

# **A History of ASEASUK**

On its 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

**V.T. King**



**ASEASUK**

ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN  
STUDIES IN THE UNITED KINGDOM



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On its 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

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## Introduction

As the current Chair of ASEASUK I think it is timely that we should provide a history of the Association as we prepare to celebrate our 40<sup>th</sup> year at our conference in Swansea on 11-13 September 2009. I must emphasise that this is both a 'brief' and 'personal' history of a long-established institution on its anniversary.<sup>1</sup> Other colleagues might well have chosen other milestones, people and events for special mention and remembrance. However, we are also rather constrained by the written information available to us. Unfortunately the Association has not kept a complete, consolidated and easily accessible record of its activities and deliberations from its early days. Files and other materials were usually passed from honorary secretary to honorary secretary and from chairperson to chairperson and did not have a permanent home. We started modestly and I suppose we did not anticipate that 40 years on we might wish to remember how we were born and then attempt to trace the tortuous pathways by which we reached a certain maturity with direct reference to the written evidence contained in a consolidated archive.

It was only when the Association's newsletter *ASEASUK News* was launched in 1984 that we begin to get some consistency and regularity in the annual coverage of our proceedings and activities. Therefore, my summary of the first 15 years is based on rather

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<sup>1</sup> I am sincerely grateful to colleagues and friends who read earlier drafts of this history and provided comments or gave me additional information and guidance, among them Joern Dosch, Ian Glover, Tim Harper, Lewis Hill, Mike Hitchcock, Russell Jones, Pauline Khng, Tony Milner, Mike Parnwell, Jonathan Rigg, David Smyth, Tony Stockwell, Bob Taylor, and Kirsty Walker.

I recognise fully the dangers one faces in recording one's own 'recollections' and interpretations of the past and the perils which reside in one's selection and evaluation of what seemed important and worthy of note at the time; see, for example Marrison (2005) and Kershaw (2005).

patchy information, and relies especially on the files which my colleague Lewis Hill decided wisely to put in storage in the basement of the Wilberforce Building at Hull University.<sup>2</sup> Sadly, the substantial materials which I know that another of my colleagues at Hull, Dr David Bassett, kept securely in his filing cabinet when he was Chair of the Association between 1976 and 1983 and going back to the time when he was involved, along with several London colleagues, in the setting up of the Association in 1969 seem to have disappeared after his death in 1989. I was also able to check ASEASUK files which are now stored in the archives of the British Academy along with files from the British Institute in South-East Asia (Singapore and Bangkok) and its successor, the London-based British Academy Committee for South-East Asian Studies (see below). The ASEASUK materials were sent there for safekeeping by Professor Jonathan Rigg, a former long-serving Honorary Secretary and Chair of the Association. I had hoped that these would provide some information on the late 1960s and the 1970s, but I have since discovered that they date from 1982-83 through to 2002.

I have touched on the institutional, financial and policy context of the Association's foundation and development where appropriate, and for reasons which will become clear later I have chosen to devote considerable attention to the Association's relations with the British Academy. Much of the national level information can be gleaned from numerous other publications,<sup>3</sup> and in terms of government policy and funding, and the trials and tribulations of area studies

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<sup>2</sup> I have not referenced individual items from these files in this paper.

<sup>3</sup> See Bassett 1981; Carey 1986; Clarke 1989; Cowan 1963; Forth 1986; Hayter 1961; Hodder-Williams 1993; Kemp 1983; King 1989a, 1990, 1992, 2001, 2005; Khng and King 2001; Milner 1978; Parker 1986; Parnwell 1987, 1988; Scarbrough 1947; Smith 1986; Stephens 1986.

programmes in the UK our history presents a depressingly familiar pattern of what in current parlance might be termed 'boom and bust' (well almost). Therefore, I have kept this somewhat parochial and have decided to focus primarily on the Association's internal development. However imperfect, this history serves to remind us of our ancestry and some of our more notable achievements, of which we can all be proud. There may be other achievements (and indeed shortcomings) which I have neglected to mention and it would be especially helpful if other ASEASUK members, particularly those whose memories extend to the early years, are moved to remind us of those in future issues of *ASEASUK News*.

### **Our beginnings and purposes**

For those members who were around in the formative years of the Association, and I joined in 1973 four years after the Association was born in London so I cannot claim any special insight into its beginnings, there was probably very little if no thought given to whether or not the enterprise was sustainable in the longer term and which direction (or directions) it might take. It was a creature of circumstances. It emerged, as its Constitution stated proudly if rather quaintly in its opening sentence, 'to meet the felt needs consequent to the growth of South East Asian Studies in the United Kingdom'. That phrase remains in the Constitution to this day, though if current members were asked what their 'felt needs' were (and are) there would probably be a range of responses. The South-East Asian Studies constituency was relatively small and residentially concentrated in the 1970s and very much focused on the three main Centres of South-East Asian Studies - London, Hull

and Kent<sup>4</sup>. Indeed the major role played by senior academics of the Centre of South East Asian Studies at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in the early years of the Association is very evident. However, already by the 1980s the Association had expanded considerably in its membership and the presence and participation of scholars from several universities outside the three Centres had increased markedly. This trend has continued to strengthen to the present.

‘The Association of South-East Asian Studies’<sup>5</sup> as it was styled in the circular letter of 23 May 1969 announcing its formation (‘in the United Kingdom’ was not mentioned and presumably taken for granted), was initially promulgated and administered by a primarily London-based professoriate comprising Professors C.D. (Jeremy) Cowan, Charles A. Fisher (1916-82),<sup>6</sup> Maurice Freedman (1920-75)

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<sup>4</sup> The staff at Kent, who began to be appointed in 1969-70 and their associated programmes introduced from 1971 were not formally organised into a Centre until 1978.

<sup>5</sup> As many colleagues will know ‘South-East Asian Studies’ is rendered in various ways and there has been much debate about the ‘correct’ form. In the earlier Association correspondence which I have been consulting it is rendered variously as ‘South-East Asian Studies’, ‘South East Asian Studies’, ‘South-east Asian Studies’, ‘Southeast Asian Studies’, and ‘South-East Asian studies’. Out of habit and my long sojourn in Hull I am more accustomed to ‘South-East Asian Studies’, but, for reasons unknown to me, my current institution, Leeds University, prefers it without the hyphen. Incidentally our Newsletter has it as ‘Southeast Asian Studies’.

<sup>6</sup> *ASEASUK News* has carried obituaries on behalf of some of its founders and early officers: Professor Stuart Simmonds (Smyth 1995), Dennis Duncanson who served as ASEASUK’s second Chair (Coueslant 1998) and Dr David Bassett, our third Chair (King 1989b; Marrison 1990; Marrison and Hill 1992), its first two Honorary Secretaries, Professors Ralph Smith (Brown 2001; Rettig 2001), and Michael Leifer (*The Times*/Asad Latif, 2001). For Professor Maurice Freedman see Skinner (1976: 871-85) and Freedman (1978, essays selected and introduced by G. William Skinner), and obituaries in *The Times*, 22 and 26 July 1975; for Professor Charles Fisher see obituary in the *Geographical Journal* 1982: 148, no. 2: 296-97 and *The Times*, 11 January 1982; and for Professor Mervyn Aubrey Jaspán the obituary in *Borneo Research Bulletin* ([Tom Harrisson], 1975, 7, no. 2: 72-73) and in Geoffrey Marrison’s catalogue (1989). For Judith

and E.H.S. (Stuart) Simmonds (1919-94) joined by Dr David Bassett (1931-89) from Hull. As an *ad hoc* or *interim* Committee they set themselves the task of undertaking the preparation of a draft constitution and a statement of aims. The reason for the Association's formation was stated in the brief circular which was intended to obtain expressions of interest from potential members, in addition to their postal address, institutional affiliation and 'field of interest'. It stated 'In view of the growth of South-East Asian Studies in the United Kingdom, and the need for co-operation and co-ordination in the development of these studies and in the advancement of our mutual interests, the Association for [sic] South-East Asian Studies has been formed'.

At this juncture it is interesting to note with regard to South-East Asian Studies at the national level that parallel developments were taking place elsewhere since it was in 1969 that senior figures in the British Academy began to discuss the possibility of founding a British Institute in Singapore and encouraging the formation of an associated Society of Friends to coordinate and facilitate the development of British research in the region. These Academy discussions achieved a real momentum in 1970 and 1971 just at the time that the Association was taking its first tentative steps and they involved prominent academics who were to play a role both in the early years of the Association and in the planning for a British Institute, particularly Maurice Freedman and Jeremy Cowan (see below).

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Jacob see Smyth's obituary in *Mon-Khmer Studies*, 2003, 33: xi-xii; and see Huffman, 1993 and Smyth, 1993).

A draft constitution was circulated by Jeremy Cowan in early 1971, and among other things charged the Association with ‘the circulation of professional information amongst scholars with South-East Asian interests and the projection of South-East Asia as an important field of study within the United Kingdom generally’. Perhaps it is this responsibility above all else that the Association set itself in its early years which has been accomplished with a large measure of success. Another of its aims was ‘keeping under review the financial and other resources available for the pursuit and development of South-East Asian Studies in the United Kingdom’. We have certainly succeeded in keeping national resources under review, but arguing persuasively for and safeguarding these resources have been rather more problematical, as evidenced by the later demise of the two provincial Centres at Kent and Hull (Kent having closed its programmes by 1991, just over 20 years after its foundation [Annual Report, 1985-86:2], and Hull closing between 2003 and 2005 following over 40 years of activity, though with the transfer of five academic posts from Hull to the Department of East Asian Studies, University of Leeds by 2005 [King 2003; Marrison 2005; Kershaw 2005]).

In his survey of maritime South-East Asian Studies in the United Kingdom undertaken in the mid 1980s, and at a time when higher education and area studies were going through particularly tough times and South-East Asian Studies had lost several academic posts, Peter Carey took a rather stern view of the Association’s achievements at that time and its prospects for the future. He said ‘Even within the United Kingdom, the Association of South-East Asian Studies in the U.K. still has a long way to go before it can really be considered as an effective nucleus for the promotion of area studies and the maintenance of contacts between individual

scholars' (1986: 23-4). From the mid 1980s and particularly through its newsletter, regular conferences, registers and surveys, its close links with the British Academy Committee for South-East Asian Studies, and more recently the development of its website and the continued provision of Academy-funded research grants, it has done much more to co-ordinate and promote research activities and gather and disseminate information than it did in its first decade or so. In looking back perhaps Peter Carey can be persuaded today to modify his view somewhat, but it is certainly true that the Association has continued to struggle to protect South-East Asian language-based area studies programmes from the vagaries of government funding and policy in an 'RAE- and quantitative target-driven educational culture' (Ford 2005: 2).

### **Early developments and officers**

Following the informal deliberations of 1969 and 1970 it was decided to establish a necessary democratic body to administer the affairs of the fledgling Association. Therefore, election to the seven places available on the Committee took place in the first quarter of 1971, the results of which were reported on 6 April 1971 by Jeremy Cowan's secretary at that time, Ms J. Edwards. Committee members served for two years but could then offer themselves for re-election. The Committee could also co-opt up to three additional members, including, if necessary, an Honorary Secretary (though more recently we seem to have abandoned 'Honorary' or at least the term seems not to be used as much as it was). A Chairperson was then appointed from among the elected members (see Appendix I). The first Committee comprised all the members of the *ad hoc* Committee with the exception of David Bassett, in addition to Professor Mervyn Aubrey Jaspan (1926-75), from Hull, (John) Dennis Duncanson

(1917-98), from Kent and Dr Leslie Hugh Palmier from Bath. With the exception of Maurice Freedman, who served as the first elected Chair, and Leslie Palmier, the officers of the Association were drawn from the three Centres of South-East Asian Studies in the UK.

It is also worth emphasising the important role of the London School of Economics (LSE) in the early development of the study of South-East Asia in the United Kingdom. Professors Raymond Firth and Maurice Freedman were there (though Freedman went to the Chair of Social Anthropology at Oxford in 1970 and remained there until his untimely death in 1975), as well as Dr H.S. (Stephen) Morris, Dr Rosemary Firth, Dr Judith Djamour and, before his departure to Cambridge, Dr Edmund Leach. Dr Michael Leifer also joined the LSE in 1969 after spending seven years in Hull. Coincidentally Leslie Palmier had also undertaken his doctoral research at the LSE, some of the results of which appeared in the LSE Monographs on Social Anthropology. This is a distinguished series which published the studies of many social anthropologists and others who had carried out fieldwork in South-East Asia from the late 1930s through to the 1960s (including Freedman, Leach, Djamour and Rosemary Firth along with Allan Elliott, J.D. (Derek) Freeman, John Gullick, Michael Swift, and W. E. Willmott) (see King 1989a:18-19).

In 1971 Dr Ralph Smith (1939-2000) (Brown 2001; Rettig 2001) from SOAS was co-opted to serve as Honorary Secretary of the newly elected Committee. But, as a subsequent circular stated, he stood down in 1972 because of pressure of work to be succeeded as co-opted Secretary by Dr Michael Leifer (1933-2001) (*The Times*, 2001; Asad Latif, 2001) who reported to the membership on 17 April 1972 that the decision had been taken to charge a subscription of £1.50 (which in those early years appears not to have been collected in any

systematic fashion). This modest charge remained in place until 1982 when the Committee raised it rather dramatically to £2.00.

The first list of members compiled in 1971 totalled 64, almost half (31) of whom came from SOAS: Allott, Ayre, Barrett, Bastin, Bee, Caldwell, de Casparis, A.H. Christie, Cowan, Davidson, Fisher, Gandamihardja, Henderson, Hla Pé, Hodder, Honey, Jacob, Jones, Knappert, Lodge, G.B.Milner, McVey, Ng, Okell, Phillips, Ricklefs, Shorto, Simmonds, Smith, Turton, Ward; 9 from Hull: Bassett, C.J. Christie, Douglas, Hill, Jackson, Jaspan, Moon, Palmer, Parkinson; and 4 from Kent: Duncanson, Hooker, Kemp [then at UEA], Kershaw. Therefore, just over two-thirds of the membership came from the three recognised Centres. Oxford mustered 4 members (Freedman [recently from the LSE], Kidron, Needham, Rose); other London colleges were also represented: Cook (Goldsmiths), Leifer and Morris (LSE), Lyon (Institute of Commonwealth Studies), Wheatley (UCL), and a smattering of academics from other universities including Cambridge (Tambiah), Bristol (Brailey), Swansea (Oliver), Bath (Palmier), Southampton (Robinson), Aberdeen (Short), and Durham (Wilder). There were also 4 retired or unaffiliated members (Hall, Mendelson, Pearn, Powell).

Following the Committee elections for 1973 Dennis Duncanson, Charles Fisher, Maurice Freedman, who continued as Chair, and Stuart Simmonds were re-elected and new members were David Bassett and Dr Peter Lyon (ICS). Michael Leifer was also elected and continued to serve as Honorary Secretary. New members who came onto the Committee in 1974 were Peter Ayre (SOAS) and Judith Jacob (SOAS) (1923-2002), the Association's first female representative on the Committee who between 1952 and 1988 was also the only lecturer in Cambodian in a British university (Huffman

1993; Smyth 1993, 2003). Dennis Duncanson was elected to the Chair in 1974 and Dr Anthony C. (Tony) Milner was appointed as Honorary Secretary in 1975 (he left Kent for the Australian National University in 1980); the Association was therefore administered for two years from the Centre in Kent. It was also with great sadness that we received news of the death of Maurice Freedman in 1975, a senior colleague who had played a truly leading role in the foundation and early development of the Association, as well as in the planning for the British Institute in South-East Asia (see below) and along with Judith Djamour, Jeremy Cowan and others had been active in the Committee responsible for organising the London-Cornell project for South-East Asian Studies (Carey 1986: 7; Skinner 1976).

It is important to return for a moment to the position of language and literature in the Association of which I was recently reminded by Dr Russell Jones. As I have indicated Judith Jacob was our first woman committee member in the early 1970s and the first colleague to represent scholarly interests in the Association in the languages and literatures of South-East Asia. It was then not until the 1990s that Ulrich Kratz, as an Indonesian language and literature specialist, became Chair of the Association. Most certainly those professionally involved in research and teaching in language and literature joined the Association as members, some served on the Committee from time to time, and they attended the annual conferences, but perhaps ASEASUK's attention to their scholarly interests was not as energetic and positive as it might have been until relatively recently. Our conferences, for example, were primarily directed to issues and themes in the social sciences and humanities, though more recently we have introduced through the hard work of Annabel Teh Gallop, panels on Indonesian and Malay Manuscript Studies. Language

specialists have also moved into such multidisciplinary areas as cultural, media, film and gender studies and through these interests they contribute increasingly to the Association's conferences.

Nevertheless, one result of this relative neglect was the founding of Indonesia Circle at SOAS in 1973, with its own association newsletter (later to become the journal *Indonesia and the Malay World*). It was also accompanied by the setting up of the Indonesian Etymological Project which organized colloquia in different European countries every two years. Specialists in the broader field of Austronesian languages also did not confine their regional interests to what came to be defined as South-East Asia in the post-war period; for that matter neither did the small number of archaeologists and prehistorians who were active in ASEASUK.

### **ASEASUK, the British Academy and CCASA/UKCASA**

In 1976 Dennis Duncanson stood down as Chair of the Committee. The membership had by then increased to 81. The Association's administration moved from Kent to Hull when David Bassett, who had been appointed to the Directorship of the Centre for South-East Asian Studies there following the death of Mervyn Jaspán, took over as Chair of the Association from 20 March 1976; Victor (Terry) King was also co-opted as Honorary Secretary and became a full Committee member from 1979 until his resignation from the Committee in 1992. They both served as officers until 1983 and Terry King also took on the post of Treasurer from 1988 until 1992. In the Association's early days the Honorary Secretary assumed a range of responsibilities but from 1988 it was decided to separate financial from other administrative functions and then from 1990 to

establish an additional post of Membership Secretary. In practice the posts of Treasurer and Membership Secretary have usually been combined, first in the person of Dr Mike Parnwell (1992-95) and then for an extended period from 1996 to the present in Pauline Khng, with a brief interlude (2003-04) in which Dr A.V.M. Horton served.

### ***British Institute in South-East Asia and the Academy Committee***

Just prior to the commencement of David Bassett's and Terry King's tenure fortuitously there was a significant development for South-East Asian Studies in the UK. The British Academy began to take the necessary steps to establish its British Institute in Singapore (BISEA).<sup>7</sup> Discussions in the Academy and with the British Council and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office about the need to found an Institute in Asia go back to at least 1958. These deliberations prompted by the recommendations of the Scarborough Report (1947) and initially coordinated by a Committee of the Universities of Oxford, Cambridge and London focused on the possibility of establishing an Institute in Far Eastern or East Asian Studies. This was to concentrate primarily on China and Japan and the preferred location was Tokyo. Largely for financial reasons the plans for an Institute which originally was to share premises with the British

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<sup>7</sup> ASEASUK has recently committed some of its funds to an archival project to enable a short history to be written of British perspectives on scholarship in South-East Asian Studies in the context of the discussions about the founding of a British Institute in South-East Asia from 1969 and the development and work of the Institute in Singapore and then Bangkok from 1975 to 1986. A Cambridge postgraduate student, Kirsty Walker, has already catalogued the materials which are now kept safely in the archives of the British Academy in London. A further project to sort and catalogue the ASEASUK files now stored in the Academy is also under active consideration.

Council in Tokyo eventually fell through, though other locations in Kobe, Kyoto and Yokohama were also considered.

Given the long drawn out discussions and negotiations over locations in Japan and the eventual collapse of British plans, it was not until mid 1969 that the Academy began to entertain the idea of either an Institute of East Asian or South-East Asian Studies in Singapore. Singapore had established its own Institute of Southeast Asian Studies in 1968; possible accommodation for a British scholarly presence was identified with the planned departure of British military forces; positive support from the Singapore government was forthcoming, and facilities and communications were excellent. It was also felt that prospects for local donations and the cooperation of Australian and New Zealand academies would be much more likely in Singapore. The Academy proceeded to organise an exploratory meeting in March 1970 and a follow up meeting in December, both chaired by Professor Grahame Clark FBA (Professor, later Sir, John Grahame Douglas Clarke, 1907-1995) to which prominent scholars in the fields in which the Institute was to operate (archaeology, art history, history, social and cultural anthropology, and languages and literatures) were invited: John Addis, William G[erald] (Bill) Beasley, A.H. Christie, Jeremy Cowan, Peter Gathercole, Maurice Freedman, Christoph von Fürer-Haimendorf, Basil Gray, Mervyn Jaspan, Edmund Leach, J.H. Macartney, G. de G. Sieveking, Stanley Tambiah and William (Bill) Watson. Grahame Clark was to go on to serve as the first Chair of the Institute's Management Committee in London from August 1975, to be succeeded by Bill Watson (1917-2007) who continued briefly to serve as Chair of the Academy's Committee for South-East Asian Studies which was founded in 1986 following the closure of the Institute in Bangkok. He was in turn succeeded by Bill Beasley

(1919-2006) who served as Chair of the Committee until 1990; Jeremy Cowan then returned to take up the Chair from 1990 to 1998 (see Appendix I).

There were wide-ranging debates in these exploratory meetings in 1970 but two major issues surfaced: the regional scope of the Institute and whether or not it should include East Asia, especially China, and whether Singapore was the most appropriate location to support the Academy's efforts to promote archaeological work in a diverse region. There was also some concern about whether Singapore's own Institute might present difficulties for the development of a British Institute covering the same general region. Following the first meeting the Chair, Grahame Clark, wrote a brief paper for the Academy which began:

As a meeting-ground of Indian and Chinese culture, the home of a number of indigenous peoples of outstanding interest and the source of great wealth, South-East Asia, comprising Burmah (sic), Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, Indonesia and the Phillipines (sic) [the former British dependencies were omitted from this statement and presumably taken for granted], has strong claims to the serious attention of scholars from a broad range of disciplines. The exploratory meeting held on 19<sup>th</sup> March 1970 in the Academy's rooms showed that British universities are becoming increasingly aware of the potentialities of this region both for teaching and research. Indeed studies in the geography, archaeology, art, history, economics, sociology and politics of South-East Asia promise to be one of the more significant areas of growth in a number of British universities. If this growing interest –

and investment – is to be as productive as it might be, there is an obvious need for some coordination both in this country and in the field. The time is ripe while the situation is still fluid for the Academy to take a lead in this promising field.

Clarke's paper proposed that a 'Society for South-East Asian Studies' be formed and an Institute or School 'at some central point in the area' be established. Finally, it was suggested that there seemed to be 'a strong case for seeking to coordinate United Kingdom and Australian and New Zealand endeavours in South-East Asia'.

It was Edmund Leach who pressed for Maurice Freedman, his former colleague at the LSE and a fellow senior anthropologist, to be fully involved in the deliberations. Freedman was both a South-East Asianist who had undertaken field research in Singapore and a Sinologist, and was at that time involved in the setting up of the Association of South-East Asian Studies which he was then to Chair. The possibility of combining South-East and East Asian interests was therefore left open. Freedman was appointed to undertake a visit to the region on behalf of the Academy between 6 September and 9 October 1971 taking in Singapore, Jakarta, Kuala Lumpur, Bangkok, Manila, Hong Kong, Taipei and Canberra. He submitted his report soon after his return entitled *Proposed British Institute for and in South-East Asia* (November 1971). Given the diversity of the region, Freedman recommended that serious attention be turned to establishing a multi-site Institute with an administrative centre in Singapore and two bases with library resources to support field research in Bangkok (to cover mainland South-East Asia) and Jakarta (for the island world). He also suggested that Manila might have its attractions if a single site Institute was established and he pointed to

strong links between the Philippines and Hong Kong scholarship on South-East Asia. Above all Freedman argued for the vigorous pursuit of a joint Australian-British Institute.

A third meeting, again chaired by Grahame Clark (who was the champion of the Institute in the Academy and whose role in the development of support for scholarly work in Southeast Asia needs to be recognised), was organised for February 1972 to consider the Freedman report. The decision was taken at that point to recommend to the Council of the Academy that a British Institute be established, setting down various options, requirements and recommendations. Proposals went to the Council at its meeting on 26 October 1972 and approval was given to proceed to found an Institute, which was to be located in Singapore, for an initial period of three years. Its purpose was to promote joint endeavours with local scholars on research objectives of mutual interest in South-East Asia (particularly in the fields of archaeology, history, art history and anthropology); to keep British scholars informed of needs and priorities in regard to research work in the region; and to arrange for collaboration and secure the necessary permits for British scholars to work there (see Carey 1986: 16; Villiers 1980: 1).

The Institute's directorship was advertised in 1974. Dr Milton Osborne, an Australian citizen who was then in the Department of History at Yale, with experience in the Australian Foreign Service and good relations with French academe, and a distinguished historian of Indochina, was appointed to the post in October of that year. The link to Australia was confirmed. A Management Committee chaired by Grahame Clark was established (with Beasley, Cowan, Freedman, Gray, Leach and Watson as members, and subsequently Professor Hedley Bull in order further to reflect Australian

interests). Although Milton Osborne commenced his duties from August 1975 it was not until February 1976 that the Institute was finally registered in Singapore under the Societies Act and it took up a small office suite in the International Building in Orchard Road. For South-East Asianists in the UK who were undertaking research in the region the Institute provided invaluable support, advice, connections and facilities, and it served to demonstrate forcefully, with a physical presence there, that Britain was firm in its commitment to the development of scholarly activities in and on the area. The Institute also introduced Travelling Fellowships for British researchers from 1976, a welcome support for field research in the region.

To round off this brief excursion into the history of the Institute, Milton Osborne resigned as Director in February 1979 to be succeeded by Dr John Villiers from 1 October 1979, again an historian and someone with considerable administrative and diplomatic experience who was a leading scholar of the early European (Portuguese and Spanish) mercantile period in South-East Asia. Under John Villiers the Institute began to embark on a broad range of activities. It provided research funds through its own and Leverhulme-funded Fellowships and through travel grants; it organised symposia, conferences and seminars, launched its own newsletter and developed a small library. The Institute's first international symposium was held in Singapore in 1981. In July 1982 it also appointed an Assistant Director, Dr Gregory Forth, an Oxford-trained anthropologist who had worked in eastern Indonesia and who took up his post in Singapore from January 1983.

In 1982 the Management Committee in London, under Bill Watson's tutelage, extended its membership to include the then Chair of ASEASUK, David Bassett. Dr Ian Glover, a leading archaeologist of

South-East Asia, was also appointed. In addition, Terry King, then Honorary Secretary of ASEASUK, took up the newly created post of Honorary Secretary of the Management Committee from 1 August 1982. Thus the relationship between the Academy, the Institute and ASEASUK increased immeasurably from this time. Prior to this and with the exception of Jeremy Cowan, a founding member of ASEASUK, the Management Committee had comprised Fellows of the Academy, who, though they possessed considerable Asian experience and expertise, had no direct links to or membership in the Association. The Institute's London secretariat had also been provided by Academy staff.

Unfortunately, during the first part of the 1980s the Institute then began to suffer from the increasing costs of operating in Singapore (to economise it moved from Orchard Road to cheaper rented premises on Beach Road), the need to continue to support the wider range of activities it had developed and to fund its increased staff base. There was also a more general squeeze on public finances. To that end the decision was taken to close the office in Singapore and move to premises in Soi Somprasong in Bangkok where it was hoped that costs would be considerably reduced. The Institute moved in mid 1984 and was formally registered in Bangkok in October 1984. Yet the financial situation did not improve and the decision was taken eventually to close the Institute officially in December 1985. Its operations were gradually run down and the library sold off, and sadly the Institute, just over a decade after its foundation, ceased operations in Bangkok in June 1986.

### ***British Academy Committee for South-East Asian Studies***

Very fortunately for South-East Asian scholarship in the UK the Academy sustained its firm commitment to the support of advanced research on the region, which continues to this day. It decided to establish a London-based Committee for South-East Asian Studies in 1986, on a very modest budget, whose main responsibilities were to approve and sponsor research projects and activities, and to keep the Academy informed about the needs of British-based researchers in South-East Asia and the opportunities for research there. The Committee received its first grant in 1987 and Professor Bill Beasley, as Chair, began the task of developing a programme of work. Terry King continued as Honorary Secretary. Links between the Academy through its Committee for South-East Asian Studies and ASEASUK became even closer from 1986, particularly because several members of the Association served on the Committee and funds were provided to support various Association activities and the research of many of its members. However, in this ever closer relationship between the Association and the Academy, ASEASUK did not develop into a 'Society of Friends' of an Academy-funded Learned Society, though the issue was discussed earnestly from time to time. Indeed, it was not until 2005 that the Academy's Committee was eventually incorporated (officially and constitutionally) into the Association as its Research Committee. This followed discussions with the Academy conducted on ASEASUK's behalf by the then Chair of the Academy Committee, Professor Bob Taylor and the Secretary, Professor Jonathan Rigg and his successor Dr Tim Harper (for officers of the Committee see Appendix I).

ASEASUK was also successful in securing continuing research funding for a five-year period from 2005-06 from the Academy and

is recognised currently as an Academy-funded Learned Society with the responsibility of disbursing grants for field research and for the support of conference panels, publications, and related outreach activities. In particular, if it had not been for Academy financial support from 1986 there would only have been a most modest level of British field and primary research in South-East Asia. It is also very unlikely that the Association's newsletter, which is part-funded by Academy resources, would have been able to sustain and develop a substantial twice-yearly programme of publication and an international outreach. Nor would the Association have been able to fund the compilation and publication of its research registers and surveys.

### ***Co-ordinating Council of Area Studies Associations***

Another important development a few years after the establishment of the British Institute was the founding of the Co-ordinating Council of Area Studies Associations (CCASA) which held its constituent meeting on 19 June 1980 at the University of Birmingham. ASEASUK as a formally established society with a constitution was allocated two representatives (the Association's Chair and Honorary Secretary) on the Council whose primary mission was 'to promote the professional interests of Area Studies Associations concerned with Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean'. The Council continues to function with some energy to this day (and ASEASUK continues its membership).

It was clear that any pressure that might be brought to bear on government and other funding bodies would be much more effective if all area studies associations spoke with one voice. Even so some areas of the world, for quite obvious reasons, have done much better

than others in securing government attention and financial support; witness the recent Language-based Area Studies (LBAS) initiative with some £25 million of funding over five years provided by HEFCE, ESRC and AHRC, which focuses on Chinese, Japanese, Middle Eastern and Arabic, and East European and Russian Studies. Since the Parker Report (1986) on Asian and African languages and area studies, there have been two further reviews of Soviet and East European Studies in 1989 and 1996 and of Chinese Studies in 1997. The ESRC also launched its Pacific Asia research initiative with funds of about £5 million from 1994 to 1999, though within this regional-focused programme, most of the support, not unexpectedly, went to East Asian and not South-East Asian projects. In addition, an Area Studies Monitoring Group was established in the early 1990s, chaired by His Majesty, the Prince of Wales, under CCASA's wing and a database and register were compiled with ESRC funding (Hodder-Williams 1993). This particular project picked up for a few more years and then petered out in the late 1990s (see King 2001). But the role of national monitoring and co-ordination of area studies was then revived by the Co-ordinating Council which found a new lease of life from 2003 accompanied by a change of name to the UK Council of Area Studies Associations (UKCASA) with its secretariat in the Subject Centre for Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies, School of Humanities, at the University of Southampton.

### **Early annual meetings**

It was from 1973 that ASEASUK began to provide a focus and structure to its annual one-day gathering (which included its business meeting) in London. These early, rather modest meetings were mainly concerned with the infrastructure and academic rationale of South-East Asian Studies. In March 1973, for example,

the Association held a one-day conference on 'The Purposes and Problems of South-East Asian Studies' at Carr-Saunders Hall in London. There were convenors for four sessions on finance (Jeremy Cowan), research (Maurice Freedman), education (Stuart Simmonds) and training (Mervyn Jaspan). Incidentally for those of us struggling to find funds to attend ASEASUK's annual conferences today, the Association charged a conference fee of 50 pence to help cover a buffet supper at SOAS and £2.50 for bed and breakfast at the Hall.

Other themes considered at the annual meetings comprised current and proposed research on the region and evaluations of recent significant contributions to the literature. At its meeting on 20 March 1976 at the Royal Asiatic Society the Association organised a conference on 'Problems and Proposals for Research in South-East Asian Studies'. Three sessions were organised: (1) Political and International Relations; Chairman Michael Leifer with Laura Summers and Dr Roger Kershaw as discussants; (2) History and Literature; chaired by Jeremy Cowan with Stuart Simmonds and David Bassett as discussants; and (3) Other Disciplines; chaired by Charles Fisher (Geography) with Dr William [Bill] Wilder (Anthropology) and Dr Rowena Lawson (Economics) as discussants.

The Association continued the momentum of its conferences into the late 1970s. At its April 1978 gathering ASEASUK examined 'Developments in the Literature in South-East Asian Studies since 1975' and at its March 1979 meeting it addressed the theme of 'Recent Research and Reviews of Current Literature in South-East Asian Research since 1977'. However, in the following year at its meeting on 10 May 1980 held at the Institute of Commonwealth Studies in London it was for the first time, if I remember correctly, that the Association invited some of its members to present their

current research. It was not a themed conference; instead three colleagues provided miscellaneous papers on their current work in South-East Asia: Paul Lightfoot (Hull) on 'Circular Migration and Modernization in North-East Thailand'; John Bousfield (Kent) on 'Philosophical Encounters in the Spiritual Heartlands of Malaysia and Sumatra'; and Leslie Palmier (Bath) on 'The Control of Bureaucratic Corruption in Indonesia'. This was to be the prelude to what became a regular series of research-focused conferences organised around a theme or themes (organised by panels) with convenors and invitations to both members and non-members to present papers. It was also decided that the Association should endeavour to travel and visit its provincial constituents from time to time, given that up until then its one-day meetings were invariably held in London.

### **The conference season begins**

Prior to the Association's 1980 annual meeting at the Institute of Commonwealth Studies, Bill Wilder, on behalf of the ASEASUK Committee, sent a circular questionnaire to the members to test the waters for a proposal to hold a larger themed conference outside London. The response was very positive and so the first major two-day gathering organised by the Association took place at Eliot College, University of Kent at Canterbury on 25-27 March 1981 on the theme 'Ethnicity in South-East Asia, Past and Present'. Although several of the previous annual meetings at which papers were presented were styled 'conferences', the Kent meeting was considered to be the Association's inaugural conference (see Appendix II). To raise the profile of these events it was also decided that the convenors should attempt to secure the publication of some or all of the proceedings should the contributors so wish. Most of the papers from this first conference were duly published in the

Singapore-based *Southeast Asian Journal of Social Science* (see King and Wilder 1982). Other successful annual conferences followed and several of them led to publications (see, for example, Wilder 1986; Bassett and King 1986; Hitchcock, King and Parnwell 1993; Summers and Wilder 1995; Parnwell and Bryant 1996). Carey remarked that '[i]n its choice of conference topics over the past five years [from 1981 to 1985], ASEASUK has tried to address itself to some of the broader debates which are currently taking place in the social sciences' (1986: 16).

In the 1980s the Association also began to coordinate its conferences with the annual meeting of the South-East Asia Library Group (SEALG) so, that for those colleagues whose interests and membership spanned the two organisations, they were then able to attend both events. Although I do not have the information available to say much about the early days of SEALG, at least I should emphasise that the Library Group and the Association have always worked very closely together. SEALG has a slightly longer history, being founded at Hull in 1968 during Philip Larkin's time as University Librarian there with Brenda Moon as his Deputy (who played a leading role in the Group in its early years), and, unlike ASEASUK which was firmly UK-based for much of its early history, SEALG soon widened its membership to embrace librarians and scholars from continental Europe (especially the Netherlands, France and Germany), providing a valuable link between those European libraries which contain major South-East Asian holdings. ASEASUK also instituted an arrangement in 1983 to co-opt a SEALG member on to its Committee; this it has done regularly over the past 25 years, with one of SEALG's members, Nicholas Martland, serving as the Association's Honorary Secretary between 2000 and 2003. However, with its network of international contacts SEALG has

always been tempted to spread its wings, as it used to in its early years, and it has also held several of its more recent meetings, not in conjunction with ASEASUK, but in exotic locations overseas, in Leiden, Provence, Marseilles, Berlin, Paris and Naples among others.

Given the Association's modest resources and relatively small membership, it was proposed as long ago as 1987 that we might not be able to sustain annual meetings and that we might consider holding a major conference every two years with brief business meetings in alternate years. Again in 1997 it was suggested that we might hold a meeting for postgraduate students in alternate years and not pursue the reckless and demanding path of an annual conference. Despite these considerations the annual conferences continued. Indeed there was a positive move not to separate postgraduate students from our gatherings but to include them, and very recently to organise special panels devoted to 'emerging scholars'. In a personal note to me Dr Tim Harper emphasised the importance of the ASEASUK conferences for postgraduates who wished to present their research in that they provided 'a very unique, receptive and encouraging forum' particularly for those students who were working on South-East Asia in relative isolation in their own institutions. In spite of the difficulties of holding and supporting an annual conference there was obviously a general desire for members to get together as frequently as possible, and some of our colleagues from overseas, like Professor Joern Dosch, who have since taken up posts in the UK have remarked on the importance of the conferences in providing a very direct route to the constituency of South-East Asianists here. In fact it was not until 1999, after holding its 18<sup>th</sup> conference (in 1998) that the Association, for the very first time from the inauguration in 1981, decided not to meet. In addition, from 2000 it was decided that ASEASUK should

not go head-to-head with the European Association of Southeast Asian Studies (EUROSEAS) and that it should relax and take a year out when EUROSEAS meets.

The European Association was founded in 1992; it organises its major international conferences every three years, which many ASEASUK members attend and at which they present papers. However, it took a while for the Association to decide to intermesh with EUROSEAS. In the 1990s ASEASUK carried on steadfastly and (with the exception of 1999) continued its annual conference, including the years when EUROSEAS held its first conference in Leiden in 1995 and its second in Hamburg in 1998 (see Appendix II). Nevertheless, eventually the Association reached the conclusion that the EUROSEAS conference scheduled to be held at SOAS in London in 2001, and supported by SOAS, ASEASUK and the then University of North London was an appropriate time to mark a change in its policy. It did not hold a meeting in that year, nor did it gather when EUROSEAS met in Paris in 2004 and in Naples in 2007. The Association will also take a welcome 'breather' when EUROSEAS meets in Gothenburg in 2010. A policy and pattern has now been firmly established; the Association will only meet in two years out of every three and after Gothenburg the 26<sup>th</sup> ASEASUK conference will be held in Cambridge in 2011 and the 27<sup>th</sup> in Durham in 2012 as a prelude to the 7<sup>th</sup> EUROSEAS conference in 2013.

In its 40<sup>th</sup> year the Association will be holding its 25<sup>th</sup> conference, and for the first time in Swansea. In the spirit of the decision taken in 1980 to visit its constituents whenever possible outside London ASEASUK has held conferences in a suitably diverse range of locations. Although it has met at SOAS five times since 1981 and once each at the Horniman Museum and Royal Holloway College in

London, it has also gathered at Hull (4 times), Kent (3), Oxford (3), Durham (2) and once each at Brighton, Cambridge, Exeter, Leeds and Liverpool (see Appendix II).

### **Changing membership and officers**

Returning to the growing and changing membership of the Association the 1980 list provided details of 80 members; the dominance of the three Centres continued with just over half the membership (26 from SOAS, 9 from Hull, 6 from Kent). However, the trend towards a greater diversification of institutional representation was already noticeable. Outside those retired and non-affiliated members (4 in number), the membership was drawn from Aberdeen (1), Bath (1), Bristol (1), British Institute in South-East Asia (1), British Library (4), Cambridge (2), the CBI (1), Coleraine (1), Commonwealth Institute, London (1), Dundee (1), Durham (2), Edinburgh (1), Goldsmiths, London (1), Institute of Archaeology, London (1), ICS, London (1), Keele (1), Lancaster (1), Leicester (1), LSE (1), Oxford (4), Royal Holloway College, London (1), Southampton (2), Surrey (1), UEA (1), and Winchester (1) (and for the current institutional representation see Appendix III).

The membership has steadily increased over the past 25 years. In 2004 the Association's membership stood at 152 (which included 16 student, 26 overseas and 15 retired members); it now stands at about 190 (see below). This certainly does not exhaust all those individuals who undertake research in and on South-East Asia. For example, the questionnaire survey which was used to compile the *Register of South-East Asianists in the UK* in 2000 (Khng and King 2001) identified about 220 individuals for the mail shot of which there were 193 responses; of these only 72 were members of

ASEASUK at that time, though several joined subsequently and lapsed members duly paid their subscriptions. The membership of the Association is now even more geographically scattered, and though there is still some concentration at SOAS and now at Leeds, the numbers and proportion of the total membership in recognised programmes of South-East Asian Studies are much reduced from what was in evidence in the 1970s and 1980s (King 2005: 20, 23-24).

Several individuals currently working on South-East Asia are either the sole representative in their university or they work in twos and threes; there has been a very welcome increase in members from the post-1992 universities and aside from the traditional subject areas which dominated the Association's interests up to the 1990s (anthropology, history, geography, politics and international relations, language and literature, economics and archaeology) there are now more members with expertise in emerging and multidisciplinary areas of study and in fields which were not represented or at least not represented to any significant degree in the early years of the Association: art history, drama, performance and music, museum studies, law, library studies, business and management studies, environmental studies, development studies, education, comparative religion, media and information technology, and the natural sciences.

After David Bassett and Terry King stood down in 1983 as Chair and Honorary Secretary respectively (and incidentally David Bassett is still the Association's longest-serving Chair) the nerve centre of ASEASUK returned to London, though not immediately to SOAS. Dr Tony Stockwell at Royal Holloway College took up the reins as Honorary Secretary and served for five years whilst Michael Leifer

(still at the LSE) made a welcome return as Chair. It was Tony Stockwell who was to introduce the Association's newsletter (see below). Then from 1986 to 1988 Dr Bob Taylor at SOAS became Chair (eventually to return as Chair of the British Academy Committee in 2002), before the office moved north again and Dr Bill Wilder, who had been a very active member of the Association, particularly in his contribution to its annual conferences, took over and served for six years until 1994. A Durham-SOAS axis developed during this time. Bill Wilder was joined by Dr Ian Brown (SOAS) as Honorary Secretary for four years until 1992 (and, like others, Ian Brown courageously took on the burdens of British Academy Committee office from 1998, as Honorary Secretary) and then for a brief two-year period the Chairperson and Secretary resided together in Durham when Dr Jonathan Rigg was appointed as Secretary from 1992.

SOAS then stepped in again in the shape of Dr Ulrich Kratz who took over as Chair from 1994 to 1998, having previously served on the Committee for a considerable period of time. During Jonathan Rigg's long tenure as Secretary the Chairpersonship moved yet again but only a short distance this time across London to Professor Michael Hitchcock (then at the University of North London to become London Metropolitan University). Clearly Jonathan Rigg was attempting some kind of record: he became the longest-serving Honorary Secretary when he stood down in 2000, only to become Chair from 2000 until 2002, and then Honorary Secretary of the British Academy Committee from 2002. Nicholas Martland then took up the challenge as Honorary Secretary of the Association in 2000, providing an even firmer link between ASEASUK and SEALG, and the post has now remained in London for some nine years when Dr Fiona Kerlogue at the Horniman Museum (our first female Honorary

Secretary) succeeded Nicholas Martland and served from 2003-07. She then handed on to the current Honorary Secretary, Dr Susan Conway who has a Research Fellowship at SOAS. On the Chair side there has been a post-2002 flurry of activity following Jonathan Rigg's departure. From Professor Anne Booth at SOAS (our first and only female Chairperson), the post moved north again to Professor Duncan McCargo at Leeds, back south but this time to the depths of the south-west when Dr Nick Ford at Exeter took over and then finally back to Leeds again with the current Chair Professor Terry King.

Given the importance for professional associations of a base in London and particularly for ASEASUK the close links that it enjoys with the British Academy and the University of London, one might anticipate that the posts of Chair and Honorary Secretary would have spent a good deal of time in the country's capital. Interestingly this has not been the case or at least it is not as marked as one might expect. The Chairpersonship has moved between SOAS, LSE, London Metropolitan/University of North London, Oxford, Kent, Hull, Durham, Leeds and Exeter. The Secretaryship, though slightly more focused on London at SOAS, LSE, Royal Holloway and the Horniman Museum, has also spent periods of time in Kent, Durham and Hull. This seems to me to be a healthy sign and a reflection of the national reach of the Association, but I think it also reflects the willingness of many members of the Association, some outside the main Centres of South-East Asian Studies, to assume the burdens of office and ensure that ASEASUK continues to develop and flourish, and that it does connect with and respond to the needs and interests of those of us in the provinces. In a recent message to me Professor Tony Milner, one of our former Honorary Secretaries, emphasised the role that the Association played for him during the time that he was working in

the UK at the University of Kent in the 1970s in connecting scholars to a nation-wide community and, in the multidisciplinary environment which the Association encouraged, introducing them to other ways of seeing and understanding South-East Asia. This role has assumed an increasing significance in the work of the Association since the 1970s as the membership has become increasingly diverse and geographically spread.

### **Our newsletter and the website**

Perhaps one of the most significant developments for the Association was the decision, taken at the Annual General Meeting on 30 March 1984, to circulate a Newsletter entitled perhaps rather unimaginatively *ASEASUK News*, at a point mid way between ASEASUK conferences and meetings. The then secretary, Dr Tony Stockwell generously assumed the role of editor and the first issue appeared in November 1984 comprising five pages of news on startlingly green paper, neatly stapled. Three numbers were produced in this format, the second of 13 pages in February 1986 and the third of four pages in May 1986. The responsibility for the editing and production of the newsletter was then taken over by the Centre at Hull with Dr Jan Wisseman Christie and Terry King as joint editors, though the main burden of editing was taken up by Jan Christie. The 'new series' was launched with the first issue in the Spring of 1987 printed on distinctive orange/gold paper, still stapled. Its production was to remain in Hull for 16 years until the closure of the Centre's programmes there in 2003.

The development of an enlarged newsletter issued twice-yearly was in part to fill the gap left by the demise of the British Institute and its *South-East Asian Studies Newsletter*, which was published quarterly

between September 1980 (no. 1) and January 1986 (no. 22). The Centre at Hull had been running its own newsletter, *South-East Asian Studies News*, from early 1985 and the decision was reached to include Association news in the Hull newsletter in its 1986 issue no. 4 as a prelude to the launch of a new *ASEASUK News* in 1987. In addition, with the establishment of the British Academy Committee in 1986 funds were subsequently set aside specifically to support the additional costs of producing and distributing a more substantial and regular newsletter to institutions overseas. The Committee also provided resources for the administration and publication of surveys and registers on UK research on South-East Asia to fulfil one of its main responsibilities which was to keep the Academy informed of current research and the needs of British-based researchers working in and on the region.

A further development in the history of the newsletter occurred when Jan Christie decided to stand down as co-editor in 1993 to concentrate on her research and was succeeded by Pauline Khng who has continued to serve assiduously in this capacity to the present time. It is Pauline who gathers the material, chases colleagues for reports on conferences, seminars, publications, research projects, postgraduate students and other matters, organises the book reviews section, and ensures that the newsletters are produced and distributed to a schedule. A notable feature of the newsletter is the considerable expansion of the book reviews section in recent years. If anything it is Pauline Khng who has provided an anchor for the Association, first in Hull and now in SOAS from the early 1990s. The issue produced in 1994 (no. 15, Spring) appeared in a new double-column format printed on white paper with a white card cover attractively illustrated with South-East Asian postage stamps from the Hull collections, an enterprise which was given

considerable encouragement there by Dr Tim Huxley, an enthusiastic philatelist. A truly memorable sign of progress in the Association's affairs was that for the first time the newsletter was bound rather than stapled. The Association then launched a competition for a new logo/cover design with a cash prize, which was increased in value when there was no response to its invitation. Presumably members were entirely content with the postage stamps which continued to make an appearance until the Autumn of 2004 and graced the covers of 20 issues of the newsletter. Finally with the Association's new status as a British Academy-funded Learned Society and the increasing desire for a corporate image, the new logo (an encircled map of South-East Asia in silhouette) appeared on the front cover of issue no. 37 (Spring, 2005).

As well as its spanking new logo the newsletter had already embarked on another chapter in its development. Its production was transferred to SOAS from Hull after the publication of issue no. 33 in the Spring of 2003. Dr Justin Watkins at SOAS willingly assumed the responsibility on behalf of South-East Asian Studies at the School to find a new home for the newsletter which fitted seamlessly with Pauline Khng's move to London from Hull.

The newsletter is in my view one of the most notable triumphs and strengths of ASEASUK. It has also now been made available on the Association's website from the Autumn 2005 issue. We owe much to Pauline Khng and Jan Christie for their sterling efforts on our behalf in ensuring that information is gathered, sifted and disseminated and for providing us with the necessary associational 'cement'.

Whatever we might wish for the newsletter, and some of our members steadfastly insist on receiving it not in electronic form but

in hard copy, any professional organisation in the age of information technology and the internet is nothing without a website. Dr Fiona Kerlogue, until recently our Honorary Secretary, had the foresight to press for this development and took on the task of establishing our first website from Hull in 2000. The management of the site was then transferred to SOAS, as was the newsletter, and continued by Dr Michael Charney, then Justin Watkins and most recently Pauline Khng and her daughter Jane. On very modest resources, again with Academy financial support, we have managed to produce something which expresses, I think, what the Association is committed to, what it does, and what it strives to achieve. The problem with which we continue to grapple, and we are not alone in this, is how to find the resources and time to keep the website updated on a regular basis. We are currently working on a possible solution to meet this need.

### **The present and the future**

As I look back on my 36 years of involvement in the affairs of the Association, I do so with some pride. We have survived, sometimes against the odds, indeed we have continued to develop, and certainly in recent years have blossomed. It is difficult to predict where we shall be in ten years' time on our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2019; it is even more hazardous to imagine where we might be in another 40 years, which in turn will depend in part at least on whether we continue to conceive of South-East Asia as a region worthy and valuable for study and contemplation in its own right (though we should note that various members of the Association have never confined their regional interests to what we usually define as South-East Asia), whether we hold to the importance of understanding this complex and diverse region by deploying perspectives and concepts from a range of disciplines, and whether we sustain our commitment to the

importance of reaching those understandings through the learning and teaching, and the use of local languages. Of course, it will also depend on the availability of funding and the goodwill and support of our membership.

Given our present dire national economic circumstances I suspect that there will have to be some loss of academic posts within the next few years, though not necessarily in regional studies, through renewed early retirement and voluntary severance schemes and leaving vacant posts unfilled. Some of us have been here before (several times before). Undoubtedly the institutional resources to undertake research in South-East Asia are likely to diminish rather than increase as will research funds more generally from the main grant-giving bodies. This is already happening and the devaluation of sterling has had an additional negative impact on international activities. There is bound to be diminished funding for scholarship with the inevitable cuts in public expenditure. At the moment ASEASUK enjoys the firm support of the British Academy which has accepted, endorsed and funded its five-year plan entitled 'Integration and Interaction in the South-East Asian Region' which was launched in 2005-06. The plan comprises three main components: cross-border interaction: networks and borderlands; flows and circuits: culture, capital and commodities; and security issues: trans-national threats and co-operation ([Harper] 2007). This programme of work has served us very well indeed but we shall need to make considerable adjustments to it with the recently announced reductions in the Academy grant to its learned societies and a decrease in the Association's budget for research of over 50 per cent. Academy support will therefore decrease in financial year 2009-10 and we have been advised to plan for further reductions in 2010-11 and 2011-12.

It goes without saying that for a modestly resourced Association like ours the grant from the Academy has been invaluable. For some 23 years we have been very fortunate in receiving direct funding from the Academy and prior to that indirectly through the British Institute, and although these resources have been relatively modest we have accomplished much and used the funds wisely. It has to be said that an annual grant, in 2008-09 it stood at £78,000, can sustain a whole area of field research, and relatively small amounts of public funding have helped support an enormous amount of research activity in South-East Asia during the past two decades, across a wide range of disciplines and subject areas, some of which (in the social sciences in particular) are not well represented in the Academy. Therefore, it has enabled us to fund primary research in and on the region, to encourage early career scholars in undertaking field research, to continue with our newsletter at current levels of production and circulation, to develop our website and support registers, surveys, and public lectures, and to provide strategic resources for our annual conferences. We can now, for example, give some financial support to postgraduate students and 'emerging scholars' to present their research at our conferences in a national and international forum, and, as our founders envisaged, to enable and underpin 'the projection of South-East Asia as an important field of study within the United Kingdom generally'.

We have a programme of annual meetings planned until 2012. The bi-annual newsletter will continue to be produced, the website is undergoing further development, and we are currently updating our register of researchers (at the moment exceeding 100 individuals) which is also available on our website. In recent years we have sponsored, along with other funding bodies (including the AHRC),

high profile research on, for example, the Niah Cave re-excavations in Sarawak, Malaysia led by Professor Graeme Barker FBA, who continues to serve as a member of our Research Committee. He is currently involved in another of our funded projects in Sarawak with Dr Monica Janowski among others.

Other positive developments are the Association's distinguished lecture series, which was launched by Professor Benedict Anderson at SOAS, and will continue this November 2009, co-sponsored by the British Academy, and delivered by Professor Jomo Kwame Sundaram (Assistant Secretary-General at the United Nations). Again it is hosted by SOAS, and the lecture is entitled topically 'Did South-East Asia Learn the Right Lessons from the 1997-98 Financial Crisis?' (The lecture, originally scheduled for 24 April 2009 has had to be postponed and rescheduled). Moreover, ASEASUK, in partnership with the British Institute at Ankara and coordinated from our side by Professor Mike Hitchcock and Dr Annabel Teh Gallop, was also recently awarded one of two major grants under the British Academy's Sponsored Institutes and Societies' (BASIS) Collaborative Research Scheme for a three-year project on 'Islam, Trade and Politics across the Indian Ocean: Interaction between South-East Asia and Turkey and the Ottoman Empire, 16<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> Centuries'. This will also involve a consortium of institutions in Turkey and South-East Asia and for ASEASUK is a very new and exciting collaborative venture.

In another recent positive move the Academy's International Committee has decided to establish an East Asia Panel to address policy and broader strategic issues to do with British research and scholarship on the region (which combines both East and South-East Asia). Reassuringly, the Association will be represented on this

newly established Panel by Professor Tony Stockwell, currently Chair of ASEASUK's Research Committee; the Panel has held its inaugural meeting this year. Interestingly, we seem to have come full circle in some sense from the 1960s when the Academy was deliberating on the possibilities of establishing an East Asian or Far Eastern Institute, then founded an Institute in South-East Asia, and has now decided to combine both sub-regions in an international policy panel. However, given current and foreseeable financial circumstances it is highly unlikely that we shall see another Institute in the region.

A final area of future development and interest is the Association's membership. It is unlikely that numbers will increase much, if at all in the near future. But membership has been sustained and pleasingly renewed by many early career, younger scholars and postgraduate students who have joined during the past five years. ASEASUK's membership now stands at approximately 190 (including 14 overseas, 28 student and 18 independent/retired members) spread between some 45 higher education and other institutions (see Appendix III). This range of interest and representation is especially welcome and hopefully will continue. The Association through its newsletter and website is also in regular contact with all major organisations and institutions world-wide with scholarly interests in South-East Asia.

### **Concluding remarks**

From this current vantage point, and allowing for the vagaries of government policy and national funding for area studies, the Association will undoubtedly continue its best endeavours to support and promote the study of South-East Asia in the United

Kingdom and to provide a home and a forum for those who are professionally involved in the region. However, some of our activities depend on securing further grants from the British Academy beyond March 2012 (which marks the end of the five-year Learned Societies Programme). Undoubtedly we shall be in a very harsh financial environment for quite some time to come and, though one has to remain optimistic, longer term Academy support looks particularly uncertain. There will of necessity be very serious discussion within the next several months within the Association to determine our priorities and to reach agreement on what we must sustain at all costs as core activities in the longer term using our own resources.

Notwithstanding the inevitable anxieties which the current public funding environment is generating I trust that the Association, in its anniversary year, is preparing to embark, with some cautious confidence, on our next 40 years. I hope this brief history has given us some sense of what the founders of the Association and their successors wanted to achieve for South-East Asian Studies and that it has provided some concrete evidence of what we have accomplished together since ASEASUK's birth in 1969. In my view, and I hope yours, we have more than surpassed what our founders hoped for us.

## **Appendix I: ASEASUK officers**

### **Chairpersons**

Professor Maurice Freedman (1971-74)  
John (Dennis) Duncanson (1974-76)  
Dr David Bassett (1976-83)  
Dr Michael Leifer (1983-86)  
Dr R.H. (Bob) Taylor (1986-88)  
Dr William (Bill) Wilder (1988-94)  
Dr E.U. (Ulrich) Kratz (1994-98)  
Professor Michael Hitchcock (1998-2000)  
Dr/Professor Jonathan Rigg (2000-02)  
Professor Anne Booth (2002-03)  
Professor Duncan McCargo (2003-04)  
Dr Nicholas (Nick) Ford (2004-06)  
Professor Victor (Terry) King (2007- )

### **Honorary Secretaries**

Dr Ralph Smith (1971-72)  
Dr Michael Leifer (1972-75)  
Dr Anthony (Tony) Milner (1975-76)  
Mr/Dr Victor (Terry) King (1976-83)  
Dr A.J. (Tony) Stockwell (1983-88)  
Dr Ian Brown (1988-92)  
Dr Jonathan Rigg (1992-2000)  
Nicholas Martland (2000-03)  
Dr Fiona Kerlogue (2003-07)  
Dr Susan Conway (2008- )

### **Treasurers (and Membership Secretaries; combined or separate offices)**

Professor Victor (Terry) King (treasurer: 1988-92)

Dr Michael Parnwell (treasurer: 1992-96; membership secretary: 1990-95)

Pauline Khng (treasurer 1996-2003, and membership secretary 1995-2004; treasurer and membership secretary 2004- )

Dr A.V.M.Horton (treasurer 2003, and membership secretary 2004)

### **Editors of *ASEASUK News***

Dr A.J. (Tony) Stockwell (1984-86) (nos. 1-3)

Dr/Professor Jan Wisseman Christie (1987-93) (New Series, nos. 1-14)

and Dr/Professor Victor (Terry) King (1987- )

and Pauline Khng (1994- ) (New Series, nos. 15- ).

### **Website managers**

Dr Fiona Kerlogue (2000-03)

Dr Michael Charney (2003-04)

Dr Justin Watkins (2004-07)

Pauline Khng and Jane Huxley-Khng (2008-09)

### **Officers of the Research Committee (from 2005)**

#### **Chairpersons**

Professor R.H. (Bob) Taylor (2005-08)

Professor A.J. (Tony) Stockwell (2008- )

#### **[Chairpersons of the British Academy Committee for South-East Asian Studies, 1986-2005]**

Professor William (Bill) Watson FBA (1985-1986)

Professor W.G. (Bill) Beasley FBA (1986-1990)

Professor C.D. (Jeremy) Cowan (1990-1998)

Professor Victor (Terry) King (1998-2002)

Professor R.H. (Bob) Taylor (2002-2005)

### **Secretaries**

Professor Jonathan Rigg (2005)

Dr T.N. (Tim) Harper (2005-08)

Dr R.J. (Becky) Elmhirst (2008- )

### **[Secretaries of the British Academy Committee for South-East Asian Studies, 1986-2005]**

Dr/Professor Victor (Terry) King (1986-98)

Professor Ian Brown (1998-2002)

Dr/Professor Jonathan Rigg (2002-05)

## Appendix II: Conferences

1. **1981 Eliot College, Kent**  
Ethnicity in South-East Asia, Past and Present
2. **1982 Hull**  
Western Colonialism in South-East Asia and its Aftermath
3. **1983 SOAS, London**  
Contemporary Problems of Development in South-East Asia
4. **1984 Eliot College, Kent**  
Religion and Society in Modern South-East Asia
5. **1985 Trinity College, Oxford**  
Wealth and Poverty in South-East Asia
6. **1986 Hull**  
Britain and South-East Asia
7. **1987 SOAS, London**  
Understanding Contemporary South-East Asian Culture
8. **1988 Selwyn College, Cambridge**  
Four panels: Contemporary Philippines; Contemporary Indonesia; Britain in South-East Asia after 1945; Ethnography and Museum Studies in South-East Asia
9. **1989 Durham**  
Three panels: Historical Dimensions of Ethnographic Objects; Post-war South-East Asia; Regionalism and Nationalism in Post-war South-East Asia
10. **1990 Eliot College, Kent**  
Four panels: The Greening of South-East Asia; Indigenous Peoples in South-East Asia; Aspects of the Cambodian Problem;

Textiles and Traditions in Maritime South-East Asia; Paper and discussion: Repatriation of Vietnam Refugees from Hong Kong

**11. 1991 Hull**

Tourist Development in South-East Asia

**12. 1992 SOAS, London**

Three panels: National Election Politics in Thailand and Indonesia; Early History of Java and Sumatra; Material and Economic Cultures of South-East Asia

**13. 1993 St. Antony's College, Oxford**

Five panels under the original title 'Construction and Reconstruction in South-East Asia': Economic Issues in South-East Asia; Borneo; Gender; Cambodia Trust; Politics of Thailand, Indonesia and the Philippines

**14. 1994 Royal Holloway and Bedford New College, London**

The Environment in South-East Asia

**15. 1995 Durham**

Gender and the Sexes in South-East Asia

**16. 1996 SOAS, London**

Power and Identity in South-East Asia: Local, National and Regional Dimensions

**17. 1997 Hull**

South-East Asia between the Local and the Global

**18. 1998 SOAS, London**

Asia and Europe: four panels: Asia-Europe Inter-regionalism and the New Multilateralism; Tourism and Development in South-East Asia; South-East Asia-Europe Relations: Political and Economic Dimensions; Joint ASEASUK/Visiting Arts Session

**(1999 No conference)**

**19. 2000 Brighton Royal Pavilion**

Art, Culture and the Media

**(2001 London, EUROSEAS)**

**20. 2002 London, Horniman Museum**

Two panels: Museology and Material Culture; Reform, Reaction, Adaptation: Developments in South-East Asia after the Asian Financial Crisis and September 11.

**21. 2003 Leeds**

Nine panels: Rethinking Civil Society; Pre-modern South-East Asia; South-East Asian Arts and Culture in Practice; Aspects of Vietnam; Development and Change; Indonesian Politics after the Fall of Soeharto; Medical Anthropology: Patients among Different Medicines and Health Systems in South-East Asia; Malay and Indonesian Manuscript Studies; Issues in South-East Asian History

**(2004 Paris, EUROSEAS)**

**22. 2005 Exeter**

Turbulence and Continuity in South-East Asia

Five panels: South-East Asian Tradition-based Contemporary Performance; Indonesian and Malay Manuscript Studies; Sexuality and Sexual Culture in South-East Asia; Art, Material Culture, Space and Time in South-East Asia; Towards a New Rich Agenda in South-East Asian Politics: Big Landmarks or Grassroots Change?

**23. 2006 St Antony's College, Oxford**

Four panels: Emerging Scholars; Art and Artefact; Visuality and Performativity in South-East Asia; Indonesian and Malay Manuscript Studies

**(2007 Naples, EUROSEAS)**

**24. 2008 Liverpool (John Moore's)**

Six panels: Emerging Scholars; Civil Society and the Middle Class in South-East Asia; Indonesian and Malay Manuscript Studies; Sinful Pleasures: Attitudes towards and Depictions of Vice in South-East Asia; South-East Asian Arts in Transnational Perspectives; Liverpool and South-East Asia

**Forthcoming meetings**

**25. 2009 Swansea**

**(2010, Gothenburg, EUROSEAS)**

**26. 2011 Cambridge**

**27. 2012 Durham**

**Appendix III: ASEASUK members' institutional affiliation**

1. Aberystwyth
2. Bath
3. Bath Spa
4. Birmingham
5. Brighton
6. Bristol
7. British Library
8. Buckinghamshire New
9. Cambridge
10. Chichester
11. Durham
12. Edinburgh
13. Exeter
14. Glasgow
15. Goldsmiths
16. Horniman Museum
17. Huddersfield
18. Hull
19. James Green Centre, Brighton
20. Kent at Canterbury
21. King's College London
22. Kingston
23. Lancaster
24. Leeds
25. Leeds Metropolitan
26. Leicester
27. Liverpool John Moores
28. London Metropolitan

29. LSE
30. Manchester
31. National Museum, Edinburgh
32. Nottingham
33. Open University
34. Oxford
35. Queen's, Belfast
36. Reading
37. Roehampton
38. Royal Holloway
39. SOAS
40. South Bank
41. Sussex
42. Swansea
43. Ulster
44. University College London
45. East Anglia
46. East London
47. West of England

ASEASUK also has members in Australia, Belgium, Canada, France, Japan, Malaysia, the Netherlands, Singapore, Sweden, Thailand, and the USA.

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