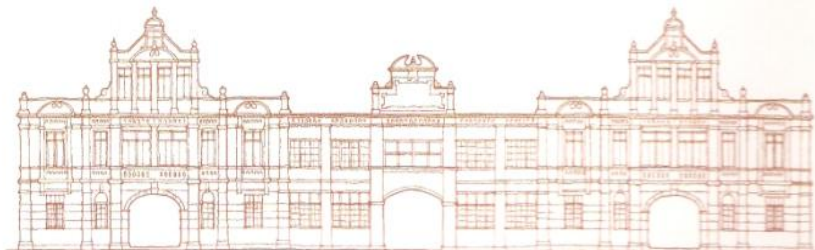


# TAIPING

## Town of Everlasting Peace

A guide to the heritage sites and buildings  
of Perak's foremost historic town



### Traveller's impressions of Taiping:

...this important Chinese town, with a street about a mile long, with large bazaars and shops making a fine appearance, being much decorated in Chinese style; halls of meeting for the different tribes, gambling houses, workshops, the Treasury, a substantial dark wooden building, large detached barracks for the Sikh police, a hospital, a powder magazine, a parade ground, a Government storehouse, a large, new jail, neat bungalows for the minor English officials, and on the top of a steep, isolated terraced hill, the British Residency. ...

Taiping is a thriving, increasing place, of over six thousand inhabitants, solely Chinese, with the exception of a small (Indian) population, which keeps small shops, lends money, drives gharries and bullock-carts, and washes clothes.

Taiping is tolerably empty during the day, but at dusk, when the miners return, the streets and gambling dens are crowded, and the usual babel of Chinese tongues begins.

(The sentries of the Perak Armed Police) wear large blue turbans, scarlet coats, and white trousers. There are four hundred and fifty of them, recruited in India from among the Sikhs and Pathans, and many of them have seen service under our flag.... They are splendid looking men, with long moustaches and whiskers, but they plait the long ends of the latter and tuck them up under their turbans.... When off duty they wear turbans and robes nearly as white as snow, and look both classical and colossal... I have been awake each night by the clank which attends the change of guard, and as the moonlight flashes on the bayonets, I realise that I am in Perak...

*Isabella Bird, The Golden Chersonese And The Way Thither, 1879*

Not alone in hospitals did Thaping lead the van of civilisation in the native states, for on the old town being burnt down fine broad streets were laid out, shade-giving trees being planted at intervals along the sides, good

### TAIPING, Perak

A historic tin-mining town, the former administrative centre of Perak and the Malay States, and a country resort with cool climate, expansive gardens and verdant hills.



macadamized roads were constructed, and after a while kept in a repair that would put to shame many a London thoroughfare.

*Ambrose B. Rathborne, Camping And Tramping In Malaya, 1898*

The town of Taiping (Chinese word - everlasting peace) lies on the Larut alluvial mining field ... For nearly fifty years, this field has been turned over and over by tin miners... With the possible exception of the centre of the town itself there is probably not a square yard which has not either been worked for tin or covered with overburden. Even in the town itself mining is still, by special permission, going on, and were the cricket-field between the two clubs to be put up to auction as a mining block it would find ready purchasers.

The town itself is one of the most picturesque in Malaya. Its public offices are handsome and contain a fine State Council Chamber. The road from the railway station, a quarter of a mile down which is the resthouse, is the boundary between the native and the English parts of the town. To the north lies the English quarter. Arriving by motor from Penang one runs right through it, a little country city where houses dot a perpetual freshness of gardens. On the south of Station Road

is the Chinese town, with broader streets than those in most Malaysian cities.

The streets are shaded by rows of the *angsen* tree, which at irregular intervals bursts forth into a riot of blossoms, even more yellow than those of the labrunum. These it rains down in golden snow upon the streets, providing a carpet fit for a Sultan, for yellow is the royal colour in the East. With its golden snow, the *angsen* spreads abroad an almost over-powering scent, even more sweet than the smell of the *pinang* blossom. Most of the towns in Malaya have planted this *Pterocarpus indicus* as shade tree, but in Taiping it has grown to a greater height than elsewhere.

*Cuthbert Woodville Harrison, An Illustrated Guide To The Federated Malay States, 1911*

What a pleasant town Taiping is!

I first saw it some years ago on a rainy, cool evening, when the air was laden with the scent of flowering *angsen* trees and golden light bathed the slopes of the Ijau range. ...

Taiping has the heaviest rainfall of any town in Malaya, and while this is unfortunate for devotees of tennis it makes walking exceedingly pleasant after the daily deluge has fallen.... Apart from the temperature the visitor finds much to tempt him to walk in the town of Taiping. ...

I know of no more lovely sight in this country than the Taiping gardens when the rays of the early morning sun are shining obliquely through their clumps of bamboo, palms and isolated trees scattered on islands among the expanse of water. One receives in that glorious half hour an experience of light in foliage that is quite unobtainable in England.

*George L. Peet, A Journal in the Federal Capital, on the account of his visit to Taiping in 1933*

#### How to get there:

Taiping is situated off the North-South highway, 88 km from Penang Island, 80 km from Ipoh and 302 km from Kuala Lumpur.

For further enquiries, please contact the Public Relations Unit, Taiping Municipal Council, tel 605-8080777.

## Brief History of Taiping

The town of Taiping was born out of the wars over the tin-fields of Larut district in the State of Perak.

Larut was first promoted by a young adventurer named Long Ja'afar, who reportedly found tin while bathing in a stream. Long Ja'afar brought the first group of Chinese miners from Penang to help him work the mines at Klian Pauh. These miners were Hakka Chinese members of the Hai San, a Penang-based Chinese secret society, led by Chung Keng Kooi.

Not long afterwards, another group of miners migrated to a nearby area called Klian Baru, literally, "new mines". Oral tradition has it that the deposits were discovered when a runaway elephant which strayed into the area was found with its hooves covered in tin-rich mud.

Long Ja'afar was succeeded by his son Ngah Ibrahim, known as the Mantri of Larut. Around 1856, he built his fort, residence and store, now known as Kota Ngah Ibrahim, in Matang. He established the first modern system of administration in Perak, which had a police force, a judge and magistrate, a treasurer and a clerk.

In 1861, a fight broke out between the miners of Klian Pauh and Klian Baru over the control of a water-course. Protracted feuding took place over the years between several groups of rival miners, from

various Chinese secret societies. Consequently, Ngah Ibrahim engaged Captain Speedy and his Indian soldiers of fortune to quell the "Larut Wars", promising Speedy a salary and a share of the revenue.

Pressured by Chinese merchants who had invested heavily in the tin mines, the new Governor of the Straits Settlements negotiated a treaty with Raja Abdullah and several Malay chiefs. The historic Pangkor Treaty of 1874 obliged the British-appointed Sultan to accept the "advice" of a colonial officer, and became the starting point of British intervention into the Malay States. At the same time, a separate agreement was signed with the headmen of the warring Chinese secret societies to keep the peace.

From being an employee of Ngah Ibrahim, Speedy became the Assistant Resident stationed at Larut. He planned for the establishment of two towns, one called Taiping, for the Hakka Chinese, and another called Kamunting, for the rival group. It was Speedy who gave the name to Taiping, which "being the Chinese for 'Everlasting Peace', I regarded as a happy omen for the future."

With this new-found peace, miners and shopkeepers flocked to Taiping, and within a year there were 5,000 inhabitants. Larut's development was fuelled by revenue from tin duties. A four-mile road joining Taiping and Kamunting was one of the many roads that were built.

In 1875, the assassination of the first British Resident of Perak, J.W.W. Birch, necessitated the use of coercion to consolidate the British position in Perak. A punitive expedition by British troops ensued. This "Perak War" eliminated many chiefs who were hostile towards the British. Ngah Ibrahim, Sultan Abdullah and other chiefs who were implicated in Birch's murder were exiled to the Seychelles in 1877. Ngah Ibrahim never returned to Perak. He died in Singapore in 1895.

By 1877, the seat of Perak's administration was moved from Lower Perak to Kuala Kangsar in Upper Perak, just south of Taiping. Several important institutions were established in Taiping, including the gaol, the hospital, the police force and the survey office. In terms of its town plan and development, the pioneer settlement of Taiping was given a second chance:

"On re-laying out of the town of Taiping, which took place after the great fires in 1880, the main streets were widened to seventy feet and the cross streets to sixty feet. Some of these were taken through abandoned mining land which necessitated great unforeseen expense in filling up the old pits, and the metalling of the larger streets cost much more than had been anticipated... The result has been that, instead of a dirty village of attap huts traversed by narrow crooked lanes, the new town contains blocks of brick buildings of neat appearance equal to the best which are usually seen in the trading part of the towns of the Straits Settlements, and sanitary regulations have become hopeful..."

The predominantly Chinese town consisted of shophouses, laid

out in a grid. At one end of this town were the British officers' detached quarters, the military cantonment and the gaol. At the other end was the Indian settlement at Kota.

Taiping's streets were kept meticulously clean by the Taiping Sanitary Board. Its reputation as a salubrious town was enhanced by the cool weather, the excellent water supply and the nearby highlands. Maxwell Hill (now called Bukit Larut) was made a hill resort for the British officers. Situated on a flat plain, from which the Gunung Hijau range rose abruptly to a height of over 5,000 feet, and only 13 miles from the coast, Taiping's location was strategic.

While Taiping's early development was guided by Sir Hugh Low as Resident of Perak (1877-1899), it was during Frank Swettenham's term as Acting Resident (1884-1886) when many existing institutions such as the market, the gaol, the post and telegraph office, the assistant resident's house, the audit and treasury offices and the police offices were rebuilt and expanded. Low commented that,

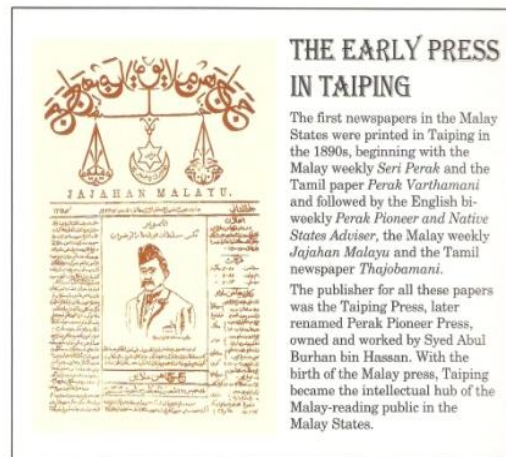
"The architectural pretensions of all the buildings undertaken by the advice of Mr. Swettenham shows a very great improvement in taste on those which were erected in the preceding years, and... are equal in beauty of design and excellence of workmanship to anything to be found in any older Colony."

Convict labour enabled the public works department to carry out ambitious construction and landscaping projects. In 1882, it was reported that,

"A large number of prisoners was employed profitably at earth work on the slopes of Fort Carnarvon, the Residency Grounds, on cutting granite for the Town Water Works, and for the road culverts, in the conservancy of the Town of Taiping, at the Gaol Laundry, at the Bakery which supplies all Taiping with bread and on other useful works."

The prisoners also printed the annual *Perak Government Gazette* at the Government Printing Office in the Taiping Gaol.

In 1885, the controversial 8-mile railway line from Taiping to Port Weld was completed. It was the first railway in the Peninsula, and two contingents of the Ceylon Pioneer Corps were seconded by the colonial government of Ceylon



## THE EARLY PRESS IN TAIPING

The first newspapers in the Malay States were printed in Taiping in the 1890s, beginning with the Malay weekly *Seri Perak* and the Tamil paper *Perak Varthamani* and followed by the English bi-weekly *Perak Pioneer and Native States Adviser*, the Malay weekly *Jajahan Malayu* and the Tamil newspaper *Thajobamani*.

The publisher for all these papers was the Taiping Press, later renamed *Perak Pioneer Press*, owned and worked by Syed Abul Burhan bin Hassan. With the birth of the Malay press, Taiping became the intellectual hub of the Malay-reading public in the Malay States.

for the project.

As clubs and schools flourished, Taiping led in sports. Personalities such as Frank Swettenham and Col. Walker played cricket regularly at the Esplanade field.

By the 1890s, the Kinta Valley had superseded Larut as the principal tin-mining area in the Peninsula. The Federated Malay States (FMS), comprising Perak, Selangor, Pahang and Negeri Sembilan, were formed in 1896, and Kuala Lumpur was made its capital.

The administrative centre of Perak remained in Taiping, but already talk had begun of relocating it to Ipoh. The citizens of Taiping argued for their town to remain the capital through the *Taiping Weekly Record*, while Ipoh's mouthpiece was the *Times of Malaya*.

Taiping's importance was briefly resumed during the period of Japanese Occupation, when it became the headquarters of the Japanese military administration of Malaya and Sumatra. Many of Taiping's school buildings were turned into army bases.

In August 1945, Sukarno and Mohd. Hatta, later first President and Vice-President of the Republic of Indonesia respectively, flew into the Taiping aerodrome for a meeting

with Dr. Burhanuddin al-Helmi and Ibrahim Yaacob, leaders of the organisation called KRIS to discuss the possibility of declaring the independence of Malaya jointly with Indonesia. The meeting was arranged by the Japanese military administration, which was then occupying the two countries. The plan was not carried out and Indonesia declared its independence in 1945 without Malaya.

After the war, Ipoh replaced Taiping as the capital of Perak by an administrative fiat.

Taiping, a town of many firsts, is one of Perak's foremost historic attractions. Its built environment, consisting of colonial buildings, public gardens, old roadside trees and shophouse ensembles, tells the story of its development from 1874 to the present. This remarkable heritage, together with the town's exceptional climate and tranquil surroundings, continues to earn Taiping its reputation as the town of everlasting peace.

### Further reading:

Khoo Kay Kim, *Taiping (Larut): The Early History of a Mining Settlement*. IMBRAS, Vol LXIV Part 1, 1991.  
Khoo Kay Kim, *Taiping, Ibukota Perak*. Persatuan Muzium Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur, 1981.

## Malay States Guides

Under Col. Walker, the predominantly Sikh regiment was styled the "1st Perak Sikhs" and, with the federation of the Malay States in 1896, they served as the "Malay States Guides".

Statue of Col. Walker "Father of the Malay States Guides", now at the Perak Museum.



The Guides joined the Aden Field Force during the First World War. Two regiments, comprising Punjabi and Pathan Muslims almost revolted when asked to fight against the Turkish caliphate. Upon their return, the Malay States Guides were disbanded in 1919. They were replaced with the Burma Rifles, seconded by the Indian Government, who remained until the Japanese Occupation.



In order to restore law and order among the feuding Chinese miners, the Mantri of Larut, Ngah Ibrahim, hired Captain Speedy, formerly Superintendent of Police in Penang, to recruit a sepoy force. In 1873, Captain Speedy returned from India with 110 soldiers consisting of Sikhs, Hindus and Pathans. After the Larut Wars, the mercenary band formed the "Perak Armed Police", stationed in the cantonment in Taiping. On special occasions, the show regiment would parade on the Esplanade field.



**1 Taping Government Offices, Kinta Road**  
This Victorian style building of offices was opened in 1898. The Government Offices building which is well designed and constructed, was commenced in 1895, and provides accommodation for a Chief Executive, and Offices for the Secretary, Treasury, Audit, Education, and Social Departments. The estimated cost is 363,750. It is in the possession of the Late Malayan Public Office.



**2 Kapitan Chung Keng Koo's Tea-house, Seravak Road**  
A prominent business leader of the Taping community, Chung Keng Koo (1819-1901) was also a Kapitan Cina of Perak and set up the Perak State Council. He also set up Chung An Yang, who resided here, was a member of the Taping Sanitary Board and 'of the important trading clubs'. He employed an European teacher for private tutoring, gave financial aid, and maintained the stables at 12,000 dollars a year.



**3 The first Post Office in the F.M.S., built in 1884, to replace an earlier building. The first Post Office was carried by a relay of runners (1841) and ponies.**



**4 Perak Museum, Main Road**  
The Perak Museum, the first in the country, was started in 1883 in the former government offices. The building was developed in stages from 1885 to 1903. The first curator was Leonard Gray, who built up the much admired natural history and ethnological collections, including a section on the aboriginal peoples. Assembled in the grounds today are European medals for privateering, sea fashions, and the statue of Sir Webb.



**5 Lely Teacher Girls' School, Upper Museum Road**  
The first girls' school in the Malay States was established by the Perak Government in 1883. The Methodist later took over the school and renamed it after the British Rescuer's wife. Soon after the present school building was completed in November 1941, the Japanese Occupation army requisitioned it for their barracks.



**6 The first Perak Prison in the Malay States for the use of the Perak Armed Force in 1881, under the supervision of Col. Walker. The first convict was completed in 1885 and two years later, a guard room and guard house were erected. The first was named after the Earl of Cornwall, Secretary of State for the Colonies (1874-1876).**



**7 British Officers' Mess, New Club Road**  
The Mess building was of 'painted brick and limestone'. It was built by the Government. It was the first of its kind in the Malay States. It was built in 1885 and was the first of its kind in the Malay States. It was built in 1885 and was the first of its kind in the Malay States.



**8 Malay States Guide, Seravak Road**  
Built in 1886, this was the headquarters of the Perak Armed Police, later called the Malay States Guides. Today it is the most intact, historically important military complex of its kind in Malaya. The statue of Colonel Walker originally stood above the porch of the Regimental/Quartermaster House which faces the Esplanade. See 'Malay States Guide' inside.



**9 The Secretary to Resident's House, Esplanade Road**  
The house was built in 1885 and was a 'Tudor style' building. It was built in 1885 and was a 'Tudor style' building. It was built in 1885 and was a 'Tudor style' building.



**10 Town Hall House, Station Road**  
The Town Hall House was built in 1884, near the former Taping Hall on Station Road. George Fawcett who stayed there in 1915 sometimes 'Raffles' known as the 'Raffles Hotel' but I could not find it in the 'Raffles' book.



**11 King Edward VII School, Station Road**  
The Central School, started in 1883, was the first English school in the Malay States. It was renamed the King Edward VII School when the present building was opened in 1905. The original trees of 20 'most picturesque school ground in Malaya' were planted in 1914. The school excelled in sports, especially football, rugby, hockey and athletics. During the Japanese Occupation, the school was used as a military camp. The school was converted into a military camp and the playgrounds were used as a military camp.



**12 St. George's Institution, Station Road**  
The Catholic boys' school was established in 1919 and 13 years later, the 'Catholic' school was established with a wing on each side. During the Japanese Occupation, the school served in turn as Nippon-Do Gakko (Japanese school), Japanese military school and Japanese officers' hotel.



**13 Police Station, Kinta Road**  
Firstly built in 1881 'at a point about equidistant from the Chinese Station, the market and other main thoroughfares'. The building was built with 'imperial style' for guns, was probably erected some years later. The police station shifted to a fire station. The first to be built in the F.M.S. was made up of members of the Perak Armed Police and later the Malay States Guides.



**14 Ceylon Association, Station Road**  
The Ceylon Association came to Perak in the 1880s to gain the civil service and build the railway. In 1889, they founded the Ceylonese Association and pulled the building two years later.



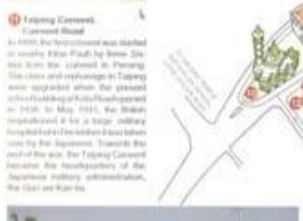
**15 F.M.S. Indian Association, Main Road**  
The founder was Sheikh Nuruddin. In 1885, his son-in-law, a Ceylonese Muslim named O. M. Khan presented the building. It was built in 1885 and was the first of its kind in the Malay States.



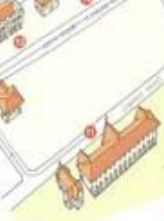
**16 The Keling Mosque, Kinta Road**  
The Tamil Muslim came to Latut as slaves in 1816, grew and the Indian 'beggar' brought with them. They settled at Kinta, at the southern end of Taping town. The community built a mosque dedicated to the west of Nagore, called the 'Mahomedan' or 'Haram' mosque. The mosque was built in 1885 and was the first of its kind in the Malay States.



**17 General Hospital, Main Road**  
Founded in 1880 as Yang Wah (Chinese Paper) Hospital. By the moving of the hospital to the site of the old site in 1891, it was taken over by the government and relocated to the site in 1891. A large number of buildings survive from the 1880s.



**18 Taping Cemetery, Cemetery Road**  
The first burial ground was started in 1841 by the Chinese. It was built in 1841 and was the first of its kind in the Malay States.



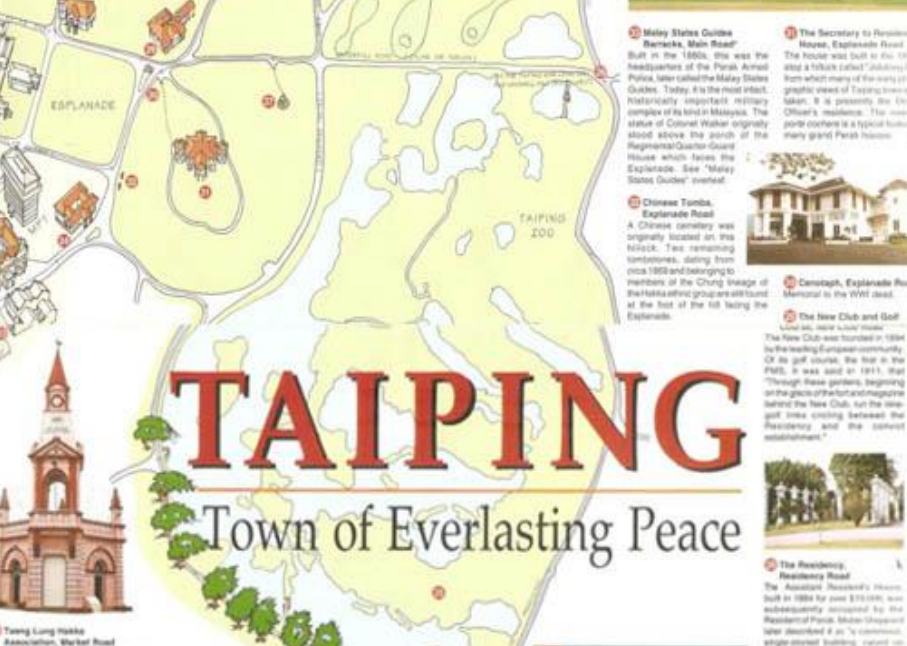
**19 Old Kato Mosque, Kinta Road**  
The oldest mosque in Taping, with an intriguing site-related facade, was built back in 1887 as a community hall. It was built in 1887 and was the first of its kind in the Malay States.



**20 Hokkien Association, Kinta Road**  
This association of immigrants from Fujian province in South China was founded in the late Ching dynasty. The site was acquired in 1918 and the building was completed in 1921.



**21 Sunlight Muslim Association, 212 Kinta Road**  
The first national conference of Sunlight Muslims, a group club, was held here on 11 November 1934. It was 'the first pan-Malayan Malay gathering of a non-official kind ever held'. Among those present were Idris Ali, Tan Sri Yusoff Yusoff, U. M. Zainal Abidin and Sheikh Abdullah of Malacca. Idris Ali and U. M. Zainal Abidin, who were invited to become members of the Malacca conference.



# TAPING

## Town of Everlasting Peace



**22 Taping Market, Market Square**  
The Taping Market consists of two buildings, the Old Market built in 1881 and the New Market built in 1985, each one a similar job and scale structure, '120 feet long by 60 feet wide, concrete floor and roof' with a mobile structure. Presently the larger, more impressive modern timber structure in the corner, the Taping Market is also Malacca's oldest government building, a major 19th century market building.



**23 Chinese Association and Temple for the Immigrant Old, Tanjong Street**  
The Kwan-Yun for Old, founded in 1887 by Chung Keng Koo and others, is an association of people from Kwan-Yun (Central province in South China). The temple was renovated in 1949 and 1954. A pair of old stone lions still guard the entrance. During the same period, it was used as a school for the Chinese in Taping. It is believed to have been a model of Taping of long history. Immigrants' association.



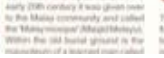
**24 Chinese Association, Esplanade Road**  
A Chinese cemetery was originally located on this hillside. Two remaining tombstones, dating from circa 1888 and belonging to members of the Chung Hwa of the Malacca group, are still standing at the foot of the hill facing the Esplanade.



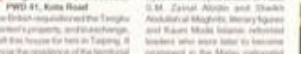
**25 The Residency, Residency Road**  
The Resident's Residency, built in 1884 for use by the British, was subsequently occupied by the Resident of Perak. After the war, it was abandoned and used as a warehouse. It was built in 1884 and was the first of its kind in the Malay States.



**26 Sunlight Muslim Association, 212 Kinta Road**  
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**27 Taping War Cemetery, Cemetery Road**  
The cemetery contains 600 graves of Commonwealth soldiers who fell before the advance of the Japanese in the 'War of Malaya' (Dec 1941 - Jan 1942). It was constructed and maintained by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.



**28 Taping War Cemetery, Cemetery Road**  
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