Bukit Timah Railway Station

A Station for History, Nature and Community

2024 AWARD
FOR CONSERVATION (DISTINCTION)

Developers:
Urban Redevelopment Authority
National Parks Board

Architect:
Kay Ngee Tan Architects

Engineers:
Lee & Lee Consultants Pte Ltd
KEON Consult Pte Ltd

Contractor:
Towner Construction Pte Ltd

Conservation Specialist:
Dr Yeo Kang Shua

Additional Team Members:
Grant Associates Singapore Pte Ltd (Landscape Architect)
ICON Engineers LLP (M&E Engineer)
Lee & Lee Consultants Pte Ltd (Quantity Surveyor, Design Stage)
BCM Consultants Pte Ltd (Quantity Surveyor, Construction Stage)
Nipek Pte Ltd (Lighting Designer)
Pico Art International Pte Ltd (Environmental Graphics Designer)
Mobistudios Pte Ltd (Interactive Panel Specialist)
Bautec Pacific Pte Ltd (Brick Masonry Treatment)
Windhoff Singapore Pte Ltd (Design and Build of Service Wagon)

Thoughtfully restored, the Bukit Timah Railway Station and its adjoining Railway Staff Quarters stand as testaments to Singapore's rich transport history. Originally built in the 1930s and decommissioned in 2011, the sensitive refurbishment has preserved its rustic charm while transforming it into an appealing public space.



A unique landscape of heritage, nature, and people

An Endearing Railway Icon

Built in 1932, Bukit Timah Railway Station served as a key transfer and loop station for suburban Singapore, as well as a loading point for goods and livestock. The Station and Railway Staff Quarters reflect Arts and Crafts influences, with fair-faced brickwork, distinctive brick patterns, timber columns, roof trusses, and terracotta roof tiles - significant symbols of the nation's early economic development and historical links to Peninsula Malaya.

Bringing History to Life

A photograph by Darren Soh, capturing streaks of light from the last train along the tracks, served as the primary inspiration and guided the team in revitalising the site.

Meaningful curation of the Station's setting incorporated the surrounding natural and man-made elements as integral to the historic buildings they have long been intertwined with. Landscaping retained both native and introduced vegetation, complemented by established familiar vistas. Historic features, such as the 200-meter-long platform, railway key token posts, and replicas of service wagons, serve as vivid reminders of the Station's operational past.

Evoking Historic Charm, Enhancing Experience

While the Station was thoughtfully curated as a heritage gallery, the Railway Staff Quarters employed two distinct approaches: the relatively intact East Wing adhered to a maximum retention strategy with only localised repairs, while the heavily altered West Wing underwent a more liberal adaptation to highlight its architectural elements. Its interior walls were left unfinished to expose the original brickwork, and the ceiling was removed to reveal the timber structure, enabling visitors to easily distinguish between altered and original elements.

Anchored in the 3R principles and with thorough investigations into construction methods and architectural history, the restoration retained much of the Station's and Railway Staff Quarters' original elements, including timber-framed doors and windows, clay vent roof tiles, and brick walls. Severely damaged parts were replaced on a one-for-one basis, judiciously, in line with conservation best practices.

The project's meticulous restoration extended to the finer details as seen in the Station's original ticket counter, signal panels, antique gear levers, and Bakelite switches. These provide subtle yet tangible connections to the past. Objects and materials found on-site were creatively repurposed: old steel tracks became armrests for timber benches, and a concrete septic tank was reimagined as a planter box. These approaches were key to evoking and recapturing the Station's sense of place and memory, creating a unified spatial experience.

This unique combination of heritage, nature, and community is further enriched by new ancillary facilities, which were sensitively designed to meet modern needs without compromising the site's historical integrity.

A New Legacy

Today, the Station stands not just as a relic of a bygone era but a celebrated part of Singapore's Rail Corridor, inviting future generations to appreciate and engage with its legacy.



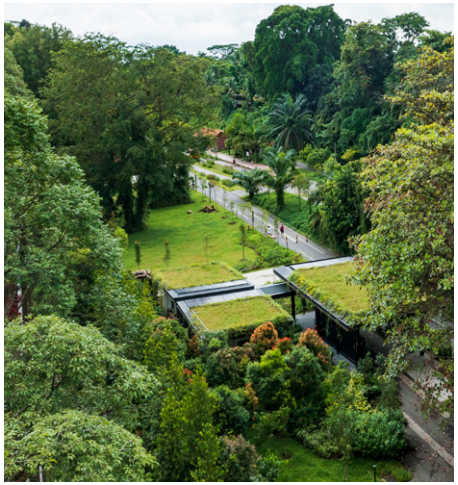
Aerial view of the Station and the Heritage Lawn



Thoughtful blend of wild flora and landscaped gardens at the old Railway Staff Quarters



The sketch illustrating the overall concept for the site



Sensitively designed Yard Shelter blending into the setting



Innovative use of found objects and materials adds to the 'genius loci' of the place









Bricks, timber and glass were carefully examined and restored by craftsmen





Vivid visual reminders of the Station's operational history



Old waiting room and its meticulously restored woodwork



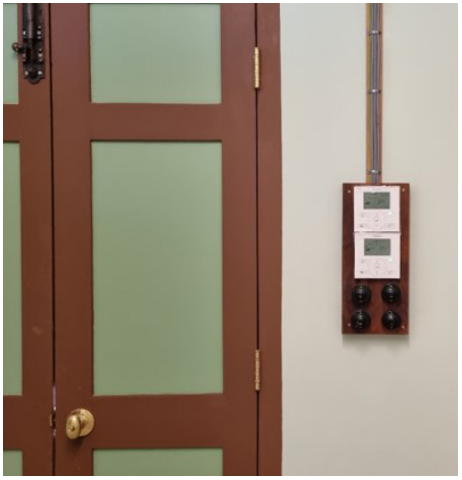
The old Station aglow with sophisticated, subtle lighting



Equipment Room's reinstated interior enhancing the visual story telling of the site



The 'Arts and Crafts' style old Railway Staff Quarters nestled in a well-considered landscape



Restored Bakelite Switches retained as decoration





Courtyard and interiors of the old Railway Staff Quarters, now a café that serves the community of visitors



Timber framed windows restored with historic colours

BUKIT TIMAH RAILWAY STATION

2024 Award for Conservation (Distinction)

With heritage, nature, and community at its core, the Bukit Timah Railway Station project stands out for its excellently restrained yet transformative approach to recapture the sense of place of a historic site that has evolved beyond its original utilitarian function.

Inspired by a stylised photograph of light streaks left by the last train, the site design showcases artful combination and curation of different materials, planting, and ground finishes to strengthen the railway alignment. The restored 200-m long boarding platform with historic railway key token posts, electrical pylons and lamp posts, relive the charms of travel reminiscent of the past. The landscaping is also well executed with a judicious mix of spontaneous and newly introduced native vegetation to recapture the familiar ambience along the enchanting Rail Corridor.

Anchored by deep research and expert technical know-how, the rustic charm of the two quaint pre-war buildings is enlivened in the restored quaint clay roof vents, old ticket counter and cabinet, antique gear levers, nostalgic exposed timber-cleat wiring and black signature 'Bakelite' switches (reinstated as artefacts) and iconic signal panels etc. Old steel tracks creatively recycled as arm rests for timber benches and two authentic style railway service wagons parked on the remaining railway tracks purposefully complete the image of a bygone era.

The former transport node, enhanced with tastefully designed new ancillary facilities remains as a celebrated part of our collective memories and heritage landscape. With improved accessibility, it offers new opportunities for all to contribute additional layers of history and stories to its enduring legacy.

Additional citation for Bukit Timah Railway Station and Bukit Timah Truss Bridges

Collectively, this project together with the Bukit Timah Truss Bridges has created a 'cultural landscape' where the historic transport-related buildings and structures with appropriate landscaping, synergise well to strongly bring out the heritage significance of the Rail Corridor. Their seamless harmony generates more value than each project individually and enables their shared history and contiguous heritage trail to be commemorated and celebrated in a more holistic setting.

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(Construction to TOP/CSC stage)

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