



BLACK & WHITE

Our Homemade Heritage

A Publication by the Singapore Land Authority





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Singapore Land Authority



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It is the stories that bring these grand houses to life.

“The rarely shared tales bring these regal houses to life.”

Foreword

Timeless, gracious and stately are the black and white houses that stand steadfast amidst Singapore’s rapidly changing landscape. To many, these gorgeous architectural homes are reminiscent of the colonial era, evoking a sense of nostalgia and magnificence that make up a part of Singapore’s proud national heritage. Nearly a century old, an estimated five hundred of these state properties are wonderfully preserved and managed as Singapore’s crown jewels by the Singapore Land Authority (SLA).

These houses were once home to colonial mandarins, magistrates, magnates and towkays (local businessmen) in the early days of Singapore’s development. And within these corridors of power, through periods of triumph and turmoil, history was shaped and made.

If only those walls could speak! Behind the coal-tinged window frames, whitewashed pillars, and black and white rattan blinds, unfinished tales continue to be written and rewritten every day. The occupants have changed but their rarely shared stories bring these regal houses to life and give us, the readers, a semblance of the scale, nuance and colour they deserve.

Within these pages, you will find the authors of these heartening stories telling it in their own words. I hope you’ll enjoy these unique narratives that bind the past to the present, and that will one day lead us to the future.

Lim Sim Seng
Chairman
The Singapore Land Authority



There's no better setting to appreciate a bit of Singapore's history.

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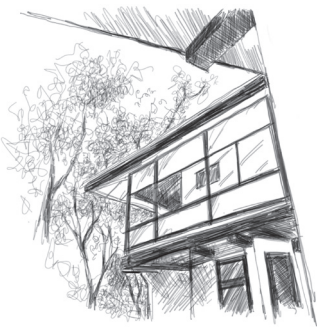
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“Only in Singapore will you find the old and the new side by side. Our responsibility is to take care of the old even as Singapore pursues the new.”

As a young boy wandering the various streets of Singapore years ago, I used to marvel at the many colonial Black and White houses scattered throughout the island. The bulk of these houses come under the management of the Singapore Land Authority (SLA) today, and we have a duty and responsibility to ensure that these beautiful properties, rich in history and steeped in heritage, are maintained for many more years to come.

While Singapore continues to mature and develop, and new buildings and infrastructure spring up throughout the country, these Black and White houses, known as such because of their colour scheme, remain a part of Singapore’s diverse history. It is therefore important that we try to capture the “soul” of these houses today, where the stories of so many of its occupants and tenants, past and present, are formed. These stories enrich the life of the properties, and bring different dimensions to each and every one of them. It is this impetus that prompted the SLA to undertake the task of collecting these stories, and bring them together in one beautiful publication.



In the following pages, through the wonderful stories that the properties featured have brought to their occupants, we hope you will begin to appreciate how these iconic houses have become a part of these people’s lives.

The SLA’s management of these Black and White houses adopts a multi-disciplinary and multi-dimensional approach. And we do this together with a multitude of parties, not least the present occupants. The outcome, in many ways, represents a shared vision of the properties’ potential, and we believe that all stakeholders must be involved in order to ensure that they are well-kept, and utilised efficiently.

As you comb through the pages, you will notice the many new uses that various Black and White houses have been adapted to since the early days. As part of the SLA’s mandate, and moving with the times, we have turned many of such properties to innovative and interesting uses. Many properties have now been rejuvenated to meet a variety of community and business needs.

Take, for example, the former Kinloss House at 3 Lady Hill Road. Once a boarding school for the children of British soldiers, it has since been restored to its immaculate original state. It then became the home of AXA University, the regional staff training campus for French insurer AXA. Likewise, the former administration buildings used by the British Forces at 34 and 35 Hendon Road have also been comprehensively refurbished, and now host the Asia Pacific Training and Development Campus for BNP Paribas, a major international bank.

Elsewhere, we have also readapted some Black and Whites in selected clusters for use as F&B establishments or childcare facilities to support the building of balanced and attractive communities.

Looking to the future, the fundamental tenet, which the SLA holds dear, is that such properties must be preserved as part of Singapore’s rich history, regardless of its use. And we will do so to the best of our ability.

May you enjoy the beauty of Singapore’s glorious Black and White houses, and may the stories captured in this book inspire and stir you.

Tan Boon Khai
Chief Executive
The Singapore Land Authority



3 Lady Hill Before:
Kinloss House was once a boarding school for the children of British soldiers.



3 Lady Hill Today:
The regional training campus of AXA University.



34 and 35 Hendon Road Before:
The former administration buildings for the British forces.



34 and 35 Hendon Road Today:
The Asia Pacific Training and Development Campus for BNP Paribas.

“They are nurtured and cared for to ensure that the original vision and handicraft of the skilled architects and craftsmen are not compromised.”

Distinctive, if heterogeneous in appearance, the Black and White look was one that evolved across the course of two centuries. Concepts shaped by British experiences in colonial India were cross-pollinated with indigenous Malayan features, and further embellished with period conceits – the stand-out colouring for which they are named reflected the mock-Tudor tastes of the late Victorian era – to create a hybrid style unique to Singapore and Malaya. The stark singularity of these houses, then or now, is no doubt one of the driving factors that makes them so coveted, and also so worthy of preservation.



Today, the vast majority of Singapore’s remaining Black and Whites are under the care of the Singapore Land Authority (SLA). Arrayed into distinct clusters, they can be found across the island. The main reason for their survival has to do with the fact that they were largely built and managed by the colonial administration – which meant that the departing British handed them en bloc to the fledgling government of newly-independent Singapore. While the government had the foresight to conserve much of the pool of Black and Whites it inherited, most privately held units have

long since been demolished in the name of progress and development.

The surviving list of Black and Whites includes some of the earliest examples, commissioned by the colonial authorities for senior civil servants, as well as the ones erected last, which were part of the big military built-up immediately prior to World War II. The latter is mainly concentrated around sites of military and naval importance in districts such as Alexandra, Changi, Seletar and Sembawang.

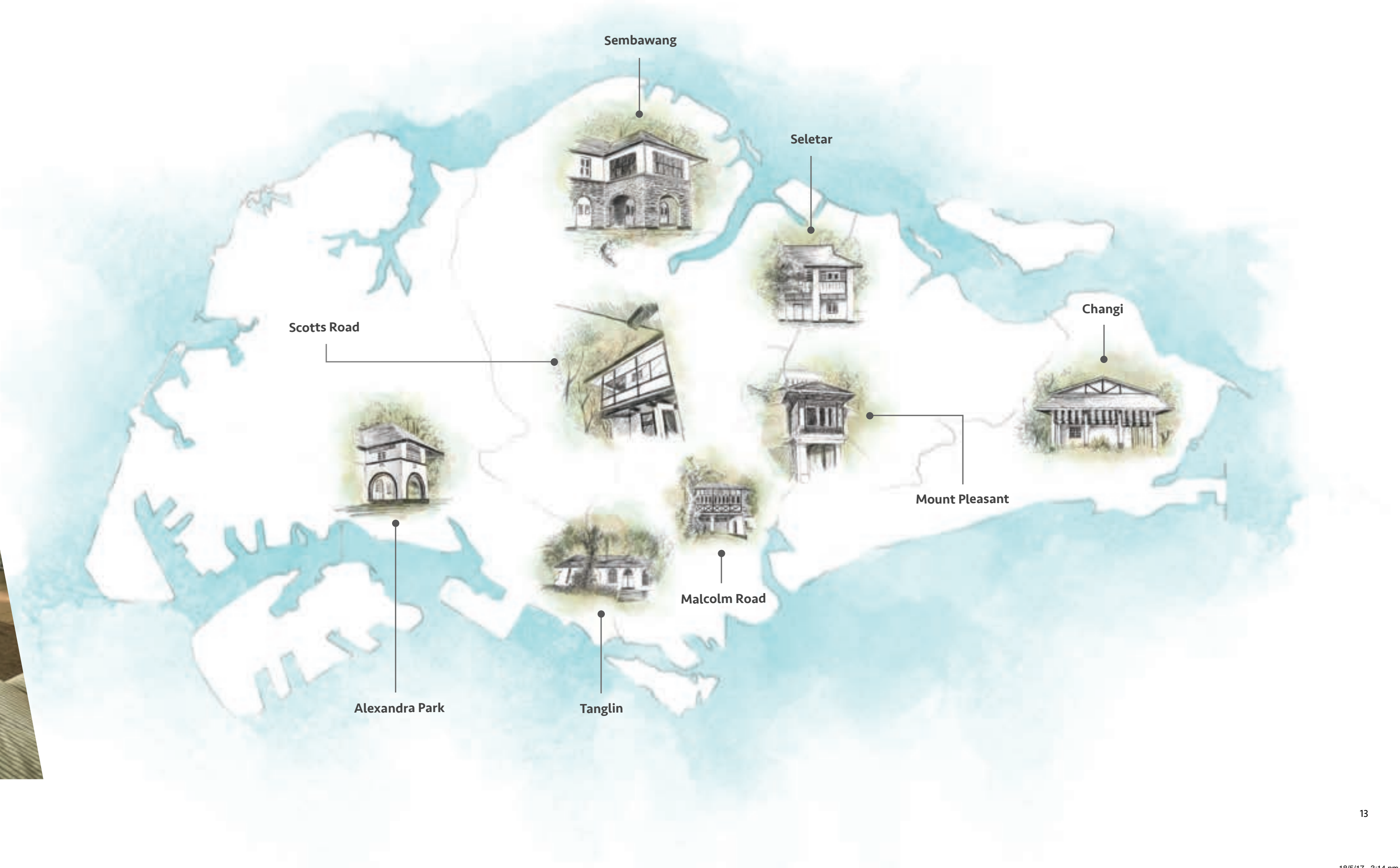
Once the domiciles of colonial officials, military men and established businessmen, these stately homes are a sleepy, dreamy reminder of the city’s distant past, evincing a stark contrast to the tightly packed high-rises that are typical of the Lion City’s urban idiom. Drenched in history and resting mainly upon verdant, sprawling swaths of green, these prized properties, often strung together with winding roads christened with some form of colonial reference, offer an enticingly different mode of life in our space-limited environment.

Given the age of these houses, the need for maintenance needs quite naturally exceed those of more contemporary buildings.



An understanding is shared among the diverse pool of tenants that the unique flavour of these houses requires careful upkeep and generous love. Of course, quality conservation goes beyond just preserving a facade or the external shell of a building. It requires a deeper comprehension and appreciation of history, and a willingness to adopt the best practices necessary to retain the inherent spirit of the conserved buildings, while recognising that each house has a distinct personality. They are nurtured and cared for to ensure that the original vision and handicraft of the skilled architects and craftsmen are not compromised, for doing otherwise would be a disservice. As a vital conduit between past, present and future, these magnificent buildings that bear witness to the tides of history are simply our love letters from yesterday, and to tomorrow.







*On a hidden hill
by the highway*

Malcolm Road

Hidden behind a pleasant wall of green and a scattered collection of schools, the Black and White enclave at Malcolm Road is an oasis of tranquillity located next to a busy expressway. Indeed, most of the thousands of drivers that use this stretch of the Pan-Island Expressway (PIE) daily may never have suspected the existence of such an exquisite estate. Put simply, time has not diminished the charm nor character of the great houses that dot this discreet but prestigious sanctuary. With its well-shaded lanes and serene atmosphere today, one would think that the passage of years has only enhanced the grace and poise of this precinct, since it now stands in such contrast to the cosmopolitan modernity of the city.

Most of the grand homes on this lush, rolling hill were built by the Public Works Department (PWD) in the 1920s for high-ranking civil servants of the colonial government. Although cast in the same classic PWD pre-war Black and White mould, signs of adaptations to changing

taste and technology are evident in many of these houses. As the area sits on a small hill, most of the houses were constructed on sloping ground, necessitating some interesting solutions.

As with the typical Black and White, the basement floor is left open, with only the entrance hall and stairwell accompanying the concrete piers propping up the rest of the building – a fashion that mimics the grand old plantation villas of the previous century. The rest of the living area of the house is located in its entirety on the upper storey, as is typical. However, due to the sloping nature of the site, the back of the building rests at ground level. This same feature would also be adapted for Black and Whites at Alexandra Park and other sites where a similar topography compelled such a touch.

The interior layout is long, narrow, and merely a single room deep, with a continuous verandah making up the outer perimeter,





Sometimes, the road less taken is the path you make yourself.



The best dreams are the ones you have the privilege of living.

In the rustle of the leaves, new memories are being made.



in keeping with the best colonial tradition of architectural adaptations to the tropics. Symmetrically arranged around a central axis, the rooms consisted of a drawing room (with a sitting verandah) in the middle, extending out over the car porch, a dining room situated behind, and bedrooms on either side.

Further down the lane, where the estate sprawls onto the area around Mount Rosie Road, one is able to see the continued evolution of the Black and White form. Here, Modernist influences can be seen in the design and execution of the columns, many of which have an unmistakably Art Deco flavour. Less self-consciously Tudorbethan (and thus less anachronistic), credit for these interesting touches go to government architect H.A. Stallwood, who was responsible for most of the houses in the Malcolm Road area, as well as the stately military headquarters at Fort Canning.

The idyllic name of Mount Rosie owes its origins to a certain Theodore Heinrich Sohst, a prominent German trader in the late 19th century, who named his large country estate in the area after his Eurasian wife. His palatial wooden bungalow once stood on the hill and was later even used by the War Office. While it regrettably stands no longer today, the remaining houses in the area are certainly no less fascinating, and no less appealing.



“Our own stories will one day become part of the house.”



“We’ve always wanted to stay in a Black and White since we discovered their existence. A Black and White is a kind of cultural fusion, a British sort of house, but in Asia – East meets West and right at home. It’s also old yet new, urban yet rural. This is a meaningful kind of duality that can only be seen in these houses. You always have this sense that they have lots of stories to tell. They are all the same in a way, yet each house is also a unique piece with lots of character, and its own original stories. We had a visitor who told us that his uncle, a Major in the armed forces, used to live here. And a father and son who stayed here 10 years ago popped by as well. Their stories have all become part of this house. And, one day, our stories will too.”

Fredrik and Elaine Haren
Tenant at Malcolm Road



Around the corner, a very different world that’s all your own.



Where will today's adventure take you?

We are merely passengers on the passage of time.



Here is space for imagination and the creation of brilliant ideas.



Great things are done where
men and mountains meet

Mount Pleasant

Here on the green and spacious slopes of Mount Pleasant, one will find some of the grandest Black and White houses built post-war. The estate is believed to have been developed by the Public Works Department (PWD) in conjunction with the police complex within the vicinity. In fact, what appears today to be an isolated collection of palatial mansions and old police facilities, thinly spread amidst the immense greenery, was really once the location of an administrative and policing hub for the entire colony. With the old police academy nearby, many of the houses were undoubtedly reserved for Inspectors-General and other high-ranking officers, although the estate was also home to Municipal Councillors, judges and other senior members of the administration.

The earliest houses at Mount Pleasant were based on the plantation-style prototypes first introduced by the PWD, with later examples in the estate showing greater variability, in effect tracking the evolution of the Black and White style right up until the outbreak of World War II. Many of the houses here are textbook examples of the PWD archetype and laid out accordingly – meaning a symmetrical layout with a single-room and with a carriage porch placed under a projecting second storey verandah.

During the Japanese invasion of Singapore in 1942, pitched battles were fought at nearby Adam Park and the frontline eventually encompassed Mount Pleasant, where Allied forces continued to put up stiff resistance all the way till 15 February – the day of the surrender. Some of the Black and Whites



were turned into defensive positions and fortified, and a few were eventually damaged or destroyed. In the subsequent occupation, many of the houses here were taken over by the Imperial Japanese Army and used to house senior commanders. Several were placed under the control of the Kempeitai, the much-feared Japanese military police responsible for many atrocities, some of which are believed to have taken place within the estate or its vicinity. Other houses were simply abandoned and laid empty during these barren years.

The area was named by George Henry Brown, a prosperous English businessman, who found a hill within the estate he purchased particularly beguiling. And, certainly, flanked by mature Saga trees, a slow, relaxing drive along this meandering lane is nothing if not pleasant.



Follow your heart, and you'll always find your way home.



When nature sets a stage, not a leaf is out of place.



“The elements that make up this Black and White help to tell a story of the entire house.”



“For us, Black and White houses were pretty much our first and only choice. I come from Thailand and am accustomed to nature and space. I need to have trees, shrubs and bushes nearby, to have the earth beneath my feet. So living here connects me to my home, to my roots. The elements that make up this Black and White help to tell a story of the entire house. And there are just so many hidden stories, so much history here. They unearthed a ton of bullet casings just last year – imagine that! I spend quite a bit of time painting the house, and it has become a hobby. You have to set aside time to love a Black and White. You cannot feel annoyed that there are fixes that need to be made from time to time. Having service residence specialist The Ascott as the manager of the estate really helps as they’re very attentive to our needs and also share our love for these great houses and their unique heritage.”

Mita Kelder
Tenant at Mount Pleasant Road



A truly joyous home is a reflection of the happy lives within.

Elegance is a quality rarely understood, best understated.





Verdant, tranquil, with a splash of great expectations.

The conversation is ready. It's time to put the kettle on.



Every house has a delightfully different story to share.

On the road to
greatness and beyond



Scotts Road

The bungalows on Scotts Road were originally built as part of a single development in the late 1920s, during a period that saw rapid expansion of the city's suburbs. It was common in those days for the large gardens and backyards of existing houses to be subdivided into smaller plots and sold off individually, or as an entire block to property developers – a lucrative practice, since the real estate boom had seen a dramatic appreciation of land prices near the central downtown area.

These relatively modest homes are believed to have been constructed for Singapore's burgeoning Asian and Eurasian middle classes. In intent and detail, they captured the vision, dreams and self-confidence of their upwardly mobile occupants. The four remaining bungalows here can be quite obviously grouped into two distinct pairs. The first two are finished with ornately

Neoclassical flourishes such as huge Corinthian columns that almost appear a little mismatched with the rest of the house. The remaining pair, on the other hand, is more reminiscent of the typical Anglo-Malay Black and White archetype and features more restrained and elegant detailing.

Located just minutes from the hectic, ultra-modern world of Orchard Road, the unique houses along this short but iconic stretch are now homes to a fine collection of lifestyle establishments. With many high-end condominium developments in the vicinity – and the accompanying substantial catchment of cosmopolitan consumers – the niche businesses comprising restaurants and spa boutiques occupying these premises understand all too well the value and vibe that these buildings bring to accentuate their operations.



"I want our clients to feel like they've just come home."



"We are in the wellness and health management business – meaning we want people to take charge of their own well-being. It's a different perspective, and having a centre here in such a different setting definitely helps. You just can't find something like what we have, where nature can be brought indoors and you feel like you've been dropped off on some idyllic resort, elsewhere in Singapore. And we're talking about a very convenient location just off Orchard Road. I've personally lived in a Black and White for many years. And I loved it. I want our clients to feel like they've just come home, to encounter the rich feelings I experienced every time I got home. The look of pleasant surprise on their faces tells me we've succeeded."

Tanny Kea
*General Manager
at Fullshare Group*



Wonders will always be hiding in plain sight.

The spirit needs sustenance as much as the body, perhaps more so.





Sit comfortably in the shade, while enjoying the brilliant view.

Evenings made grander by an imposing entrance.



What stories do the echoes of footsteps tell?



*“Our Black and Whites
are like a small island
within the city.”*



“Our group has four restaurants along the stretch. The uniqueness, grandeur and history of these buildings are a perfect fit for our fine dining concepts. First-time customers are always impressed with the ample space available, both outdoors and inside, and wowed by the gorgeous architecture and decor. These Black and Whites are like a small island within the city. They are filled with nature and wildlife, and we do need to constantly maintain them. It is without doubt a lot of work. But it’s also all worth it, as it makes working here very enjoyable. Our customers come here for the food, but they also appreciate and desire a good experience, one that is quiet and private. Here, they can spend a few hours of the day away from the crowd and escape the busy city life.”

Frank Lim
*Board Member
at Connoisseur Group*

Pictured:
Gabriele Rizzardi
Wine Director at Buona Terra (left)



The best dessert is a memory you can’t forget.

Every successful meal starts with a warm welcome.





Illuminated by nature, conversations flow freely.

A welcome respite from the bustling city.



Just for a moment, everyday worries seem far behind.



Tanglin

The grounds of the current Tanglin Village used to be the site of sprawling plantation estates that had first been used to cultivate gambier and subsequently nutmeg. By the middle of the 19th Century, the British had decided to garrison European troops in Singapore, alongside local soldiers. New facilities had to be rapidly constructed to house this influx, although concerns from the business community about the placement of another major military facility in the heart of the city meant a site had to be found in the outlying areas. This made the area around Tanglin an obvious choice.

Under the supervision of Colonel George Chancellor Collyer, Chief Engineer of the Straits Settlements, construction of the new Tanglin Barracks began in 1860. The original buildings were large with commodious enclosures featuring timber floors and walls, and were raised on piers in the typical Anglo-Malay style. They also incorporated plenty of apertures and open verandahs to provide good circulation. Spacious ceilings were

part of the design and the structures were topped off with roofs thatched with attap. While the original architectural elements were somewhat reminiscent of the Anglo-Malay plantation-style houses of the day, the architects responsible for the barracks’ later additions also found inspiration in the dominant Black and White styles of their respective eras. Expansion and improvement of the sprawling site began almost immediately after it was first completed. In 1911, the thatched roofs of the earliest blocks were replaced with more durable red French tiles that have remained to this day. With the intensified military build-up of the mid 1930s, the base received additional tranches of buildings. These were modelled, like many other structures dating from the same period found in military sites elsewhere on the island, on contemporary buildings designed by the Public Works Department (PWD).

Many locals, from civilian staffers to shop owners, also settled in the area. A full array of facilities, which included a swimming





Just minutes from the city, yet a world away. Will wonders never cease?



In the company of good friends, every worry is forgotten.

To be able to measure time in sips of tea is one of life's simpler pleasures.



pool, a theatre, two churches, tennis and basketball courts, football fields, a dance hall, a golf club, a post office and even a bank, the barracks was a self-contained community in more ways than one.

Following the country's independence and the eventual withdrawal of British forces, Ministry of Defence (MINDEF) eventually inherited the compound. Many older male Singaporeans may remember Tanglin Camp vividly, as the Central Manpower Base (CMPB) located within was where they were first inducted into National Service. After MINDEF vacated the site in the 1980s, the area was gradually transformed into a unique retail enclave. Located only a few minutes from Orchard Road, this tranquil hideaway is today a well-loved lifestyle destination that continues to draw the crowds with its idyllic ambience, old-world charm, and a stylish, upmarket and varied selection of restaurants, bars, cafes, shops and galleries.

“We want to bring an old world charm to our businesses, and the Black and White gives us that... and lots more.”



“We didn’t want to site our business within a concrete jungle. Instead, we just want people to pop in, relax and enjoy their surroundings. The way that the buildings are spread out here gives the area a spacious, uncluttered feel. Everyone gets to enjoy nature, yet we’re just minutes from the heart of the city. You can have a nice dinner at one restaurant and take a stroll after your meal to pick a bar to have a drink in. It’s just hard to replicate this unique experience anywhere else. Aside from marketing the area as a lifestyle destination, we’ve also incorporated a heritage trail, to bring more awareness about its rich history to the public. In a place like this with such a great heritage, every building has a story to tell.”

Soh Kim Teck and Florence Tan

*Managing Director and Director
at Country City Investment*



Sheltered from the elements, these pillars have stood the test of time.

As the chatter of voices grows, so does the spirit of community.





The imagination runs freely, following whispers from history.

Top on the menu: a generous serving of great times.



The evening may end, but the stories will still be told.

*A hidden slice of
far-off lands*



Alexandra Park

Imagine acres of rolling hills that stretch to the horizon, punctuated by winding paths seemingly leading nowhere. A scene much at odds with commonly accepted perceptions of Singapore, this sliver of lost memories still stands today, evoking references to far-off lands and long-disappeared epochs. Originally planned as accommodations for officers based at the nearby Alexandra Barracks, Alexandra Park was named after Princess Alexandra (subsequently Queen Alexandra), wife of Prince Edward (then Prince of Wales and the future King Edward VII). The first houses here were erected around the turn of the 20th century and the oldest house still standing in the estate – also known as the Plantation House, as the area was once a pepper plantation – is

believed to be 6 Russels Road. Elephants were used to clear the plantation before construction of the residences could begin in earnest.

In terms of form and style, the estate's collection is dramatically diverse, since the houses here were constructed across a 50-year period. This in turn lends the area a unique feeling of historical rootedness quite unlike similar estates. From the 'Tudorbethan' nuances of tropical Edwardian to the modernist language of Art Deco, the disparate styles on display chronicle the rapid evolution of architectural modes in a fast-changing world. The classic Black and Whites of the Public Works Department (PWD) provided much inspiration, with the houses on Canterbury and York Roads that date from the late 1920s clearly influenced by the earlier plantation-style houses at Goodwood Hill and Nassim Road.

A later spate of hurried construction during the military expansion of the late 1930s and early 1940s yielded the bulk of the estate's units, and these later-built bungalows, including the sterling examples along Hyderabad and Winchester Roads, are thought to be modelled on existing bungalows dating from the 1920s. The hilly topography of Alexandra Park supported some novel design features, including the adaptive placement of units on slopes, with the front of the house elevated on concrete stilts and its rear kept at ground level. The nearby Alexandra Hospital was completed in 1940 for the military and many of its personnel also lived at the Park. Quite a few of these late additions are smaller single-storey bungalows, often built on the grounds





Within these grounds, there is so much rich history to dive into.



There's a feeling that time has been all but suspended here.

The same road we take every day could lead to new memories every time.



of their grander cousins. This textured and very visible variability has contributed to the fascinating and multi-layered history of the estate.

Today, Alexandra Park remains a generously wooded and labyrinthine estate, complete with luscious vistas that would not be out of place in a colonial hill resort, or even an English country estate. Ensconced in such sweeping swathes of green, this lovely neighbourhood has also become a bird sanctuary. The flora on offer would certainly intrigue any botanist, especially with the presence of three gazetted Heritage Trees. Located just off Alexandra Arch and the entrance to Hort Park, the estate provides easy access to the sights and delights of the spectacular Southern Ridges trail. Winchester Road is also home to four old clay tennis courts. In order to provide a balanced living environment with a good range of amenities and support residents' needs, some of the units here have also been tenanted out to commercial operators providing services such as childcare. The provision of such conveniences adds flavour and diversity to the neighbourhood.

“Entertaining guests is a joy to do when living in a Black and White house.”



“For us, the biggest difference about living in a Black and White is having a jungle at the doorstep – we once had a monkey in the house, so it’s really that close! Whatever downsides can easily be managed and in return, we have all this jaw-dropping greenery. Of course, staying in such a big and old house means you have to look out for wear and tear. But we enjoy a bit of home improvement now and then. For example, the wooden decking and window frames need periodic shoring up. You’ve got to be prepared that repairs and regular maintenance do come with the house. Nonetheless, if we were to live in something else in Singapore after this, it’d probably be disappointing. So our choice will have to be something similar. Once you’ve gone Black and White, you won’t go back.”

Rupert and Amy Sayer
Tenant at Cornwall Road



Life here takes on a contrasting perspective.

In that very instant, nothing else around seemed to exist anymore.





Moments come and go, but memories stay an eternity.

What do you see when you open a window into the past?



Staying in? Going out? Take your time to decide. There's no hurry at all.



“Having a home here has certainly helped us develop a deeper appreciation for Singapore.”



“The space and freedom you get from living in a Black and White is incredible. Whether it’s sunny, rainy or windy, it’s always possible for us to enjoy the outdoors, even without stepping out of the house. Having a home here has certainly helped us develop a deeper appreciation for Singapore. It makes me want to instil in my kids a sense of pride that they live in this great city. There’s such a fascinating history steeped within these walls. And I love having people discover the magic for themselves. In fact, we have curious folks hiking through the estate all the time, and I welcome them with open arms. I feel it’s important for others to be given a chance to enjoy these houses too. After all, I’m only a tenant here – this is not my house – I am merely its caretaker. I can’t be selfish about it.”

David Mayo
Tenant at Russell Road



True character can only be built on foundations that stand the test of time.

A closed heart can find no place in an open space.





Time may ravage, but nature's caress will ease all worries.

Every man walks the same steps. The difference lies in how.



Let no one else dictate how you choose to make yourself at home.

*A sprinkling of green
at the sky's edge*



Seletar

Seletar is probably one of the older local place names that have been preserved since the dawn of the Lion City, and it is thought to refer to the original coastal dwellers living around the area. The region truly came into being with the completion of Seletar Airport in 1928 – the first Royal Air Force (RAF) station east of India and the first civilian airport in Singapore. Plans were first laid down in 1923 but construction proved a formidable challenge – the chosen site was a former rubber plantation that was largely low-lying and marshy, with mud flats and mangroves on its coastal flank. Overseeing

the construction was a certain C. E. Woods, who was also responsible for the design of the airfield. Jalan Kayu nearby is believed to be named after him, as kayu means “wood” in the Malay language.

The estate was mainly established to serve the residential needs of military personnel from Royal Air Force (RAF) Seletar. To match what was then considered the finest landing ground in the Far East, the most modern infrastructure available was laid down, with sizeable offices and living quarters, complete with recreational facilities, built for the various ranks of the RAF hierarchy and their families. The residential areas in particular were noted for combining functionality with gentility, creating an atmosphere that referenced English landscapes in a most picturesque manner. Typical Black and White traits were retained, such as the use of verandahs, balconies and eaves, and high ceilings and windows for better ventilation. However, the detailing is more pared down, with an emphasis on economy, efficiency and functionality. Many of the buildings here were completed in the tropical Art Deco style that was preferred by the British military of the era. From the 1950s through to the early 1970s, the community living here was also better known as Seletarville. Another distinctive feature of the area is the naming of its road network after famous roads and neighbourhoods in London – Piccadilly Circus, Baker Street, Hyde Park Gate, Maida Vale and Lambeth Walk are some interesting examples.

A large number of these colonial bungalows will be retained as an integral component of the emerging Seletar Aerospace Park.



As much as possible, the rustic and tranquil nature of the estate, with its lush foliage and open fields, has been and will be retained, including a number of heritage trees. Some of the Black and Whites will be put up for adaptive reuse as training institutes and restaurants or cafes within the quaint settings, while others will continue to be set aside for residential use.



With nature at your doorstep, every day is a wondrous experience.

Good neighbours are a blessing in many ways.



When you slow down a little bit, you'll enjoy life a lot more.

*“Like a typical Teochew family,
we moved in at night, bringing
in all the noise and lights!”*



“The amount of space you have is what really distinguishes life in a Black and White. Plus, of course, the greenery. Look beyond our backyard and it’s just nature and serenity. It can seem a bit dark when the sun sets, and like a typical Teochew family, we moved in at night, bringing in all the noise and lights! But we’ve all gotten used to the peace and quiet and can now appreciate this unique tranquillity more than ever. With so much space to spare, it’s easy for everyone to find his or her own zone or space. And yet because we live here, there is also a much wider range of activities for us to do together – whether it’s going for a jog, playing soccer in the backyard, or just chilling out as a family on the porch. No matter where you stay, it is what you choose to do as a family that counts”.

Don Ho and Dawn Lim
Tenant at Lambeth Walk



Childish things should be put away, but never childish dreams.

As the seasons pass, dreams take flight.





As the wind sings its song, the shadows dance.

In the afternoon sun, a wistful thought arises.



Room to grow together, room to know each other.

“On top of everything, houses like these are valuable repositories of Singapore’s history, so they ought to be honoured and preserved.”



“Space and quietness matter to us so we didn’t just choose a Black and White because it was a Black and White, but rather for the space the house gives us and its proximity to nature. In an apartment, you are immediately in public space once you step out of your door. Here, we’ll still be in our own space for quite a hefty distance – and that gives you a tremendous sense of privacy and luxury. There’s also a sense of security here. We hardly ever need to lock the door except when we go to bed. We open up all the windows to let the smells, the air, and the insects in and out of the house too – it’s a good way to enjoy nature at our doorstep. On top of everything, houses like these are valuable repositories of Singapore’s history, so they ought to be honoured and preserved.”

Dr Ooi Kee Beng and Littly Sacker
Tenant at Mornington Crescent



At day’s end, retreat to your little corner of paradise.

A warm meal and a cool breeze. All is as it should be.





One never tires of looking up at the sky,
for it is like an enchanted film that runs on forever.



It's all leading up to something amazing.

Where roads end,
new voyages begin



Sembawang

The breezy suburban district of Sembawang is home today to a significant collection of Black and White houses. Just as the construction of RAF Seletar necessitated the inclusion of a wide assemblage of ancillary facilities, the genesis of the grand houses found in this area can be traced back to the construction of the Royal Navy's Sembawang Naval Base. A linchpin of what was termed the 'Singapore Strategy' of British defence planners, construction of this sizable naval station (it covered a respectable 5438.98 hectares) had begun in earnest in the 1920s, though it was not opened until 1939, after a frenzied period of construction in the mid-1930s, spurred on by the worsening international climate.

The civil engineering firm of Sir John Jackson Ltd, which had been awarded the principal contract for the naval base, was also responsible for the design of the Black and Whites here. Like many of the homes built elsewhere on the island to support the great military build-up of the 1930s, the architects responsible seem to have taken their inspiration from the Public Works Department (PWD). Aside from the use of modern building materials such as concrete, the standard Black and White in the Sembawang area is ultimately an elaboration of the PWD's pre-war plantation-style template. From the characteristic verandahs and large, overhanging eaves, to the many lateral vents or the Malay-influenced stilt supports that elevate the living space, the details they feature are all classically Black and White.

The houses at Sembawang were built to match the seniority levels of military personnel of the Royal Navy. In fact, one could generally tell a person's rank within the naval hierarchy by the type of house he had been assigned. This is probably a reflection of the regimented nature of the armed forces, though similar divisions could also be seen in housing constructed for the civil service. In both cases, distinctions between types were mainly a function of size.

As with other Black and White estates, large portions of the landscape in the Sembawang precinct remain untouched. From unspoilt natural beaches and quiet parks to the island's only hot spring and a truly intriguing gathering of abandoned pillboxes, bunkers and underground shelters,



the area stands out with its unparalleled blend of nature and heritage. The roads in the area were named after former British colonies (and current Commonwealth states) as well as existing British territories, or cities within them, creating an interesting tapestry on the map. The former Admiralty House and the Beaulieu House within Sembawang park are two magnificently conserved heritage buildings that are also found within this cluster.



A slice of life from another era, reimagined and revitalised for the discerning generation of today.



“The house that is so special and precious to us now used to be equally special to someone else too.”



“We’re into gardening and the outdoor space gifted by a Black and White is probably its most attractive aspect to us. The house itself is also hugely spacious and just swallows everybody. We entertain a lot and a Black and White definitely makes things easier! The biggest difference between life here and elsewhere is this great connection to the outdoors – you can just pop outside, pick some rambutans, tend to some plants, or just sit by the pool. It’s just so amazing as it defines your lifestyle in a positive manner. A British couple that lived here 60 years ago visited us and shared their stories. The house that is so special and precious to us now used to be equally special to someone else too. It’s a nice, humbling feeling to know that this space has so much character and history.”

Michael Fiebrich

Tenant at Gibraltar Road



With your head in the clouds, you can see forever.

To sleep, perchance to dream. To dream, perchance to realise.





There must always be space for the imagination.

David A.Hoss, tenant at Gibraltar Road.



The magic happens when you follow your own path.



Changi

By 1935, with the increasing militarisation of Singapore, the British transformed Changi from an under-developed area into a sprawling constellation of military installations – ‘Fortress Changi’. To meet the housing needs of the burgeoning number of stationed officers, a range of semidetached and detached residential dwellings were constructed.

Most of the Black and White houses in Changi were built based on the same bungalow prototype that had been well-established by the Public Works Department (PWD) since the mid-1920s. The basic house here is linear in plan and axially symmetrical, just a single room deep and with a continuous verandah forming the outer periphery both front and back. The general detailing seen in these houses could be said to be somewhat functional, or even spartan. While reflecting a typically military concern for utility and efficiency, this was also probably a result of

expediency as the houses and the facilities that their occupants served in were all erected in great haste.

During the Japanese Occupation, an airfield was constructed in the area. This facility, renamed RAF Changi expanded to become a RAF station post-war. The Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) eventually took over the installation after the British pullout in 1967 and Changi International Airport – the country’s pride and joy – also grew partially out of a massive expansion of the old airfield. There remains, today, another aeronautical connection – many of the roads here, such as Manston, Hendon, Biggin Hill or Upavon, were named after RAF airfields in Britain. With many untouched pockets set along a beautiful coastline, this idyllic area is a real treat for nature lovers, blending lush greenery with unmatched views of Singapore’s eastern flanks.



*“There’s a vibe here that
just makes me feel like
I’m on a holiday.”*



“I didn’t know much about Black and Whites at first, but when my husband and I went house-hunting, we wanted something with a good amount of space and the Black and White was just a natural choice. Singapore is a tropical city and the Black and White is tailor-made for life here. You can have the windows open with a natural breeze flowing through instead of leaving the air conditioning on. I like to spend my time on the verandah. It’s just lovely and I adore how it gives you open access to the great outdoors, and yet is sheltered. I can just spend the whole weekend out here, reading a book, having snacks, or just relaxing. It feels peaceful. And as you look into the greenery and maybe see some birds fly by, your mind just clears. There’s a vibe here that just makes me feel like I’m on a holiday.”

Heike Friedrich
Tenant at Upavon Road



Thoughts that float on warm coastal breezes bring fleeting moments of pure delight.

When the mind is brightened, the spirit is enlightened.





With a sunbeam for company, how can one ever feel lonely?



The scent of a memory lingers in the air, soon to be replaced by another.

Some invitations can never be ignored.



“The use of advanced technology allows us to conserve and protect our Black and Whites more efficiently and effectively.”

Many of the Black and Whites managed by the SLA are approaching or have already passed the century mark. The conservation of these important heritage buildings requires a rigorous maintenance regime, which in turn has to be supported by accurate surveys and efficient data management. To make all of this a reality, the SLA is increasingly leveraging on sophisticated technological breakthroughs in 3-dimensional (3D) surveying.

In terms of information capture and analysis, visual inspections and ground photographs alone may not be good enough. The SLA employs 3D Terrestrial Laser Scanner (3D TLS) systems and other precision measurement equipment to capture building information. For the Black and Whites under the SLA’s care,

the rich assemblage of information that can now be collected and analysed will aid in the development of a more holistic picture of each and every individual unit in ‘real time’. The point cloud data obtained from the TLS system can also be easily translated into a variety of 2D information, whether to serve as digital documentation for reinstatement, or to help detect the presence of unauthorised structures. Damaged artifacts can be recreated and potential problems such as sagging false ceilings and water ponding can now also be detected through this technology.

In the absence of floor plans for all the Black and White Houses, 3D TLS processes allow the generation of highly accurate ‘as-built’ topography and floor plans, permitting a more complete and objective



understanding of these state properties. We can even restore key motifs or architectural elements should there be a need to. In more ways than one, technology will enable us to care for and preserve these precious buildings even more conscientiously.

The SLA’s commitment to technology also extends to the use of state-of-the-art Geographical Information Systems (GIS) to maintain new and existing data. For example, our officers can now access high-resolution photomaps overlaid with

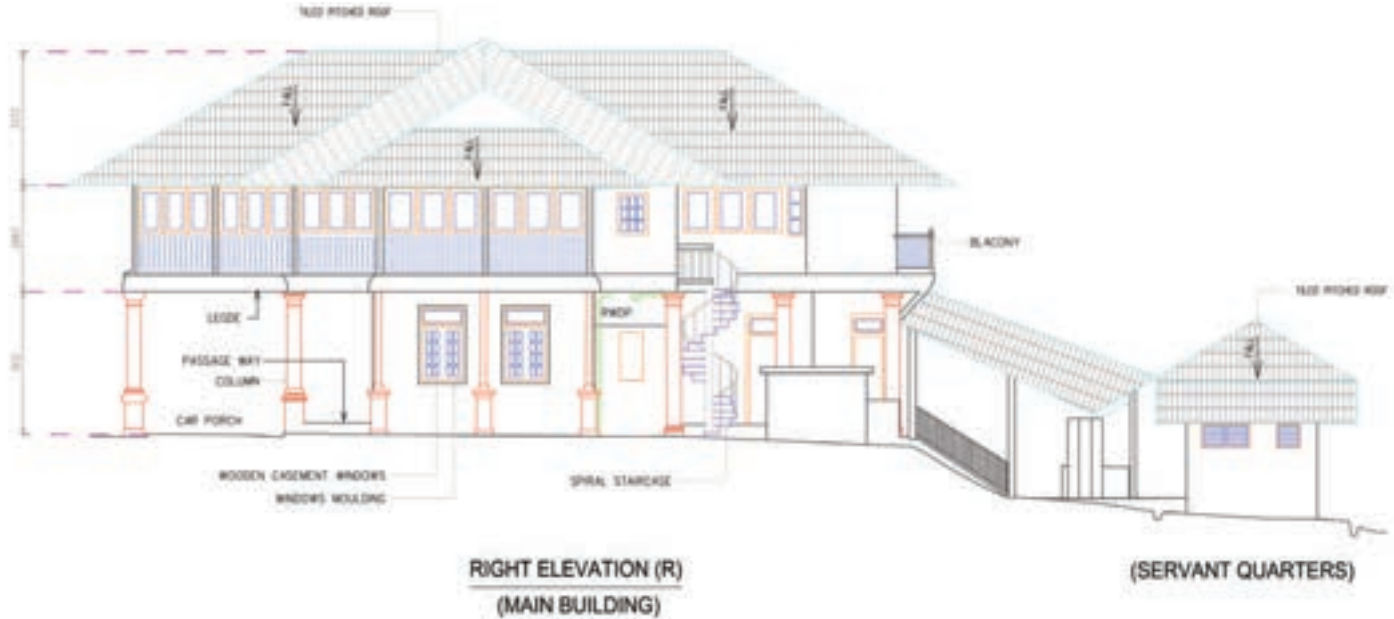
a variety of thematic data-rich layers. Whether remotely viewing a cluster in its entirety or zooming in on an individual unit, work processes have thus been streamlined. In some instances, measurements can now be even taken without the need for on-site personnel. A variety of professional software is then used to interact with the servers for data extraction and manipulation. Without a doubt, leveraging on technology allows us to focus our efforts more efficiently and comprehensively on the maintenance and conservation of our Black and Whites.

A 3D Terrestrial Laser Scanner in action, capturing a 3-dimensional image of this Black and White’s interior.



3D image of the Black and White houses in Sembawang cluster.

This is a technical illustration of the house on page 87.





Innovation Creates Value

“In a rapidly changing world, the ability to adapt and reinvent is the key to maintaining relevance.”

Change has always been one of the steadfast constants of the Singapore Story. As both the economy and social fabric change, the SLA has spearheaded many initiatives to tackle these new realities. The colonial-era properties under the SLA’s care have presented tremendous opportunities



for further optimisation of these heritage collections. These include the innovative re-profiling of Black and White bungalows.

A key tenet of estate re-profiling is to creatively extract both social and economic value from these state properties through cluster development. While awaiting the finalisation of long-term development plans, new leases of life can now be obtained for Black and White clusters and other heritage collections in the interim period by making them available for adaptive reuse or realigning them collectively to target new niche markets. We identify key clusters for development and attempt to match them with suitable tenants via calibrated marketing efforts, introducing new choices, concepts and possibilities to the market while simultaneously improving the occupancy rates for these properties.

Tanglin Village and Tanglin Meadows are two notable examples of our re-profiling programme. Over the years, the SLA has been exploring creative and innovative ways to rejuvenate the state properties and revive these landmarks.

The cluster of former army barracks in Tanglin Village possesses the charm of being a historic place, a green enclave with an abundance of untouched nature, and a distinctive site with unique lifestyle uses. Today, many new concepts such as the COMO Dempsey which houses the world renowned retail concept store and fine culinary institutions, are brought in to create buzz and attract more people to enjoy the historic charm of the heritage buildings. Further plans to rejuvenate the cluster will be implemented to sustain the vibrant Tanglin



Village atmosphere. Tanglin Village will be a destination choice for both visitors and locals.

Situated along Kay Siang Road, six colonial houses within Tanglin Meadows are planned to seed the cluster development initiative. Major property enhancement and upgrading works have been carried out on the buildings to enhance the experiential aspects of living for tenants. Guided by the vision of ‘Lush Haven, Hush Location’, the rebranded cluster will target discerning tenants who pursue a more authentic and exceptional Black and White experience just minutes away from the city centre.

With the extensive experience and knowledge in managing interim use of state properties, the SLA is able to match rental models with shifting market needs and ensure that good synergies exist between our estates and the users. The crux lies in establishing which activities can best complement the nostalgic and unique flavours of each of our heritage clusters. Through interim use master planning and actively thinking out of the box, a larger public can enjoy the rustic and historical.

This way, we can extend the lifespans of our Black and Whites and ensure the heritage and the stories the users tell are preserved by many generations to come.

Acknowledgement

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To our Tenants:

Thank you for sharing your stories with us and allowing us to feature your properties.

Fredrik and Elaine Haren	Tenant at Malcolm Road
Mita Kelder and Ascott Limited	Tenant at Mount Pleasant Road
Tanny Kea	General Manager at Fullshare Group
Frank Lim	Board Member at Connoisseur group
Gabriele Rizzardi	Wine Director at Buona Terra
Soh Kim Teck and Florence Tan	Managing Director and Director at Country City Investment

Rupert and Amy Sayer	Tenant at Cornwall Road
David Mayo	Tenant at Russell Road
Don Ho and Dawn Lim	Tenant at Lambeth walk
Dr Ooi Kee Beng and Littly Sacker	Tenant at Mornington Crescent
Michael Fiebrich	Tenant at Gibraltar Road
Heike Friedrich	Tenant at Upavon Road

The Singapore Land Authority

Lim Sim Seng	Chairman
Tan Boon Khai	Chief Executive Officer
Nelson Liew	Director, Outsourced Leasing
Jayne Lim	Deputy Director, In-house Leasing
Yap Eai-Sy	Deputy Director, Business Planning & Development
Victor Khoo	Deputy Director, Land Survey
Johnson Seah	Deputy Director, Corporate Communications
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