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HOW did Dhoby Ghaut get its name? What do kacang puteh and movie theatres have in common? It would be a pity if future generations never knew that Dhoby Ghaut was the place where the Indian dhoby ran their laundry business. Or that nuts contained in paper cones, called kacang puteh, were first popularised by vendors who sold them outside the old Ang Mo Kio cinema.

But thanks to the power of Web 2.0, fond memories of the past can live on and be broadcast far and wide.

Web 2.0 is not rocket science. It's just the name for a bunch of tools freely available on the Net which include blogs, wikis and Facebook. These tools are popular because of their vast reach, especially to the grass-roots, and because they allow instant feedback.

The National Heritage Board (NHB) took advantage of MyBlogLog, a Yahoo! free service, when it started a blog in March 2006.

Called yesterday.sg, the initiative is an extension of NHB's current mission: promote public awareness and appreciation of Singapore's heritage.

The beauty of a blog lies in its raw energy. Without the strict corporate filters that wring the life out of postings, authenticity is preserved like in a classroom show-and-tell.

The idea for yesterday.sg came from Walter Lim, director of corporate communications and industry promotion at NHB, in 2005.

"I was looking at celebrity bloggers like Mr Brown and Xiaxue and realised that we could do the same to reach out to young people in Singapore," said Walter, an avid blogger himself. "Young people don't like to visit museums because displays are behind glass windows and the experience is static."

His plan took shape when he befriended renowned Singaporean bloggers like Benjamin Lee, famously known as Mr Miyagi, and Lee Kin Mun, *aka* Mr Brown. They and more than 10 other bloggers now actively pen their thoughts on yesterday.sg.

The blog attracts 500 unique visitors a day, mostly from Singapore. But there are also visitors from Malaysia, Britain and the United States.

NHB doesn't – and hasn't had to – police or remove content because the subject revolves around "sweet memories and doesn't incite negative feelings".

If it is any indication of the blog's success in reaching both the young and old, yesterday.sg boasts a fol-

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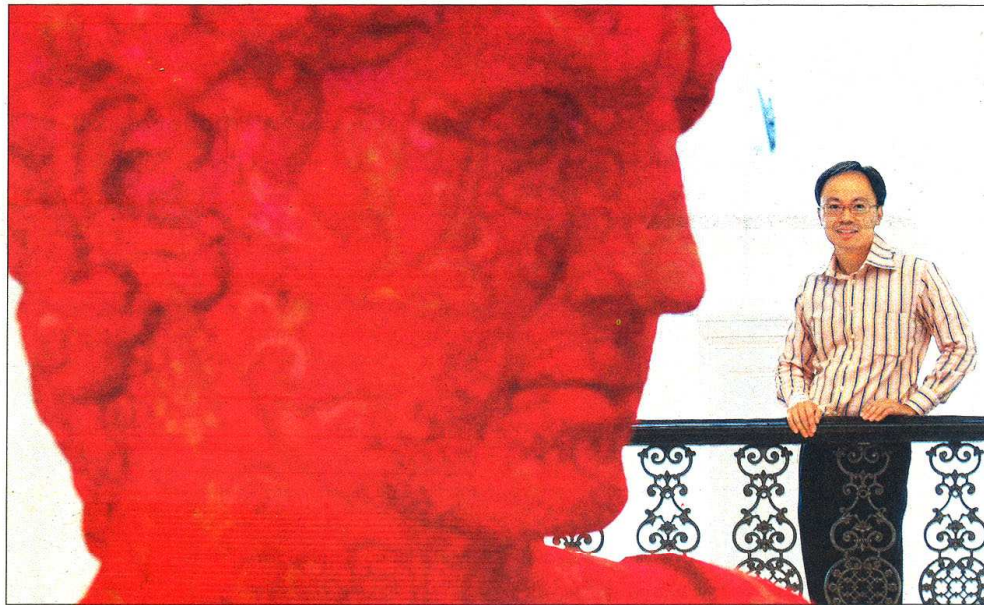


PHOTO: MARK CHEONG

Making history come alive, Walter Lim, director of corporate communications and industry promotion at National Heritage Board, hit on the idea of a blog for visitors to pen and share their sweet memories.

lowing from twenty-somethings to those over 60 years old. They blog or comment on postings.

Visitors to the Asian Civilisation Museum, the National Museum of Singapore and the Singapore Philatelic Museum, among others, have also gone up from 800,000 in 2005 to 1.7 million last year, due partly to publicity on the blog, said Walter.

Walter is even considering hosting face-to-face meetings for yesterday.sg's members, turning it into a

real-world club. Even if that doesn't happen, Singaporeans can still continue to swop war stories and post snapshots of their nostalgic past on yesterday.sg.

Landmarks like Big Splash and the red brick house that was once the famous Katong Bakery & Confectionery, though absent in physical form, will live on virtually forever.

By Irene Tham