# Forty Good Men

*The Story Of The Tanglin Club In The Island Of Singapore*

*1865 ~ 1990*

**Forty Good Men** is the story of the Tanglin Club, originally established as a social institute for select Britishers in 1865 in the island of Singapore, an equatorial corner of Britain's colonial empire in the Far East. Drawing on wide-ranging first-hand accounts and historical commentaries, it also provides an informative glimpse of the mores and historical fortunes of the colonial élite who traditionally comprised the membership of the club and their role in the development and destiny of the island. Extensively illustrated and documented with photographs and memorabilia, letters and diaries, chronicles and historical records gathered from archival and personal collections around the world, the story follows the evolution and persistence of the Tanglin Club from the early colonial period, through the uncertainties of two world wars and the turbulent pre- and post-independence periods, to its successful transformation in the years after independence in 1965 which have enabled it to survive as one of the most prestigious social clubs in the city-state of Singapore in the 1990's.

This Indenture made the
ight hundred and sixty six between Arthu
ughes Dunman, James Davidson, Da
of Singapore, Esquires. Trustees of a certain
the second part. Whereas by an Indenture, d
to be made between William Scott of Singapor
of the other part, the said William Scott for th
1842 and also independently thereof, grant u
assigns all that piece or parcel of land situat
in the plan endorsed on the said indenture
Road, on the East by Stevens Road and on
of eighteen acres and twenty two poles together
of land being part of the lot of land marked
and granted to the said William Scott by C
have and to hold the said hereditaments
.ber 1859, and the said Jean Marie P
the said hereditaments and premises ar
Whereas the said Arthur Hughes de
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.nant and proviso as to the use and occu

26 June 1863 Indenture 2

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thur Hughes de Wind of Singapore Esquire of the first part and
David Rodger, Charles Dunlop and Jonas Daniel Vaughan
ain Club or Association in Singapore called the "Tanglin Club" of
e, dated the 1st day of November in the year 1859, and made or ba
pore Esquire of the one part and the Reverend Jean Marie B
the consideration therein mentioned did in pursuance of Act No.
t unto the said Jean Marie Beurel, his Executors, administrators
ate in the district of Claymore and island of Singapore as te
ure, bounded on the North by Stevens Road, on the South by
on the West by William Scott's plantation estimated to conta
her with the appurtenances thereto belonging, (the said piece
ked No 28 and 29 in the Government Map of the distr
ry Government Indenture No 23 dated the 2nd day of
ts and premises comprised in the said Indenture d
th his executors, administrators and assigns for ever
are now vested in the said Arthur Hughes de W
e Wind has agreed to sell and release to the par
the piece or parcel of land and premises comprised in
the price of Dollars six hundred ($600.) but subje
cupation of the said premises hereinafter contained

# Forty Good Men

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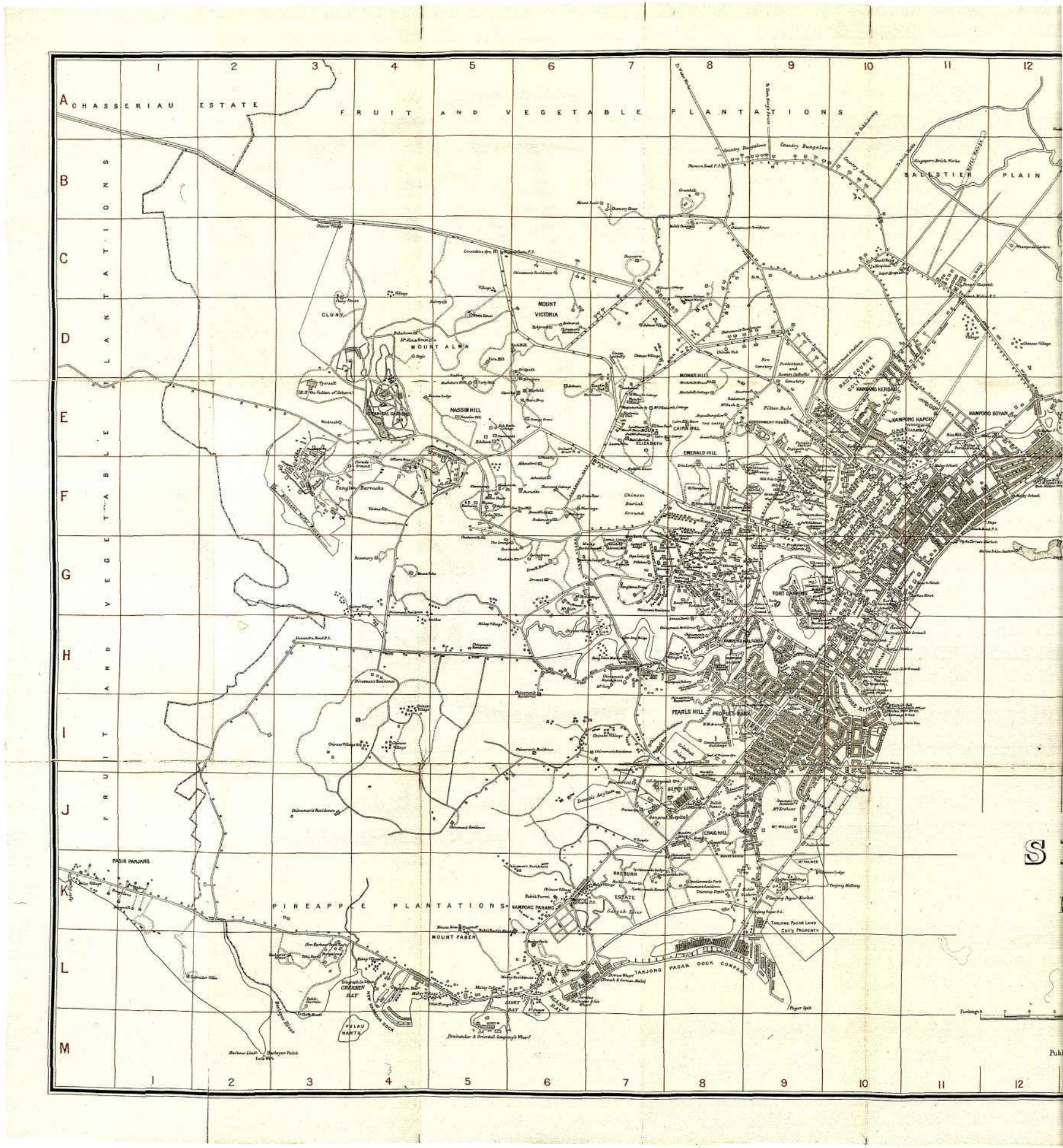
# Forty Good Men

*The Story Of The Tanglin Club In The Island Of Singapore*
*1865 ~ 1990*

*Text* Barbara Ann Walsh

*Research* Jan and Graham Bell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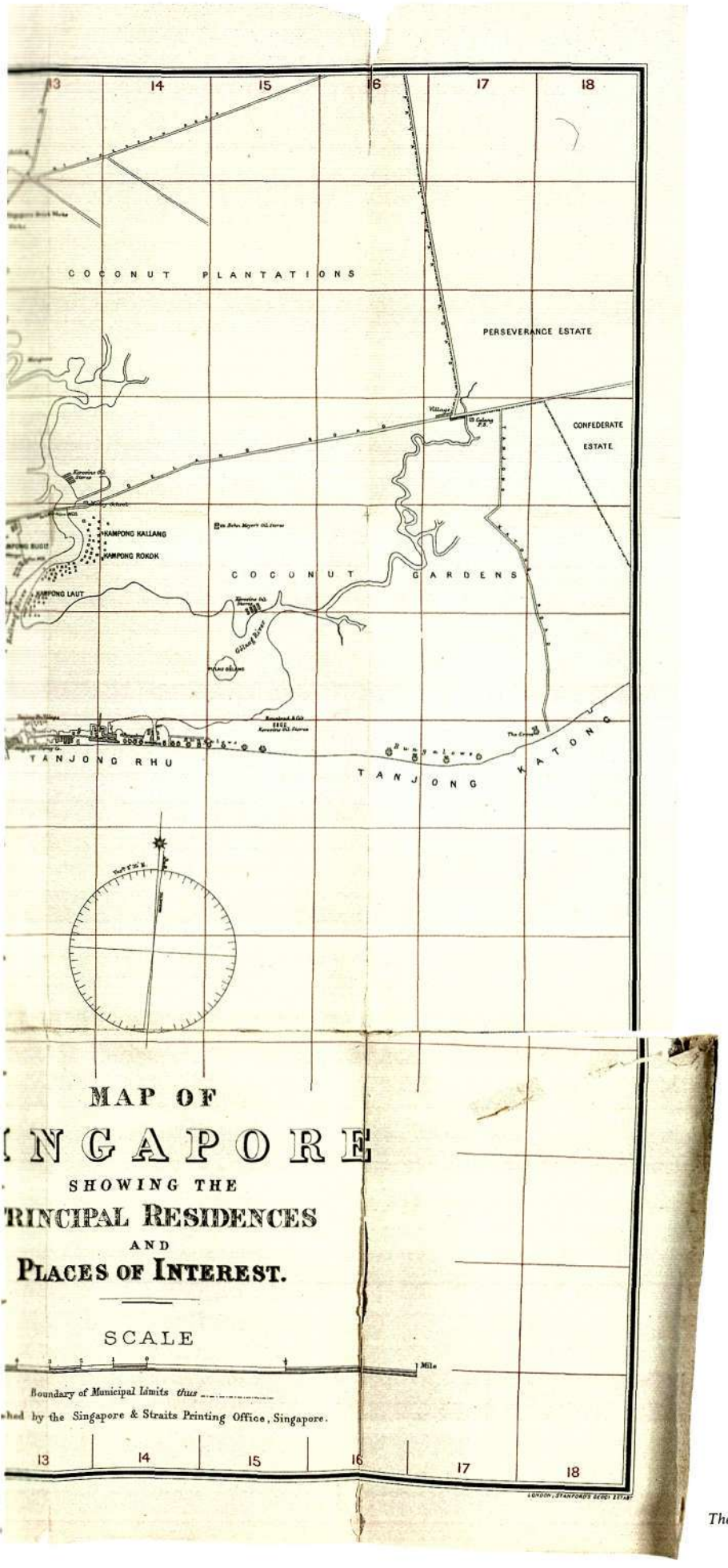
CLUNY
MOUNT VICTORIA
MOUNT ALMA
NASSIM HILL
BOTANICAL GARDENS
MONKS HILL
RACE COURSE
GOLF LINKS
KAMPONG KERBAU
KAMPONG KAPOR
KAMPONG BOYAN
CAIRN HILL
ELIZABETH
EMERALD HILL
Tanglin Barracks
Chinese Burial Ground
FORT CANNING
KAMPONG MELAYU
PEARLS HILL
PEOPLE'S PARK
GEYLANG LINES
CRAIG HILL
MT WALLICH
MT PALMER
RACBURN ESTATE
PASIR PANJANG
PINEAPPLE PLANTATIONS
KAMPONG PAHANG
MOUNT FABER
TANJONG PAGAR DOCK COMPANY
TANJONG PAGAR LAND COY'S PROPERTY
CHERMIN BAY
KIDUT BAY
BELANDA BAY
PULAU BARTU
Singapore Brick Works
Chinese Village
Malay Village
Chinaman's Residence
Furlongs




*The settlement in 1892 — Handbook to Singapore*

plan referred to in
conveyance dated
of June 1886 made

Scott

Stevenson

STEVENSROAD

DRAYCOTT
PROPERTY OF J. ANDERSON
A R P
16 - 0 - 32

ALLOTMENT Nº 28

PART
GRANT Nº 35

PART GRANT Nº 35
(1 of 27)

NEIDPATH
PROPERTY
OF
SOHNE & Co Ltd
A R P
4 - 0 - 20

A R P
4 - 0 - 18

BELVEDERE
PROPERTY OF J. D'ALMEIDA
A R P
3 - 0 - 0

GRANT

ARDMORE
PROPERTY OF T. SCOTT
A R P
14 - 1 - 7

ALLOTMENT Nº 29

LADY HILL
property of
Rautenberg Schmidt & Co
A R P
2 - 2 - 10

ORANGE GROVE
property of
A. L. Donaldson
A R P
5 - 1 - 14

Common to Allotments 28 & 29

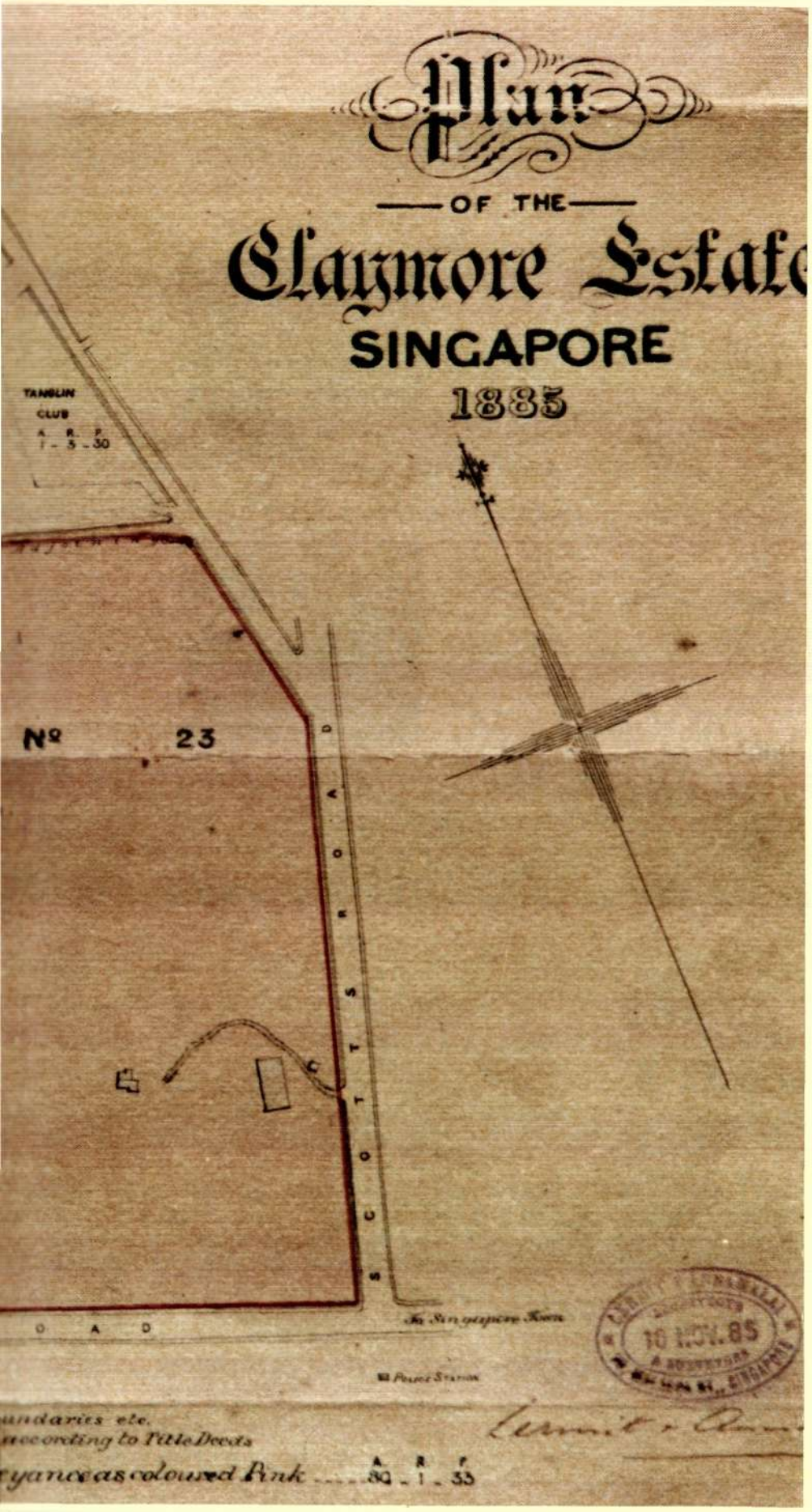
ORCHARD

FRANKLIN RD

Scale 4 Chains to one Inch

Note:-
Black lines denote existing
Blue ——— Boundaries

Area of the property included in this Co




*Allotments Nos. 28 & 29 with the property of the Tanglin Club, 1885 — T.C.*

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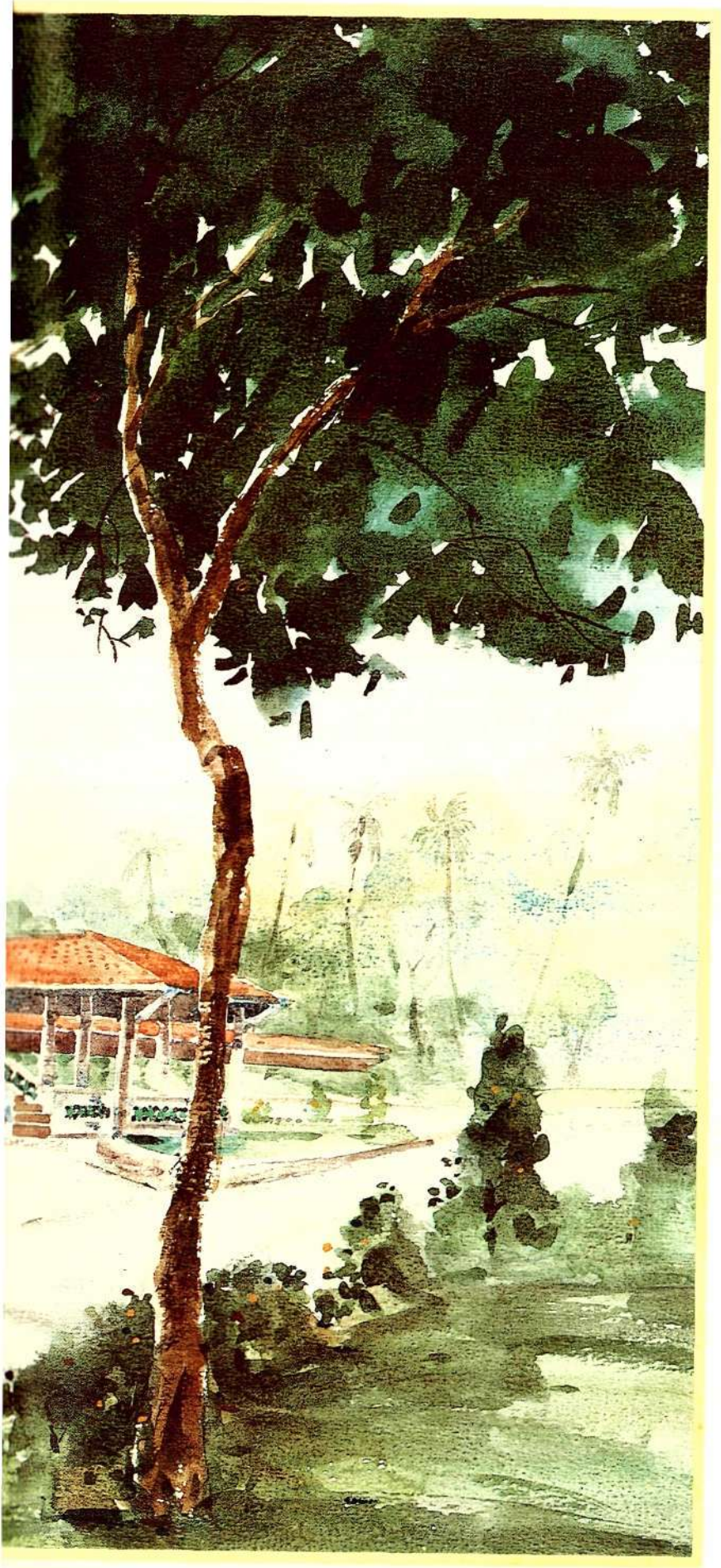


*Water-colour of the Tanglin Club in the 1890's by Martin Gilmon, 1990 — T.C.*

# Preface

*The Tanglin Club was founded as a social club that, over the years, has met the wants of a community and its members in a variety of ways. By 1990, one sees that its success has been and will be dependent on its relevance to such needs, a challenge as daunting today as it was in 1865. While there are still members who recall with wistful nostalgia the memorable New Year's Eve balls, the social occasions that accompanied tennis matches, the Sunday tiffins and the leisurely camaraderie of earlier times, the club today caters to a new generation of members whose lives are dictated by the stressful and competing demands of the last decade of the twentieth century. Few can imagine how the Tanglin Club will serve an exclusive membership in the next century; those who try to are certain that it will never be the same.... Kindly remember, fellow members, this sentiment was also aired one hundred years ago!*

**What Kind Of Men And Why**

In 1977 writer Eric Jennings was commissioned to produce a short history of the Tanglin Club to coincide with the completion of the new clubhouse but the publication was never realised. Another proposal in 1989 was rejected as the cost exceeded expectations. In 1990 as the 125th anniversary loomed, the need to document the history of the club became an imperative. An editorial committee of members volunteered to produce a volume — with six months to research and write the text! — although some sourcing of materials had been initiated by Graham Bell, chairman of the Tanglin Club's 125th anniversary organising committee, over the previous year. Reseach tasks were allotted — Jan Bell to cover people, society and photographs, Graham Bell the gaps in the club's history, Andrew Jordan the club's properties — and all materials passed to me to be woven into an unfolding story of the Tanglin Club as a social institute defined by the environment of the times. In order to situate the chronological development of the Tanglin Club against the broad socio-economic and political trends that shaped the lives and interests of the élites who constituted its core membership, I divided the book into twenty-five-year periods, each organized around an evocative theme. With the spectre of constantly appearing and lapsing deadlines, the preoccupation with trying to do justice to a hundred and twenty-five-year evolution became a full-time daily routine. We all worked long hours to assess the available materials; if there are sections where our inexperience and omissions are obvious, our undaunted enthusiasm will call on members' forbearance.

There were many heated arguments over the gaps in our research on the early period of the club's existence, and various speculations could not be substantiated to everyone's satisfaction. Hearsay had it that after the Japanese occupation during World War II no records were to be found; yet, in 1965 Bill Kerr, then club manager, decided to clear out "a room under the ballroom chock full of papers and boxes some dating back to the turn of the century." Could the answers to many of our questions have been tossed out at this time? Why, for example, did Thomas Dunman, the first club president, make a point of distancing himself from the club so soon after its formation? What kind of 'good men and true' were those forty individuals who founded 'a suburban social institute to meet the wants of Britishers in the colony'? Why did these same men all share a passion for amateur dramatics? What role did affiliations with commercial, political or other institutions, for example, the Masonic Lodge, play in banding a select group of colonials together in a social club that upheld the privacy of its members? Readers can enjoy judging for themselves on what basis the club may have attained its historical exclusivity. Long-time members of the club familiar with the history of Singapore may recognise much of the background and source materials presented. More recent members perhaps will find in this review of the last century and a quarter of the club's existence some new and different insights into the contemporary life of the colonial island settlement of Singapore and its transformation into a global city-state, one of the brightest diamonds in the Pacific Rim tiara no less.

Barbara Ann Walsh

## Foreword

### Justly Proud Of Its Premier Standing

The forty 'good men and true' who founded the Tanglin Club in 1865 would be justly proud of its premier standing with over five thousand members representing more than fifty different nationalities in the island of Singapore one hundred and twenty-five years later. Having survived the vicissitudes of debt and war, age and apathy, even a major transformation, the Tanglin Club still retains a certain exclusivity as one of the most prestigious social clubs in Singapore today. Many of the personalities who have graced the evolving scene of this social institution are those that have figured prominently in the greater drama of the history and development of Singapore; in 1990 the 125th anniversary of the Tanglin Club also had the added significance of being in the year when the Republic of Singapore celebrated its twenty-fifth year of independence.

The need to document the history of the club was acknowledged some years ago but despite the best intentions various efforts did not come to fruition. The impetus for this commemorative project came from Graham Bell, the chairman of the 125th anniversary committee, whose enthusiasm has inspired a publication which many members may see as coming almost too late. It has been an enormous task to present a review of one hundred and twenty-five years of the Tanglin Club. Facts and figures, writings and memories were compiled and sought from a variety of sources locally and abroad; the task of verifying and piecing these together was made no less easy by the unfortunate absence of club records — with the exception of a copy of the minutes of the 1922 AGM — for the years 1865 to 1946. Still, though much, regrettably, may have been lost with the passing of time, the dedication of Jan Bell as principal researcher, club members Graham Bell and Andrew Jordan (before his premature departure to Hong Kong) in providing supplementary research, and Barbara Walsh, wife of member Frank Walsh, in her work as author has at long last provided club members with a book to enjoy and treasure. The result is an historical account that provides not only an insight into the story of the Tanglin Club but also a perspective on life in Singapore as recorded in the diaries and letters of various personalities who have counted among the membership of the club.

My thanks go to all the members and individuals who have unselfishly contributed their time and effort towards the realisation of this book, one that stands as a fitting tribute to commemorate the 125th anniversary of the Tanglin Club in the island of Singapore.

George Sandosham
President 1990

The Tanglin Club

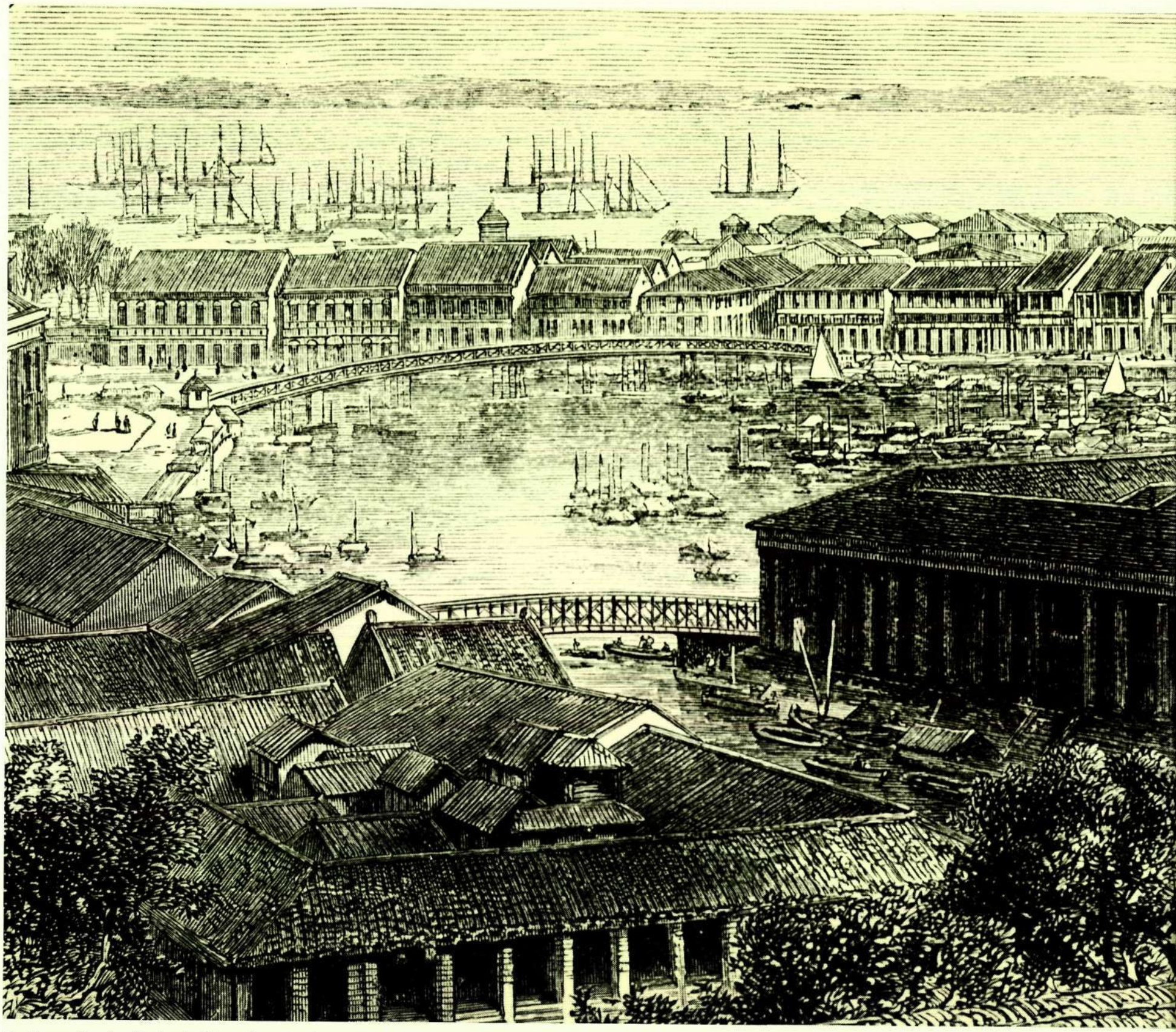
*Founded 1865*

**Tanglin Club Committee 1990**
*President:*
*George Sandosham (George Sandosham & Co.)*
*Vice-President:*
*Michael K.L. Khoo (Michael Khoo & B.B. Ong)*
*Honorary Treasurer:*
*Graham S. Bell (Crown Cork & Seal (Singapore) Pte. Ltd.)*
*Committee Members:*
*Dr. Colin Evans (consultant surgeon)*
*Robin G. Langdale (North Borneo Timbers Bhd.)*
*Ray F. Lynch (McDermott Equipment Inc.)*
*Roger H.W. Marshall (Chartwell Enterprises Ltd.)*
*Alexander C. McColl (Robbins & Meyers Canada Ltd.)*
*Noris Ong C.G. (Coopers & Lybrand)*
*Roger A. Prior (Roger Prior Associates)*
*Gilbert Whitesman (Ferranti Systems Singapore Pte. Ltd.)*
*[Back row left to right: Ray F. Lynch, Alexander C. McColl, Roger H.W. Marshall, Edward J. Grinsted, Norris Ong C.G. Front row left to right: Dr. Colin Evans, Michael K.L. Khoo, George Sandosham, Graham S. Bell, Roger A. Prior]*

*Part One: 1865 ~ 1890*

# A SUBURBAN SOCIAL INSTITUTE

*Tea on the lawn, c. 1890 — N.A.*



*The Singapore River from Fort Canning Hill, woodcut, artist unknown, 1866 — Travels in the East Indian Archipelago*