



The Heritage House

of Tuan Haji Hashim Kerani





The house today, left vacant and in a state of deterioration.

The Tuan Haji Hashim Kerani Heritage House is a traditional Setol Malay house located on Jalan Bagan Belat, 13500 Teluk Air Tawar, Seberang Perai Utara, and has stood since the 1880s. Built by skilled craftsmen from Satun, Thailand, the house reflects the migration history of communities from Kedah, Patani, Setol, Aceh, and Batu Bara who settled in the area, particularly after the

Kedah–Siam War (1821–1842). Bagan Belat was one of the earliest fishing villages in the area and was well known for its belat (traditional fish trap) industry, which was an important source of income for the local community. It is also believed that Tuan Haji Hashim's ancestors operated a gold-threaded kain pelekat weaving business at the house between 1900 and 1940.



The house in its earlier days, serving as a community gathering place and a witness to the struggle for Malaya's independence.

During the Japanese Occupation (1941–1945), the house was moved by villagers through a community effort to Padang Benggali after its original location was affected by the construction of a military airfield. The house also played an important role as a meeting place and discussion centre for the local community. In the 1950s, it became a gathering place for notable figures such as Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra Al-Haj, Tuan Guru Sheikh Abdullah Fahim—a respected Islamic scholar and astronomy expert who proposed the date of Malaya's independence—and Haji Ahmad



*Tunku Abdul Rahman
Putra Al-Haj*



*Tuan Guru Sheikh
Abdullah Fahim*



Haji Ahmad Badawi

Badawi. Discussions held at the house focused on community welfare and efforts towards achieving independence. Today, Jalan Tunku Putra in Teluk Air Tawar stands as a reminder of this important historical connection.

Notable Figure

Tuan Haji Hashim Kerani



Tuan Haji Hashim was one of the key figures who contributed to the early development of UMNO in the Teluk Air Tawar area and was actively involved in community activities.

Tuan Haji Hashim bin Itam (1906–1999) was a respected community leader and among the earliest Malays to obtain a Senior Cambridge certificate. He began his career as a clerk at the Seberang Perai Utara District Office in 1928 and later retired as the Chief Clerk of the Butterworth District Council. In addition to his public service career, he was actively involved in politics as Chairman of the Teluk Air Tawar UMNO Branch and a committee member of the Permatang Kucing Division.

Through these roles, his house became an important centre for grassroots organisation, bringing together villagers to discuss community welfare, education, and the struggle for independence. Today, the heritage house stands as an important reminder of the social, political, and cultural history of the Malay community in Teluk Air Tawar.

Did you know?

Tunku Abdul Rahman frequently visited this area, often on a weekly basis, while serving as the District Officer of Kulim. One of the acts of kindness still remembered by the local community was his habit of offering rides to villagers who were walking to the mosque. He was also known for keeping sacks of rice in his car, which he would distribute to those in need.



Tuan Haji Hashim with his extended family at his house in 1985.

Historical & Heritage Timeline

Early 1800s

Teluk Air Tawar was established as one of the earliest Malay settlements in Province Wellesley

1821–1842

Kedah–Siam War: Large-scale migration of Malays from Kedah and Setul to Seberang Perai.

Circa 1880s

The original site of the house began to be occupied by the ancestors of Tuan Haji Hashim's family.

1942

The house was relocated by villagers through a communal effort to Padang Benggali during the Second World War.

1950s

The house became a meeting centre for Tunku Abdul Rahman in discussions and planning related to the nation's independence.

1999

The passing of Tuan Haji Hashim bin Itam, leaving behind a legacy of leadership, knowledge, and community service.

The Historic Landscape of Bagan Belat

The Tuan Haji Hashim Kerani Heritage House stands within the historic village of Bagan Belat, one of the earliest coastal settlements in northern Seberang Perai. Established in the mid-19th century, the village became an important fishing centre supplying fresh seafood to surrounding communities and Penang Island. The name "Bagan Belat" originates from the traditional belat fishing structures once found in large numbers along its coastline, reflecting the close relationship between the local community and the sea.

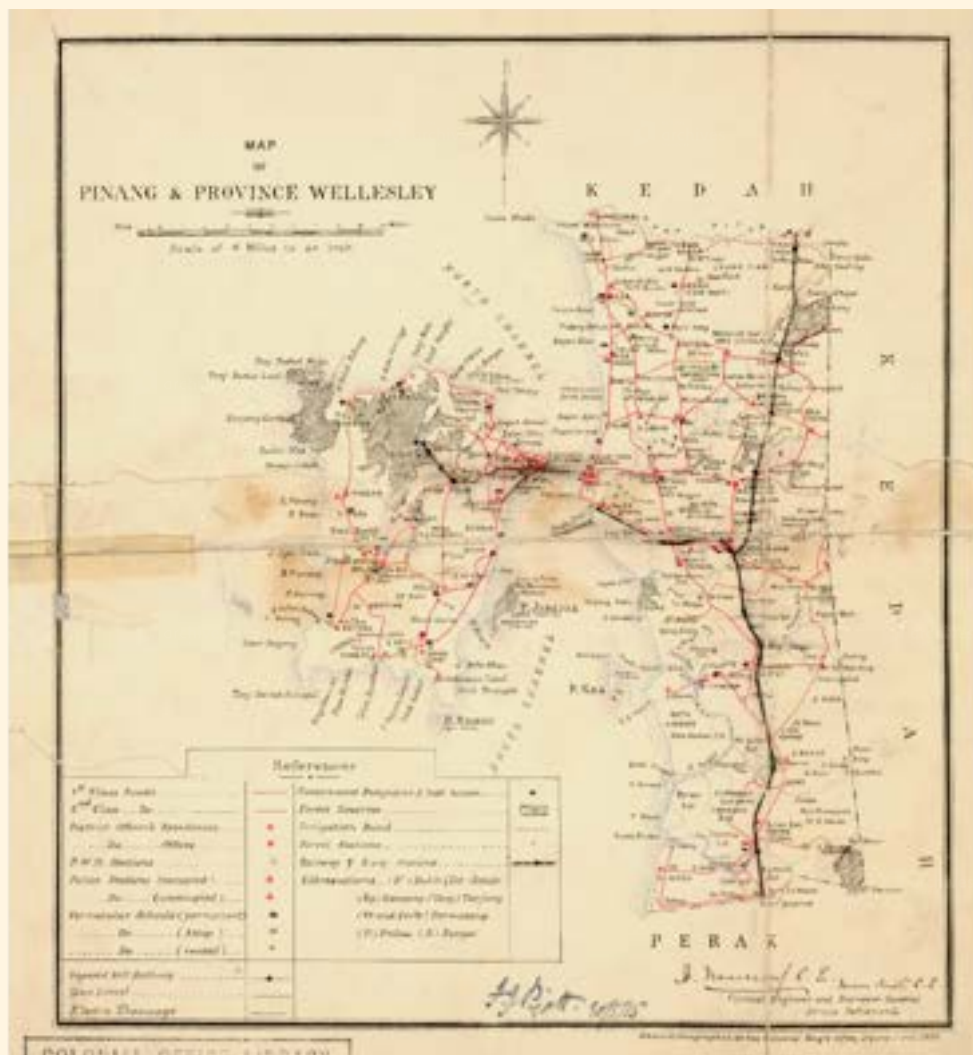
The people of Bagan Belat were known for their specialised maritime skills, particularly in constructing and operating belat fish traps.

These skills were highly regarded beyond the village, and local craftsmen were invited to assist fishing communities in Sumatra and southern Thailand. The fishing industry remained an important part of village life until the 1960s, when changing economic conditions gradually led to its decline.

Bagan Belat was also an important centre of religious learning. In the late 19th century, Tuan Haji Mohammad Taha established a traditional Islamic learning centre and surau in the village, attracting students and strengthening the area's role as a centre of community life. Although the original surau was later relocated due to coastal erosion, its legacy remains part of the cultural history of Teluk Air Tawar.



Bagan Belat Beach - Historical photograph showing the view toward Penang Island. A prominent sandbar, clearly visible on the left side of the beach, stretches in the direction of Bagan Tambang, illustrating the coastal landscape of the area in 1992.



Historical map of Province Wellesley, 1915.

The heritage house is one of the few remaining reminders of a historic coastal settlement that has witnessed significant changes over time. For more than a century, Bagan Belat has experienced continuous shoreline erosion, altering the landscape and causing the loss of parts of the original coastline and several early settlements. Today, the house stands not only as a symbol of local leadership and community history but also as a testament to the resilience of the people who built and sustained this coastal village.