

on 30 April 2014

Field trip to Fort Alice eye-opener for Unimas students



Enriching experience: Members of the Unimas group taking a group photo with Fort Alice in the background.

SRI AMAN: The first group of 40 students from the first archaeology course offered by University of Malaysia Sarawak (Unimas) took a three-hour bus trip here to see the historical reconstruction of Fort Alice.

The undergraduates were able to witness heritage conservation in person and up close.

Architect Mike Boon led the field trip for the students and their visiting professor Dr Nancy White, and lecturer Nicholas Gani.

The visitors were amazed by how the fort is being preserved, with its original beams and other construction materials from the mid-19th century still intact.

The 145-year-old fort is a listed historical monument.

Mid-last year, the structure was taken apart piece by piece. The 9,900sq ft, two-storey wooden building consisted of 88 columns, of which 74 were carried through to the second floor.

In weight, the belian (local ironwood) — which was used extensively, from columns, wall panels, floor boards to roof beams — weighed an estimated 100 tonnes.

From its strategic hilltop, it served to defend against “piracy” and invasion from the Lupar River, but mostly it became a government administrative centre for Charles Brooke, the second Rajah of Sarawak.

It was here where the White Rajahs staked their claims aground. The British battled against local tribal warriors like Rentap along the Batang Lupar and expanded the state’s territory northwards and eastwards from the Sarawak River; thus charting the modern day boundaries.

Fort Alice had fallen into ruin since then but thanks to the preservation project, it regains its historical significance and is now a fascinating subject for many case studies.

Unimas currently offers a four-year undergraduate programme in Antropology and Sociology.

Further details about the programme are available at www.unimas.my.

Source: **The Star**