

His legacy: Anson Road is a tribute to Sir Archibald Edward Harbord Anson.

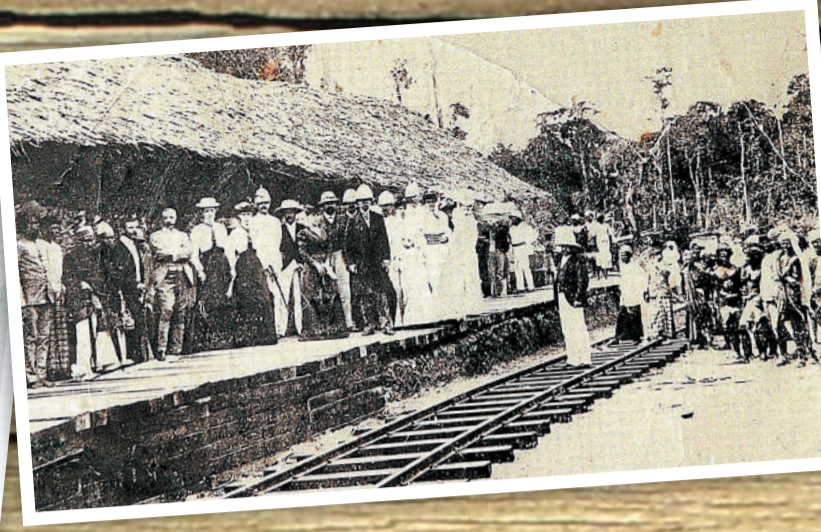
In his element: Wantan mee seller at Tai Hin coffeeshop.



Old establishment: The Tai Hin coffeeshop is a popular eating place for the writer.



Penang-style: Chee cheong fun from the pushcart outside Seow Fong Lye coffee shop.



A good day: A photograph of the opening of the Teluk Intan (formerly Teluk Anson) line at 16th mile station near Tapah Road on May 18, 1893. The photo is kept by the Tapah Road station master.



A different era: Kapitan Chung Keng Kwee's great-grandson Owen Chung with a photo of the Penang Riots.

Caught between two triads

Anson earns a street name in Penang for his contributions

Anson Road

Each time I return home to Penang, I try to eat at the Tai Hin coffeeshop at the junction of Melaka Street and Anson Road. The corner coffeeshop is operated out of a pre-war house, one of many that dot George Town. It isn't the best coffeeshop in town but has its regular patrons. I have been eating at the same wantan mee stall since I was about 10 years old. Over the years, I have seen some of the stall operators, including a *char koay teow* seller who was very popular back then, pass on.

The wantan mee seller is probably now in his mid-60s and I reckon he would soon give up the business.

His wantan mee is served mostly in dry form, with thick soya sauce and sesame oil, and topped with *char siew* or barbecued pork, and boiled vegetables. It comes with two small meat dumplings.

Older Penangites sometimes refer to wantan mee as *tok tok mee*, so called because in the old days, wantan mee hawkers would signal their arrival by hitting two bamboo sticks together, making the distinctive *tok tok* sound.

His sister runs another wantan mee stall at the famous Seow Fong Lye coffeeshop at Macalister Lane which is famous for its Penang-style *chee cheong fun* or rice rolls that come with blackish prawn paste, sweet sauce and chilli.


Each time I am at the Tai Hin coffeeshop sipping the thick coffee with condensed milk, memories of old Penang would come flooding back.

I remember how my classmate, Choong Keng Hooi, now a hairstylist in Penang, used to buy me a packet of fried mee or economy noodles, from the wet market in Anson Road.

As a growing teenager in my secondary school days, I was constantly hungry and it was sometimes impossible to control my urge to eat before recess at 11am.

By around 10am, I would smuggle out my packet of noodles, stealing bites, even as the teacher was still conducting the lesson in the classroom!

Penang's History My Story
By WONG CHUN WAI



I guess with my kind of behaviour, the school already knew that I was not perfect material, nor a class monitor. In fact, the school didn't think that I should even be a traffic warden!

I suppose the former students who eventually rise to high positions are those who hold such responsible positions in their schooldays.

So, it was with some satisfaction when I returned to my alma mater, St Xavier's Institution, years later as the guest-of-honour at the school's Speech Day or prize-giving day.

It was to be the first and last time as the Brother Principal looked on disapprovingly when I advised the students, "Be the best in what you do. If you are a doctor, be the best. If you are a waiter, be the best waiter, and if you end up as a criminal, be remembered like Botak Chin."

The students applauded loudly but I doubt if the principal and the other Brothers shared the same enthusiasm.

But Anson Road is our main concern here because it is a major road connecting Macalister Road, Burmah Road and Perak Road.

Anson Road is named after Colonel (later Major) Archibald Edward Harbord Anson, the Lieutenant Governor of Penang from 1867 to 1871.

Born in Devonshire, England, he was also Acting Governor of the Crown Colony of the Straits Settlements in 1877.

A British army commander, he served in England, Ireland, Scotland, Mauritius and Madagascar, according to a report.

It has been reported that he also wrote a memoir, *About Others and Myself, 1745-1920*, where he

described the feeling of depression upon his appointment as Penang's Resident Councillor.

At the time he was in Penang, he negotiated in the Penang Riots that broke out between the Cantonese-speaking Ghee Hin-White Flag and the Hakka-speaking Hai San-Red Flag gangs.

During the nine days of fierce clashes in 1867, which saw heavy street fighting and bloodshed between the two secret societies, the British had to bring in reinforcements from Singapore while the Europeans who were staying in Penang were roped in to help.

The fiercest fight was near Cannon Street at the Khoo Kongsi building where a cannon was fired, resulting in a big hole on the road, hence its name to this day.

It was essentially a quarrel between the triad leaders over tin mining rights and other lucrative business deals.

As a highly respected figure, Anson has also been honoured with a road that is named after him in Singapore, which is located at its central business district.

Then there is Teluk Intan in Perak — which was formerly known as Teluk Anson or Anson Bay.

In fact, until the British named the town after Anson, the town was originally called Teluk Mak Intan, after a woman Mandailing trader from Sumatra, Indonesia.

It was here the Perak rulers held court from 1528 until Kuala Kangsar became the royal town in 1877.

The British renamed the town after Anson as he was responsible for drawing up the town's planning.

Teluk Intan is famous for its iconic colonial style structures including the 5m-high Clock Tower, known as the Leaning Tower of Teluk Intan.

Apart from keeping time, the tower is also used to store water for the locals during drought season or in case of fire.

For sure, Sir Archibald Edward Harbord Anson has left his mark not only in Penang but other parts of the Straits Settlement.



Daily grind: The wantan mee seller at Seow Fong Lye coffeeshop



Still popular: The Seow Fong Lye coffeeshop at Macalister Lane sees brisk business daily.

Readers write

Referring to your article *Jerejak - The Forgotten Isle* (StarMetro, May 18), I would like to share my experiences in Pulau Jerejak in the early 1960s.

I was posted from the General Hospital to Pulau Jerejak as doctor in-charge. The island then had five camps and housed wards for tuberculosis (TB) patients, a leprosarium, school and quarantine station.

As one travelled to the island by ferry, Camp 1 for TB cases was on the extreme right, next to Camp 2 which housed the school, Camp 3 also had wards for TB patients, X-ray facilities and a laboratory.

The leprosarium was in Camp 4 while Camp 5 was the quarantine station for infectious cases arriving in Penang by air or sea.

The doctor had to travel from camp to camp by motorised sampan!

On festive occasions, we had visits from prominent people and community leaders bringing gifts for the TB and leprosy patients.

The then Chief Minister Datuk Wong Pow Nee, Aziz Ibrahim, Loh Boon Siew and Arumgam Pillay were regular visitors.

The patients used to put on performances for the visitors and would sing, dance and play several musical instruments.

Ladies from RAAF Butterworth and play weekly to interact with the inmates and take them for walks. They read to some and played music for others.

They would also arrange for the patients' favourite songs to be played over RAAF Butterworth's radio station. The patients were thrilled to hear their names mentioned on air.

TB patients would dig for snails along the seashore while some leprosy patients would cast their nets for fish or harvest oysters which they later cooked.

Patients also planted papaya trees as well as vegetable and flowering plants. The various camps would compete to see who had done a better job.

You also mentioned in an earlier article that when you were in primary school at St Xavier's Institution, some of the teachers wore *cheong-sam* or *sanyfoo*. Do you remember which Standard 1 class you were in? Some of the teachers would like to know if they had taught you.

Ex-PJ staff K.M.Lee Penang

I am an avid reader of all your articles on the bygone days of Penang. Born and bred in Penang, I am just as sentimental about the state.

Reading about the allure of the silver screen brought such happy and sweet memories of showtime then.

Another unique feature I cannot resist mentioning is the interesting cinema advertisements then.

I still have in my possession several old cinema handbills.

Sixty to 70 years ago in Penang, cinema handbills (called flyers today) were distributed by hand by musicians (comprising Malays and Filipinos.)

They would travel in colourful and beautifully decorated bullock carts.

The bands would play the music loudly while going slowly around town, distributing the colourful handbills from house to house.

The Hollywood films would have details on the cinema and the screening dates of new films.

It was a unique feature of Penang cinema. Amy Goh