

George Town



The George Town
we have inherited

Peter Ho

George Town

We Inherited



Peter Ho Cheng Woh

History

George Town was founded by Captain Francis Light, a trader for the British East India Company, in 1786, as a trading base for the company in the Malay States.

After obtaining the island of Penang from the Sultan of Kedah he built Fort Cornwallis on the north-eastern corner of the island. The fort became the nexus of a growing trading post for the East India Company.

To clear the site for the town, gold coins were fired into the area from a canon, and the land was cleared as fortune seekers cut and slashed their way through the swamps and trees to collect their 'wages'. The original commercial town was laid out between Light Street, Beach Street, Chulia Street and Pitt Street.

Warehouses and godowns extended from Beach Street to the sea. By the 1880s, there were ghauts leading from Beach Street to the wharf and jetties as Beach Street receded inland due to land reclamation. A new waterfront was created at Weld Quay, where commercial buildings sprang up.

The historic commercial centre was divided into banking and trading areas related to port activities which included shipping companies, the import and export trade, and the wholesalers who dominate the southern section of Beach Street until now.

This whole site has now been listed as a World Heritage site since July 2008.



Fort Cornwallis as it stands today, with its canons still guarding the heritage site as it had done for the past 200 years.



Fort Cornwallis has now become a popular tourist site. Many wedding photographers have also chosen the fort as an evergreen prop for photography.



*Pre-war buildings
& Monuments
that are still here.*





Life in Old George Town.

The Baba Nyonya



What was life like in George Town 100 years ago?

Well, life was simpler than today.

*There were no McDonald's and Internet but
still you can have food brought to your doorsteps
or else it would be a 1 MP (man power) transport
to get to the market or restaurant.*



Life in Old George Town.

The Baba Nyonya

Listening to their favourite tunes on radio



Life then was slow and simple. Keeping up with the news or passing time was only only the radio. There was no TV then. Having your photo taken could mean engaging an artist. But still people knew how to pass their time.



Having your 'photo' taken.



Enjoying a game of chap ji kee.

Life in Old George Town.

The Baba Nyonya



favourite tunes on radio

People somehow knew how to entertain themselves and pass the time.

Of course there were those who like to visit each other to update themselves with the latest news while the active ones did their own 'line dancing' of sort.

There were others who like a breath of fresh air in their trishaw rides. Of course the air would be less polluted then.





Life in Old George Town.

Night Entertainment



Night life besides the cabarets was going to Night Operas like what has dotted the town mainly during festive months of the Hungry Ghosts just like it is today.

Temples and community centers become congregating spots.

Today Night Operas are held in almost all the temples and still draw the crowd who would bring along their own seats.



Celebrations in George Town.

Chinese New Year Open House

The Heritage Site had always been a ground for activities and Open House in Heritage George Town which is a recent phenomena attracting tourist & locals from all walks of life. Here are some interesting shots captured in the open house events during Chinese New Year. Attempting to bring back the glory of yesteryears the event focus its attention mainly on culture and disappearing crafts.



The Gods of Prosperity - 2003 CNY Celebration



The "Gods" had always been an attraction



Celebrations in George Town.

Vanishing Traditionals

This is something we do not see anymore and the bearers of the sedan chair are now replaced by horsepowers - the Mercedes and BMWs.

There was a flash of culture to display how the matrimonial knot was tied in the olden days complete with music and the "Sin Kek Hmn" (the master of ceremony).

A flash of traditional marriage ceremony.





Celebrations in George Town.

Vanishing Traditional Crafts

There has always been a fear of traditional crafts and skillmen disappearing and totally taken over by computer assisted techniques and modern mechanization.

But looks like there is a revival and the young are keen to revive what had been traditionally theirs.

Miniature Crafts in the making





Celebrations in George Town.

Chinese New Year Open House

The air around venue of the event around Khoo Kongsi and Cheah Kongsi gets electrified as the streets are filled with red as dancers jam the streets and stage backed by loud drums and cymbals.



Pretty dancers adorning traditional costumes.



Colour, music & dancing mood fill the air as dancers in colourful costumes throng onto the stage.



Celebrations in George Town.

The Dragon Dance

The dragon - a symbol of wealth and power has dominated the Chinese Culture since the Han Dynasty. Brought to our shoreline by our forefathers the dragon dance had always been performed on auspicious events.

The dance, a feat in itself demands the synchronization of the team as it weavers and moves around.

Lately in most big events, the dragon comes alive as a big attraction.



The Dragon Dance performed in Heritage George Town



Celebrations in George Town.

The Lion Dance

The Lion Dance has always had a place in the Chinese New Year Festival.

Without fail it has always awoken me up every first day of the Chinese New Year.

It is believed it has the power to usher in good fortune and wealth to the Chinese as well as to ward off evil spirits.

Accompanied by drums and cymbals it creates a big bang with its loud music.

But then now this has become an attraction everywhere it is performed.





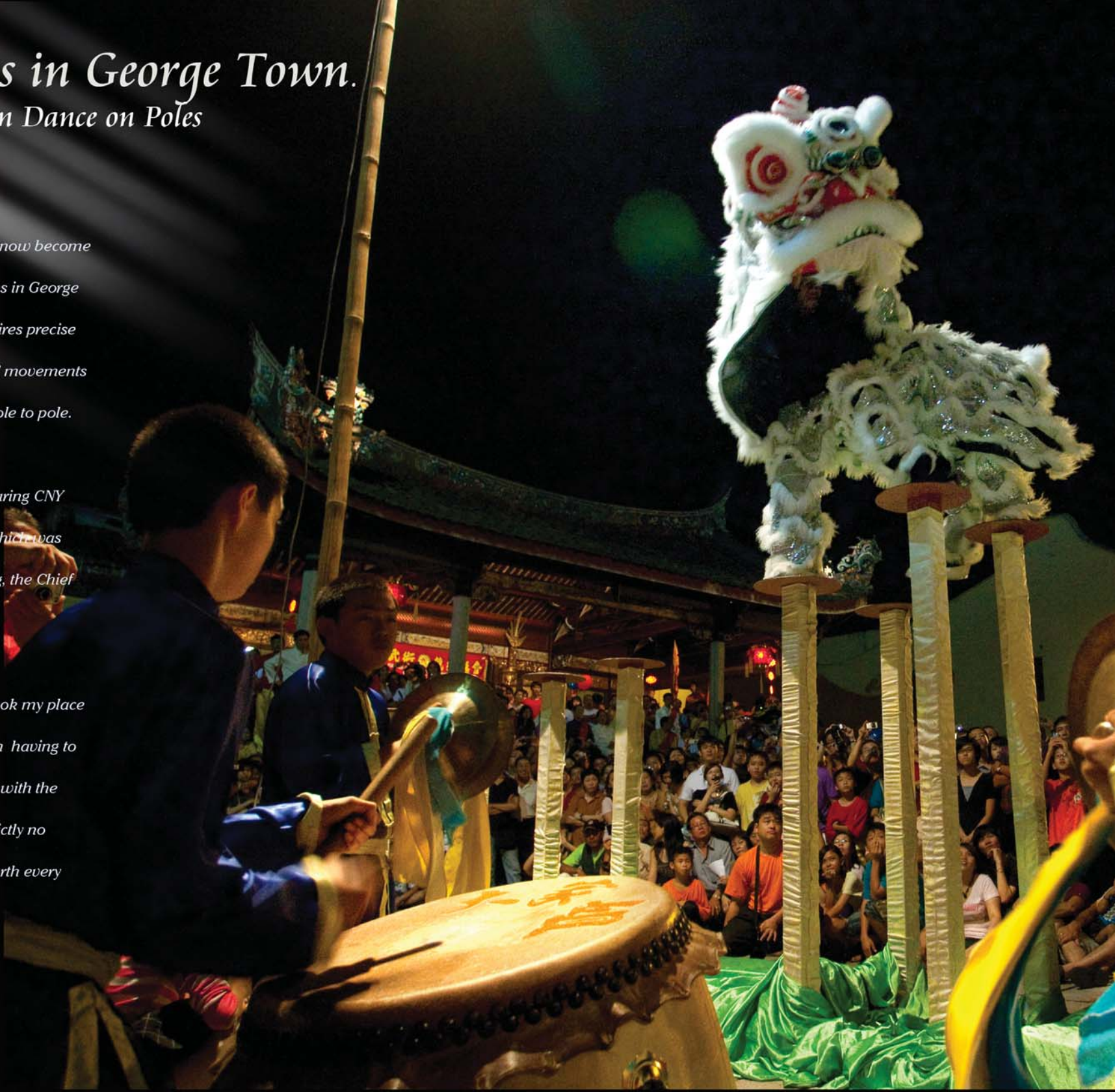
Celebrations in George Town.

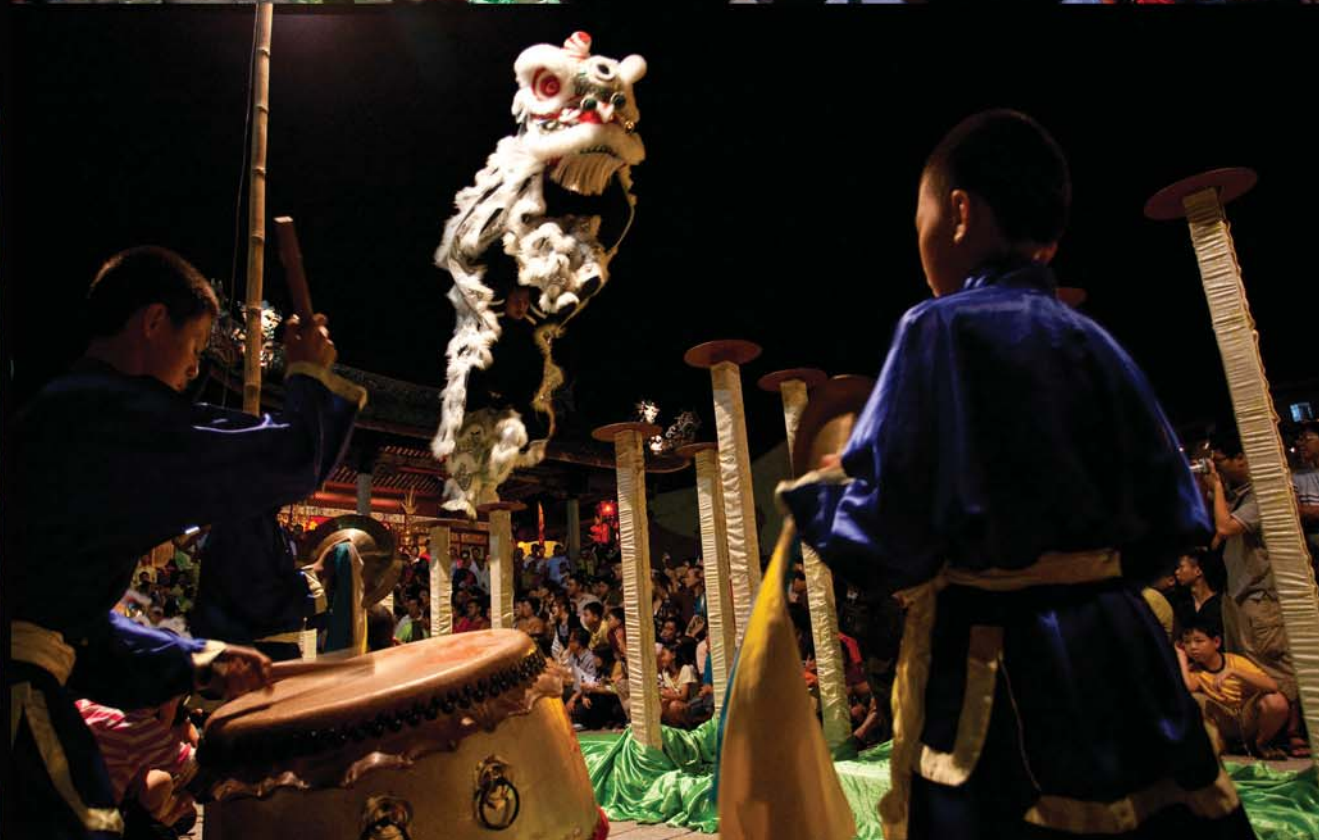
The Lion Dance on Poles

The Lion Dance on poles has now become an in event on big celebrations in George Town. The performance requires precise skills to synchronise the pairs' movements as they hop and jump from pole to pole.

Here are a few shots taken during CNY celebration at Khoo Kongsi which was attended by YB Lim Guan Eng, the Chief Minister of Penang.

I had to wati for 2 hours to book my place next to the drummer and then having to bear the loud drums together with the cymbals on my right. With strictly no flashlights allowed, it was worth every second of it.





Celebrations in George Town.

The 24 Season Drums

Tan Hooi Song will be remembered forever for his cultural legacy – the 24 season drum which are labeled based on the unique categorization of weather in China yet the 24 season drum is truly a proud and outstanding cultural heritage of Malaysia to China and other parts of the world. An art form in itself it is respected for its emphasis on the combination of movement formations and drum beat variations bringing out multiple dimension of musical sensation.

Here are some shot taken recently in George Town with school children performing.





Celebrations in George Town.

Thaipusam

Penang has always been celebrating Thaipusam in a big way with the Indian community congregating to pay homage to Lord Muruga. During this religious festival the Old part of George Town again play host to this unique event which in turn has attracted many non indians too. It has also become a festival for tourist who join in walking all the way to the temple in Botanical Gardens.

As as for me I have been photographing this event almost every year from the 70's and still finding it just as challenging.





Celebrations in George Town.

Chingay

*When the word Chingay is uttered,
Penang comes to mind. For Decades the
flags have roamed the streets of old
George Town from the pre-Merdeka days
when I used to watch the event in the
Esplanade just as it has been till today.*

*It is no easy feat but then it now has
become a multi-racial and with the fair
gender joining the ranks of the once
male dominated sports.*





Large red logo on a white banner, possibly representing a community organization.

Vertical Chinese text on a white banner: 吉隆坡大新會
大新大新會

PERSATUAN CHINGAY SEBERANG PERANG
PASUKAN CHINGAY BUTTERWORTH

Vertical Chinese text on a white banner: 吉隆坡大新會



Buildings in George Town.

The night scene

The sensor of the digital camera detects colour temperature in a unique manner creating a beautiful display of lights when the sun sets over George Town.

I captured some buildings around George Town against the blue sky shooting at a specific moment when the sky turns into a beautiful hue of blue.



The Kapitan Kling Mosque



The Municipal Council Building



The Cheah Kongsi



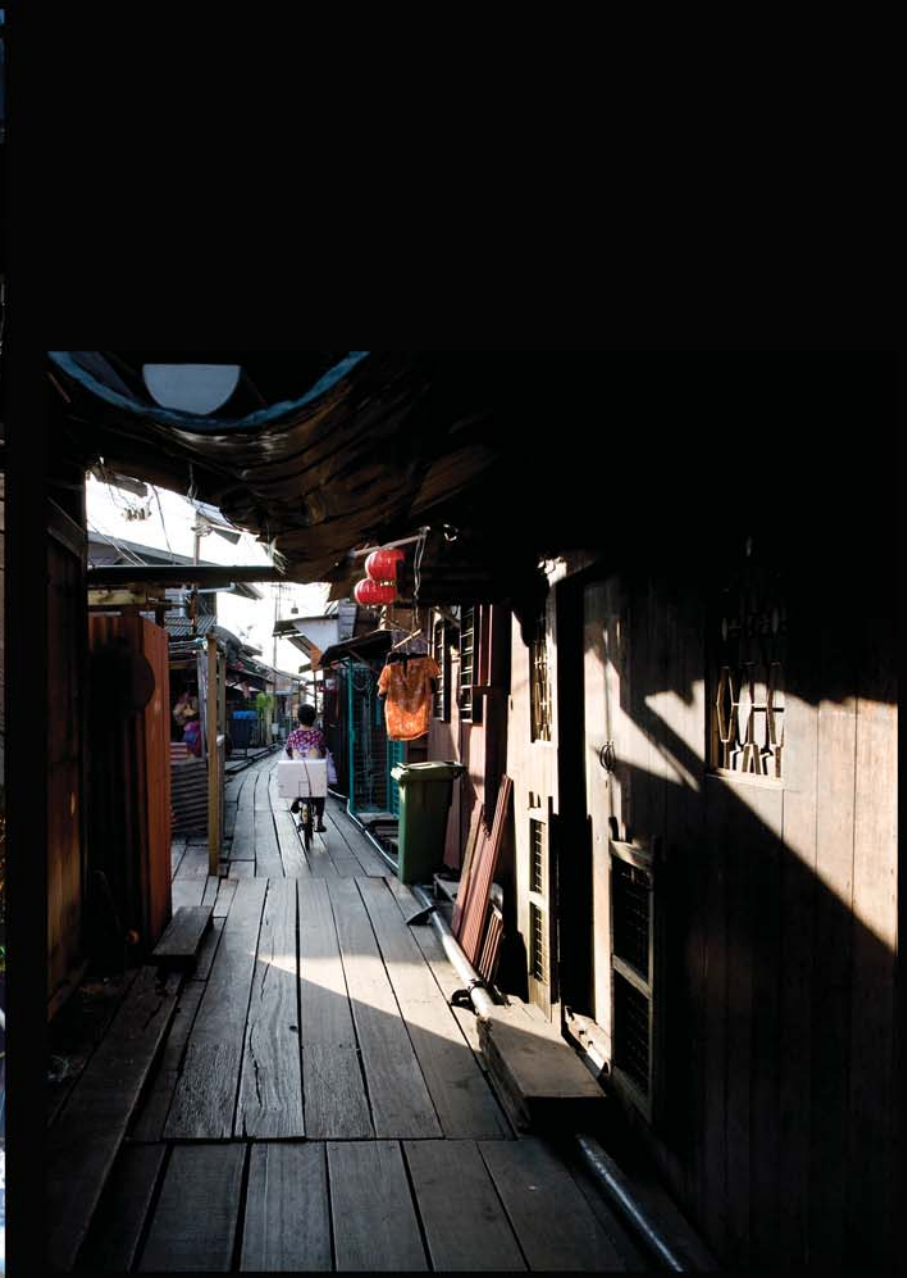
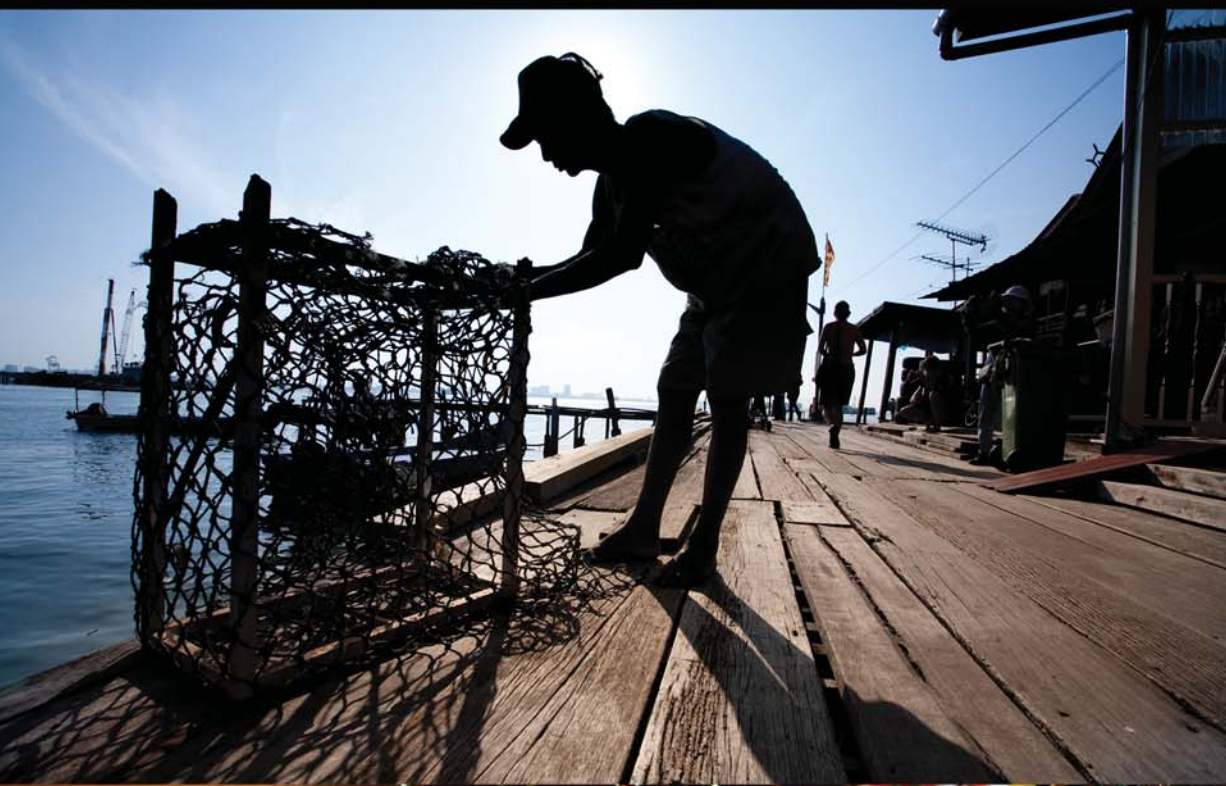
The Khoo Kongsi

Buildings in George Town.

Chew Jetty

The Chew Jetty is one of the waterfront settlements on stilts along Weld Quay which still houses hundreds of people. Recently it has become a tourist attraction and many have opened their home to tourist who wants a taste of life on a jetty.





An annual affair, when the Chew Clan congregate to worship the Jade Emperor on the eve of the 9th day of Chinese New Year when a half Km long altar filled with offerings is put up. At midnight the burst of fire crackers and lion dance marks the peak of the festival.

Transport in George Town.

The King of the Road

Trishaws were one of main modes of transport in old George Town. They have managed to survive the onslaught of "horsepowers" and still maintain the crown as "King Of The Road".

If you drive in George Town then you will understand why they have been crowned as "King".

Around the Esplanade there are over a hundred of them lining up waiting for the tourists who want to have a taste of this slow mode of transport.





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If Captain Francis Light were ever to set foot again in the town which he founded - he would be astonished with the transformation from a small port with a small settlement to what it is today - rivaling many other cities of this region.

Almost all the photographs were captured during public events or with set up models.



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