

= Fort Tanjong Katong =

Fort Tanjong Katong , which stood from 1879 to 1901 , was one of the oldest military forts built by the former British colonial government of Singapore . The fort gave its name to today 's Fort Road , and it used to stand on the grounds of the present Katong Park . Fort Tanjong Katong , the only one of its kind on the eastern side of the island , was part of a series of defensive batteries and fortifications along the southern coast of Singapore , that defended the eastern approaches to the Singapore Harbour and Singapore Town against seaborne attacks . Due to its poor structural design and remoteness , the fort was subsequently abandoned and buried until its rediscovery in 2001 . Found with traces of a moat and near intact perimeter wall , the fort was considered by local archaeological experts as one of Singapore 's most important archaeological finds of a " true 19 @-@ century fort " to date . As a result , an archaeology group has been lobbying for the site to be gazetted as a National Monument . As of May 2010 , the National Heritage Board has stated that it has no plans to gazette the fort for the time being .

= = History = =

Fort Tanjong Katong was designed and built in 1879 by Henry Edward McCallum , who was the Colonial Engineer and Architect of the Singapore History Museum on Stamford Road . The fort reflected the British concerns that other European powers such as the Netherlands and Russia , might attack the strategically located colony founded by Sir Stamford Raffles of the British East India Company in 1819 . On the island of Sentosa , Fort Siloso , Fort Connaught and Fort Serapong were built around the same time as Fort Tanjong Katong , to guard the western and eastern entrances to the New Harbour (now Keppel Harbour) .

The fort was sitting atop a wet , low @-@ lying coconut plantation and occupied an area of approximately two hectares , and had a small elevated battery of three 7 @-@ inch (180 mm) rifled muzzle @-@ loading guns facing the sea , along with bombproof shelters . The battery was surrounded by a ditch measuring 100 feet wide on the flanks . A local team of contractors constructed the fort in less than 12 months . The fort 's garrison included members of the Singapore Volunteer Artillery (SVA) that held regular gun drills and their annual training camps at the fort . In 1885 , works began on upgrading the existing gun batteries in Singapore , and the three @-@ gun battery at Tanjong Katong was replaced with a pair of more powerful and longer range Mark VII 8 @-@ inch (200 mm) breech @-@ loading guns .

= = = " Wash @-@ out Fort " = = =

Beset by problems from the start , the Fort Tanjong Katong was nicknamed the " Wash @-@ out Fort " . Due to the soft ground , each time the guns were fired , the range finding equipment would shake , and would need to be recalibrated . To make matters worse , it was difficult to find the ammunition for the new 8 @-@ inch (200 mm) guns as it was not common in Singapore . The remoteness of the site , which hindered supply and reinforcement , reduced the effectiveness of Fort Tanjong Katong as a defensive position .

Barely five years after upgrades were completed in 1888 , it was suggested the fort be demolished . Debates over the fort lingered on between the Colonial Defence Committee in London , and the Local Defence Committee in Singapore for nearly a decade . The fort was finally rendered obsolete and abandoned in 1901 when the guns were removed . Instead of destroying the fort , the British thought it simpler to bury it , which was done sometime after World War I. A portion of a bastion was still visible above ground well into the 1960s , when a public park was built atop the fort for the fast @-@ growing Katong suburbs . In the late 1960s , the bastion was finally buried when land reclamation in the East Coast took place , and its memory was soon forgotten in the ensuing decades .

= = = Rediscovery = = =

In 2001 , the outline of the top of the bastion wall became visible during a dry spell ; this prompted a Katong resident , Jack Sim , to seek out the relevant authorities to investigate its origins . Despite much public discussion and interest generated by the discovery , it was not until in 2004 that the Singapore government finally approached a team of archaeologists to excavate the forgotten fort . The excavation was made possible by a community @-@ based project named " Raising History , Planting Roots " , that was initiated by the Mountbatten Citizens ' Consultative Committee with local residents and schools as a community involvement program to encourage ownership of local heritage . In just four weeks , an amount of S \$ 200 @,@ 000 (US \$ 120 @,@ 000) was raised from corporate sponsors and a fund @-@ raising dinner , held at Suntec City Mall on 27 September 2004 . Senior Minister Goh Chok Tong , a Member of Parliament for Marine Parade Group Representation Constituency , was the guest of honour at the event .

The long @-@ awaited excavation began on 29 September 2004 , led by a handful of archaeologists and dedicated archaeology volunteers called Southeast Asian Archaeology . Nearly 2 metres down , the volunteers uncovered significant remains of the fort still in situ ? a pair of infantry bastions that did not appear in the original plans , the perimeter of the moat 's inner escarpment and what appears to be the drawbridge superstructure . Experts call it Singapore 's only ' true fort ' ? one with protection all around ? and it was considered one of Singapore 's most important archaeological finds .

The archaeological dig at the former Fort Tanjong Katong site , provided a unique opportunity for many like @-@ minded Singaporeans to participate actively in uncovering the remains of the old fort . For nearly 10 months , more than 1 @,@ 000 volunteers ranging from school students to housewives , retirees , working professionals on their off @-@ days assisted the archaeologists on site and discovering first hand on the 125 @-@ year @-@ old military fort .

The Raffles Museum of Biodiversity Research , a natural history research unit of the National University of Singapore , assisted with the analysis of marine artefacts and corals that were uncovered at the site , and some 36 bags of samples have been deposited with the museum for further analysis . A Preliminary Site Report (dated 7 May 2006) was later compiled and submitted to the relevant authorities which outlined the research process , preliminary findings , variety of volunteers , and a list of the archaeology research team involved .

= = = Reburied again = = =

To date , the excavation project at Fort Tanjong Katong has ended and only the south @-@ eastern bastion , which was nearly fully excavated , has been cordoned off indefinitely (the south @-@ western bastion was left untouched) . Except for the cordoned off bastion , other exposed fort remains were reburied again in December 2005 by the National Parks Board , which runs the park , to protect them against the elements for future archaeologists to discover . It was also done because the dug @-@ out pits could well breed mosquitoes ; there were also fears that someone might fall into one of the 2 m @-@ deep holes . The remaining funds , about S \$ 150 @,@ 000 , were ploughed back into bursaries and scholarships for the constituency 's students .

The archaeology group is lobbying for the site to be gazetted as a National Monument , and to incorporate the fort remains to be featured as part of the park in future . To date , its status is still pending while waiting for the final decision by the Preservation of Monuments Board and the Urban Redevelopment Authority .