Assembly General Election in April 1955 resulted in the formation of the Labour Front coalition government, with David Marshall as Singapore's first Chief Minister. For the first time in Singapore's history, members elected by the population constituted the majority in the legislature.

However, Marshall was not satisfied. He continued to advocate for full internal self-government and eventually independence. He led a delegation to London in April 1956 for constitutional talks known as the Merdeka Talks, but disagreed with the British over who would retain control over internal

security in Singapore. To put pressure on the British, he resigned in June 1956, and was succeeded as Chief Minister by Lim Yew Hock.

Merdeka Bridge and Nicoll Highway

It was during this time that the Merdeka Bridge and Nicoll Highway were built over the Kallang Basin to relieve traffic congestion in the City and provide a new transport route between the City and the suburbs in the east.

The \$8-million Merdeka Bridge was named to reflect the "confidence and aspirations" of the people. An important feature was two lion sculptures placed at either end of the bridge – these became known as the Merdeka Lions.

Nicoll Highway was named after Sir John Fearn Nicoll, a former Governor of Singapore who had made possible the construction of the road. He had also paved the way for the 1955 General Election.

Hence, both bridge and highway paid tribute to Singapore's *merdeka* journey. They were launched on 17 August 1956 by Chief Minister Lim.



An aerial view of Kallang showing the Nicoll Highway and Merdeka Bridge in 1956. (Source: Public Works Department Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore)



Festivities during the opening ceremony of the Merdeka Bridge and Nicoll Highway on 17 August 1956. (Source: Ministry of Information and the Arts Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore)

Singapore eventually achieved its *merdeka* dream, gaining full internal self-government in 1959. In the election that year, the People's Action Party swept into power. Singaporeans now looked forward to a new era as masters of their own destiny.

A Park for the People

Fresh in power, the Government of 1959 decided that Singaporeans needed more open spaces for recreation. Part of the former grounds of Kallang Airport was chosen to be converted into a park called Kallang Park.



Kallang Park in 1959. (Source: Ministry of Information and the Arts Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore)

"Operation Lung"

Minister of National Development Ong Eng Guan spearheaded the project, stating that it

would "provide lungs for people who lived in cubicles", a reflection of the impoverished living conditions prevalent then. Lacking funds for community projects, the Government turned to *gotong royong* ("mutual self-help" in Malay), a tradition common in villages, to overcome resource constraints.

Gotong Royong

Responding to a government call, more than 22,000 volunteers turned up over two days – 1 and 2 August 1959 – to plant 500 trees, and create two fountains, a children's playground, a cricket field, games pitches and flower beds.

This *gotong royong* project, christened "Operation Lung", was a huge success. Kallang Park opened on 18 October 1959 to great fanfare.

When Singapore became part of Malaysia on 16 September 1963, Kallang Park hosted the Malaysia Day Carnival as part of Malaysia Day celebrations. However, the happiness was short-lived. Irreconcilable differences with the Malaysian leadership led to separation and independence for Singapore in August 1965.

Sports and Recreation for the Nation

For a young, independent republic, sport was an important tool for nation-building. This led to newfound vigour to develop sports and recreational infrastructure in Kallang Park.

A Stadium for the People

As early as 1947, sports officials had discussed the need to build a stadium capable of seating 50,000 spectators. By 1966, concrete steps were taken to fulfil this vision. On 7 December that year, Minister for Culture and Social Affairs Othman Wok sank the first pile of a 55,000-seat, \$27-million National Stadium in Kallang Park.

On 21 July 1973, the National Stadium was officially opened by Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew. Its first major sporting event was the 7th Southeast Asian Peninsular Games that year.

The National Stadium swiftly became more than just a sports facility – it was a beloved Singaporean icon. The “Grand Old Dame” was the birthplace of the “Kallang Roar” and the “Kallang Wave”, where Singaporeans came together to cheer on Team Singapore, witness the rise of sporting legends, and celebrate the nation’s birthday during National Day Parades.



The newly-built National Stadium in 1973. In the foreground along the coast is the Oasis Theatre Restaurant, Niteclub and Cabaret. (Source: Civil Aviation Authority of Singapore Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore)

Leisure Facilities

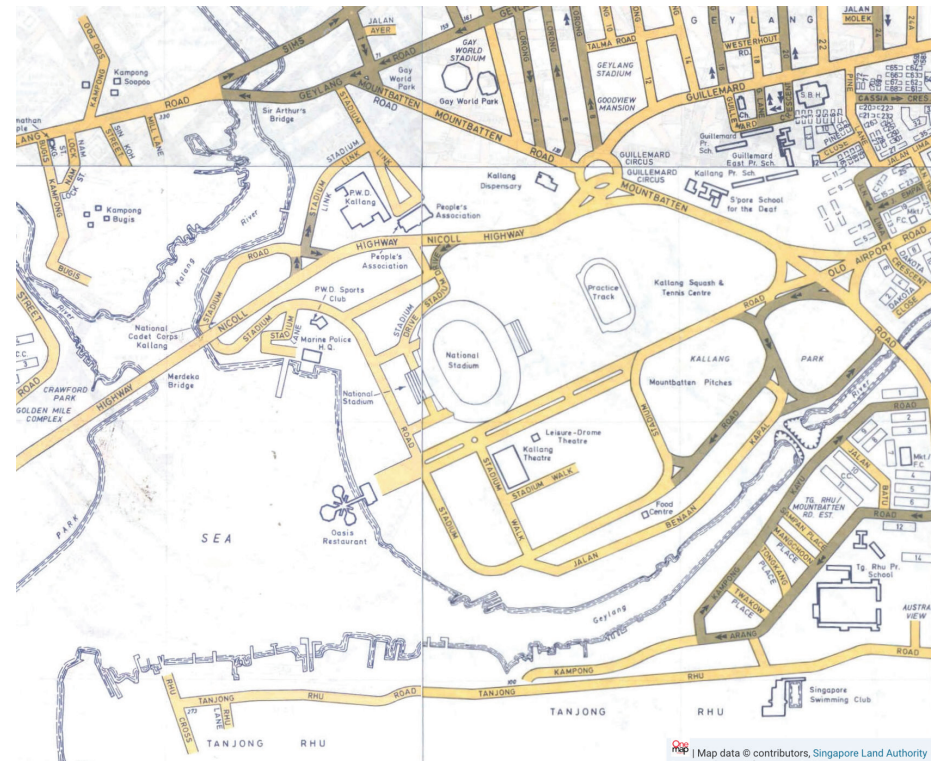
The private sector also funded leisure facilities in Kallang Park. They included the Wonderland Amusement Park (opened in 1969, closed in 1988), the Oasis Theatre Restaurant, Niteclub and Cabaret (opened in 1969, demolished in 2010), Kallang Cinema (opened in 1978, became Kallang Theatre in 1986) and Leisure Drome (opened in 1981).

The Government poured in another \$68 million to build the Singapore Indoor Stadium to complement the National Stadium. It was officially launched in 1989 as Singapore’s first modern air-conditioned stadium.

Over the course of just 20 years from the 1960s to the 1980s, Kallang became the place to go in Singapore for sports and recreation.

Kallang Renewed

From the 1960s, urban renewal in the form of ambitious redevelopment projects transformed the face of Singapore. Whole communities and industries were resettled from the City to the outer parts of the island, and the Kallang area was not spared.



A map of the Kallang area in 1984. Kallang Park had sporting and recreational landmarks such as the National Stadium, Wonderland Amusement Park (not drawn), the Oasis Theatre Restaurant, Niteclub and Cabaret, Kallang Cinema, and Leisure Drome. (Source: Singapore Land Authority)

A Cesspool Called Kallang

Kallang had seen more than a century of shipbuilding, saw milling, and farming. Many place names there belied their ties to shipping and industry. They included Jalan Benaan Kapal (Malay for “Ship Construction Road”), Kampong Arang (Malay for “Charcoal Village”), and the roads of Twakow Place, Tongkang Place, Mangchoon Place, and Sampan Place, named after local boats.

Unfortunately, these activities also turned the Kallang River and Basin into a cesspool. Thousands of low-income homes, factories, street hawkers, and farms treated the river as an open sewer.



Overseas Shipyard Pte Ltd along Jalan Benaan Kapal in 1986. (Source: Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore)

The Clean Rivers Project

The turning point came in 1977 with the launch of the Clean Rivers Project, covering six rivers – the Singapore, Rochor, Geylang, and Kallang and its tributaries, the Whampoa and Pelton. The Ministry of Environment pulled



The Kallang River was a cesspool by the 1970s. (Source: The Straits Times © Singapore Press Holdings Limited. Reprinted with permission)

together 10 government agencies and expended \$200 million to accomplish what seemed like the impossible – clean rivers teeming with fish.

The Kallang River and its tributaries were not just cleaned and dredged – land use in the area was transformed. Thousands of residents were resettled to Housing and Development Board flats. Street hawkers were moved to hawker centres. Shipbuilding,

sawmills, factories, and farms had to go, replaced by parks, green spaces, and recreational activities such as canoeing, kayaking, and dragon-boat racing.

In 1998, Kallang Gasworks, now under the Public Utilities Board, closed and its operations shifted to Senoko Gasworks in the north of the island. The complex was eventually demolished, ending a 134-year legacy.



Kallang Gasworks in 1961. (Source: Ministry of Information and the Arts Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore)

The Crown Jewel of Kallang

Today's jewel in the crown of Kallang is the Singapore Sports Hub, which began operations in 2014.

In 2001, the Government initiated plans to redevelop the National Stadium into “an integrated cluster of world-class sporting facilities”. The stadium's official closing ceremony, “Field of Dreams – A Tribute to the National Stadium”, was held on 30 June 2007. Demolition commenced on 30 September 2010. The Grand Old Dame had lasted just 37 years.

The ground-breaking ceremony of the Singapore Sports Hub took place at the same time and it opened four years later.

Kallang has come a long way since the early days of the Orang Laut, mangrove and *pokok ru*. To contemplate Singapore's long and eventful journey from sultanate to colony, and from colony to city-state, Kallang is the place to explore.



The National Stadium was demolished in 2010 for the Singapore Sports Hub. (Source: Poh Yu Khing)

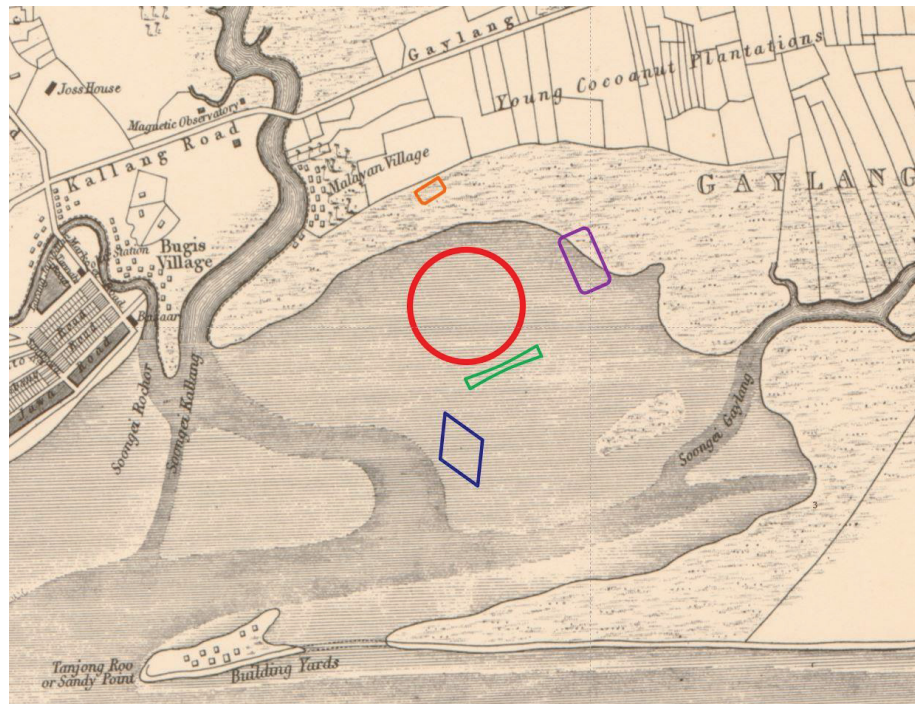
Kallang Through the Years

The physical and human geography of the Kallang area has changed dramatically in the past 200 years.

We have traced the footprint of five significant landmarks in the Kallang area in 2019. They are the **National Stadium (in red)**, the **Former Kallang Airport Terminal Building (orange)**, **Singapore Indoor Stadium (blue)**, **Kallang Practice Track (purple)**, and **Circle Line MRT Station (green)**. We have placed them on six maps of the same area at different points in time. This gives you clear perspectives of how the area has evolved over time, answering the oft-asked question, “what used to be here?”

Take a trip back in time with these maps!

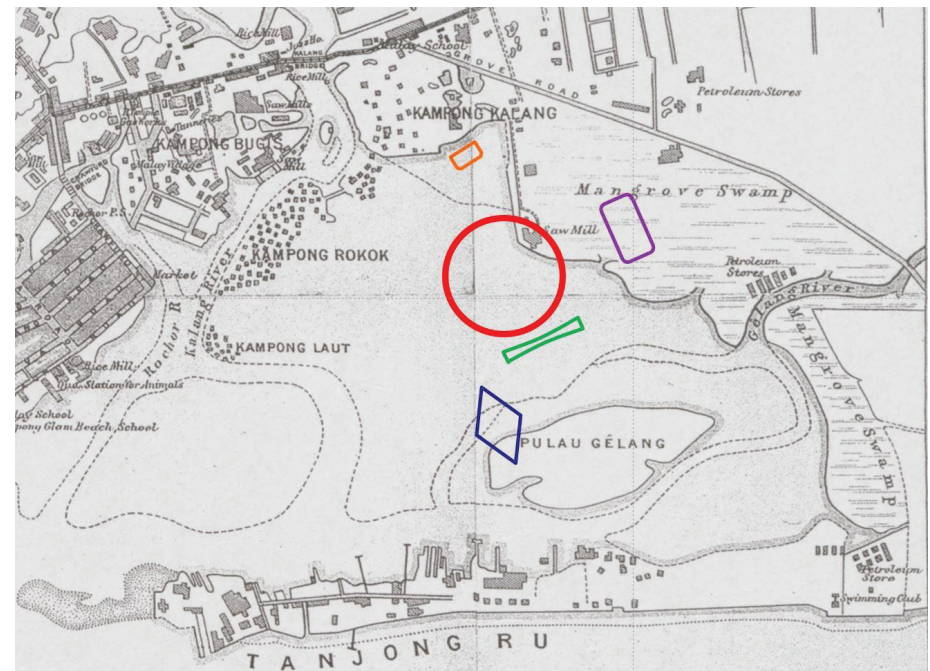
1846: Swamps and Sand



(Source: Urban Redevelopment Authority Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore)

In 1846, the area in and around the Singapore Sports Hub was either mangrove swamp, or sand and mud which was submerged at high tide. Three rivers drained into the Kallang Basin: the Rochor, Kallang, and Geylang (spelled Gaylang in the map). Two villages existed at the mouths of the Rochor and Kallang rivers, named Bugis Village (Kampong Bugis) and a “Malayan Village”, which was most likely Kampong Kallang. A small, unnamed island sat at the mouth of the Geylang River. To the south, Tanjong Rhu (spelled Tanjong Roo in the map), also known as Sandy Point, housed shipbuilding yards.

1913: The Spread of Communities and Industries



(Source: Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore)

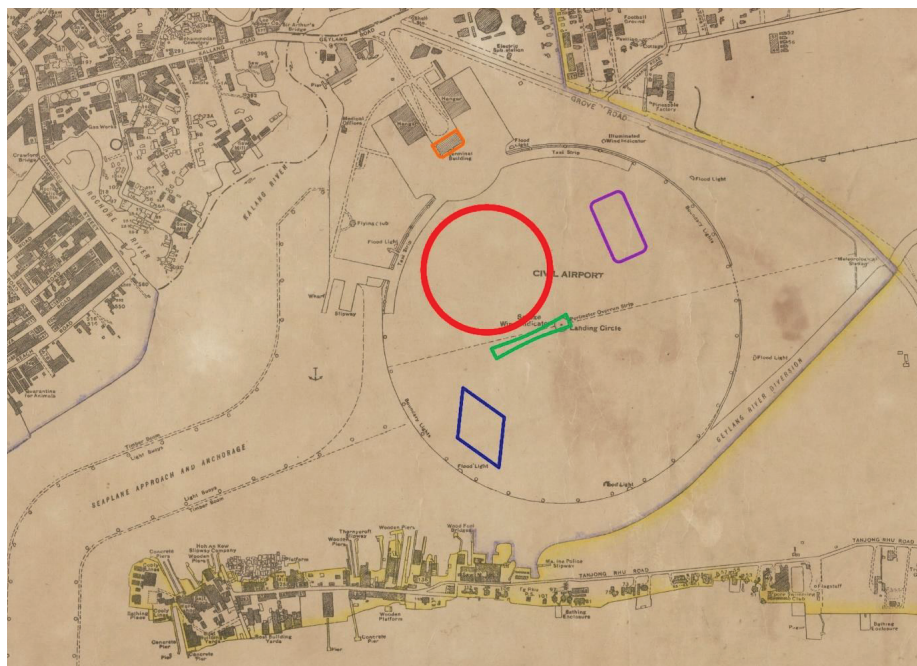
By the dawn of the 20th century, more communities and industries had emerged around the Kallang Basin. Industries included sawmills, rice mills, and petroleum stores, while examples of communities were Kampongs Rokok, Laut, and Kallang (spelled “Kalang” in the map).

The unnamed island at the mouth of the Geylang River had by now been named Pulau Geylang (spelled “Pulau Gelang” in the map). Today, the southern end of the Singapore Indoor Stadium stands on what was once Pulau Geylang.

To connect the Town of Singapore with the suburbs of Katong and Siglap to the east, Grove Road was laid down from Geylang Road – it appears in the top right corner of this map.



1938: An Aerodrome Arises



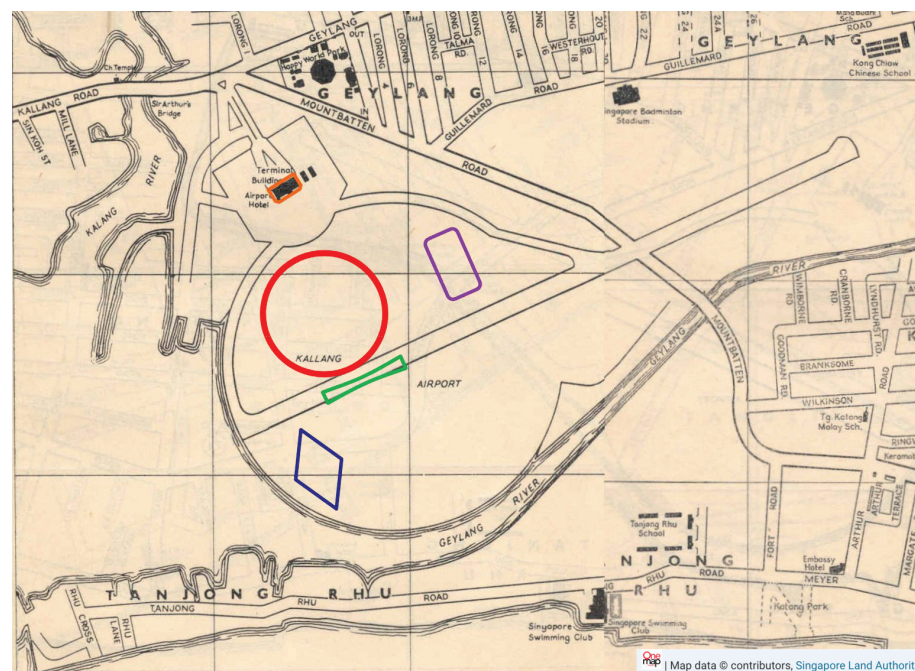
(Source: Survey Department Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore)

The face of the Kallang Basin radically changed in the 1930s. Kallang Aerodrome – with a circular landing ground – officially opened in 1937. The swamps and sand disappeared, and so did the kampungs at the mouth of the Rochor and Kallang rivers, making way for solid earth and tarmac on a circular bund. The Geylang River was also canalised and diverted.

A surprise lay in store for the workers reclaiming land for the aerodrome – Pulau Geylang was discovered to be an island of sawdust and decaying timber! The island could have formed from decades of sawmill operations in the area. It had to be removed and replaced with hard earth, and then it was absorbed into the mainland.

Only Kampong Bugis to the northwest and the shipbuilding industries of Tanjong Rhu to the south survived the arrival of aviation to Kallang.

1955: Enter the Runway

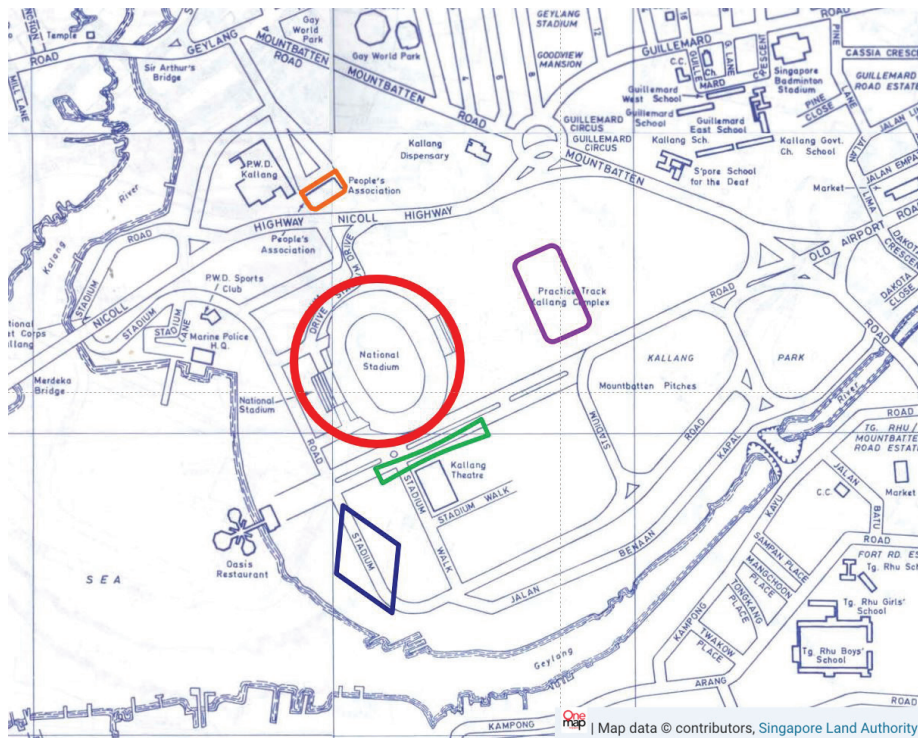


(Source: Singapore Land Authority)

When this map was published in 1955, Kallang Airport was in its final year of operation. The circular landing ground had been replaced by a one-mile (1.61 km) runway. The runway cut across Grove Road, by now renamed Mountbatten Road, necessitating a runway crossing.



1978: Sports and Recreation Galore

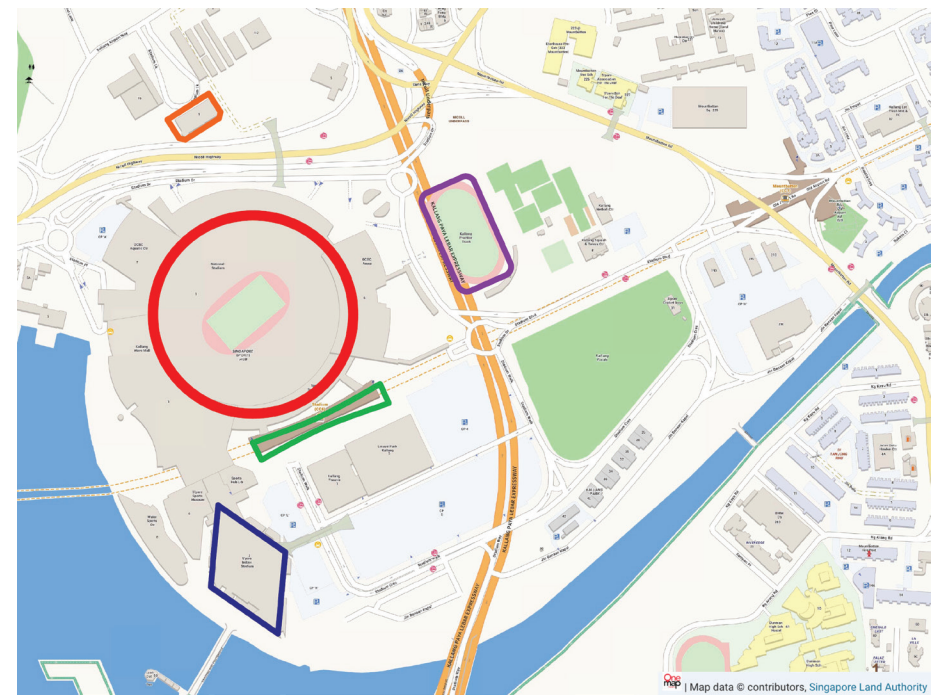


(Source: Singapore Land Authority)

After Kallang Airport closed in 1955, the grounds west of Mountbatten Road were converted into Kallang Park. Then, facilities for sports and recreation gradually filled the park. By 1978, they included the National Stadium, Oasis Theatre Restaurant, Niteclub and Cabaret, Wonderland Amusement Park, Kallang Theatre, and the Mountbatten Pitches. The former airport runway largely survived as Old Airport Road and an internal service road inside Kallang Park.

Along the banks of the Geylang River, roads appeared reflecting the proliferation of industries in the area. They included Jalan Benaan Kapal ("Ship Construction Road"), Kampong Arang Road ("Charcoal Village Road"), and Twakow Place, Tongkang Place, Mangchoon Place, and Sampan Place, all named after local boats.

2019: Kallang in the 21st Century



(Source: Singapore Land Authority)

Kallang in the 21st century is a blend of old and new.

The Kallang Airport Terminal Building has been conserved, and some landmarks from the 1970s, such as Kallang Theatre and the Kallang Practice Track, are still around. They stand alongside fresh landmarks such as Singapore Sports Hub and Kallang Wave Mall. Much of the former airport runway has been replaced by a subway - the Circle Line, with Stadium and Mountbatten stations serving the area.



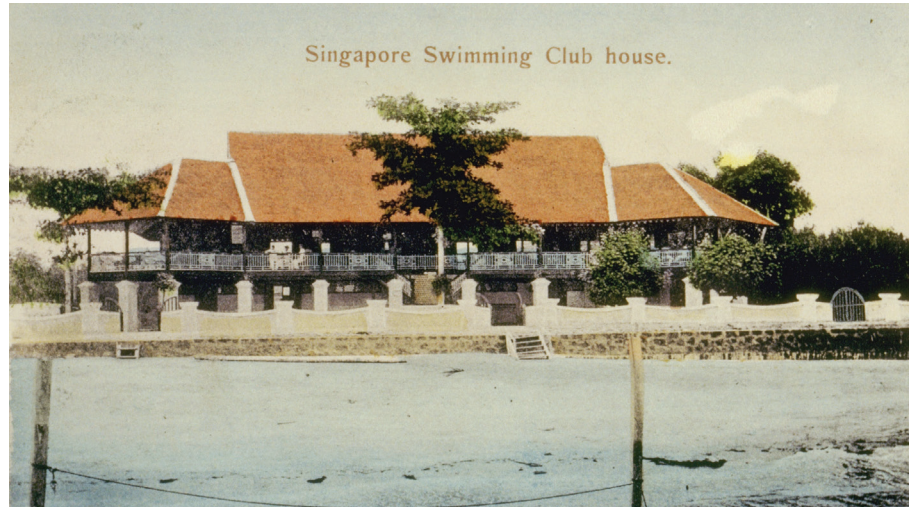
A Stage for Dreams

Kallang is synonymous with sports. Since the end of the 19th century, sportsmen and sportswomen have flocked to the Kallang area to do what they do best: train, compete, and achieve. Here are some notable sporting venues which have nurtured world-class athletes and provided a stage on which their loftiest sporting dreams have come true.

Singapore Swimming Club

Officially opened: 1894

Status: Operational at original site



The clubhouse of the Singapore Swimming Club in 1906. Due to land reclamation, the club is no longer next to the sea. (Source: Arshak C Galstaun Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore)

The Singapore Swimming Club (SSC) is one of the earliest sports establishments in the Kallang area. In the early 1890s, a group of young European men took *sampan* rides from Johnston's Pier (along Collyer Quay) to Tanjong Rhu to swim. They swam off a military pier that projected from Fort Tanjong Katong (now Katong Park).

They decided to form a swimming club, first renting an *attap* hut in the area, then a neighbouring bungalow. The SSC was officially opened in 1894 with 50 members. As in the

past, a *sampan* was hired to transport members from Johnston's Pier to the club on the coast, as access roads such as Tanjong Rhu and Mountbatten roads did not exist then.

In 1897, the club held its first swimming race. Regular swimming competitions took place on Sundays, and on Christmas Day, a 1¼-mile race from the club to Sea View Hotel. However, a member, a Miss Boyer-Smythe, was killed by a shark in 1925, putting an end to the annual race. After that, a rectangular

enclosure made of wooden stakes was constructed, and swimming was confined to this area.

Eventually, the SSC constructed a swimming pool, which enabled members to swim any time, regardless of tides. The \$54,000 pool measured 64 by 30.5 metres, slightly larger than an Olympic-size pool (50 by 25 metres). It was officially opened on 3 December 1931 by Straits Settlements Governor Sir Cecil Clementi, who, after declaring it open, threw off his robes and jumped into the pool! The pool caused “a sensation throughout Malaya”, “nothing like it having been seen in the country before”.

From the late 1940s, the SSC has cemented its swimming legacy by nurturing many national

and international champions. Its swimming school has seen formidable coaches such as the likes of “Flying Fish” Neo Chwee Kok (1931-1987), who was appointed chief coach in 1973. He had won four gold medals at the inaugural 1951 Asian Games in New Delhi, and qualified for the 1952 Helsinki Olympics.

The results have been impressive. For example, Norma Hutchinson represented Singapore in the 1954 Asian Games in Manila. Junie Sng (born 1964) made her international debut aged 11, and in the 1983 SEA Games, swept 10 golds in 10 days. Other star names include Junie's sister Elaine, and the Tay sisters of Molly and Chin Joo. The SSC has done more than its fair share in building up the local swimming scene.

Gay World Stadium

Opened: 1937

Demolished: 2001

In an era predating television, the internet, and modern shopping malls, amusement parks were the go-to entertainment spots for Singaporeans. Before World War II, three

became famous: New World in Jalan Besar (opened 1923), Great World at River Valley (1929), and Happy World along Geylang Road (1937).



The third Merlion Cup for basketball was held at Gay World Stadium in 1987. (Source: Basketball Association of Singapore)

Happy World stood out because it also had a sports stadium. Called the Happy World Stadium, it was octagonal in shape, and had 15 tiers of seats that could accommodate up to 7,000 spectators. It was the only indoor sporting arena in Singapore from 1937 to 1952, and was mainly used for boxing, basketball, badminton, and table tennis. In 1964, after a change in management, Happy World and its stadium were renamed Gay World.

From the stadium's inception, boxing became entrenched there as a regular event, thanks to Happy World's managing director George E. Lee, dubbed an "enterprising boxing magnate" by the *Malaya Tribune*.

Thousands thronged the stadium to catch boxing bouts, which were so popular that two boxing rings staged matches simultaneously, side by side.



Old Singapore Badminton Hall

Officially opened: 1952

Status: Repurposed

Before World War II, there was no purpose-built badminton hall in Singapore. Competitive matches had to take place in venues such as the Singapore Volunteer Corps Drill Hall at Beach Road, or the Clerical Union at Rangoon Road. However, facilities were either inadequate, or tournaments were delayed due to double booking.

The impetus for a purpose-built badminton hall finally came in 1949. The Malayan badminton team, which included Singapore-born and based players, won the inaugural Thomas Cup, a prestigious international championship in Britain. At the time, Thomas Cup winners defended their titles on home soil, which meant Malaya had to host the next tournament in 1952.

Eventually, boxing greats emerged, such as Gopalan Ramakrishnan (born 1940) and Syed Abdul Kadir (born 1948). Both made it to the Olympic Games – the former in 1964, the latter in 1972.

Gay World Stadium also became synonymous with basketball. From the late 1940s to the 1980s, matches could attract up to 10,000 spectators, far beyond the stadium's official capacity. Fans made do by sitting on the stairs and at the top of the stands. Hundreds who could not get tickets lingered outside the stadium, just to hear the excitement of the spectators and get live score updates.

By the 1970s, National Sports Associations found Gay World Stadium too small and antiquated for international competitions. Eventually, in 2001, this stage for dreams was demolished with the rest of Gay World.

Singapore Badminton Association (SBA) president Lim Chuan Geok – who had also managed the victorious Thomas Cup team – called for the construction of a badminton hall worthy of hosting international tournaments. A committee was formed to raise funds, and in 1951, a site along Guillemard Road was approved. The Singapore Badminton Hall (SBH) officially opened on 7 June 1952, with four badminton courts and a capacity of 7,126 spectators.

Eventually, the 1952 Thomas Cup was held at Gay World Stadium, because the Malayan team thought it risky to defend their title at a new venue where they had never practised. Their decision was justified – they retained their title. The SBH finally hosted the 1955



The Singapore Badminton Hall in 2007, one year before the Singapore Badminton Association gave up their lease on the building. (Source: Aldwin Teo, Wikipedia)

tournament, and the Malayan team, starring badminton greats such as Wong Peng Soon and Ong Poh Lim, made it three Thomas Cup wins in a row.

Other than badminton, the SBH also hosted sepak takraw, table tennis, and taekwondo tournaments. It even witnessed epochal political events such as Singapore's only referendum – it served as the vote counting station for the 1 September 1962 vote on merger with Malaya. Fittingly, in 1999, it

became the first sports facility to be marked as a historic site by the National Heritage Board.

Alas, the SBA gave up its lease on the badminton hall in 2008, ending a 56-year stage for dreams. The building reopened the following year as a commercial centre named Guillemard Village. A new Singapore Badminton Hall opened nearby in 2011 at 1 Lorong 23 Geylang, continuing Kallang's rich involvement in badminton.



Old National Stadium

Officially opened: 1973

Demolished: 2010

No narrative of Singapore sporting history is complete without mention of the National Stadium. Kallang's "Grand Old Dame" was a fitting stage for sports at a time when a young nation was finding its feet.

The National Stadium was not the first purpose-built stadium in Singapore. Officially opened in 1924, the 11,000-capacity Anson Road Stadium was nicknamed the "Wembley of Malaya" as it hosted Singapore's pre-war

Malaya Cup (now Malaysia Cup) football matches. Unfortunately, it was severely damaged during World War II and never rebuilt.

As for Jalan Besar Stadium (opened 1929), it was hardly world-class, with a capacity of just 10,000.

In the 1950s, the authorities zoomed in on Kallang as a possible site for a world-class

55,000-seat stadium, as there were other sports facilities in the area, such as the Singapore Badminton Hall. By 1965, Kallang Park was confirmed as the site, and construction started the following year. After seven years and \$27 million – a significant sum for newly-independent Singapore – the National Stadium officially opened in 1973.

Finally, Singapore had a stage with which it could showcase local and international sports to the world. The National Stadium came with an all-weather synthetic running track, and a flash timer to capture photo finishes for running competitions. Night events were well-lit by four sets of floodlights mounted on towers 70 metres high.

During its 37 years of existence, the Grand Old Dame saw the rise and crowning of dozens of sporting legends such as sprint champion C. Kunalan, track queen Chee Swee Lee, high jump star Noor Azhar Hamid, and football wizard Fandi Ahmad. By hosting the Southeast Asian Games in 1973, 1983, and 1993, and the annual National Day Parade 18 times, it also did its part to foster national and international unity.

The National Stadium was demolished in 2010, but relics such as turnstiles, floodlights and seats can still be viewed in the Singapore Sports Museum. Head there to relive the glory days of Singapore's foremost stage for dreams.



The old National Stadium as seen from the VIP Lounge. (Source: Singapore Sports Council)



Singapore Indoor Stadium

Officially opened: 1989

Like the National Stadium, the Singapore Indoor Stadium was not the first indoor sporting venue in Singapore. Its main predecessors were the Gay World Stadium and the Singapore Badminton Hall.

However, by the 1970s, National Sports Associations (NSAs) considered these venues antiquated and inadequate for international events. After the inaugural Merlion Cup basketball tournament in 1984,

the Basketball Association of Singapore complained that “Gay World Stadium has been given several facelifts without much improvement. Five large pillars block the view of the spectators.”

Finally, in 1985, the Singapore Sports Council (now Sport Singapore) received approval to construct an indoor stadium in Kallang, a short walk from the National Stadium. Work on the \$68-million building began in 1987 and took two years to complete. Thanks to famed Japanese architect Kenzo Tange, the stadium acquired an iconic look: a soaring, diamond-shaped roof.

The Singapore Indoor Stadium was equipped with the latest facilities, including a four-sided, \$8-million Sony Jumbotron TV screen to display close-up shots and playbacks; each side measured 3.8 by 2.8 metres. Its seating capacity of 12,000 came

with 2,600 retractable seats to create more space. While the Gay World Stadium accommodated just one basketball court, the indoor stadium could take in two basketball, four tennis, or 12 badminton courts. And matches could be played in air-conditioned comfort – a big draw for athletes from temperate climes!

The new venue was an instant draw. Even before its official opening in December 1989, it already received bookings for 1994. Its first sporting event was the 5th Merlion Cup basketball tournament from 26 November to 3 December 1989, followed by the Grand Prix Badminton Final from 6 to 10 December.

The success of the Singapore Indoor Stadium hastened the demise of Gay World Stadium, and to this day, it remains a favoured venue for indoor sports and entertainment.



The Singapore Indoor Stadium. (Source: Singapore Sports Hub)

Kallang's "Track and Field"

Just east of Singapore Sports Hub, on either side of Stadium Boulevard, lie the Kallang Practice Track and the Kallang Fields (formerly

Mountbatten Pitches). Despite unassuming appearances, they have played their parts in Kallang's rich sporting history.



Kallang Practice Track

As its name suggests, the Kallang Practice Track was completed in 1973 as a warm-up venue for athletes competing in track and field meets at the nearby National Stadium, which also opened in the same year.

Despite its humble name, it is known as "the Home of Athletics" for good reason. From track queen Chee Swee Lee in the 1970s, to sprinter Calvin Kang and marathoner Soh Rui Yong today, the venue has been a training ground for generations of national athletes.

The man in the street is welcome too. "Sports Days" – annual events by schools in the area – are held here, and it is frequented by recreational joggers, although national athletes take priority.

The practice track was last refurbished in 2015 for \$4 million.

The Kallang Fields

Southeast of the Kallang Practice Track lie the Kallang Fields. It was first known as the Mountbatten Pitches from the 1970s to the mid-1980s, and was a popular venue for both competitive and recreational football matches.

From 1998 to 2015, the Kallang Fields were divided and leased separately on a yearly basis to the Singapore Cricket Association and the Singapore Softball Association (now the Singapore Baseball and Softball Association).

The cricket ground was known as the Kallang Cricket Ground, and the softball pitch, the Kallang Diamonds. Both associations organised local and international matches there, and used the grounds as their National Training Centres.

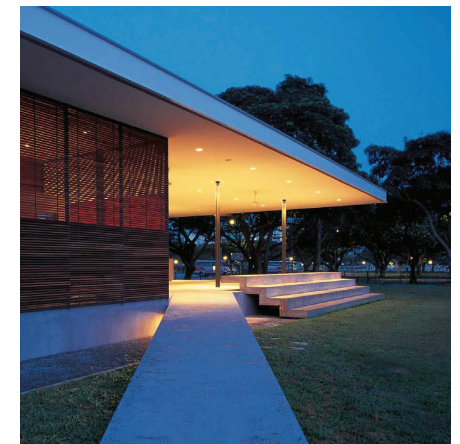


India vs Zimbabwe, September 1999. The Kallang Cricket Ground hosted the 1999 Coca-Cola Singapore Challenge, a triangular tournament. The third team not seen in this photograph was the West Indies team. (Source: Sport Singapore)

The Kallang Cricket Ground hosted the Saudara Cup – an annual cricket match between Singapore and Malaysia – seven times. In the last event in 2014, not a ball was bowled – the match was abandoned due to rain.

The ground also hosted the archery competition for the inaugural 2010 Youth Olympic Games and the 2015 SEA Games. As for the softball competition for the same SEA Games, it was held at the Kallang Diamonds.

In the Kallang Cricket Ground was the Singapore Cricket Association Pavilion, designed by award-winning architect Kerry Hill. It housed changing rooms for players and umpires. The building, and its construction was partly sponsored by local cricketers through the Friends of the Pavilion scheme.



Singapore Cricket Association Pavilion was designed in the style of modern tropical architecture. (Source: Albert Lim, Kerry Hill Architects Pte Ltd)

With the expiry of the two leases, the Kallang Fields will be revamped into a \$25-million National Training Centre for football, with up to three football pitches.

A Look Into the National Stadium

The centrepiece of Singapore Sports Hub in Kallang is the National Stadium, which opened with the rest of the complex in 2014. With its iconic dome – the world's largest free-spanning dome, able to shelter four Airbus A380 airliners under it – the stadium stands out from afar. In this chapter, SportsHub Pte Ltd gives you a peek into the nuts and bolts that make the building a truly world-class facility, well-equipped to stage the grandest of sporting and entertainment events.



Introduction

The Singapore Sports Hub opened its doors to the public in **June 2014**.

The first events were:
Rugby World Club 10s **21 & 22 June 2014**

Singapore Chinese Orchestra
Our People, Our Music 2014 **28 June 2014**

Stefanie Sun
2014 Kepler World Tour **5 July 2014**

The Singapore Sports Hub
was officially opened by Prime Minister
Lee Hsien Loong on **26 July 2015**



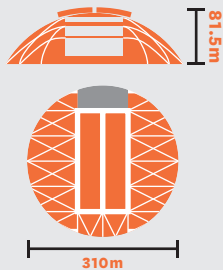
The current National Stadium was built on the same location as the Old National Stadium (1973-2010).



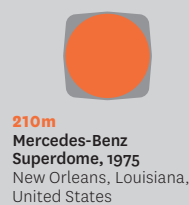
10,000 Tonnes of steel were used in the construction of the new stadium.

Dome

The National Stadium dome is the **world's largest free-spanning dome**.



Other famous domes around the world, in comparison.

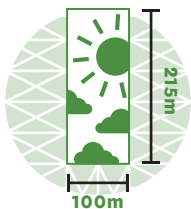


Retractable Roof



The time it takes to open or close the roof.

The area open to the sky.



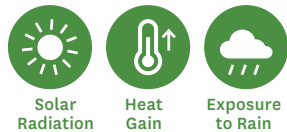
The retractable section consists of 2 half sections which move symmetrically at the same time to cover the field of play.

ETFE

Ethylene Tetrafluoroethylene

The material of the roof is a transparent polymer which offers better light penetration and insulation than glass.

Closing the roof minimises:



Additionally, it is the most effective way to cool down the stadium before an event.



Innovative Lighting System

This projection can be seen from both inside and outside the stadium.



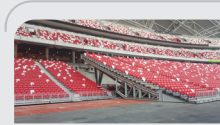
Air Ventilation and Views

Only the west end of the stadium remains open as this allows for spectacular views of the Singapore skyline and air ventilation.

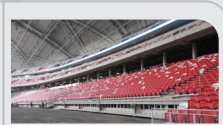
Movable Tiers



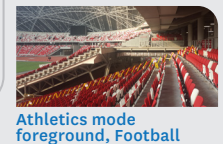
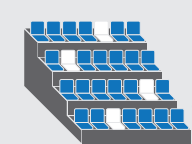
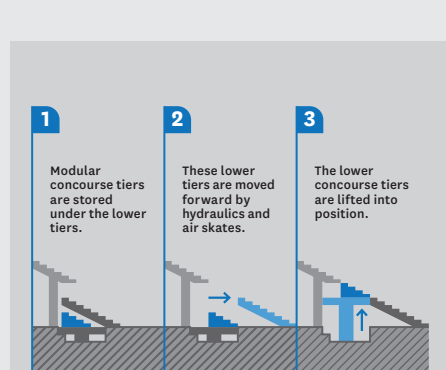
The lower tiers are pushed back to create maximum space for the running track.



The North and South tiers are pushed back, and extra seats removed to create the round oval needed for cricket.



The lower tiers are pushed forward by 12 metres, thereby creating a larger public concourse. This allows space to fit up to 5000 extra seats on the concourse tier, and provides spectators with an excellent view of the field.



Each tier weighs up to **1,500 Tonnes**.

The tiers are so heavy that wheels wouldn't be able to withstand the forces involved. Instead, a system of hydraulics and "air skates" is used.

Bowl Cooling System

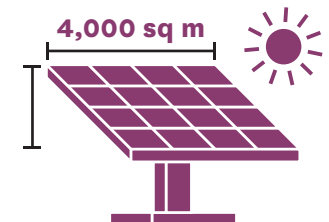
The Bowl Cooling System creates and distributes cooled air around the stadium. This unique solution was invented by engineers to deal with Singapore's hot and humid tropical climate.



Four chiller plant rooms are located under the stadium. Like big refrigerators, they produce chilled water.

A closed water circuit transports water to 116 air handling units (AHUs) around the stadium. Inside these units, the water will cool the air flow to 23 degrees. This freshened air gently flows through the slots underneath the seats.

The 116 AHUs can be activated separately to save energy.

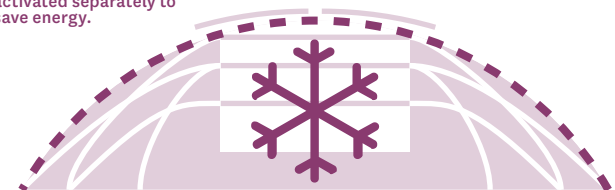


The solar panels generate the same amount of power as the energy consumed by the Bowl Cooling System. This makes the Bowl Cooling System carbon neutral.



Ice Storage Technology

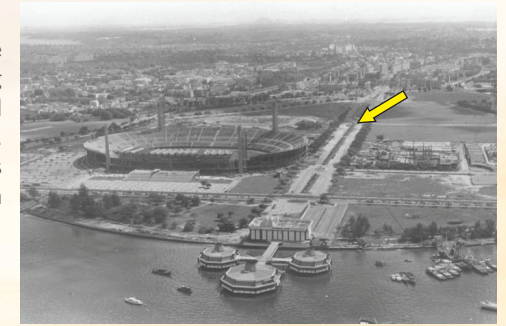
Large tanks with 1.2 million ice balls filled with cooling liquid are located around the stadium under the tiers. These are frozen the night before an event. On the event day, the Bowl Cooling System is turned on and the water flows between the ice balls.



Kallang - A Sporting Hub

This aerial view of Kallang shows the plethora of facilities available for both land and water sports. From the most casual of joggers to the most accomplished of Olympians, there is something for everyone in Kallang to get their pulses up.

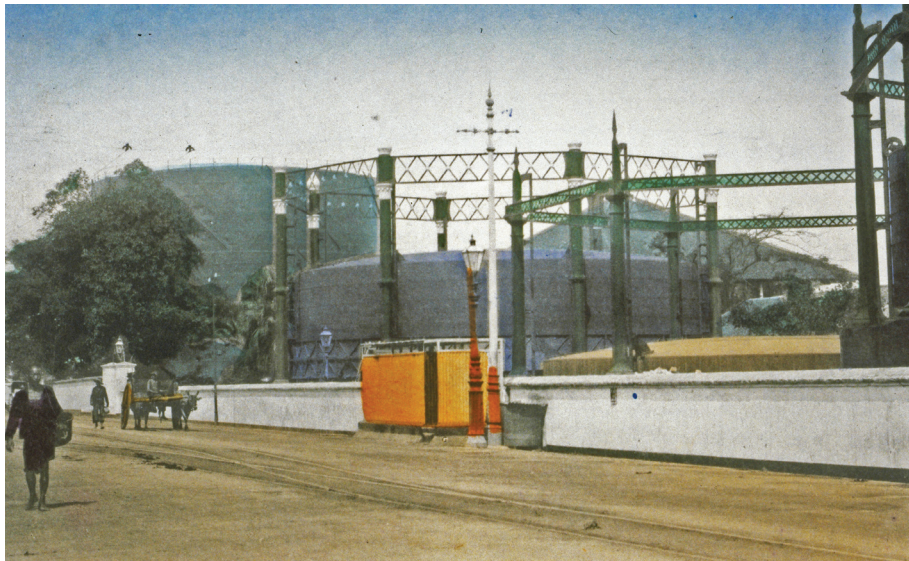
A 1973 photo of the same area. The yellow arrow marks the former Kallang Airport runway, by then an internal road serving the newly-built National Stadium. Today, part of the Circle Line MRT tracks (marked out by red dashes in the main photo) run under the former runway.



Icons of Days Past

Most Singaporeans today would associate Kallang with Sports Hub and the many sporting facilities within and around it. However, there once stood several iconic buildings and sites in Kallang relating to entertainment, transport and even housing. Read on to reminisce and discover the history of these past icons.

Kallang Gasworks (1862 - 1998)



A 1910 postcard featuring Kallang Gasworks. (Source: Lim Kheng Chye Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore)

The Kallang Gasworks was one of the most iconic landmarks in Kallang. Within the gasworks, the large 25-storey blue metal cylinder stood out as a prominent landmark. The gasworks reached the ripe old age of 136 years before it was finally demolished in 1998 to make way for residential development.

The Kallang Gasworks was built in 1862 by the Singapore Gas Company, a private firm founded in London, in order to provide gas for street lighting. The local population initially feared the gasworks. The Chinese

even called it "*Huay Sia*", Hokkien for "Fire City" for fear that it could explode at any time. The presence of 24-hour armed surveillance further added to its foreboding nature.

The gasworks was tirelessly dedicated to the production of gas for street lighting and domestic purposes such as cooking and heating water. The last gas-fuelled street lamp was extinguished in 1956. The gasworks was expanded several times over the years to increase production capacity.

In 1888, a Hindu temple was founded by Tamil workers of the gasworks who set up a shrine to Lord Siva. The Sri Manmatha Karuneshvarar Temple still stands in its original location, opposite the former gasworks, and is also known by devotees as the Kallang Gasworks Sivan Temple.



The Sri Manmatha Karuneshvarar Temple. (Source: Singapore History Consultants Pte Ltd)

In 1997, the plant was relocated to Senoko Power Station which was twice the size of Kallang Gasworks. The move was to allow for the redevelopment of the Kallang Basin and expansion of production capabilities. On 23 March 1998, George Yeo, Minister for Information and the Arts unveiled a sculpture called the 'Spirit of Kallang' to mark the official retirement of the gasworks. Made of materials from the plant, the sculpture is at Kallang Riverside Park, near the former site. In addition, an original gasholder structure (Gas Holder No. 3) is also preserved at the park.



Gas Holder No. 3 preserved at Kallang Riverside Park. (Source: Singapore History Consultants Pte Ltd)

Racial Riots 1964

On 21 July 1964, an unfortunate event in our history took place near Kallang Gasworks. A procession from the Padang to Geylang was organised to celebrate the birthday of Prophet Muhammad. However, during the procession, a clash occurred between Chinese and Malays as it passed by Kallang Gasworks. Violence broke out islandwide over several days, resulting in 23 fatalities and 454 casualties. 21 July is today commemorated as Racial Harmony Day.



Riot squads of the Police Federal Reserve Unit assembled at Kallang Road to restore order. (Source: The Straits Times © Singapore Press Holdings Limited. Reprinted with permission.)

Happy World (Gay World) (1937– 2001)



The front entrance to Happy World, 1940s. (Source: Lim Kheng Chye Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore)

Happy World was built in 1937 at the cost of \$350,000 and was managed by Happy World Ltd. Just a stone's throw away from the Kallang Aerodrome, Happy World stood on a 10-acre (4.04 hectares) triangular plot of land bounded by Grove Road (today known as Mountbatten Road) and Geylang Road. In fact, the buildings within Happy World had to abide by a height limit so as to avoid interference with the planes taking off.

Happy World provided amusement for people from all walks of life with different tastes and budgets. At its opening, features included a cabaret dance hall, a cinema, a sports stadium, hundreds of gaming booths and refreshment stalls, a small golf course, three beer gardens, open theatres for cultural plays and magic shows and a large restaurant with European and Chinese food.

The Happy World Cabaret even held an annual Cabaret Queen contest to recognise the most popular cabaret dancer. The famous Rose Chan, a cabaret-dancer-turned stripper, began at Happy World Cabaret and drew crowds of men and women with her performances.

The stadium in Happy World was a key sporting venue from the 1950s to the 70s. The stadium could seat up to 7,000 people and frequently hosted boxing matches and other sporting events. Other prominent sporting events held there include the 1952 Thomas Cup badminton tournament and basketball matches for the 1973 Southeast Asian Peninsular Games.

In 1964, Happy World was renamed Gay World when British and Malayan Trustees Ltd took over its management. In 1973, it was taken over by the government and managed by the National Stadium Corporation, which was subsequently merged with the National Sports Promotion Board in the same year to form the Singapore Sports Council.

Unfortunately, Gay World began to lose popularity from the 1970s as other forms of entertainment became widely available. The crowds at Gay World began to dwindle and the park was finally demolished in 2001.

Kallang Aerodrome (1937 – 1955)



Crowds gathered at Kallang Airport for Singapore Air Day, 1950. (Source: Ministry of Information and the Arts Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore)

Singapore's first civilian airport, Kallang Aerodrome, was built on 339 acres of reclaimed swampland in Kallang Basin. This was a massive undertaking as villagers at the mouth of the Kallang River had to be resettled in order for the land to be reclaimed. In addition, the Geylang River was diverted to allow for more space.

The modern aerodrome was opened by Governor Sir Shenton Thomas on 12 June 1937. Instead of a runway, it originally had a circular landing ground as well as a slipway for sea planes. The famous aviatrix, Amelia Earhart, who landed at Kallang Aerodrome as part of her round-the-world flight, called it the "aviation miracle of the East".



An aerial view of the Kallang Aerodrome airfield, 1946. (Source: Collection of the National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board)



Amelia Earhart was famous for being the first female aviator to fly solo across the Atlantic Ocean.

The terminal building was designed by Chief Architect of the Public Works Department, Frank Dorrington Ward who was inspired by the Art Deco style featuring horizontal lines and streamlined curves. The terminal building resembles an aeroplane – the glass control tower in the middle, with wings extending on each side.

After the war, a permanent runway was constructed and the aerodrome was henceforth known as Kallang Airport. A popular event held at the airport was Air Day, an annual public air show which aimed to stimulate interest in civil aviation and raise funds for local charities. At the inaugural event in 1948, more than 7,000 spectators viewed air displays and exhibitions.

In 1954, an unfortunate accident occurred at Kallang Airport. Thirty-three people were killed when a Qantas-BOAC Constellation flying from Sydney to London crashed after its undercarriage hit the seawall.

An inquiry into the accident concluded that the pilot had misjudged the landing due to fatigue (after flying for 21 hours). The airport fire service was also inadequately trained and equipped.

A new airport had already been planned for and was being built to replace Kallang Airport. On 20 August 1955, Paya Lebar Airport was opened and Kallang Airport was closed the following day.

Even after Kallang Airport had closed, the terminal building remained and different parts were used for various purposes over the years: Singapore Youth Sports Centre (1956 – 1960), People's Association Headquarters (1960 – 2009), Public Works Department and the Central Manpower Base (1967 – 1972). In 1956, the former airport grounds served as the venue for the Merdeka Rally. In 2008, the airport terminal building was gazetted for conservation by the Urban Redevelopment Authority.

Oasis Theatre Restaurant, Niteclub and Cabaret (1969 – 2010)



The Oasis Theatre Restaurant, Niteclub and Cabaret was housed in the main building along the water's edge and three octagonal structures which stretched out onto the Kallang River.

In 1969, an iconic entertainment venue was opened up right on the waterfront of the Kallang River. The \$4-million three-storey main building at the water's edge was built first and opened on 1 November 1969 by Tan Sri Dr Runme Shaw. The following year, an additional three adjoining octagonal floating platforms were built at a cost of \$1.6 million.

At its opening, the main building featured the Oasis Theatre Restaurant, Golden Neptune Niteclub and Cabaret, Paradise Cove Bar and Nightingale Coffee House. Over the years, other famous restaurants took up premises there as well, such as the Oasis Taiwan Porridge Restaurant and No Signboard Seafood Restaurant. Oasis Taiwan Porridge was based there for 34 years. It has since relocated to Toa Payoh Town Park, retaining its original name. No Signboard Seafood Restaurant opened its

first full-fledged restaurant at Oasis and subsequently expanded its business to open other branches and was recognised in 2018 as a top brand seafood restaurant by Influential Brands.

The venue was a popular night spot, and a favoured venue for annual dinner and dance events due to its unique features and ability to accommodate large numbers of diners.

As early as 1986, the Kallang Sports and Cultural Complex master plan by Japanese architect, Kenzo Tange, hinted at the eventual demolition of the Oasis Theatre Restaurant, Niteclub and Cabaret. However, it was only in 2010 that Oasis was finally demolished to make way for the Singapore Sports Hub.

Old Kallang Airport Estate (1958 – 2017)



The iconic Dove playground of Dakota Estate has been granted conservation status. (Source: Singapore History Consultants Pte Ltd)

Singapore is known for its successful public housing provided by the Housing and Development Board (HDB). Today, more than 80% of Singapore's resident population live in flats. HDB inherited this task from its

predecessor, the Singapore Improvement Trust (SIT). The SIT was set up in 1927 to provide low-cost housing for the working classes. By 1959, the SIT had successfully built about 25,000 housing units and shops.



Minister for Local Government, Lands and Housing Incche Abdul Hamid Bin Haji Jumat speaking at opening of Singapore Improvement Trust's Kallang Airport Estate. (Source: The Straits Times © Singapore Press Holdings Limited. Reprinted with permission.)

In 1955, when the former Kallang Airport was officially closed, planners set aside part of the land for the development of housing. The Kallang Airport Estate was one of the last estates built by SIT at a cost of \$21,250,000. The estate was set to become one of Singapore's most important residential and industrial suburbs, featuring factories, shops and 3,000 flats. It was launched in 1958 by Minister for Local Government, Lands and Housing Incche Abdul Hamid Bin Haji Jumat.

SIT flats were designed specifically to help residents cope with the tropical weather. The flats often had high ceilings and large windows and open balconies to promote better air circulation. Some flats were even called "puay kee chu" or "aeroplane houses" by the Hokkiens because their design was similar to that of the former Kallang Airport control tower. The design aesthetic was a form of Art Deco, featuring streamlined and aerodynamic lines.

One of the segments of Kallang Airport Estate was named Dakota, most likely after the Douglas DC-3 (also known as the Dakota) which frequented Kallang Airport.

In 2014, it was announced that the residents of the 17 blocks of low-rise flats in Dakota Crescent would have to vacate by 2016 to make way for new developments under Mountbatten's estate renewal plans. This sparked several public and community initiatives to capture the heritage of the estate and push for its conservation. In 2017, Minister for National Development, Lawrence Wong, announced that the courtyard and iconic dove playground, and six blocks around the courtyard would be retained and repurposed for community use. In March 2019, the Urban Redevelopment Authority released the Draft Master Plan, which included plans to rejuvenate Dakota Crescent by adding new housing and amenities.

Wonderland Amusement Park (1969-1988)



Some of the highlights of Wonderland Amusement Park: the Ferris Wheel and the Tea-Cup ride. (Sources: The Straits Times © Singapore Press Holdings Limited. Reprinted with permission. Ministry of Information and the Arts Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore)

Apart from Happy World, Kallang also had another iconic entertainment venue – Wonderland Amusement Park. It was owned and operated by Singapore Wonderland Amusements Pte Ltd. Built at a cost of \$5 million, the Wonderland Amusement Park was opened in Kallang Park on 2 August 1969 by Datin Lee Chee Shan. Datin Lee was the daughter of Aw Boon Par, co-founder of the famous Tiger Balm and Haw Par Villa.

The park catered to both the young and the old and was referred to as a "miniature 'Disneyland'". The highlights of the five-acre park included the iconic 80-foot high ferris wheel, jet roller coaster, tea cup ride, mini trains, octopus ride, chair planes and a merry-go-round. Apart from the rides, there were also two restaurants and an outdoor theatre.

Over the years, new attractions and more rides were added, such as a six-lane bowling

alley for children, the Viking Ship and the Sea Monster rides. Up to the 1980s, the fee for the rides ranged from as little as 50 cents to \$2. The park was especially popular during weekends and festive periods, and was often booked for company outings, carnivals and fundraising events.

Unfortunately, by 1986, there were indications that the amusement park would have to close down. The masterplan for the Kallang Sports and Cultural Complex indicated that Wonderland was to make way for carparks to support visitors to the National Stadium and upcoming Indoor Stadium. In mid-1987, Singapore Wonderland Amusements Pte Ltd was issued a notice by the Urban Redevelopment Authority to leave by the end of the year. After successful appeals, the last day of operation was confirmed as 2 March 1988.

150th Anniversary

The opening of Wonderland Amusement Park was planned as part of festivities to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the founding of modern Singapore.

The Making of Sporting History

Sport in Singapore has seen more than its fair share of significant moments over 200 years. Here are 10 milestones that made or changed sporting history in Singapore.

1826 - Singapore Yacht Club opens as Singapore's first sports club



The Royal Singapore Yacht Club in 1949 along Trafalgar Street in the Tanjong Pagar area. It relocated to Tanjong Penjuru in 1966, and again to its current premises at West Coast Ferry Road in 1999. (Source: J E Gabain Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore)

After the British founded the modern port of Singapore in 1819, European sports and sports clubs appeared in the settlement for the purposes of recreation. Popular sports included football, cricket, tennis, and yachting.

Unlike today, the first sports clubs formed were exclusively for the tiny European community, which by 1871 numbered merely 1,946 out of a population of 97,111.

Singapore's first sports club was the Singapore Yacht Club, founded in 1826. Its founding president was military doctor William Montgomerie. It was later joined by

the Singapore Sporting Club (now the Singapore Turf Club) in 1842, and the Singapore Cricket Club (SCC) in 1852.

The Singapore Yacht Club became renowned for its annual regattas. It changed its name to the Royal Singapore Yacht Club in 1922, after it came under the patronage of the Prince of Wales, later King Edward VIII. Two years after Singapore gained independence in 1965, the club was renamed the Republic of Singapore Yacht Club.

As the settlement prospered, the elites of non-European communities formed their own

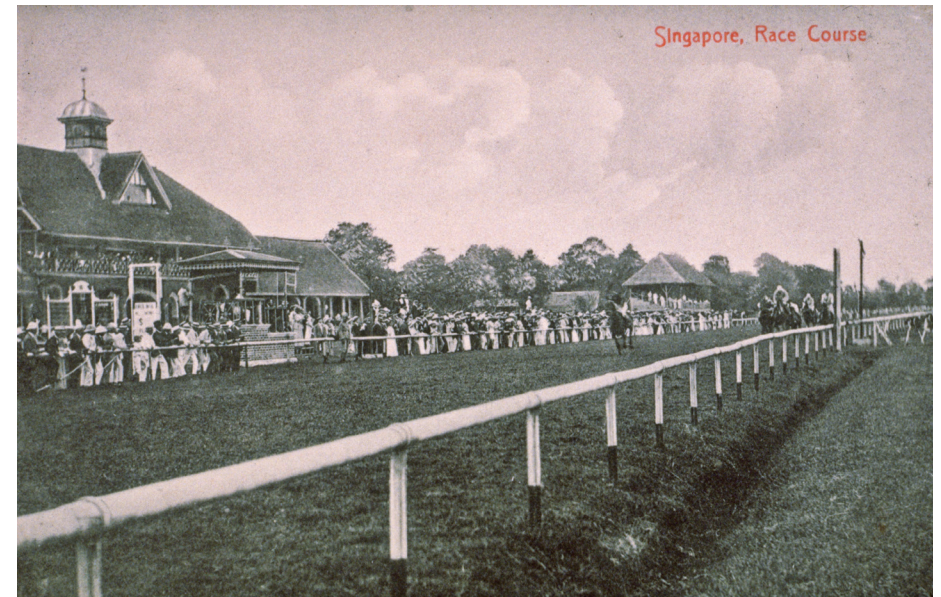
exclusive sports clubs. The Eurasians started the ball rolling with the Singapore Recreation Club in 1883, sharing the Padang with the European-dominated SCC.

Thereafter, the Straits-born Chinese formed the Straits Chinese Recreation Club – now the Singapore Chinese Recreation Club – in Pearl's Hill in 1885. The Singapore Malay Football Club was founded in 1910, the Singapore Indian Association in 1923, the Ceylon Sports Club in 1928, and the Singapore Khalsa Association for the Sikh community in 1931. The last four clubs were all based on Balestier Plain.

European women, who had been largely shut out of male-dominated sports clubs, wanted in. In 1884, lawyer Alexander Leathes Donaldson – ironically, a man – founded Singapore's first women's sports club, the Ladies Lawn Tennis Club. Seven courts were built in Dhoby Ghaut but the club closed in 1932.

After independence, the Government ordered sports clubs to open their doors to all, to promote inclusivity and build national unity. Today, sports clubs in Singapore no longer discriminate according to race or gender.

1842 - The Race Course opens as Singapore's first purpose-built sports venue



The Race Course, around 1910. (Source: Andrew Tan Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore)

Amateur horse-racing enthusiasts in colonial Singapore's European community came together on 4 October 1842 to form the Singapore Sporting Club, Singapore's first and only horse-racing club. Members included prominent figures such as merchants William Henry Macleod Read and Charles Spottiswoode, and lawyer William Napier.

The men looked around for a race track and found "a patch of swampy land" near the junction of Bukit Timah Road and Serangoon Road. The government granted their request for the land, and thus, the Race Course was born – Singapore's first purpose-built sports venue.

The first horse-racing event for the Singapore Cup and a prize of \$150 took place in February 1843, and subsequently, the Race Course became a hub of European social life in Singapore. The Race Course moved to Bukit Timah in 1933, and again to Kranji in 1999.

Even after the Race Course moved away from Serangoon Road, the place name lives on in Race Course Road. The area, known today as Farrer Park, is still bustling with sporting activities.

As Singapore grew in population, more public sports venues were needed. The sport of swimming received a significant



Mount Emily Swimming Pool around 1960. (Source: Singapore Sports Council)

boost in 1931 with the opening of Mount Emily Swimming Pool, Singapore's first public swimming pool. Once the preserve of the well-to-do, swimming was now open to the masses. In 1951, 150,000 people – or 400 a day – used the pool.

However, by 1981, swimming pools were common in housing estates, adversely affecting Mount Emily's attendance figures.

Poor attendance forced the Singapore Sports Council (now Sport Singapore) to close the pool, and it was demolished two years later. Eventually, neighbouring Mount Emily Park was extended over the site.

Singapore's first "sports hub" was the Singapore Youth Sports Centre, officially opened by Chief Minister Lim Yew Hock on 12 October 1956. The centre was housed in the Kallang Airport Terminal building, which was vacated the previous year when the airport shifted to Paya Lebar. In early 1957, the centre had more than 12,000 members, with around 2,000 members using its facilities every day, engaging in

sports such as basketball, badminton, and gymnastics.

Eventually, the centre was taken over by the People's Association, who occupied the historic Terminal building until 2009. Today, multi-purpose sports venues are ubiquitous in Singapore.

1921 - Singapore wins the inaugural Malaya Cup



The Colony of Singapore won the Malaya Cup in 1950, defeating Penang 2-0 at the Padang of the Selangor Club in Kuala Lumpur. Chia Boon Leong (front row, extreme left), a Singapore-based footballer who played in the 1948 Olympic Games for China, was part of the team. (Source: Chia Boon Leong Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore)

Some of Singapore's most memorable sporting moments have revolved around football. The "Beautiful Game", however, had humble beginnings in colonial Singapore.

Scottish marine engineers first introduced football to Singapore around the middle of the 19th century. When European members of exclusive sports clubs played the sport, it attracted the attention of the Asian population.

The Straits Times, founded in 1845, also stoked interest in the sport by announcing matches and team sheets, and critiquing players and referees. For example, after an 1891 match between teams from the Royal Navy gunboat *HMS Rattler* and the Royal Artillery based in Singapore, The Straits Times wrote: "The naval team was rather weak owing to the absence of Lieutenant Shelford... (conversely) Adams, Parsons and Edgson did admirably well." The Artillery won 7-0.

Eventually, British military personnel began playing with Asian teams at locations such as the police cricket ground at Tank Road, next to Fort Canning Hill.

In 1892, a group of Europeans founded the Singapore Football Association – now the Football Association of Singapore. It was just 29 years younger than The Football Association (of England), the oldest football association in the world.

In January 1921, the Royal Navy battleship *HMS Malaya* called at ports in Malaya and Singapore. Its crew played friendly football and rugby matches against local clubs. Three months later, the *Malaya's* captain, H. T. Buller, offered the Chief Secretary of the Federated Malay States two trophies for football and rugby, as tokens of appreciation for the warm reception his crew had received. Various clubs eventually came together to

organise tournaments to compete for these trophies. The football tournament was named the Malaya Cup, now known as the Malaysia Cup.

Six state or port-based teams took part in the first Malaya Cup in 1921 – Singapore, Penang, and Melaka of the Straits Settlements, and Negeri Sembilan, Perak, and Selangor of the Federated Malay States.

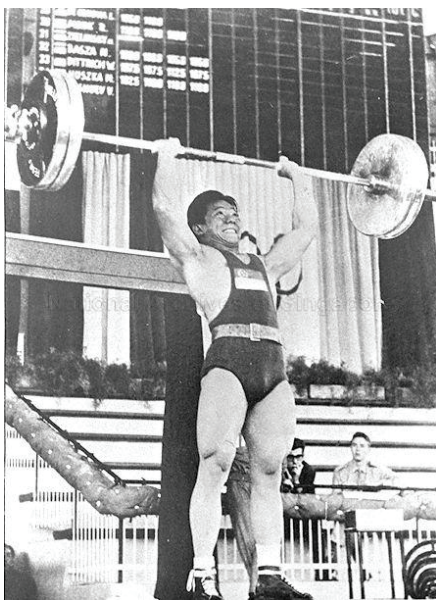
After qualifying matches, Selangor and Singapore faced each other in the inaugural Malaya Cup Final on 1 October at the Padang of the Selangor Club (now Merdeka Square) in Kuala Lumpur. Three thousand spectators – one of the largest football attendances in Malaya at the time – turned up to watch Singapore win 2-1. The Straits Times gushed: “Singapore played a magnificent game... each man was in his place and the team to a man played first-class football.”

It was the start of a formidable run for Singapore – it would qualify for every Malaya Cup Final before World War II came to Malaya in 1941, winning the trophy 12 times and sharing it with Selangor twice. The Beautiful Game was here to stay in Singapore.

1960 - Singapore's first Olympic medal

The modern Olympic Games, which began in 1896, is considered the world's foremost sports competition, and to qualify for the international event is already an achievement. Singaporeans have shone at the grandest stage, but the road to the top has been long and arduous.

The Singapore Olympic and Sports Council (now the Singapore National Olympic Council) was only set up in 1947. It was recognised by the International Olympic Committee in time for the 1948 London Games. Only one man had his paperwork done in time – Singapore's first Olympian,



Weightlifter Tan Howe Liang created Singapore sporting history in 1960 when he won an Olympic silver medal in Rome – Singapore's first and only Olympic medal for the next 48 years. (Source: Sport Singapore)

26-year-old high jumper Lloyd Oscar Valberg, who also happens to be grand-uncle of 2016 Olympic gold medallist Joseph Schooling.

Valberg had developed an “explosive spring” in his legs partly by cycling to and from work as an engineer every day. However, in London, he faced a battle as the sole member of his contingent. “I felt miserable and lonely... I was ready to catch the next boat home,” he recalled. Eventually, he finished 14th in the high jump event.



Lloyd Oscar Valberg. (Source: Singapore Sports Council)

Valberg was not the first Singapore-based Olympian. The first was footballer Chua Boon Lay, who represented China at the 1936 Berlin Games at age 33. The defender's nickname was “*Towkay Ayam*” (“Chicken Boss”) as he sold chickens at Telok Ayer Market (now Lau Pa Sat). His training regimen was humble – 30 laps around the market selling chickens! Unfortunately, the reserve never played a match in Berlin, and China was knocked out of the first round.

In Helsinki in 1952, 19-year-old sprinter and hurdler Tang Pui Wah became Singapore's first female Olympian, competing in the 100-metre sprint and 80-metre hurdles. The

daughter of a soy sauce factory owner and a housewife, she dominated athletics in Malaya and Singapore in the 1950s.

Finally, in Rome in 1960, 27-year-old weightlifter Tan Howe Liang fought through pain to lift 380 kg and win a silver medal in the lightweight category, Singapore's first and only Olympic medal for the next 48 years. It was the fruit of eight years of backbreaking training in between full-time work as a clerk, then a mechanic. Tan's achievements have become the stuff of legend, and his perseverance despite little support and few rewards are an inspiration to us all.

1964 - Sports for the masses through Pesta Sukan



Fencing was a sport included in the 1965 Pesta Sukan. This match was held at Raffles Institution. At the time, the campus was at Bras Basah Road. (Source: Ministry of Information and the Arts Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore)

Singapore achieved full internal self-government in 1959. The Government recognised that the promotion of sports among the masses could bond a budding nation, foster goodwill and camaraderie among people of different races and creeds, and improve general standards of health.

To this end, the Ministry of Culture conceived Singapore's first Festival of Sports, or Pesta Sukan in Malay.

Held from 4 to 21 December 1964, Pesta Sukan was sponsored by the government and supported by 25 sports organisations. The diverse programme included athletics, basketball, football, judo, and weightlifting. Singapore was part of Malaysia then, and out of 2,000 participants, 800 were from other states. The “Little Olympics” helped heal communal relations that had been shattered by riots in July and September that year.

Pesta Sukan's second edition in July to August 1965 took on an international gloss, as teams from 11 Asian countries such as the Philippines and Pakistan joined the games. After Singapore gained independence from Malaysia in 1965, Pesta Sukan became an annual feature of National Day celebrations.

In the 1970s, more family-oriented and mass events were added. They included a Water Carnival (later the Sea Carnival), a National Walk, and dragon boat races. By 1983, Pesta Sukan had grown to involve 50,000 participants and 42 National Sports Associations.

To further promote sports at the grassroots level, the Inter-Constituency Games was launched in 1972. Thousands of enthusiasts in sports such as football, basketball, and badminton from different parts of the city-state competed every year.

Gradually, sports became part of Singapore's DNA, and other organisations stepped up to launch mass sporting events. Its mission accomplished, the Singapore Sports Council (SSC) wound down Pesta Sukan at a national level, leaving NSAs free to organise national and international competitions using the Pesta Sukan brand.

After half a century, the Inter-Constituency Games was replaced by the Community Games. The inaugural edition in 2012 drew 1,087 teams and 10,000 participants aged seven to 79. They competed in seven sports – badminton, basketball, bowling, netball, sepak takraw, football, and table tennis.

In 2019, as part of Bicentennial celebrations, Sport Singapore revived Pesta Sukan for good times' sake. The event featured 21 sports such as aquatics, boccia, and football over 10 days from 1 to 10 August. Pesta Sukan and the Inter-Constituency Games have made immeasurable contributions to Singapore sports.

1973 - Formation of the Singapore Sports Council



Dragon boat races in the early 1980s were one of many mass sporting events organised by the Singapore Sports Council (SSC) under its "Sports For All" policy. (Source: Singapore Sports Council)

Sport Singapore is the statutory board tasked with overseeing and developing sports in Singapore. It has done more than any other organisation in fostering a sporting DNA in Singaporeans.

Its earliest predecessor came about in 1966, just one year after Singapore achieved independence from Malaysia. The Ministry of Social Affairs created a Sports Division. It oversaw the building of sports facilities, ensured the inclusion of sports in schools, and supported Singapore athletes in overseas sporting events.

Five years later, the National Sports Promotion Board (NSPB) was formed. On top of taking over the Sports Division's duties, it coordinated and directed sporting bodies, and engaged in research in sports and physical education. Its founding chairman was Minister for Social Affairs Othman Wok.

On 1 October 1973, the NSPB merged with the National Stadium Corporation – which operated and managed the National Stadium – to form the Singapore Sports Council (SSC). It started a "Sports For All" policy to encourage "fit, healthy citizens to build a fit, healthy nation".

In its formative years, the SSC organised mass sporting events for walking, jogging, cycling, and swimming. In 1976, it introduced the National Aerobic Fitness Award (NAFA) Scheme for Singaporeans to evaluate their aerobic fitness, and the Master Plan of Sports Facilities to build sports facilities in housing estates and schools. The Republic's first fitness park came up at MacRitchie Reservoir the following year, starting a trend towards exercise in a natural setting.

The SSC has not kept its eyes off sporting

excellence among Singapore's athletes. It launched the Sports Aid Fund in 1982 for talented athletes, and the Sports Excellence 2000 blueprint in 1993 to push athletes to "go for gold". It assisted in the successful hosting of four Southeast Asian (SEA) Games on home soil in 1973, 1983, 1993, and 2015. Team Singapore won 84 gold medals and a total of 259 medals in 2015 – its best SEA Games medal tally ever.

The SSC was rebranded as Sport Singapore in 2014, and remains indispensable to Singapore sport today.

1973 - Opening of the National Stadium



The first major sporting event held at the National Stadium was the 7th Southeast Asian Peninsular Games in 1973. (Source: Singapore Sports Council)

During the National Stadium's official opening on 21 July 1973, Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew said in his speech that the aim of the stadium was to be a facility "to generate healthy, vigorous exercise for the whole population, young and old", emphasising that the stadium was not just for an elite few.

The first major sporting event held at the National Stadium was the 7th Southeast Asian Peninsular Games (now the Southeast Asian Games) from 1 to 8 September 1973. This was the first time Singapore hosted

the biennial event, and the stadium staged several competitions as well as the opening and closing ceremonies.



Commemorative coins from the 7th SEAP Games which were held at the National Stadium in 1973. (Source: Singapore Sports Council)

By the People, for the People

The National Stadium was a world-class venue by the people, for the people. To raise funds for the \$27-million structure, the Singapore Pools was established in 1968 as a state-owned lottery subsidiary company. Through the sale of Singapore Sweep tickets and other lotteries, \$14.5 million was raised to offset the costs.



A Singapore Sweep ticket in 1969 had the old National Stadium as its background as part of the funding scheme for its construction. (Source: Singapore Pools)

With the world watching, the Games were a resounding success, proving that the newly-independent nation had arrived on the world stage. Team Singapore did their country proud, winning 45 gold medals to come in second in the gold medal tally behind Thailand's 47. With an overall medal haul of 140, it was Singapore's best Games showing yet.

The National Stadium also played a key role in the development of local football. In

1974, lawyer N. Ganesan, chairman of the Football Association of Singapore, pushed for moving the Lions' Malaysia Cup matches from the smaller Jalan Besar Stadium to the National Stadium. Doubters claimed the stadium would not fill up, but they were wrong. Tens of thousands turned up to cheer on the Lions.

In 1976, sports journalist Jeffrey Low came up with a catchy name for the deafening roar of 55,000 supporters – the Kallang Roar. It became the Singapore team's 12th man on the pitch. Singapore reached the Malaysia Cup Final every year from 1975 to 1981, eventually lifting the trophy twice.

A new National Stadium in Singapore Sports Hub was opened in 2014 and stands where the Grand Old Dame once stood. However, the spirit of the Grand Old Dame lives on in the memories of generations of Singaporeans.

1985 - Sports House burns down



Sports House at Farrer Park in the 1970s. (Source: Singapore Sports Council)

Before Kallang's Singapore Sports Hub became a centre of local sports, there was the Sports House of Farrer Park.

When the National Sports Promotion Board (NSPB) was established in 1971, Farrer Park, named after Municipal President Roland John Farrer (1873-1956), was chosen to house its headquarters. Farrer Park was formerly the site of the Race Course.

The Sports House was established in a colonial building built in 1887 at Rutland Road. The building was previously part of the grandstand and betting booths for the Race Course.

The humble, two-storey building became a nexus for sports in Singapore. At least 14 National Sports Associations (NSAs), and the Singapore National Olympic Council, shared the premises with the NSPB. In 1973, the NSPB merged with the National Stadium Corporation to form the Singapore Sports Council, moving out of the Sports House to the National Stadium, but the other organisations remained. The Sports House became a centre for research in sports and physical education, surrounded by sports facilities such as a swimming pool, a track and field centre, and tennis courts.

However, disaster struck at dawn on 6 June 1985.

A fire was believed to have started in the kitchen of the ground-floor canteen. It swiftly engulfed the 98-year-old building. In one cruel stroke, decades of sports records, correspondence, and accounts were lost. So

were irreplaceable trophies, medals, memorabilia, and souvenirs. Thousands of dollars' worth of office equipment and sports gear were also destroyed.



The Sports House in ruins. (Source: Singapore Sports Council)

The catastrophe shook Singapore's sports fraternity to its core. Football Referees' Association of Singapore secretary Goh Ek Koon declared it "one of the blackest days" for Singapore sports. Singapore Amateur Boxing Association vice-president K Thiruganasothi called it a "knockout blow" to local sports. Singapore Amateur Athletic Association (now the Singapore Athletic Association) secretary Leslie Shepherdson lamented: "The entire history of the association went up in smoke."

Farrer Park remained a centre of sporting activities, but the Sports House was never rebuilt. Eventually, local sports got up from this "knockout blow". Some of the NSAs moved to the National Stadium. Today, the new "house" of sports is Singapore Sports Hub, home to 22 NSAs and councils.

2010 - Singapore hosts the inaugural Youth Olympic Games

Sporting history was made in 2010 when Singapore hosted the inaugural Youth Olympic Games (YOG) from 14 to 26 August.

The idea of a YOG was pitched by International Olympic Committee (IOC) President

Jacques Rogge in 2001, and approved in 2007 by IOC members. Its aims were to inspire youths to spend more time on sports, and promote cross-cultural interaction and learning among young athletes.



The 2010 Youth Olympic Games put Singapore on the world map. (Source: Singapore National Olympic Council)

Singapore had to compete with eight other cities to host the Games. Eventually, it qualified for the final round of voting, defeating Moscow in a vote of 53-44 to win the hosting rights.

In 2008, the Singapore Youth Olympic Games Organising Committee was set up to oversee preparations for the Games. Brigadier-General Goh Kee Nguan was appointed Chief Executive, while former Singapore Sports Council (now Sport Singapore) Chairman Ng Ser Miang was made Chairman of the board.

With 20,000 volunteers, the Games proceeded smoothly. In all, 3,524 athletes aged 14 to 18 years from 204 countries competed in 201 events across 26 sports, attracting 370,000 spectators. The Games was broadcast in 160 countries and territories, reaching an estimated 247 million TV viewers.

The Games took on a distinctive Singaporean feel. The opening and closing ceremonies were staged at The Float @ Marina Bay, the world's largest floating stage. Athletes were housed at a Youth Olympic Village in Nanyang Technological University. Even the

YOG theme song, "Everyone", was written and produced by local music producer and composer Ken Lim. Kallang hosted some of the events; venues included the Singapore Indoor Stadium and Kallang Tennis Centre, and the Kallang Fields.

Team Singapore comprised 130 athletes, winning two silvers and four bronzes. But Singapore won more than just medals – it also garnered critical acclaim for a job well done as host. IOC President Rogge said: "The (YOG) vastly exceeded my highest expectations... Singapore ranks right up there in terms of the best Olympic Games I have ever attended."

A proud occasion for Singapore sports, indeed.

2008, 2016 - Olympic and Paralympic pride for Singapore

Before the 2008 Summer Olympics in Beijing, Singapore had not had an Olympic medallist for 48 years. Then, the record books were rewritten – multiple times.

First, it was the Republic's paddlers who gave the nation much to cheer about. The women's table tennis team, comprising



In the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro, Singapore's Joseph Schooling (far right) won gold for the 100-metre butterfly event. In joint second were (from left) Michael Phelps of the United States, Chad le Clos of South Africa, and Laszlo Cseh of Hungary. (Source: Sport Singapore)

Li Jiawei, Feng Tianwei, and Wang Yuegu, faced powerhouse China in the final. In a match lasting one hour 32 minutes, the trio lost – but they still took home a silver, Singapore's first since weightlifter Tan Howe Liang in Rome in 1960.



Paralympic Gold medallist Yip Pin Xiu went on to win another two gold medals at the 2016 Games for the 50-metre and 100-metre backstroke (S2) events. (Source: Sport Singapore)

A month later, also in Beijing, Singapore won its first Paralympic gold medal.

Swimmer Yip Pin Xiu, just 16 years old, won the 50-metre backstroke event at the S3 level in 58.75 seconds. In the same Games, she scored a silver in the 50-metre freestyle (S3) event – and smashed two world records. It was a remarkable comeback for a girl diagnosed with muscular dystrophy at

age three, and who became wheelchair-bound at 12.

Meanwhile, the seeds of Olympic gold were being sown.

A year after Yip's victories, a 14-year-old aspiring competitive swimmer left Singapore to train in the United States. Like how Tan Howe Liang had to train for eight long, hard years to make his mark in Rome, this teenager slogged for seven years in the pool. His time came in the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Games.

In the 100-metre butterfly event, 21-year-old Joseph Schooling clocked in at an Olympic record of 50.39 seconds to taste gold – beating no less than his childhood hero Olympic legend Michael Phelps. After his feat, Schooling told Singapore media: "This swim wasn't for me. It's for my country."

Singapore's medal hauls at the highest level have been modest – one gold, two silvers, and two bronzes for the Olympics, and three golds, two silvers, and four bronzes for the Paralympics. To the precious few who shed years of blood, tears, and sweat to put Singapore on the world map – thank you.

They Left Their Mark

Kallang is rich in heritage, sports and arts because of its people. Ordinary people, extraordinary achievements. Be it to fight for freedom, build lofty monuments or pursue sporting glory, these 10 individuals or groups have inscribed their names and deeds in the annals of Kallang.



The Man Who Heralded Victory

Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten (1900 - 1979)



Lord Louis Mountbatten leading cheers in front of the Municipal Building in Singapore after the Japanese Surrender. (Source: Courtesy of National Archives and Records Administration)

In Kallang, Mountbatten Road is a major arterial road linking the suburb of Katong and the Central Business District. The man after whom the road is named had an illustrious connection with Singapore.

Before World War II, Mountbatten Road was known as Grove Road. It took its name after Grove Estate, a 400-acre coconut plantation in Tanjong Katong owned by Thomas Dunman (1814 - 1887), the first Police Commissioner of Singapore.

Mountbatten joined the Royal Navy in 1916 and served for the better part of three decades. His first visit to Singapore was in 1922, when he was the aide-de-camp to the Prince of Wales. He played a more significant role when in 1943, during World War II, he was appointed as Supreme Allied Commander of South East Asia Command. This made him responsible for the Southeast Asian theatre of war against the Japanese.

Mountbatten led a successful campaign to retake Burma from Japanese control. The next stage was to liberate occupied Malaya and Singapore. A large-scale invasion with five army divisions was planned for September 1945. However, the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki led to the abrupt surrender of Imperial Japan on 15 August 1945, ending World War II in the Pacific.

On 12 September 1945, Mountbatten received the formal unconditional surrender of all Japanese forces in Southeast Asia. The historic surrender ceremony was held at the Municipal Building (later City Hall, now part of National Gallery Singapore) and attended by representatives from the Allies, such as India, Australia and France. The local population also turned out in force at the Padang and followed the victory parade to celebrate the end of the Japanese Occupation.



Mountbatten, in the capacity of British Chief of Defence Staff, with Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew in Feb 1965. (Source: Ministry of Information and the Arts Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore)

In May 1946, to mark the historic surrender, Governor of Singapore Franklin Gimson sought Mountbatten's agreement to name a road after him. Hence, Grove Road was renamed Mountbatten Road as a token of respect for Mountbatten and a "lasting memorial" to his presence in Singapore.

Mountbatten also made history by becoming the last Viceroy of British India in 1947. His task eventually was to prepare British India

for independence. He went on to become independent India's first Governor-General. On his return to Britain, he held several senior naval and defence appointments until his retirement from the services in 1965.

Having witnessed war in his professional career, he would have looked forward to years of peace in his retirement. However, in 1979, he was assassinated by a bomb attack by members of the Provisional Irish Republican Army while sailing in Ireland.



The Man Who Advocated for Independence

David Saul Marshall (1908 - 1995)



Chief Minister David Marshall at the opening of Kim Keat Avenue Community Centre, 1955. (Source: Ministry of Information and the Arts Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore)

In 1956, Kallang was drawn into Singapore's struggle for independence from the British by David Marshall. Marshall was a prominent lawyer who first became involved in Singapore politics from 1949.

In 1954, Marshall formed the Labour Front (LF) party together with Lim Yew Hock and Francis Thomas. The party was an alliance of two smaller political parties - Singapore

Labour Party and Singapore Socialist Party. The LF secured the most seats in the 1955 Legislative Assembly General Elections but did not attain a clear majority. The LF thus formed a coalition government with the Singapore Alliance and Marshall was appointed as Singapore's first Chief Minister.

As Chief Minister, Marshall strongly advocated for self-rule and independence for the people of Singapore. In March 1956, a delegation of six British Members of Parliament (MPs) visited Singapore in a bid to assess its readiness for independence. Singapore's political leaders from all the various parties formed a committee to organise Merdeka Week – a campaign to show the British delegation that Singapore was ready for independence.

The week of festivities was to culminate in a big rally held at the former airport at Kallang. The programme included speeches by Marshall, other party leaders and an address by the visiting British MPs. A total of 100,000 people were expected to attend the rally.



Chief Minister David Marshall arriving at the Merdeka Rally held in the grounds of the former Kallang Airport on 18 March 1956. (Source: Ministry of Information and the Arts Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore)

However, during the rally, a section of the crowd became rowdy and a riot broke out. A violent mob even threw large stones at the Kallang Airport Terminal building, where the police had guided the British MPs to shelter. This unfortunate turn of events did not help the struggle for independence.

A month later, Marshall and the Singapore All-Party delegation flew to London to hold constitutional talks with the British. Known as the Merdeka Talks, they were instrumental in bringing Singapore closer to self-rule. Unfortunately, Marshall was not able to achieve his goal of independence for Singapore. The Singapore delegation and the British disagreed over control of internal security. As a result, Marshall resigned as Chief Minister in June 1956.

Marshall's early efforts at making the British confront Singapore's desire for independence were critical in laying the basis for Singapore's eventual independence in 1965.

The Men Behind The National Stadium **Othman Bin Wok (1924 - 2017)** **Edmund William Barker (1920 - 2001)**

Two prominent men were responsible for persuading the government to support the building of a National Stadium sports complex – Othman Bin Wok and Edmund William Barker (E. W. Barker). They were amongst Singapore's pioneer political leaders in the 1960s, and advocated strongly for the development of sports apart from their other ministerial portfolios.

Othman Bin Wok was Minister for Culture and Social Affairs from 1963 to 1977, and played a major role in promoting sports consciousness. In 1966, he set up a sports department within his ministry, forming the foundation for sports administration in Singapore.

As Chairman of the National Sports Promotion Board (formed in 1971), he spearheaded several initiatives and campaigns to increase

sports participation such as the "Sports for All" campaign and inter-constituency games. He strongly believed that sports would build positive qualities such as ruggedness, endurance and sportsmanship, and promote a sense of togetherness and camaraderie. His goal was to get more people to be interested and involved in sports, in order to mould a robust and alert generation.

Barker is well-known for drafting and finalising the Separation Agreement that formalised Singapore's independence from Malaysia. He was our longest-serving Minister for Law (1964 - 1988) and helmed several other ministries throughout his career.

Barker also frequently used his position to advocate for sports, perhaps borne from his own love of sports from a young age. Barker also served as the President of the Singapore National Olympic Council (1970 - 1990) and President of the Southeast Asian Games Federation (1973).



Minister for Culture and Social Affairs, Othman Bin Wok, initiates work at the National Sports Complex, 1966. (Source: Ministry of Information and the Arts Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore)



E. W. Barker was actively involved in sports during his time at Raffles College, pictured here in the 1939 Raffles College Athletics Team (Barker is far right in the first row). (Source: Raffles College Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore)



SEA Games Federation Council President, E. W. Barker (on the podium), giving the speech at the closing ceremony of the 7th SEAP Games at the National Stadium, 1973. (Source: Ministry of Information and the Arts Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore)

“With that (sporting) habit will come the attitude of mind we call sportsmanship - which is closely involved with fair play. Basically, fair play is an understanding that all games, like life itself, can be played hard, even aggressively, so long as the rules are properly observed and the spirit of the game is recognised.

This is an attitude of mind best obtained not from text-books but from playing games.

- Message from Othman Bin Wok on the Opening of the National Stadium, 1973

Both men were instrumental in pushing Parliament to approve the building of the National Sports Complex. This was no mean feat as Singapore was just a newly-independent nation at the time.

The National Stadium was opened in 1973, just in time for Singapore to host the South-east Asian Peninsular Games. The Stadium and its facilities made sports more accessible to the wider public. The National Stadium turned into a much-loved venue for sports competitions, football matches and even the National Day Parade, and it was all thanks to these two passionate gentlemen.



President and Mrs Benjamin Henry Sheares and Minister for Social Affairs Othman Bin Wok (far right) attending the closing ceremony of the 7th SEAP Games at National Stadium. (Source: Ministry of Information and the Arts Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore)

The Man Who Won our First Olympic Medal **Tan Howe Liang (1933 -)**

Tan Howe Liang was born in Swatow, China in 1933 and moved with his whole family to Singapore as a young boy. His first encounter with weightlifting was a competition at Happy World and he became immediately drawn to the sport.



Minister for Culture, S. Rajaratnam presenting a prize to weightlifter Tan Howe Liang, 1963. (Source: Ministry of Information and the Arts Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore)

Even though his entry into the sport was by chance, his achievements were built on his own determination and effort. He trained hard on his own and slowly worked his way up the local and international competitions. In 1954, he made his international debut at the Asian Games in Manila and earned fourth place. Two years later, he competed in the 1956 Melbourne Olympics and came in ninth place.

Tan finally achieved his first taste of success on the world stage at the 6th British Empire and Commonwealth Games in 1958. He won a gold and even established a world record

in the jerk (lightweight division). Later that year, he won a gold in the 3rd Asian Games held in Tokyo. In 1959, Tan competed in the 1st SEAP Games in Bangkok and attained a gold.

In 1960, Tan had to rely largely on his own finances to take part in the Rome Olympics. The competition was tense, with 35 lifters vying for gold in the lightweight category. Tan developed cramps in his legs before his turn, but eventually the pain subsided and he fought to achieve the historic lift that won the nation's first Olympic medal - a silver. He was narrowly beaten by Viktor Bushuev of the Soviet Union for the gold.



The silver medal which Tan won at the 1960 Rome Olympics. The medal and the leotard and belt which he wore for the competition are displayed at the Singapore Sports Museum. (Source: Singapore Sports Hub)

In the 1962 Commonwealth Games, Tan won a gold medal. He subsequently served as national coach to prepare Singapore's weightlifting representatives for the 1977 Asian Games and 1987 SEA Games. He later became a gymnasium instructor at the National Stadium.

Tan achieved the rare distinction of having won medals at all the major international games of his time: Olympic, Commonwealth, Asian and SEAP. He held the record of Singapore's only Olympic medallist for 48 years, until the Singapore women's table tennis team won silver at the 2008 Beijing Olympics.

He has won several awards in recognition of his achievements. These include the *Pingat Jasa Gemilang* (Meritorious Service Medal) in the inaugural National Day Honours (1962), International Weightlifting Federation Gold Award (1984), International

Olympic Council (IOC) Silver Pin (1988) and second out of Singapore's 50 Greatest Athletes by the Sunday Times (1999). Tan was also one of the flagbearers at the closing ceremony of the former National Stadium in 2007.



"Tough Little Men from the East"

Thomas Cup Champions



The victorious Malaysians with the Thomas Cup trophy in 1949. Singapore-based Wong Peng Soon is fourth from right, while his rival Ong Poh Lim is far right. (Source: Ministry of Information and the Arts Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore)

The Thomas Cup was the brainchild of English badminton champion Sir George Alan Thomas (1881-1972). After the World Cup tournament for football began in 1930, Thomas envisioned a similar international championship for badminton.

Thomas co-founded the International Badminton Federation in 1934 (now the Badminton World Federation) which put in motion plans for a competition among its member nations. However, World War II disrupted these plans.

The idea was revived in the late 1940s, and the inaugural Thomas Cup – named after George Thomas – finally took place in February 1949 in Britain.

That was when a hitherto unknown group of badminton players – later dubbed the "Tough Little Men from the East" by the British press – exploded into the international scene. The eight-man Malayan team included reigning Malayan champion Ooi Teik Hock, and Singapore-based Wong Peng Soon and Ong Poh Lim.

The men first endured an arduous three-week cruise to Britain. Wong played hours of "shadow badminton" (footwork practice without shuttlecocks), while Ong ran up and down the deck, several kilometres at a go. Then in Britain, they fought the cold winter by playing in long-sleeved shirts and pullovers. Wong was struck by a persistent cold and then a bad shoulder.

But the "Tough Little Men" defeated favourites United States 6-3, then powerhouse Denmark 8-1, to become champions. They came home to a hero's welcome, igniting a surge in interest in badminton in Malaya and Singapore.

The Malayan team subsequently retained the Thomas Cup twice, in 1952 and 1955, establishing themselves as world-beaters. Another Singapore-based player, Ismail Marjan, starred in 1952.

Back then, Thomas Cup champions could defend their title on home soil. Hence, the Cup came to Kallang in the 1950s. 1952 saw the tournament hosted in Happy World (later Gay World), while the 1955 and 1958 events took place in the Singapore Badminton Hall. Singapore's Thomas Cup glory ended with the 1950s, but their players had left their mark on sporting history.



Singapore's Football Maestros The Lions

Several generations of Singaporean football players have carried the hopes of a football-mad nation, taking them to the heights of victory, and into the depths of crushing defeat.

The 1970s saw the rise of a multi-ethnic, star-studded side. Quah Kim Song turned heads with his speed and diving headers, free-kick specialist S. Rajagopal delivered a

lethal banana kick, and Dollah Kassim was nicknamed the "Gelek King", as his extraordinary dribbling skills made him look as if he was dancing past opposing defenders.

Matched with legendary coach Choo Seng Quee or "Uncle Choo", and housed in a new National Stadium that packed a formidable home crowd of 55,000, Singapore broke a 12-year Malaysia Cup Final drought in 1977. They beat Penang 3-2 in Kuala Lumpur's Merdeka Stadium. The following day, 1,500 fans thronged Paya Lebar Airport to give the Lions a hero's welcome.

More was to come.

In August 1978, a certain 16-year-old teenager named Fandi Ahmad was called up for the Lions. Two years later, again in Kuala Lumpur, he scored the winning goal in a 2-1 Malaysia Cup final win over Selangor to bring the cup home to Singapore.

Malaysia Cup fever peaked again in the 1990s with the assembly of the "Dream Team". The likes of Malek Awab, V. Sundramoorthy, Nazri Nasir, "super-sub" Steven Tan, and of course, Fandi, became household names. They reached the Malaysia Cup Final in 1993, but heartbreak ensued as they lost to Kedah 0-2.

The Lions did not lose heart. The following year, they made it to another Final with Pahang, and this time, they did not disappoint. In front of 81,000 fans in Selangor's Shah Alam Stadium, of which 50,000 were Singaporeans, the Lions thumped their opponents 4-0. Australian import Abbas Saad bagged a hattrick, while Fandi notched one as icing on the cake. It would be Singapore's last Malaysia Cup win, as they exited the tournament the following year.

To this day, these legends of football remain talked about, praised, and admired.



The Lions in the 1991 Malaysia Cup. From left to right, back row: Terry Pathmanathan, Alistair Edwards, Borhan Abu Samah, David Lee, Nazri Nasir, Abbas Saad. Front row: Hasnim Haron, D. Tokijan, Dzulkfli Kartoyoho, Abdullah Borhan, Yahya Madon. (Source: Sport Singapore)

The Golden Girls of Singapore Swimming Singapore's Female Swimming Legends (1960s – 2000s)

Kallang and the east coast area were dotted with swimming clubs which produced a number of swimming legends. Singapore had three famous female swimmers who were often referred to as the “Golden Girls”. Patricia Chan (1954 -), Junie Sng (1964 -) and Joscelyn Yeo (1979 -) were pioneers in Singapore swimming. They dominated regional swimming competitions from the 1960s – 2000s.



Patricia Chan proudly wearing the 10 gold medals she won in the 1969 SEAP Games. (Source: The Straits Times © Singapore Press Holdings Limited. Reprinted with permission)

Patricia Chan first represented Singapore at the age of 11, at the 1965 Southeast Asian Peninsular (SEAP) Games held in Kuala Lumpur. She won a total of eight gold medals and became one of the earliest sporting heroes of the newly-independent republic. Chan competed in five consecutive SEAP Games (1965, 1967, 1969, 1971 and 1973) and emerged with a record 39 gold medals. She was crowned Sportswoman of the Year for five consecutive years (1967 – 1971) and retired from swimming at the age of 19 in 1973.



Junie Sng representing Singapore at the 12th Southeast Asian Games in 1983. (Source: Ministry of Information and the Arts Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore)

Junie Sng made her international debut at the 1975 SEAP Games. Sng was the first Singaporean female swimmer to win a gold medal at the Asian Games in 1978. At just 14 years old, she was the youngest gold medalist in Asian Games history. She continued to win medals and break records as she represented Singapore in the SEA, Asian and Commonwealth Games in the 1970s and 80s. She was awarded Sportswoman of the Year for three consecutive years (1978 – 1980). In 1982, she was awarded the Public Service Star. She retired at her peak at 19 years, after winning 10 gold medals at the 1983 SEA Games.



The Singapore team for the women's 4x100 metres medley which won gold at the 1993 SEA Games. From left: Cheryl Tang, Joscelyn Yeo, May Ooi and Eadelin Lim. (Source: Ministry of Information and the Arts Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore)

Joscelyn Yeo joined the Singapore swimming team in 1990 and competed in her first SEA Games the following year in Manila. She went on to compete in the Olympics (1992, 1996, 2000, 2004), SEA Games (1993 and 1995) and Asian Games (1994). Yeo is the only Singaporean athlete to have competed at four Olympic Games. She was named Sportsgirl of the Year in 1994 and Sportswoman of the Year in 1993, 1995 and 1999.

Over her 17-year competitive career, Yeo clinched a total of 40 gold medals in the SEA Games (1993 – 2005), the largest gold medal haul by any Singaporean athlete. Her last competition was the 2005 SEA Games in Manila, where she won six gold medals. Retiring in 2007, at the age of 28, she had the longest competitive swimming career amongst Singapore swimmers. Yeo had the further distinction of having served as a Nominated Member of Parliament from 2009 – 2011.

The Golden Age of Squash The 1980s and 90s Singapore Squash Teams



The Ascot Squash Championship Final being played at the Kallang Squash and Tennis Centre, 1987. (Source: Ministry of Information and the Arts Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore)

Squash gained traction as a popular sport in Singapore from the 1970s onwards. The sport was promoted by the Singapore Squash Rackets Association (SSRA) which provided training programmes for schools and individuals, and organised competitions. Members of the SSRA included squash pioneers such as Haridas Nair (also Executive Director of the Asian Squash Federation) and Hubert Hill. In 1978, the Kallang Squash and Tennis Centre was opened, providing nine squash courts and six tennis courts. More courts were later added on in other parts of Singapore to cater to growing demand for facilities.

The SSRA's efforts paid off. Team Singapore was formidable in the squash court, winning numerous gold and silver medals in the Asian Championships, East Asian Championships, and Southeast Asian (SEA) Games.

One of Singapore's most prolific squash players was Zainal Abidin, who first picked up a racket in 1977, at the age of 19. Two years later, the sports equipment salesman and weekend drummer exploded on the local scene, beating a string of Singapore's best, including his coach, national champion Venkatesan Gopal.



Zainal Abidin in 1987. (Source: Ministry of Information and the Arts Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore)

The talented player hailed as a “wristy trickshot artist” never looked back. Over the next 11 years, Zainal racked up eight national squash titles and nine East Asian Championship titles. He also joined the Singapore Men’s team of Peter Hill, Anthony Chua, and Alex Tay in achieving sixth position in the 1985 Men’s World Team Squash Championships in Cairo, Egypt – the republic’s best showing in the competition.



Singapore Athletics Pioneers Singapore Athletics Team 1950s – 70s



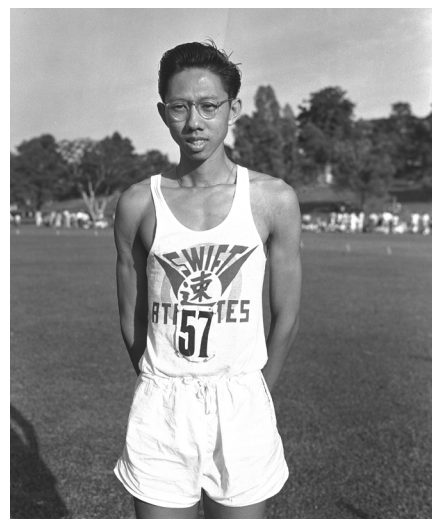
A gathering of Singapore’s veteran athletics sportsmen and women and their spouses in 2018. (From left to right) **First row:** P C Suppiah, U. K. Shyam, Sadayapan, C Kunalan, Mirza Namazie, Richard Seow, Noor Azhar Hamid. **Second row:** M Harichandra, Unknown, Kamariah Eunon, Chong Yoon Yin, Heather Merican, Evelyn Lee Tan, Maimun Azlan nee Bakar, Glory Barnabas, Mirnigar Begum, Lee Thye Jong. **Third row:** Susan Richmond, Mrs Harichandra, Ho Mun Cheong, Johnny Lim, Eng Chiew Guay, Godfrey Jalleh, Steven Lee, Mustazah Kassim, Munir Shah, Suresh Nair, Mrs Avtar Singh, Avtar Singh, William David. **Fourth row:** Brian Richmond, Cyril Monteiro, Peter Goh Pi Tuan, Fok Keng Choy, Leslie Shepardson, Alagirisamy, Sarvinder Singh Chopra. **Fifth row:** Farleigh Clarke, Low Sin Chock, John Lian, Edwin Barnabas, S Alagappan, Gan Bee Wah, Morris Lee, Dr M. Jegathesan, Chen Yew Ping, S Kannan. (Source: Mirza Namazie)

The fairer sex was not to be outdone as Singapore’s women’s squash also excelled. Mah Li Lian was just 14 when she made the news in 1983 for her “giant-killing” feats in local Women’s matches. In 1988, she won the first of four consecutive Asian Individual Championships. The women’s team also took the Asian Team Championships in 1988, 1990, and 1994.

Predictably, Singapore dominated the sport when it was introduced into the SEA Games in 1991, winning all four gold medals available – the Men’s Individual (Hill), Women’s Individual (Mah), Men’s Team, and Women’s Team. This feat was repeated in 1993. In 1995, Team Singapore attained two gold medals – their last for 20 years.

In the 2015 SEA Games, Team Singapore won a gold medal in the Men’s Jumbo Doubles, and in 2017, increased their gold medal haul to three.

Singapore Athletics was a force to be reckoned with throughout the 1960s – 70s. There were several pioneers who blazed the trail in athletics, here we focus on just three of these legends – Tan Eng Yoon, Canagasabai Kunalan, and Chee Swee Lee.



Tan Eng Yoon in the 1950s. (Source: Ministry of Information and the Arts Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore)



Heather Merican with her gold medal in the 7th SEAP Games at the National Stadium, 1973. (Source: Ministry of Information and the Arts Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore)

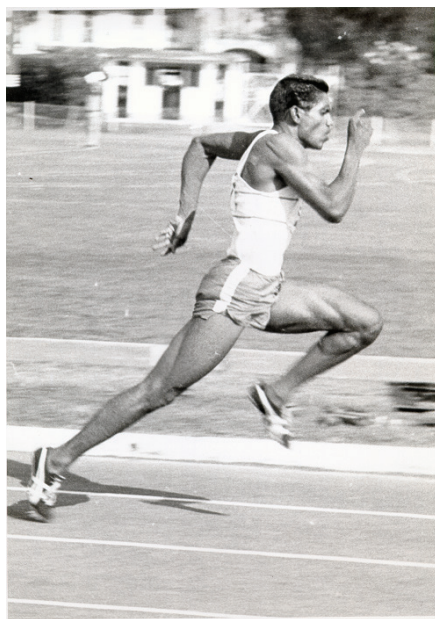
Tan Eng Yoon (1928 – 2010) was a distinguished athlete, coach and administrator. Tan represented Singapore in the Asian (1951, 1954), Olympics (1956), Commonwealth (1958) and SEAP (1959, 1961) Games. At the inaugural SEAP Games in 1959, he won Singapore’s first gold in the games.

Tan was Honorary National Athletics Coach from 1958 – 70 and his proteges included Canagasabai Kunalan, Glory Barnabas, Heather and Osman Merican and Noor Azhar Hamid.

As a sports administrator, Tan served as manager of the National Stadium, member of the planning committee for the Indoor Stadium and held managerial positions in the Singapore Sports Council. Unfortunately, he passed away tragically in a road accident in 2010 but his legacy will always be remembered amongst the local sporting community.



Glory Barnabas. (Source: Courtesy of Mrs Glory Barnabas)



Sprinting legend, C Kunalan, in action. (Source: Singapore Sports Council)

Canagasabai Kunalan (1942 -), better known as "C. Kunalan", is a national sporting icon. He represented Singapore in the Olympics (1964, 1968), Asian (1966, 1974), SEAP/SEA (1969, 1975, 1977) Games. In the 1968 Olympics, he was 25th fastest out of 32 international competitors and set a national record for the 100-metre sprint which held for 33 years. The record was finally broken by U. K. Shyam in 2001.

In the 1974 Asian Games, he set another national record in the 4x400 relay event which still has not been surpassed. Kunalan was Sportsman of the Year in 1968 and 1969. Over his 12-year competitive career, he won a total of 15 SEAP medals and five Asian Games medals. He went on to teach physical education and sport science. In 2015, he was awarded the meritorious service medal at the National Day Awards.

Chee Swee Lee (1955 -) represented Singapore at the SEAP Games (1969, 1971, 1973, 1981), Asian Games (1974) and Olympics (1976). In the 1974 Asian Games, she was the first Singaporean female to win gold for athletics at the Asian Games. She set a Games record and a national record for the 400m event which held for 43 years, before being broken by Dipna Lim-Prasad in 2017. Chee was Sportswoman of the Year in 1974.



Chee Swee Lee at the Singapore Amateur Athletics Association All-Comers Athletic Meet at the National Stadium in 1973. (Source: Singapore Sports Council)

In the 1975 SEAP Games, she won another gold. However, she could not perform at the 1976 Olympics due to an injury to her Achilles tendon. Chee moved to the US to continue her studies and retired from athletics at the age of 35. She is currently based in Las Vegas as a real estate agent.

The Man Who Captured Old Kallang on Film **Yip Cheong Fun (1903 - 1989)**



Yip Cheong Fun at a photoshoot in Changi, 1948. (Source: Andrew Yip)

The bay in Kallang has inspired many an artist. Yip Cheong Fun only began seriously pursuing photography as a passion in his fifties. Little did he know, he would later become one of Singapore's best-known photographers. His passion and achievements serve as proof that anyone (young or old) can achieve their dreams through hard work and determination.

Yip Cheong Fun was born in Hong Kong in 1903 and came to Singapore as an infant. When his father passed away, Yip was sent back to China and placed in the care of relatives while his mother continued to work in Singapore. Ten years later, he returned to Singapore to join his mother, helping out at her grocery shop.

His interest in photography began in his teens when he acquired a Brownie camera. It developed further in 1936 when he bought his first professional camera, a Rolleiflex. Yip worked as a technical supervisor at United Engineers, but went on photography trips during his free time. He was forced to take a break during the war years, when his camera was confiscated by the Japanese military. Once the war ended, he resumed his passion.

In 1953, he joined the Photographic Society of Singapore and frequently went on photography sessions with fellow enthusiasts. In 1957, Yip submitted his photograph, "Rowing at Dawn" to several international photography competitions. He shot the photograph from a *sampan* on the waterfront near the Merdeka Bridge, off the coast of Tanjong Rhu in 1957. The photograph won him several international awards from countries such as Malaysia, Indonesia, France and Taiwan.

Yip's photographs famously captured everyday scenes of a bygone era in Singapore's history. There are two other photographs which depict the Kallang and Tanjong Rhu area, titled "Row On" (Kallang Basin, 1948) and "First Cast" (Tanjong Rhu, 1957).



"Rowing at Dawn" was the first photograph to gain Yip international recognition and has been displayed in photography exhibitions in over 80 countries. (Source: Andrew Yip)



"Row - On" was taken on the Kallang Basin in 1948. (Source: Andrew Yip)



"First Cast" was shot on the same day in 1957 when he shot the award-winning Rowing at Dawn. (Source: Andrew Yip)

Yip's works have been published in several books locally and continue to be exhibited since his passing in 1989. Some of his more prominent achievements include being elected one of ten 'Photographers of the Century' by the New York Photography Society, attaining an Honorary Distinction from the *Federation Internationale de l'art Photographique*, and being awarded the Singapore Cultural Medallion.

A Brief History of Kallang in 10 Objects

History lies all around us. Even the most common of objects can be used as an entry point into another time and another world. Here are 10 objects, past and present, that tell a unique story of Kallang.

Pokok Ru (Casuarina Tree)



Left: The Casuarina Tree can be found at Arena Park. (Source: Singapore Sports Hub) Right: The flowers and fruit of the Casuarina Tree. (Source: Ria Tan, www.wildsingapore.com)

The *Pokok Ru* – the local Malay name for the Casuarina Tree, or *casuarina equisetifolia* – lent its name to Tanjong Rhu. The place name is one of the oldest in Singapore, going back more than 400 years. It appears on a 1604 map by Portuguese-Bugis explorer Manuel Godinho de Erédia.

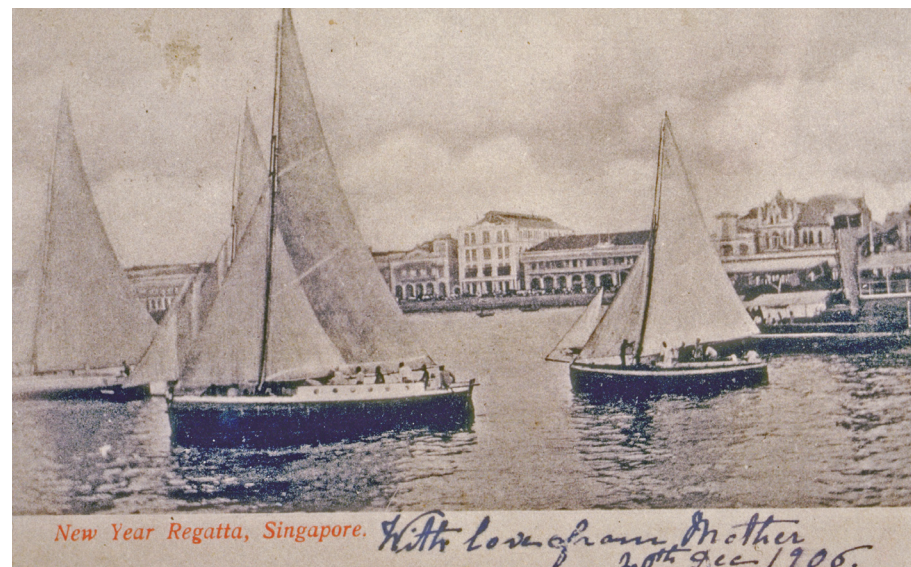
This tree with delicate needle-like twigs and distinctive cones grows naturally from the Bay of Bengal in the west, to the Pacific Islands and northeast Australia in the east. In precolonial times, it probably grew wild between Tanjong Rhu and Changi. Today, the tree can be found in Singapore's seaside parks or growing wild along the coast.

The *Pokok Ru* can grow up to 50 metres (around

17 storeys) in height, with a girth of up to three metres. It has many practical uses. The tree can check erosion, and its roots harbour nitrogen-fixing bacteria, allowing it to thrive in infertile soil. The timber is strong enough for beams, rafters, masts, and other heavy-duty applications, and it is also excellent as firewood. The bark can be used to treat dysentery and diarrhoea, and its resin, for tanning.

Today, other than scattered groves in the Kallang area, the *Pokok Ru* lives on in the form of place names in Tanjong Rhu. Examples include the streets of Tanjong Rhu Road and Rhu Cross, and the condominiums of Costa Rhu and Casuarina Cove.

Kolek



Koleks starred in the 1905 New Year Regatta. (Source: Arshak C Galstaun Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore)

The *kolek* was a traditional sailing boat used by the Malays in Singapore, Johor, and neighbouring islands, including the Kallang Basin.

The *kolek* gained fame in colonial Singapore with the rise of organised water sports. For instance, there was the annual New Year Regatta, which began in 1834. Races featured a plethora of sea craft, from sailboats to men-of-war, sampans, and *tongkangs* (wooden boats used to carry goods).

However, the *kolek* races continuously stole the show with “a combination of sheer skill, speed and spectacle”, as reported by The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser in 1938.

Other than the New Year Regatta, there were annual *kolek* races held along Singapore's southern shores, including the Kallang Basin. They were nicknamed the “5S Races” after five islands along the racing routes: Pulau Sudong, Seking, Semakau, Seraya, and Sekijang Pelepah (Lazarus Island). Newspaper

reports compared these races to the prestigious Sydney Harbour regattas, describing how “thousands of Malays thronged the foreshore at Siglap” to catch the action.

There were separate races for *koleks* crewed by two, three, five, and seven sailors. Each *kolek* represented a specific kampung, the crew made up of its villagers, much like neighbourhood football clubs. And like in football, *kolek* rivalries were intense. A winning boat with a crew of seven earned its sailors \$21 in 1937 – \$3 a person – but people competed for bragging rights rather than prize money.

The heyday of the *koleks* lasted until the 1970s, when urban redevelopment and reclamation left them high and dry. Villagers in the Southern Islands were resettled on the mainland. Storing *koleks* became too expensive. Even three of the “5S” were no more – Pulau Sudong became a live-firing area, Pulau Seking was swallowed by Pulau Semakau and became a landfill, and Pulau Seraya was absorbed into Jurong Island.

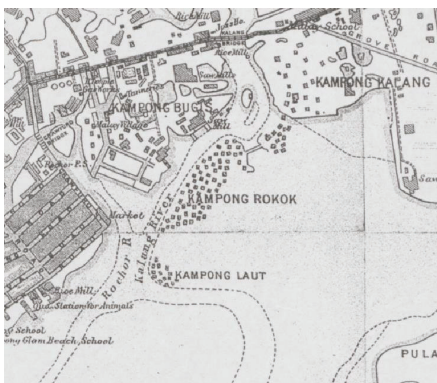
Cheroot



Cheroots on sale in Myanmar, similar to the Malay-style cigarettes handmade in Kampong Rokok at the turn of the 20th century. (Source: Worak, Wikipedia)

Smoking in Singapore is now an expensive affair and prohibited in many public places. In the 19th century, when smoking was far cheaper and a popular habit, the Kallang area manufactured its own Malay-style palm-leaf cigarettes, or cheroots.

There were no grand factories, just densely-packed attap huts perched on stilts over sand and mud, which were submerged at high tide. The cigarettes were rolled by hand, then wrapped in leaves from the nipah palm. Fittingly, the village which produced these cigarettes was named Kampong Rokok, Malay for "Cigarette Village". It was one of several villages at the mouth of the Kallang River by the beginning of the 20th century.



Kampong Rokok is in the centre of this 1913 map of the Kallang Basin. (Source: Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore)

Little about Kampong Rokok appears in the newspaper archives. The Cigarette Village and surrounding riverine communities largely organised their own affairs, and the authorities saw them as forbidding, alien worlds. As a result, stereotypes took over.

In 1951, a Straits Times columnist reminisced about the kampung, describing it as a "labyrinth for any smuggler who took refuge there – or for any Revenue officer who tried to pursue him". Of the shops there, lawyer Roland Braddell recalled in 1947: "I was quite sure that most of the stuff there had originally been stolen and I never bought anything for that reason... (even though) the prices were absurdly low."

That said, Kampong Rokok Boys' School made the news in 1919 for coming in first in a sports meet for Malay-language schools, hosted by the Singapore Recreation Club at the Padang. Out of 22 events such as high jump, three-legged races, and "kicking the football", the school won six gold, five silver, and four bronze medals.

Unfortunately, Kampong Rokok and surrounding villages were uprooted in the 1930s for Kallang Aerodrome. Most were resettled to the Malay Settlement in Eunos. With that, Kallang's association with the cheroot came to an end.

Malaya Cup (Malaysia Cup)



After Singapore defeated Perak 2-0 in the 1960 Malaya Cup Final, players and officials were invited to tea at the Istana – where a gleeful Yang di-Pertuan Negara Yusof Ishak got his hands on the coveted trophy. (Source: Yusof Ishak Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore)

The Malaya Cup – presently the Malaysia Cup – tells the story of an island's obsession with football.

The moment the Malaya Cup tournament began in 1921, Singapore proved itself a powerhouse. It qualified for every Malaya Cup Final before World War II put a halt to the tournament in 1942, taking home the trophy 12 times and sharing it twice with arch-rivals Selangor.

Most pre-war Finals were contested at the Selangor Club Padang (now Merdeka Square) in Kuala Lumpur, but four Finals were held in Singapore's Anson Road Stadium – 1925, 1930, 1933, and 1936. Singapore won three of these Finals, the exception being a 0-1 loss in 1936 – to Selangor of course.

After World War II, other Malayan teams such as Penang and Perak rose to the fore, challenging Singapore and Selangor's dominance in the competition. In the 26 years between 1948 and 1973, Singapore reached the Final just 12 times, lifting the trophy on seven occasions.

Malaya became Malaysia in 1963. Four years later in 1967, the 46-year-old Malaya Cup trophy was finally retired and replaced with a new trophy, the Malaysia Cup or Piala Malaysia. The original trophy's permanent home is now Kuala Lumpur's National Museum.

Singapore's home matches switched from the Jalan Besar Stadium to the far-larger National Stadium in 1974. The formidable fan support there gave birth to the "Kallang Roar". Between 1974 and 1994, the Lions reached the Final 10 times, winning the trophy three times.

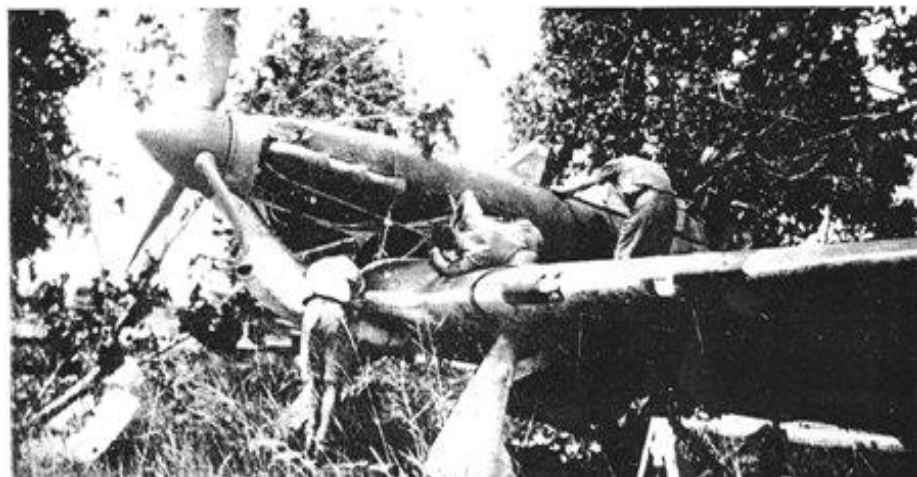
1994's 4-0 triumph over Pahang at the Shah Alam Stadium in Selangor was a bittersweet one. On one hand, Singapore broke a 14-year trophy drought. On the other hand, it was the last time they laid hands on the trophy. The following year, Singapore exited the competition over several controversial issues, such as a gate collection levy dispute and match-fixing scandals.



Football legend Fandi Ahmad lifted the Malaysia Cup for the last time in 1994, after Singapore defeated Pahang 4-0 in the Final in the Shah Alam Stadium, Selangor. He scored one goal, while Australian import Abbas Saad notched a hat-trick. (Source: Sport Singapore)

Eighteen years later in 2012, Singapore returned to the Malaysia Cup for four years with a team called LionsXII (the “XII”, or “12”, refers to the fans as a football team’s 12th man). However, their best performance was reaching the semi-finals in 2012. LionsXII

Hawker Hurricane



(Source: From *The Royal New Zealand Air Force in South-East Asia 1941-1942*. Reproduced with permission of the New Zealand Ministry of Culture and Heritage)

Kallang Aerodrome opened in 1937 as a world-class civilian airport. But its days of peace lasted just four years before the clouds of war gathered. World War II swept into Malaya and Singapore on 8 December 1941.

To combat the invading Japanese, the Allies employed all available Royal Air Force (RAF) airfields in Singapore – Tengah, Sembawang, and Seletar. But it was not enough. They also activated Kallang Aerodrome for military operations.

The following units defended the skies above Singapore: No. 243 Squadron Royal Air Force (RAF), No. 488 Squadron Royal New Zealand Air Force (RNZAF), and a Dutch fighter unit named 2-VLG-V.

Unfortunately, the Allies were routed. In terms of planes, the Japanese were far superior in

disbanded after the 2015 competition.

The Malaysia Cup may have eluded LionsXII, but the trophy retains legendary status to a generation of football-mad Singaporeans.

numbers and quality. On 12 January alone, the Allies suffered six Brewster Buffaloes – a fighter aircraft made in the United States – shot down.

Reinforcements were sorely needed. They came in the form of Hawker Hurricanes, an RAF fighter aircraft. 51 were shipped in crates to Singapore on 13 January, and by the 17th, 21 were assembled. Their pilots formed 232 (Provisional) Squadron, divided into three flights. A and B Flights were based in Seletar; C Flight flew from Kallang. A further 48 Hurricanes jumped into the fray on 28 January from the Royal Navy aircraft carrier *HMS Indomitable*.

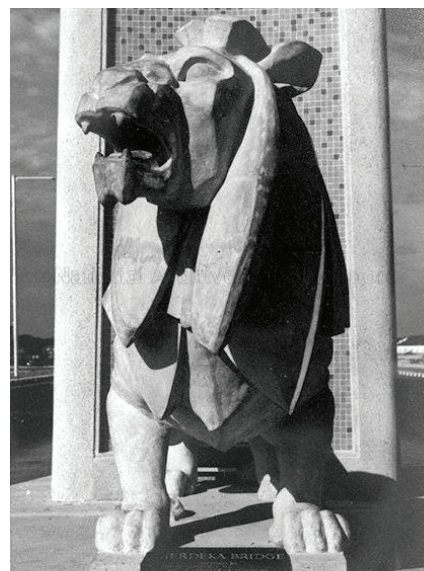
However, the bloodbath continued. The Hurricanes suffered severe losses in intense dogfights. Many were also destroyed on the ground by air raids, the result of the absence of an effective early-warning system.

The plane in the photo is a Hawker Hurricane from No. 243 Squadron, which was largely manned by pilots from New Zealand. It was hidden in the jungle on the perimeter of Kallang Aerodrome to avoid damage from surprise raids.

By early February 1942, to save the survivors to fight another day, the last Allied planes were pulled out of Singapore. By this time, Kallang Aerodrome was a spent force. Bombs had reduced the Terminal Building to a “shell”, according to Kiwi pilot Sergeant I. D. Newlands. “Bombs (landed) right around the perimeter of the aerodrome, and anything parked there was liable to get hit.”

With Kallang as one of the bases, the Hawker Hurricane had fought the good fight. In all, 45 Hurricanes were lost, but their pilots were credited with around 100 victories. Alas, on 15 February, the garrison in Singapore surrendered, plunging the island into three and a half years of occupation.

Merdeka Lions



A close-up of one of the Merdeka Lions in 1956. (Source: Wong Kwan Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore)

The Merdeka Lions are proud symbols of the spirit of *merdeka*, Malay for “independence” – and while two recreated specimens can be found in Kallang today, the originals have travelled around quite a bit.

In the 1950s, political parties in Singapore pursued *merdeka* from Britain. Partial internal self-government was granted in 1955, paving the way for a Legislative Assembly, in which most seats were allotted by election rather than colonial appointment.

A year later, a bridge was constructed over the Kallang River as part of Nicoll Highway, which served to relieve traffic congestion between the city centre and the suburbs of Katong and Siglap. Accordingly, the bridge was named Merdeka Bridge to reflect the people’s aspirations towards independence.

At both ends of the bridge, there stood a blue mosaic tower with Singapore’s coat-of-arms. At its base sat a majestic stone lion, watching over motorists as they entered and exited the bridge. The lions were commissioned by the Public Works Department (PWD) and sculpted in Manila before being shipped to Singapore.



One of the Merdeka Lions standing guard at the entrance to the Merdeka Bridge.

In 1965, work began to widen Nicoll Highway and the Merdeka Bridge to allow them to carry more traffic. Hence, the custodians of Merdeka Bridge were shifted to Kallang Park. Before the National Stadium was completed in 1973 and became the den of the Lions (Singapore’s football team), the

Merdeka Lions were already in Kallang Park.

Eventually, the PWD transferred the lions to the Ministry of Defence, who in 1995 installed them at the base of a 17-storey observatory tower at SAFTI Military Institute, a training institution for the Singapore Armed Forces. Again, the location was fitting, as the lions symbolised courage, strength, and excellence – qualities expected of an officer.

In 2019, replicas of the lions were installed in Singapore Sports Hub outside the National Stadium, in an open area appropriately named Stadium Roar. The Merdeka Lions had come home to Kallang – and this time, they were here to stay.

Kallang Park Fountain



Kallang Park Fountain in 1959. (Source: Wong Kwan Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore)

As the 1950s wound to a close, Singapore was on the cusp of historic change.

After three rounds of Merdeka (Malay for “Independence”) Talks in London from April 1956 to May 1958, Britain passed the State of Singapore Act on 1 August 1958 to convert

the Crown Colony into a self-governing state. The Constitution of Singapore was amended to provide for a 51-member legislature. It was a political triumph for Singapore’s government, led by Chief Minister Lim Yew Hock of the Labour Front.

To show the world that Singapore was ready for self-government and celebrate the amended constitution, the government organised a Singapore Constitution Exposition. Twenty-five acres of open land in the grounds of Kallang Airport – vacated in 1955 when the airport shifted to Paya Lebar – were set aside for the exposition.

The gears of economy went into full swing for the exposition. The Chinese Chamber of Commerce (CCC) led the organising committee. Rubber and tin companies, and the Harbour Board, pitched in. Firms from Singapore’s trading partners, such as Thailand, India, Japan, and Australia, signed up for 400 out of 700 available stalls. Millions of dollars were raised for the exposition.

The month-long event was officially launched by Chief Minister Lim on 1 February 1959. He declared it “the first public celebration of (Singapore’s) new constitution”, promising that 1959 would be “the most momentous in the history of our island community”.



The main entrance of the Singapore Constitution Exposition, facing Mountbatten Road. The fountain that was later named Kallang Park Fountain was just behind this gateway. (Source: Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore)

To beautify the exposition, two illuminated fountains were built for \$60,000. The larger one, erected by the CCC, lay at the main entrance facing Mountbatten Road. Fifteen metres high, it was lauded as “one of a kind” in the Asia-Pacific region. After the exposition, the CCC presented it as a gift to the City Council.

Later that year, under a new government led by the People’s Action Party, Kallang Park was completed around the fountain, which became known as Kallang Park Fountain. The futuristic symbol of a budding nation’s aspirations stood as an icon in Kallang until it was demolished sometime in the late 1980s.

National Stadium Cauldron



The National Stadium Cauldron. (Source: Singapore Sports Council)

The year was 1973. Finally, it was Singapore’s turn to host the Southeast Asian Peninsular (SEAP) Games (now the Southeast Asian Games, or SEA Games). The opening and closing

ceremonies were to take place in the National Stadium, but before that could happen, something had to be built.

When the idea for the SEAP Games was developed in 1957 and 1958 by officials from various Southeast Asian nations, they had the modern Olympic Games in mind. Hence, they adopted for the SEAP Games the Olympic tradition of a torch relay carrying a flame to a cauldron during the opening ceremony. Accordingly, in Singapore, a National Stadium Cauldron was built for the opening ceremony.

Singapore’s first sports-related torch relay was played out in style. Minister for Social Affairs Othman Wok – an avid sportsman and supporter of sports in Singapore – lit the flame on Mount Washington (now Telok Blangah Hill) on 25 August. Seven days later on 1 September, the day of the opening ceremony, a relay of runners representing the 16 events of the Games carried the torch to the National Stadium. Sprint champion C. Kunalan, 30, representing athletics, completed the final lap before lighting the Cauldron in front of 50,000 spectators.

When the Republic hosted the SEA Games again in 1983 and 1993, former star athlete Tan Eng Yoon and bowling champion Grace Young were respectively chosen to light the Cauldron.

The National Stadium Cauldron was fired up for the last time during the Grand Old Dame’s closing ceremony on 30 June 2007. Fittingly, C. Kunalan was given the honour, coming full circle.

After the ceremony, the National Stadium was torn down with the Cauldron. The base was retained, and today, it rests in front of the OCBC Arena.

Merlion Cup (Basketball)



The Merlion Cup trophy created for the inaugural tournament in 1984. It is currently with the Basketball Association of Singapore. (Source: Basketball Association of Singapore)

The Merlion Cup trophy for basketball symbolises efforts to bring the best of the sporting world to the heart of Kallang and the doorstep of Singapore fans.

In 1984, the Government celebrated “25 years of nation-building” since Singapore attained full internal self-government in 1959. To join in the festivities, the Basketball Association of Singapore (BAS) launched their most ambitious project yet – the Merlion Cup tournament. Their aim: Invite top basketball teams from around the world to compete in Singapore. BAS secretary Quek Hiang Chiang said: “Quality will be the theme of the Merlion Cup... we want the fans to have the best.”

Organising the tournament would cost an estimated \$100,000, with an additional \$30,000 for the trophy. The BAS managed to acquire sponsors such as the Singapore Tourist Promotion Board (now the Singapore Tourism Board) and Fraser and Neave. Ten teams signed up. China, Malaysia, New Zealand, and Singapore sent their national teams. Australia's Mazda Cannons, South Korea's Bank of Korea, the United States' Southern Utah State College, Japan's Matsushita, the Soviet Union's Georgia team, and Spain's Estudiantes completed a line-up to set basketball fans' pulses racing.

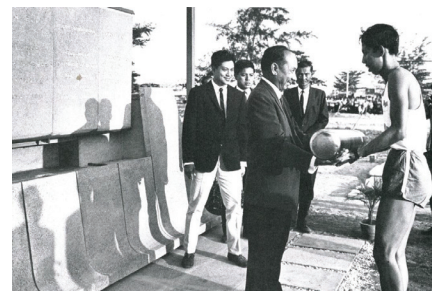
The tournament, held from 31 August to 8 September, was a rousing success. Even though tickets cost up to \$20 for a ringside seat, thousands packed the ageing, 5,000-capacity Geylang Indoor Stadium (also known as Gay World Stadium) every night. On the opening night, hundreds could not get tickets, many banged the gates in frustration, and the police had to be called in.

Singapore lost all its matches, crashing out of the group stage, but local fans remained hooked on the action. Eventually, in the Final, China edged past Estudiantes 71-70 in a thriller to lift the Merlion Cup.

Buoyed by the success of the tournament, the BAS staged the Merlion Cup eight more times from 1985 to 1996. From 1989, the event venue switched to the larger Singapore Indoor Stadium.

After 1996, the Merlion Cup went on hiatus due to a lack of sponsorship – but was resurrected in 2016. In the 2017 Final at the OCBC Arena – the last Merlion Cup tournament to date – Australia's Adelaide 36ers overcame China's Shanghai Sharks 101-81.

National Stadium Time Capsule



High-jump champion Noor Azhar Hamid (right) passing the National Stadium Time Capsule to Finance Minister Dr Goh Keng Swee, who subsequently laid it under the National Stadium's foundation stone on 23 February 1970 – the last time anyone saw the capsule. (Source: Ministry of Information and the Arts Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore)

Herein lies the greatest mystery of Kallang – where is the National Stadium Time Capsule?

As construction work on the National Stadium proceeded, a ceremony was held on 23 February 1970. A suitcase-sized copper cylinder was filled with items such as the building plans of the Stadium, the day's newspapers, and local dollar notes. A team of runners carried the time capsule from Empress Place to the building site. Finance Minister Dr Goh Keng Swee placed the capsule under the Stadium's foundation stone, which was then laid underground.

Little did Dr Goh know, he would be the last person to lay his hands on it.

Fast forward to 2007, as the closing ceremony of Kallang's Grand Old Dame neared. The original plan was to unearth the capsule and display its contents ahead of the closing ceremony. But it was nowhere to be found.

For three whole years until the National Stadium's demolition in 2010, extensive efforts to search for the capsule failed. It was believed to be under the Stadium's West Entrance, but metal detectors turned

up nothing. There were talks to hire an X-ray machine for \$100,000 to look for it. A \$50,000 lost-and-found reward was dangled in front of workers, but to no avail. Even high-jump champion Noor Azhar Hamid, who ran the last leg of the race to deliver the capsule to Dr Goh in 1970, could not recall where it was buried. It was as if the capsule had vanished into thin air.

Time marches on, and so do time capsules. In 2016, a new capsule for the Singapore Sports Hub was assembled with 50 items symbolic of Singapore's sporting achievements, including Olympic gold medallist Joseph Schooling's swim cap, sprinter Shanti Pereira's running shoes and vest, and Paralympian Jovin Tan's signature sunglasses.

Dubbed “Aspirations”, the capsule will be opened in 2040, when Singapore turns 75. And now, it will not be lost again – the capsule lies in the ground in front of the 28th SEA Games Cauldron at the Stadium Riverside Walk.

In the meantime: Treasure hunters – Kallang beckons you.



The present time capsule, “Aspirations”, lies on the Stadium Riverside Walk in front of the 28th SEA Games Cauldron. The National Stadium is in the background. (Source: Singapore History Consultants Pte Ltd)

A Canvas for Art

Sports is not ordinarily associated with the arts and heritage, but here at Singapore Sports Hub, you will find that they go hand-in-hand. Kallang has become a canvas for some charming pieces of art. They reflect a strong passion for sports and capture memories of our sporting heritage and milestones.

Re: Bench

Incorporating sports, arts and heritage, designers created works of art out of raw materials, which played a historic role in our sporting history. When the former National Stadium was demolished, the Singapore Sports Council (SSC) salvaged planks from the original wooden benches of the Stadium.

In 2012, the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) collaborated with the SSC and held a competition titled 'Bench', calling for proposals from designers on how the planks could be transformed into unique benches which reflected collective memories of the former Stadium.

A total of 30 designs were selected and the public was invited to pick a bench and vote where it should be placed in various parts of Singapore. In conjunction with this, the Adopt-a-Bench programme directed proceeds to 80 charities supported by Community Chest.

In August 2017, a second competition, titled 'Re:Bench' was held. Singapore Sports Hub collaborated with URA to bring 14 of these special commemorative pieces to the Sports Hub precinct. You can find out more about each unique design and its designer on the small plaque on each bench. As you sit on the bench, you may want to reflect on the sporting milestones they would have witnessed at the former National Stadium!

See if you can find the benches shown below:



Zip by Edison Gunawan (Source: Singapore Sports Hub)



Rivero by Guan Haotian (Source: Singapore Sports Hub)



Sculpace by Yu Yang (Source: Singapore Sports Hub)

Dream

The Women's Tennis Association (WTA) was founded by Billie Jean King in 1973. It is a global leader in women's professional tennis with more than 2,500 players from 100 countries.

Singapore was one of many countries which bid to host one of the WTA's key competitive events – the WTA Finals. In 2014, Singapore became the first city in the Asia Pacific region to host the season finale – BNP Paribas WTA Finals Singapore. Singapore hosted the tournament at the Singapore Sports Hub for 5 years. The prestigious competition brought Tennis legends such as Billie Jean King, Serena Williams, Caroline Wozniacki, Angelique Kerber and Naomi Osaka to Singapore. The final instalment of the games was held at the Singapore Indoor Stadium from 21 – 28 October 2018.

To mark the fifth and final year of the WTA Finals in Singapore, a special artwork was jointly commissioned by Singapore Sports Hub, Sport Singapore and the WTA. Titled, Dream, the sculpture features a floating purple girl connected by a tennis racket to a stainless steel ball. The artwork was created by internationally-acclaimed local artist, Baet Yeok Kuan.



Steve Simon (CEO, WTA), Baet Yeok Kuan, Billie Jean King, Oon Jin Teik (CEO, Singapore Sports Hub), Lim Teck Yin (CEO, SportSG) at the unveiling of the sculpture on 24 October 2018. (Source: Singapore Sports Hub)

At the unveiling on 24 October 2018, Billie Jean King shared that "with this symbolic art piece, I hope that Singapore remembers her invaluable contribution to the legacy of the WTA Finals here and continues to use this as an inspiration for future generations".

The sculpture seeks to inspire the younger generation to pursue their passions and dreams and achieve their ambitions. The sculpture is at the north entrance of the Singapore Indoor Stadium. Find the nearby marker to place your palm against Billie Jean King's handprints.



Billie Jean King unveiled the sculpture accompanied by children from the ActiveSG Tennis Academy. (Source: Singapore Sports Hub)

Passing The Baton and Best Foot Forward: Friendship, Excellence, Respect

The Singapore Sports Museum is dedicated to sharing Singapore's past and present sporting aspirations and achievements, as well as the stories of our sporting pioneers.

A recent addition to the museum are two artworks honouring local sprinting legend, C. Kunalan. They are a cast of his hand holding a relay baton, called "Passing the Baton: Friendship, Excellence, Respect" and a cast of his right foot called "Best Foot Forward: Friendship, Excellence, Respect". Together, they symbolise the role of Singapore's pioneer athletes in inspiring the next generation of sporting legends.



The sculptures were done by local artist, Baet Yeok Kuan and will be on permanent display at the Singapore Sports Museum. (Source: Singapore Sports Hub)



C Kunalan at the unveiling of the artworks, together with his family on 19 October 2018. From left: Oon Jin Teik (CEO, Singapore Sports Hub), Lim Teck Yin (CEO, SportSG), C Kunalan and his family and Tang Weng Fei (President, Singapore Athletics). (Source: Sport Singapore)

Kunalan's most notable achievements include winning a total of 15 SEA Games and five Asian Games medals over the span of his 12-year sprinting career. He also held the national record for the 100-metre sprint for 33 years, before it was broken in 2001.

After retiring from competitive running in 1978, he served as the National Sprints Coach from 1993 to 1996. Under his guidance, the national team broke the 4 x 100m relay record in 1994. A record that Kunalan had ironically helped set back in 1974.

Beyond sport, Kunalan taught in Tiong Bahru Primary School and Dunearn Secondary Technical School for 20 years before joining the National Institute of Education in 1980. As a lecturer, he contributed significantly to the

training of physical education teachers. He was also one of the 23 members of the Singapore Youth Olympic Games Organising Committee (SYOGOC) and was appointed as a Deputy Mayor of the Youth Olympic Village at the Nanyang Technology University when Singapore hosted the inaugural Youth Olympic Games in 2010.

At age 76 (2019), he is currently a Senior Manager at Sport Singapore and works together with the aspiring athletes of the ActiveSG Athletics Club. Kunalan also volunteers at the Singapore Sports Museum as a docent. Check out the Museum, and you might even get to meet the man himself!

Merdeka Lion Sculptures

One of the highlights amongst the artworks at Singapore Sports Hub is the pair of Merdeka Lion sculptures. Replicas of the original, they have been aptly placed at the Stadium Roar, which faces the National Stadium.

The original Merdeka Lions are often ascribed to Italian artist, Rodolfo Nolli. They were initially placed at either end of Merdeka Bridge in June 1956. However, widening of the Nicoll Highway and Merdeka Bridge necessitated relocating them to Kallang Park. The lions were finally transferred to the Ministry of Defence in 1995, and installed at the foot of a 17-storey tower at SAFTI Military Institute.



The current location of the Merdeka Lions at SAFTI Military Institute. (Source: Singapore History Consultants Pte Ltd)

The sculptures were specially commissioned by Singapore Sports Hub and were unveiled on 12 May 2019, as part of Singapore's bicentennial commemorations. Symbolising our national pride, they inspire Singaporean teams. It is apt that they guard the home of the Lions, Singapore's national football team.

National Stadium Cauldron

The first major event held at the National Stadium was the 1973 Southeast Asian Peninsular Games. Mr C. Kunalan was chosen as the first person to ever light the cauldron for the opening ceremony.



Mr C Kunalan lighting the cauldron of the former National Stadium at the closing ceremony held in 2007. (Source: Singapore Sports Council)

In 2007, a closing ceremony titled 'Field of Dreams: A Tribute to the National Stadium' was held to mark the official closing of the former National Stadium. The honour was again given to Kunalan to light up the cauldron for the last time.

In 2010, the former National Stadium was demolished to make way for Singapore Sports Hub. The current National Stadium was built on exactly the same spot. Sadly, all that remains of the cauldron is the base which has been retained at the OCBC Arena.

An integrated artwork incorporating the cauldron base is in the pipeline as part of a Community Art Project, in collaboration with Republic Polytechnic's School of Technology for the Arts. The polytechnic is one of Singapore Sports Hub's Community Partners for The Kallang Story: A Sports, Arts and Heritage Trail, which was created by Singapore History Consultants.

The art piece will commemorate the Grand Old Dame of Kallang, and represent the theme of 'fire and speed'. It will be displayed at the Arena Park in front of the OCBC Arena.

Sail Forth, Kallang



Kallang has come a long way in the last 200 years. How will it look like in the next 200 years? (Source: Singapore Sports Hub)

You have read the stories. You have seen the iconic landmarks. You have met the people who brought Kallang to life. What lies ahead for Kallang?

Plenty, it seems. In 2017, the Urban Redevelopment Authority launched “A River Runs Through It”, an exhibition showcasing opportunities to “revitalise” areas along the Kallang River. There are five broad concepts:

1. New communities.
There will be 100,000 additional residential units within 2 km of the Kallang River over the next 20 years. One site is Kampong Bugis, formerly home to Kallang Gasworks and sawmills. It will become a waterfront district with 4,000 private residential units, with an emphasis on fewer cars and more open public spaces.
2. Kallang Basin to be enhanced as a sports and recreational venue. For example, Sport Singapore will develop the Jalan Benaan Kapal area, once known for its ship-building industry, into a community space with football pitches, running trails, and free-to-play courts.
3. The biodiversity of the Kallang River to be enriched. More stretches of the river will be naturalised like the wetlands in front of the Stadium Riverside Walk.
4. Accessibility between Bishan and the city centre via the Kallang River to be improved. Examples include a riverfront promenade, underpasses, and cycling bridges.
5. The river’s rich heritage to be celebrated. The public will be engaged to capture memories associated with the river.

As this booklet has shown, change has been a constant for Kallang over the last 200 years. We hope you make use of this booklet to walk the ground and discover Kallang for yourself. Capture Kallang in your memories and photos before its next chapter is written!

Acknowledgements

PHOTO CREDITS

Organisations

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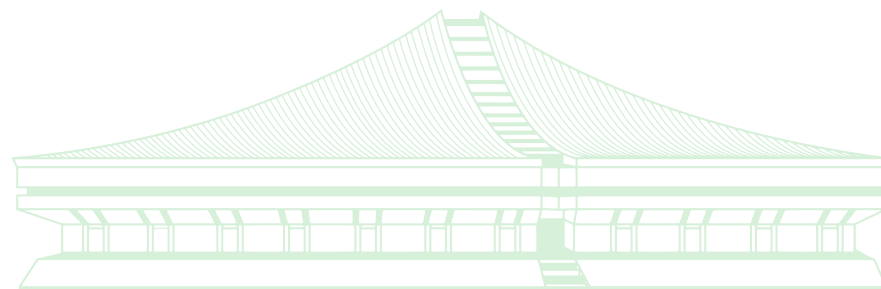
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LEGEND

TRAIL ONE: The Waterfront Trail

- 1 A Stage for Sports
- 2 Tanjong Rhu and Pulau Geylang
- 3 Making a Splash
- 4 Where Three Rivers Meet
- 4 Kallang, All Rise
- 5 Of Stilts and Cheroots
- 6 The Pride of Kallang

TRAIL TWO: The Stadium Trail (on 2nd level of National Stadium)

- 7 The Grand Old Dame
- 8 Birth of the Kallang Roar
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Singapore Indoor Stadium



Old Kallang Airport Terminal Building



Tanjong Rhu Lookout Tower



Old Kallang Airport Gateway



Singapore Sports Museum and Visitors Centre



WTA Artwork "Dream"



Merdeka Lion Sculptures



Re: Bench



Postcard from the Past



Old National Stadium Cauldron



SG Heart Map

PAST LANDMARKS



Kallang Gasworks



Wonderland Amusement Park



Gay World



Oasis Theatre Restaurant Niteclub & Cabaret



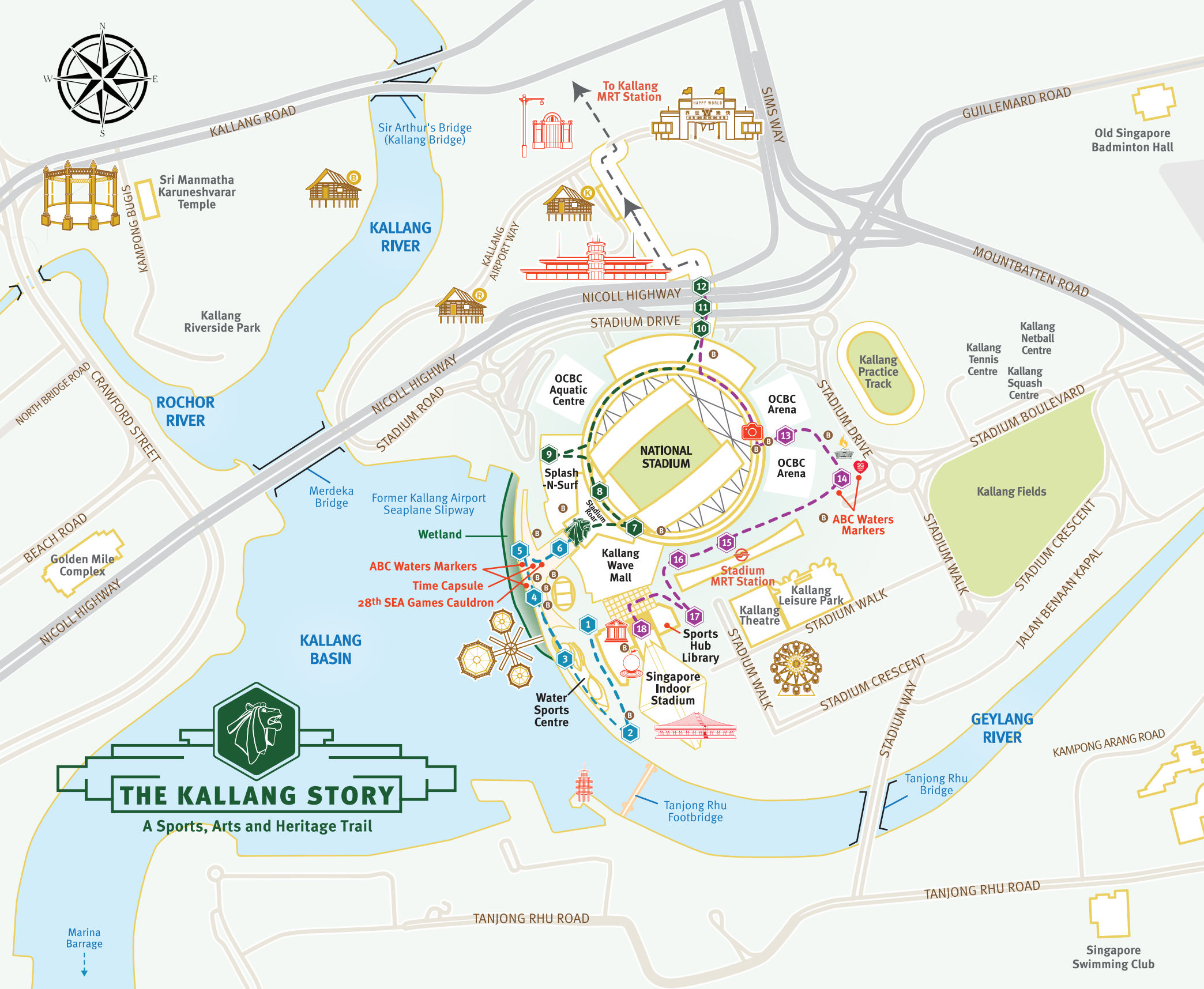
Kampong Bugis



Kampong Rokok



Kampong Kallang



THE KALLANG STORY

A Sports, Arts and Heritage Trail



Explore **The Kallang Story: A Sports, Arts and Heritage Trail** and discover our rich history, sporting achievements and art through 18 heritage markers and artefacts around Singapore Sports Hub.

Embark on a journey with this guide book, to uncover a Singaporean story through the heritage of Kallang!

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