

# KARST NEWS

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The Quarterly Newsletter of the Malaysian Karst Society

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For members only

## The Quarrying Conundrum

Yin, Hill Hugger

To quarry or not to quarry, is not the issue. The issue is how can quarrying be carried out responsibly and how do we maximise the returns from this non-renewable asset?

Since the demise of the tin industry (which was the mainstay of Perak's economy), the State Government has been looking at other resources to make up for the revenue which tin brought. One such resource is limestone.

In the early days limestone was quarried by blasting the hills with dynamite. It was the accepted practice then. And since there were only a few operators, this did not raise concerns regarding the environment. Neither did it encourage the State Government to look at alternative methods which would do less damage to the environment and at the same time bring in more revenue by adding value to the raw material.

However the time has come when the State Government must take stock of the (limestone) quarrying industry. What is its impact on the environment; provision of employment, state revenue? How best to add value to this resource thus benefiting both the quarry operators, government, and the people.

Simply blasting the hills with dynamite is a crude method of recovering limestone.



A machine that churns out limestone aggregate.



Besides the problem of pollution (noise and air), it also scars the landscape.

Indiscriminate blasting can only yield aggregates, which current price is around RM15 per ton. Value-added limestone products in contrast is worth much more as per weight. For instance, Coated Calcium Carbonate powder retails for RM300 per ton, 20 times more than limestone aggregates. In other words quarry less for more returns.

A more suitable rock than limestone for aggregates is granite. It is harder, more impervious and resistant to water. We also have more granite in Perak – 42% compared to 4% for limestone. So why are we quarrying limestone? It is because limestone hills are easily accessible and blasting limestone hills is easier than blasting granite – in short quick profits.

Blasting is the most serious of our problems but all surface quarrying eventually 'eats away' our limestone hills. It does not make sense to quarry the hills when it is estimated that 99.8% of our limestone lie below the surface.

An obvious alternative, is to quarry underground. Critics claim that basement quarries are too expensive to operate, especially in a tropical climate where rainfall is abundant, water must be pumped out of the basement quarry on pumps

### Inside this issue:

<i>Marble Sculpture</i>	2
<i>Gua Puncak, Gunung Lanno</i>	4
<i>Win Some, Lose Some?</i>	5
<i>Why Kinta Valley Hills Should Be Saved</i>	5
<i>Recent Trips</i>	6
<i>Coming Trips</i>	7

## Ninth Malaysian Plan on Conservation

"Environment stewardship will continue to be promoted by the Government to ensure an optimal balance between development needs and the environment. Greater focus will be placed on preventive measures to mitigate negative environmental effect at source, reduce illegal acts against the environment as well as intensify conservation efforts to sustainably manage natural resources."

**“We have an obligation to ensure our natural resource is used for the purpose it is best suited”**

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The Statue of David, Florence, Italy.

running on fossil fuel, the price of which is increasing, rendering basement quarrying even less of an option.

Operation costs for basement quarries may not necessarily be higher, especially in Perak, where ex-quarry sites are ample. These sites where the hills are already diminished, is ideal for basement quarrying as operators could save on costs on removing overburden.

The Malaysian Karst Society strongly feels that in terms of environmental costs, provision of jobs and opportunity costs (tourism), alternative methods (like sub-surface quarrying) have more benefits.

The government cannot allow short term gains to affect the long term future of the state. The broader interests of the community should take precedence over the narrow interests of the industry.

The Society is not opposed to quarrying and accepts that it is an essential industry.

This newsletter can be found online:

<http://www.mykarst.org/uploads/Newsletters/Q2-06.pdf>

## Marble Sculpture

Marble sculpture is the art of creating three-dimensional forms from marble. Sculpture is among the oldest of the arts. Even before painting cave walls, early humans fashioned shapes from stone. From these beginnings, artifacts have evolved to their current complexity. The point at which they became art is for the beholder to decide. In any case, sculptures rank among the greatest of human achievements.

Marble is deposited by precipitation from water. The original source will be limestone, which is dissolved in water by the weak carbonic acid present in rainwater. This can migrate underground and be deposited in voids. Owing to this water-born deposition, limestone can have fluid patterns of mineral staining, usually gray to black. The finest marbles for sculpture have no or few stain.

Among the commonly available stones only marble has a slight surface translucency

MKS however does not condone blasting limestone hills for aggregates. We have an obligation to ensure our natural resource is used for the purpose it is best suited for.

Use and production of limestone aggregates should be discouraged as it is a wasteful practice. The present situation will not change if it is left to market forces as the demand for aggregates will persist and blasting limestone for aggregates is too easy and lucrative.

MKS does not have all the answers, but it is willing to explore all possibilities with the industry players as well as the State Government to work out a solution which will be acceptable and beneficial to all parties.

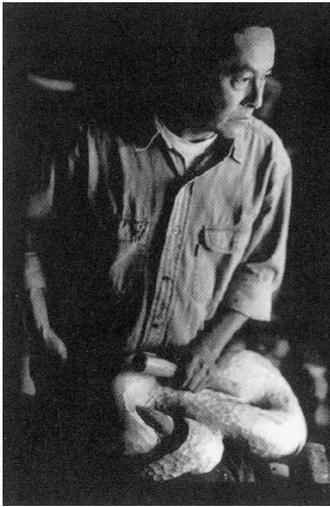
The Society has been calling for a three party dialogue with the State Government and Quarry Operators Association but have yet to receive any response.

that is comparable to that of human skin. It is this translucency that gives a marble sculpture a visual depth beyond its surface and this evokes a certain realism when used for figurative works.

Source: <http://www.wikipedia.org>

*In Perak, in spite of the numerous quarries that exist, sculpture-making is limited to tombstones. A majority of quarry operators in Perak extract stones through blasting, hence the stones are not suitable for sculptures as they are often fractured.*

*We would rather see that marble be transformed into works of art than to see it crushed and used for road metal. With a retail value of RM15.00 per ton, the State will need to allow scores of hills to be blasted for meager returns. In contrast, the same stone, in the hands of a master sculptor, could be transformed into a priceless masterpiece.*



## Pius Chong Fah Cheong

Born 1949, Singapore

In his journey, Pius has traveled and sculpted rocks from many parts of the world. He grew up in Penang, where he studied at St. Joseph's Training College. In 2005, his journey brought him back to Malaysia.

When he came to Ipoh, he was impressed with the huge array of stones that are available, from locally quarried marble to onyx from Pakistan. So he decided to stay, for a while.

Pius, whose home is now in Canada, visits Ipoh often to sculpt, in a workshop that he and a friend had setup.

His work can be viewed at 28, Jalan Sultan Azlan Shah a.k.a. Tiger Lane, Ipoh.

*Pius Chong is a member of the Malaysian Karst Society. He does not condone blasting limestone hills for aggregate..*

### Sculptures by Pius Chong

more sculptures at: [www.fahcheong.com](http://www.fahcheong.com)



*"First Generation", 2000, bronze.  
National Library, Singapore.*



*"Sayang", 2006, marble.  
MKS premise, Ipoh, Malaysia.*



*A Chinese tea table, 2006, marble.  
MKS premise, Ipoh, Malaysia.*

## Sculpture Project

In the fall of 2005, forty sculptors from different parts of the world arrived in Chau Dac, Vietnam, a small border village near Myanmar.

The sculptors, by invitation of the Vietnamese Government, were supplied with rocks, tools and assistant artisans. In return, the completed sculptures were donated to the people of Vietnam. The project is organized concurrently with the Da Nang Sculpture Project, a Norwegian-Vietnamese collaboration, which funds the

Da Nang Sculpture Centre. This project is the result of the cooperation between the Northern European Association in Vietnam (NAV) and the Danang Fine Arts Association with USD775,000 funding from NAV in the first four years.

*Sculptor Pius Chong, who was a participant in Chau Dac, believes that Ipoh has the potential for such a Sculpture Project and is currently working on it. MKS supports his endeavor.*



*Intersection at Jalan Sultan Azlan Shah (Tiger Lane) & Jalan Raja Dr. Nazrin Shah (Gopeng Road), that looks rather like a quarry site. Stone sculptures could be installed in prominent places such as this.*



The entrance to Gua Puncak, partially blocked by rockfall

**WARNING**  
Do Not  
Venture into  
Gua Puncak  
Without  
Supervision



This cave floor might be further weakened by blasting at Gunung Lanno

## Gua Puncak, Gunung Lanno, Perak

*Liz Price*

Gua Puncak is the largest cave in Gunung Lanno, Kinta Valley, Perak. The cave also houses the second largest cave chamber in Peninsula Malaysia. The cave is more than 1.5 km long, and the chamber is about 80 m high. The cave (Prk 18/40) was explored and surveyed in 2001 by Austrian-English-German cavers during the Lanno 2001 expedition.

Gua Puncak is of historical interest as it was mined for tin, possibly in the early 20th century by Chew Boon Juan as contractor for Charles Alma Baker. There are mining tools and a concrete dam inside the cave, as well as the remains of an old wooden railway, and mining implements. There are two lakes inside.



The cave entrance is surrounded by some beautiful monophyllaea.

Gua Puncak has some beautiful formations and is home to a variety of cave fauna and many bats live in the cave. The bats are especially important as they are the main pollinators for crops such as banana, durians, petai, as well as mangroves. Insect-eating bats also help to keep insect pests in check.

The cave entrance is surrounded by some beautiful monophyllaea, these single leaved plants are generally found only on limestone. It is not known which species they are, but it could well be endangered. One such species, *Monophyllaea elongata* is endemic to Perak and is only known at Gunung Tempurung. Many flora species are restricted to karst and endemic to Peninsula Malaysia, and are therefore endangered if their habitat is lost, e.g. through quarrying.

Gua Puncak is featured in the book "Expedition Gunung Lanno", and has also been documented in international caving

magazines such as *International Caver* and *Descent*, as well as in caving club journals in Austria, England and Germany.

When MKS members visited in April 2006, they found quarrying had taken place outside the cave, and the cave entrance was partly blocked by a rockfall. The cave has two small entrances, side by side. A group were able to access the cave on May 1st, and although the entrance passages have been damaged and shortened, the rest of the cave is still untouched. But the cave is in danger of being lost forever.

In early 2006 MKS members found a small cave about 100m north of Gua Puncak. Gua Debu Putih (Prk 18/43) had one entrance branching into horizontal

passages, which lead to water. It was named from the white dust coating the cave walls. However by April, the entrance had been totally blocked.

A report on Gua Puncak was published in the Perak editions of national newspapers: *Nanyang* and *Sin Chew* on May 11, *The Star* May 12. The matter is now being taken to higher authorities in an attempt to save the cave.

Gua Puncak is an important part of Malaysia's heritage as well as being an important cave in its own right. Peninsula Malaysia has some unique caves which have been mined for tin, such as in Perak and Perlis, which is unusual. Mining activity has further enlarged Gua Puncak. This is a unique part of Malaysia's heritage.

It would be a tragedy if Gua Puncak is lost. Please help to support MKS in its plea to save the cave.

## Win Some, Lose Some?

Hill Hugger

A visit to Gua Puncak, Gunung Lanno in May prompted MKS to highlight its concern regarding Gua Puncak's fate. Numerous news articles regarding Gua Puncak's eventual demise were subsequently featured in newspapers.

Perak Chief Minister Tajol Rosli later announced that the relevant quarry operator has agreed to stop quarrying 50 meters from the entrance point as "they understood the historical significance of the cave" - The Star, 25 May 2006, "**MB: Cave entrance will be cleared soon**". MKS applauds the operator on its prudent decision. However, caves are basically voids in rock, not much to quarry anyway!

Ironically, another headline on the same page read "**Eyesore quarries to be flattened**". "Whatever hills that are already spoilt, the operator will have to quarry them. They are not suppose to

touch any more hills after that", the Chief Minister said.

Virtually all the hills in Kinta Valley has been quarried at one time or another, are these hills considered 'spoilt'?

MKS urges the Perak State Government to conduct a comprehensive study on Kinta Valley's karst where all the hills and caves are evaluated for their historical, scientific, and archaeological significance. One such report (MNS 1/90) was submitted to the Perak State Government in 1991, unfortunately its recommendations were not implemented.

Many limestone hills and cave in Perak are of special interest, such as Gua Badak, Lenggong Valley, where 'Perak Man' was excavated. These hills should never be leased for quarrying.

More news articles at: <http://www.mykarst.org/index.php?/categories/5-news>

## Why Kinta Valley Hills Should Be Saved

Liz Price

### FAUNA

Serows (below), which are endangered, have been spotted on Gunung Lanno and Gunung Rapat.



The snail fauna is very rich, even on the small hills. A small plot of 2 x 4 m can contain as many as 40-50 species. Isolated hills have their own endemic species.

- *Liphistius kantan* - a trapdoor spider,

only found in Gunung Khantan

- *Liphistius tempurung* - a trapdoor spider, only found in Gunung Tempurung

Many of the caves are home to bats, both insect-eating and fruit-eating. Bats are vital for keeping check on the insect population. They are also pollinators for several crops.

### FLORA

36 species of plant are endemic to Perak limestone. Some of these are endangered, others are rare.

- *Monophyllaea elongata* - only found in Gunung Tempurung
- *Dracaena graminifolia* - only found in Gunung Rapat

## Briefly

"The Badak Cave in Lenggong, Perak, (where 'Perak Man' was discovered) has been almost destroyed by quarry activities. Its entrance is almost covered by boulders brought down by detonation at a nearby quarry."

Sanim Ahmad,  
National Museum  
archaeologist.

The Star, 27 May 2006



*Liphistius tempurung's* segmented abdomen is an ancient feature



The *Monophyllaea* has only one leaf

## NOTICE

We will be moving to:

28, Jalan Sultan Azlan Shah (Tiger Lane), Ipoh, Perak.

Members will be informed by email once the relocation is complete (tentatively by August 2006).

- Some *Paraboea* species are only found in Gunung Tempurung and Gunung Kandu

### HISTORY & ARCHAEOLOGY

Some caves, particularly those on Gunung Lanno are associated with tin-mining dating back 100 years, are part of Malaysia's heritage. Gua Puncak houses Peninsula Malaysia's second largest cave chamber.

Gua Naga Mas has a fossil bones thought to be a cat from the Pleistocene era.

There are potential archaeological sites within caves and rock shelters as many hills have not yet been studied.

Many of the hills have temples, many are still in use, but some are abandoned but are of historical interest.

*International organizations like the World Bank and The Nature Conservancy have recognized the importance of karst ecosystems and are serious about their conservation.*

## RECENT TRIPS

Pic 1

A steel cable appears to growing out of this tree!

G. Kanthan, April 2006



Pic 2, 3

The Cathedral Chamber

G. Kanthan, April 2006



Pic 4

Traversing Gua Anak Tempurung

G. Anak Tempurung, March 2006



Pic 5

Excavation site at the cave entrance

G. Kelawar, May 2006



Pic 6

Kevin inspecting some formations.

G. Kelawar, May 2006



## COMING TRIPS

### Six-mile Tunnel Sunday, 2nd July 2006

We will be revisiting Six-mile Tunnel which is actually about 700 meters in length. The lotus pond which we used to wade across to get to the Tunnel entrance is being filled up for development purpose, causing the water level in the tunnel to rise. This might be our last opportunity to explore the Tunnel.

Children below 12 years of age are not allowed. Lifejacket is compulsory for all.

Tip: If you are bringing along a camera or other electronic gadgets, waterproof plastic bags are useful to keep your things dry. A rubber dinghy will also come in handy.

Meet at	Ipoh Garden Plaza, Jalan Sultan Azlan Shah (Tasek Road)
Time	9.00 a.m.
Duration	up to 6 hours
Challenge rating	★★★★☆
Essential gear	Lifejacket, torch, ration, change of clothes



Six-mile Tunnel - wadding across the muddy lotus pond  
2004 Dec MKS File pic

### Climb Gunung Panjang 6 August 2006, Sunday

Gunung Panjang is located in Tambun, Perak. Expect a tough climb, this one is no walk-in-the-park. A panoramic view of Ipoh can be observed at its peak.

Children below 12 years of age are not allowed. If time permits, we will check out 3,000-year old cave drawings at Gua Tambun.

Meet at	Ipoh Garden Plaza, Jalan Sultan Azlan Shah (Tasek Road)
Time	9.00 a.m.
Duration	3 to 4 hours
Challenge rating	★★★★☆



Six-mile Tunnel - washing up at the Tunnel entrance  
2004 Dec MKS File pic

### Gua Ngia 3 September 2006, Sunday

Gua Ngia, a cave on the south-most tip of Gunung Lanno, was mined for tin in the 1900s. Remnants of tin-mining can still be seen.

Meet at	Kwong Fook Ngam Cave Temple, Kg. Kepayang
Time	9.00 a.m.
Duration	3 to 4 hours
Challenge rating	★★★★☆



Gua Tambun - cave drawing depicting a dugong (top)  
2004 Feb MKS File pic

## BOOK SALE: EXPEDITION GUNUNG LANNO

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See us online at

[www.mykarst.org](http://www.mykarst.org)

Views and opinions expressed in this newsletter do not necessarily reflect those of the Executive Committee of the Society.

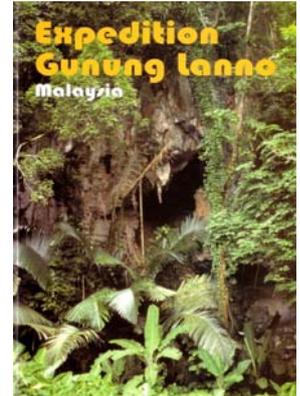
This book is the result of a 3 week speleological expedition to Gunung Lanno, Kinta Valley, Perak.

Gunung Lanno is one of the biggest limestone hills in the Kinta Valley. The expedition explored the whole mountain, covering the surface area, surveying all the known caves, and linking them to the surface survey. Research was also done on the cave fauna.

Authors: E. Geyer, P. Jeutter, S. Kogler, L. Price, J. Segl, F. Schmidt, Dr. H. Steiner, A. Wolf, S. Yian, Dr. H. Kusch, A. Örtel.

**Abstract :**

*In November 2001 a group of speleologists from Austria, England, Germany and Malaysia held an expedition to Gunung Lanno, an isolated, densely forested limestone hill in the Kinta Valley, Perak. The expedition searched for caves and surveyed them. A good overview on the caves in the mountain was established. During 3 weeks, 32 caves were documented and 12 kilometres of passages surveyed. Aerial investigation via aeroplane showed higher entrances of which not all were reached. Four temple caves were also surveyed. On the last day of the expedition the biggest discovery was made. Gua Puncak holds western Malaysia's second largest chamber the "Lanno Summit Chamber", 60 meters wide and more than 180 metres long, located directly below the peak of the mountain. Other big caves are Gua Selari, Gua Lanno and Gua Kong Fook Ngam. The cave fauna was studied, and several new species were discovered. This report documents the results of the expedition in 2001, the pre-trips in the years 1998 and 1999, as well as an introduction into the area. 2005, hardback, A4, 240pp, 253 figures, colour and B&W photos, maps, surveys.*



**RM115.00** plus post and packing **RM7.00**.

Books are available from Liz ([lizprice@hotmail.com](mailto:lizprice@hotmail.com)).

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