Publisher to do Japanese edition of Syonan: Singapore Under The Japanese
It will be a rare account of atrocities

A Japanese publishing house will be publishing a Japanese edition of Syonan: Singapore Under The Japanese. It will be one of the very few books to give the Japanese public an account of the atrocities committed by the Japanese army during World War II.

Japanese publisher Akiko Oji of Gaufsha Publishing Inc approached the Society for the rights to publish a Japanese edition some time after the launch of the book. According to Goh Eek Kheng, the chairman of the Written Heritage Committee who handled the details of the agreement, a friend of Oji-san had picked up a copy of the book while on a visit to Singapore and had shown it to him. Said Oji-san in his letter: "We do believe that it is our duty to enlighten (sic) young Japanese about the modern history of Asian country, especially where our foregone generation occupied during the last war time. From such point of view we will be happy if we can obtain your consent on the publication of the Japanese version."

The book, the Singapore Heritage Society's second monograph, was launched last year on February 8 to coincide with the 50th anniversary of the landing of Japanese troops in Singapore and the start of the Japanese Occupation.

The book itself describes both civilian and prison camp life during the Japanese Occupation. It gives the events leading up to the British surrender of Singapore as well as an idea of the effect of the Occupation on the national development of Singapore.

A large part of the book was based on oral history accounts. Author Lee Geok Boi found a treasure house of information and highly quotable quotes in the Oral History Department's Japanese Project.

This project started in 1981 to capture the memories of the mostly ordinary men and women who lived through the Japanese Occupation involving 175 interview subjects. It took four and half years to complete. These oral history accounts make history come alive.

The book is amply illustrated with material from the National Archives as well as new material from other sources including junk dealers and collectors of Japanese Occupation memorabilia.

The Japanese edition will be in black and white and the first print run will be 4,000 copies. The book is currently in the process of being translated into Japanese. A commentary written by a Japanese historian will be added to the book. It is expected to be out some time next year and retailed at 3,000 yen.

A Chinese edition soon

The book in the Chinese edition will also be different. The sketches by British civilian POW Bill Haworth in the English edition will be replaced by materials which reflect the experience of Chinese citizens.

The book was originally scheduled for publication last year. However, the first translation commission did not work out and a new one had to be done. The translation is by Lee Watt Sim, a freelance translator living on Pulau Ubin.

The Chinese edition is sponsored by Orchard Parade Holdings Ltd. The original English edition was sponsored by Shaw Foundation.

Book wins design award


Designed and produced by Goh Eek Kheng of Landmark Books, the package took a mere four months to put together from inception to book launch. Both author and designer worked at full steam to get the publication ready in time for the launch on February 8, 1992.

The book, the Society's second monograph, is more than a book. It is also quite literally a package to recapture a bit of the past. In an army green canvas pouch together with the soft-cover book are a banana note, a copy of Loh Teck Cheong's ration card and six postcards of sketches of POW camp life done by a POW, Bill Haworth. His family had given his collection of sketches to the National Archives.

Also included in the package were reprints of the three newspapers of the period: the February 15 edition of The Sunday Times, the Syonan Times, and the September 7 1945 issue of The Malay Times.

The package came in two editions. The special collector's edition was in an army green canvas pouch while the student edition was in a cardboard folder. Both contained the same materials.

The special edition which was almost sold out soon after its launch was priced at $25, the student edition at $15. The student edition is now sold out while limited copies of the collector's edition are still available.
Singapore's Architectural Heritage

By Mary Lee

"Instant Asia" used to be the slogan under which Singapore was sold as a tourist destination. Whatever the appeal of that slogan, its promise was in danger of being eroded as Singapore developed into a modern financial centre.

The city centre which had developed amid the ethnic quarters laid out by its founder Thomas Stamford Raffles was bulldozed out of the way and replaced by glass and concrete skyscrapers. The people who protested the sacrifice of Singapore's distinct urban heritage back in the 1970s were dismissed as sentimental and non-pragmatic. Nevertheless, the government set up the Preservation of Monuments Board in 1972 to show that buildings that had historical value were not destroyed. Until 1991, only 23 buildings were gazetted as monuments, most of them government or religious buildings with the exception of Telok Ayer Market. In late 1991, however, the Board announced that 60 buildings, including private houses outside the central district would be gazetted.

So 20 years after the government embarked on a "new and modern is best" approach to development, the situation is totally different. Preservation of Singapore's architectural heritage is now big business — both for the government and developers. It is also regarded as essential for the $89-billion tourist industry. The S$160 million rebuilding of Raffles Hotel — Singapore's most well-known landmark — which for more than a decade was on the verge of demolition, now stands as very attractive evidence of the government's commitment to architectural conservation.

The government enacted legislation in 1989-90, making the Urban Redevelopment Authority the conservation authority, lifting rent control over pre-war buildings and encouraging their owners to restore them under strict guidelines laid down by the URA with limited tax incentives for adaptive re-use. What may have persuaded the government to re-think its wholesale destruction of the shophouse environment of urban Singapore was the successful private-sector restoration beginning in 1981 of the Straits Chinese terrace houses in Emerald Hill.

The URA recently declared that "conservation is a continuing process of planning the development of a city which recognises its history. In retaining parts of old Singapore, we are retaining the memory of the early immigrants as embodied in their churches, temples, mosques, houses, street names and localities." The URA has slapped preservation orders on the few streets with a total of about 1,900 pre-war terrace shophouses in the older urban areas fortunate enough to escape the wreckers' ball in the past 20 years.

Many are in the ethnic zones demarcated by Raffles himself: the Little India area running off Serangoon Road; the Muslim district of Kampung Glam; Chinatown and other residential districts in the older suburbs of Geylang, River Valley Road, Joo Chiat as well as bungalows along the Mountbatten Road area. In all the URA has gazetted 10 sites spread over 100 hectares. Singapore now boasts of many examples of fine restoration of its architectural heritage in addition to Raffles Hotel: Alkaff Mansion, Empress Place, Telok Ayer Market and the National Museum. On the list for restoration are two buildings along Bras Basah Road: St Joseph's Institution (a museum of fine arts) and the Convent of the Holy Infant Jesus (a upmarket retail centre), both former Catholic schools.

In tandem with the task of revitalising parts of old Singapore to new uses, the real work of uncovering evidence of Singapore's past — the archaeological dig at Fort Canning — has continued apace under the direction of the National Museum. The excavations have revealed a 14th century trading settlement. Fort Canning was saved from redevelopment in 1986 and the entire area around it has been gazetted and converted into a Historical Park.

The debate over conservation these days occasionally dwells on specific buildings, like Eu Fook, which despite having been restored by its owners at a cost of S$1 million, is due for demolition to make way for road widening.

However, discussion is gradually shifting to the government's profit-seeking motive behind many listings. The current practice is for the URA to lease the buildings to a private developer for restoration; it is usually the developer who tenders for the project at the highest price who wins.

* See Page 3
Here yesterday, gone today

Enough is not enough

Eu Court, the subject of much public debate and pleading on the part of the Society, is no more. The building was torn down earlier this year to make way for the widening of Hill Street.

The Society had pointed out in an open letter to the media that Eu Court was "an aesthetically charming building and one of that particularly endangered species in Singapore, a curved corner building which has landmark qualities".

It had questioned whether the road widening was really necessary given the government's expressed policy to curb the growth of cars and discourage the influx of cars into the central business district. Eu Court was in the historic civic district which is supposed to be conserved.

The Society's letter had pointed out the danger to other historic buildings lining the route from Hill Street through Victoria Street and Kallang Road and between Coleman Street and Lavendar Street, all of which could well be affected by the road-widening.

"We suspect Eu Court is only the "thin end of the wedge" in conservation terms," said the Society's letter. "Only a few years ago, we were informed that the historic civic centre was to be declared a conservation area, a delightful heritage district connected by tranquil pedestrian walkways. What has happened to this dream? The proposed multilane highway we are referring to now, carves straight through the heart of this very civic centre."

For the moment, the ground on which Eu Court stood has been planted with grass. The plea and the calls by various people to conserve Eu Court in the end fell on deaf ears. The letter had said, "Enough is enough. Enough cars, enough roads, enough demolition. It was obviously not enough."

---

Singapore's Architectural Heritage

* Continued from page 2

According to the Singapore Heritage Society, a lobby group, the success of conservation must be measured by the response of the people using it and adaptive reuse seen in social, political and economic gains in that order.

The real issue, the Society feels, is not the proposed design of the restoration alone but that the proposed usage must be respectful and compatible with the ambiance of the place. In buildings of significant cultural heritage, such as the former Convent of the Holy Infant Jesus, the emphasis should be on design merit and compatible usage which is not always the most profitable to operate.

The restoration of the former St Joseph's Institution into a museum of fine arts is clearly in keeping with the Society's outlook. In fact, the government's recent announcement of its plan to turn Singapore into a centre for arts and antiques by developing a museum precinct in the city centre to be managed by a National Heritage Board suggests that it now accepts the need to promote culture in fine old buildings. The objective, according to the Minister of Information and the Arts George Yeo, "is to help Singapore find its soul for it cannot be by bread alone that we live..." A Singaporean is also a Chinese, a Malay, an Indian, a Eurasian, an Arab or a Jew, the inheritor of an ancient culture and a contributor to it. Thus, in discovering Singapore, we also discover Asia and the world."

While Singapore has discovered the potential of making money out of the past, there are many people including conservationists who believe that this will also simulate the creation of a modern Singaporean cultural heritage. Giving Singapore cultural roots, this school of thought believes, will also result in a more value-added and sophisticated tourist industry, thus promising a more prosperous future.

This paper was originally prepared for publication in Trails to Tropical Treasures: A Tour of ASEAN's Cultural Heritage published by the US Committee International Council on Monuments and Sites (US/ICOMOS) with the help of the Society. The views expressed, however, are those of the writer.

---

Plan for Conference on Marketing Our Heritage

An ad hoc committee has been formed to look into the organisation of a seminar on cultural tourism to be held late 1993 or early 1994. Claire Chang, who is also the Honorary Secretary of the Society is the chairperson of this committee.

And the committee has decided that the theme of the conference will be Marketing Our Heritage rather than the more misleading theme of cultural tourism.

The committee comprising William Lim, Kwa Cheng Guan, Bobby Wong, Chua Beng Huat and Stella Kon is now looking into who should be the resource people to invite to the conference as well as sponsorship for it. An estimated 100 persons are expected to participate.

The idea for the conference arose from the growing awareness that heritage has market value in the increasingly fierce competition for tourists, many of whom now want more than to shop till they drop. The huge success of Europe as a tourist destination because of its well-conserved heritage has not gone unnoticed.

Beyond the glittering shopping centres countries dependent on tourism have to look into what aspects of their culture and heritage can contribute to making their countries tourist destinations with a multi-layered texture.

Claire is looking for interested people to join the committee to explore the issues and outline the topics to be discussed. Anyone interested in this subject should get in touch with her at 460-3787 during office hours.

---

Arts housing request turned down

The Society's application to the National Arts Council for administrative office space has been rejected. The application was in response to a National Arts Council circular last October informing cultural and arts organisations of the Arts Housing Scheme. This was a scheme "to provide suitable and affordable housing for arts groups for rehearsal, administrative and storage space".

At present the Executive Committee of the Society holds its meetings at the office of its president in Tanglin Shopping Centre. The Secretariat is manned by a part-time secretary.
Paper on Heritage Trust for MITA

The Society prepared a report on the establishing of a heritage trust for Singapore at the request of the Minister of Information and the Arts. To explore the different options, the President of the Singapore Heritage Society, William Lim, and Vice-President Kwa Chong Guan visited the United Kingdom at the invitation of the British Council in March 1992 to look into the different conservation bodies there.

The spur towards the creation of a Heritage Trust is the existence of a number of "orphan buildings", one prime example of which is the Ford factory, a historic building for which there are tentative plans to conserve and redevelop it as a museum but for which there are no takers. Another example is the Fort Canning bunkers of Percival, currently and inappropriately under the management of the Parks and Recreation Board.

In its report, the Society highlighted the requirements for a body to oversee the different buildings listed for conservation and to plan for their proper use. This would help to focus conservation efforts which are at present still piecemeal despite the welcome efforts of the Urban Redevelopment Authority and the existence of the URA's Redevelopment Conservation Master Plan.

The role of the Preservation of Monuments Board is limited to gazetting buildings for preservation although it does manage the Thong Chai Medical Institute.

The question is whether the proposed heritage trust is to deal just with "orphan buildings" or the larger issue of overseeing conservation efforts as a whole.

In the United Kingdom, at the local level, there are societies and groups working to conserve buildings of special interest. At the national level, there are the English Heritage, a statutory body under the Ministry of the Environment, and the National Trust, a private trust. These two trusts see their role as mainly advisory and financial and technical collaboration with local conservation groups.

An all-encompassing heritage trust should have four basic aims. These are:

- Policy-making
- Policing — to act as watchdogs against violation of conservation legislation
- Education
- Management and maintenance of historic buildings

At present, the policy-making and policing functions are shared between the Preservation of Monuments Board and the URA. The educational role is done by the heritage departments of the Ministry of Information and the Arts and the Society. The fourth is not handled by anyone in particular — hence the problem of "orphan buildings".

Unlike in the UK, the management and maintenance of these buildings is unavoidable in Singapore because of the lack of grassroots conservation societies. The paper noted that English Heritage and National Trust between them manage only a tiny fraction of the more than 6,000 gazetted historical properties. The rest is handled by private and local interests.

The aim of the proposed trust governs the structure. If the larger all-encompassing body is the option selected, it can be in one of these forms:

- A private trust.
- A revamped Preservation of Monuments Board with an extended brief, more clout, and status as a statutory board.
- A hived-off division of the URA with an extended brief and more clout.

However, if the basic aim is the smaller job of caring for "orphan buildings", then a commercial company similar to the set-up of the Singapore Zoological Gardens or the Jurong BirdPark is sufficient.

The paper also brought up the important question of funding: whatever the form of the trust it will have to depend on government funding with the difference lying only in the quantum. The funds would go into capital to restore, upgrade or maintain buildings and into annual operating expenses for various programmes.

Neither Trust nor Company can hope to raise the capital costs involved where these buildings have limited commercial potential or where they must be kept in their near-original state as with the Ford Factory and the bunkers.

However, it was felt that given a good mix of buildings in its care, the proposed trust could conceivably generate income for running expenses through cross-subsidies. For example, the non-income-generating Ford Factory can be subsidised by the income-generating black and white houses.

The paper noted that in the choice of the form of the trust lay an opportunity to examine the whole conservation issue and to sharpen the focus of the current mish-mash of activities. The report was prepared by William Lim, Kwa Chong Guan, Chu Beng Huat and the rapporteur was Lee Geok Boi.

Big spread of conservation

These are four of the more than 10 trusts and societies working on conservation in the United Kingdom. During their visit the President and Vice-President of the Society met officials from the different bodies. There will be more about the other bodies in the next issue of Roots.

English Heritage

This is essentially a statutory board with the statutory responsibility for architectural and archaeological heritage conservation in the country. It also has the role of encouraging the public to enjoy their historic legacy.

It is the Government's official adviser on conservation legislation concerning the historic environment and provides the major source of public funds for rescue archaeology, owners' schemes and repairs to historic buildings and ancient monuments.

It has staff of 1,600 including some 400 curators, archaeologists and other professionals. Activities:

- Manages a portfolio of historic buildings all of which were donated to the Trust and which came with an endowment — a prerequisite before the Trust will accept the building.
- Accepts buildings only if the property is stylistically interesting.

British trip at MITA

The President, William Lim, and the Vice-President, Kwa Chong Guan, spent a week in Britain and Scotland on a British Council-sponsored trip to look at British heritage activities.

Part of the reason for the trip was to look into the set-up of the different heritage trusts in the United Kingdom and see what would be the best form for Singapore. Said Kwa: "One thing we learnt from the British was that any trust we establish must not take in any orphan buildings unless it comes with an endowment. A regular or self-perpetuating source of funding was the only way to make a heritage.
Bill to set up Heritage Board

At the March 1993 sitting of Parliament, the Ministry of Information and the Arts put forward a National Heritage Board Bill. The Bill will set up the National Heritage Board which is to be a statutory board with a chief executive officer.

The Board will manage the National Museum, National Archives and Records Centre and the National History Department. The Board will thus be charged with the collection, classification, preservation and display of objects and records.

The Board will also be empowered to advise and facilitate the preservation of historic sites, undertake or sponsor research and set up links with overseas heritage institutions. It will advise the government on matters relating to Singapore's heritage.

In addition, the Board will also have the task of promoting public awareness, appreciation and understanding of the arts, culture and heritage of Singaporeans.

The Bill did not go into the question of funding the Board or how the activities of the Board are to be financed.

In bodies on UK scene

* Encourages and helps owners to find alternatives to hold on and maintain their properties and keep it evolving rather than turned into a time capsule.
* Tries to keep buildings evolving by, for example, adding paintings to the houses as the owner might have done if he had been living there.
* Runs a scheme to get more active members to run some of the buildings.

Funding: 50-60 per cent from subscriptions, donations, bequests, endowments, and no more than 20 per cent from government funding.

National Trust for Scotland

A charity supported by membership with the purpose of protecting and caring for the landscape and its heritage buildings.

A quick look at 10 new Frankfurt museums

While in Europe, William Lim and Kwa Chong Guan took the opportunity to pop into Frankfurt, Germany, for a two-day visit to take a look at museums. In the last decade, Frankfurt has built 11 new museums plus major extensions to two more.

Lim and Kwa saw 10 of these new museums which were put up at a time when the city fathers were keen to help conserve historic buildings and historic areas of the city. The museums are examples of old buildings made over to new uses or buildings in sites which had to take into consideration existing landscape or existing buildings. Churches, odd-shaped land and older buildings presented design challenges.

Activities:
* Cares for more than 100 properties including 100,000 acres of countryside. It is involved not only with buildings but also wildlife, flora and fauna and communities;
* Promotes educational projects such as school quizzes, storytelling;
* Cares for more than 100 properties including 100,000 acres of countryside. It is involved not only with buildings but also wildlife, flora and fauna and communities;

Funding: The largest portion comes from donations and bequests, followed by investment income and membership subscriptions. It also received grants from some 14 different official agencies, as well as sponsorship for programmes.

Historic Scotland

The Government body which protects Scotland's built heritage and helps everyone to see and enjoy it. It has a staff of 600 from custodians to archaeologists and other specialists.

Activities:
* Cares for 330 properties and opens them to the public.
* Acquires properties where necessary to save them for the future.
* Restores properties;
* Gives protection to historically significant buildings to safeguard them against damage and demolition;
* Checks that protected buildings are not damaged by development or by the elements;
* Assists financially and technically the work of bodies dedicated to conservation such as the Scottish Civic Trust;
* Funds repairs and conservation by owners of buildings with historic significance. In 1990, it paid £9 million.

Funding: Government and membership subscriptions.

Museum for Pre-History and Early History from a Carmelite Convent

Museum for Ethnology
Members light on the Festival of Lights
A chance for glimpse into Indian culture and cuisine

More than 110 people turned out for the Indian Night organised by the Culture and Lifestyles Committee headed by YP Chee. And a good time was had by all at the Annalakshmi Restaurant in Excelsior Shopping Centre where the dinner was held. Members and their family and friends who paid $25 per person for the event were given an insight into several aspects of Indian culture.

In keeping with the spirit of the evening on October 31, suggested dress was something Indian. Several made the effort, with the women turning up in saris or salwar khamis and a few men in kurta.

Guests were greeted at the door with a good luck charm dabbed below the centre of their foreheads in the spot between the eyes. The putu as it is known in Tamil is also called the eye of Siva or the eye that sees all wisdom. It is also often worn by Indian women as a beauty spot.

When it came to the all-vegetarian meal, staff and volunteer workers at the restaurant were on hand to explain to guests the symbolism of various items and the nutritional value of the different ingredients. The meal consisted of classic Indian dishes such as dhal, curry vegetables, biryani rice and various Indian breads such as chappatis.

The Kala Mandhir performing group then presented several dance items with live music performed by a group of Indian musicians on classical instruments such as the tabla, a pair of small drums played by hand, and the veena, a large string instrument plucked like a guitar.

The meaning of different dance movements and the instruments played were given. The adults were not the only ones who found the performance interesting. A couple of young children in the front row were interested too. Understanding the movements obviously makes for a more meaningful enjoyment.

And for shopaholics, the evening was made complete with a chance to pick up a few bargains. The shops selling Indian handicrafts which adjoin the restaurant were opened specially that evening to give guests a chance to buy a sari or two, trinkets and other assorted craftwork. And the women present were given a lesson on how to wear a sari.

Celebrate Hari Raya Aidilfitri at Aziza’s

April 22 is when 50 members and their friends will be celebrating the Hari Raya at Aziza’s. This Malay restaurant at 36 Emerald Hill Road was the venue of a very successful Malay evening last year. If you have a good time, you can be sure that you will have a good time now.

And if you missed the party last year, now is your chance to see what you missed.

The cost is $50 for members and $55 for non-members. Come for an evening of Malay food and music and enjoy something of Malay culture. You will be in for a surprise too. Come in Malay attire or something in batik to get into the spirit of things. Or fish out your songkok from last year’s do. If you don’t have a songkok, you can order one for $10 through Jack Sim (tel. 286-0666, fax. 741-3430) of the Lifestyles and Culture Committee. Hurry and make your reservations by April 15 please.
IPSA forum on Heritage and Contemporary Values

By Mok Wei Wei

Singapore society does not have strong cultural memories. British colonialism was motivated by commerce, and the cultural practices of our forefathers have not been passed down. The diminishing influence of ethnic culture is a cause of concern among the community. The abdomen society with a cosmopolitan outlook, although more receptive to contemporary values than to traditional ones. This receptiveness is reflected in the visual arts since an artist does not work in a vacuum.

Local artists have to be placed in the context of modern art since change and challenging the unquestioning adherence to tradition are its essence.

True local art started only in the 1950s with a group of Chinese migrants: Chen Wen Hsi, Cheong Soo Pieng, Liu Kang, and Chen Chong Swee. They had roots in the Chinese tradition of art — all four were trained in the Hua Art Academy in Shanghai, then the cultural capital of China — but drew their inspiration from their new environment.

The Nan Yang style of the 50s had three key features:

* Its content incorporated visual images of the new environment.
* Content meaning included Hindu Balinese images. Such an intra-South-east Asian connection is rare.
* Although each artist worked with a different predominant model, there was an attempt to engage the differences in pictorial convention between Chinese ink brush technique and the techniques of modern art.

In the late 60s and 70s this linkage to Chinese art tradition became weaker. The artists were no longer migrants and their training tended to be in the Western tradition. The transference between artists of the 50s and those of subsequent periods lies in their cultural standpoint. One viewed contemporary art through the traditional Asian eye; the other uses the contemporary Western eye to view their own traditions.

Today, the notion of movements has lost its meaning because of the plurality of concepts and emergence of young artists with varied inspirations. Local art arises from competing artistic traditions, artists need to ask themselves where they are coming from and where they are going. In forging the visual identity of our multi-cultural society, our artists need to clarify their positions vis-a-vis tradition and modernity. Unless they do this, our visual identity will be indefinite.

New-look Boat Quay

The coal merchants, rice traders and other traditional Chinese businesses which once lined Boat Quay on the Singapore River front have gone. In its place is a row of chic restaurants, cafes and curio shops. Work on the row of shophouses which feature a variety of architectural styles spanning different times is still going on, but several outlets are already open for business.

Nearby Clarke Quay also fronting the Singapore River is also undergoing renovation. When work is completed later in the year, it will be an entertainment area featuring nightspots, restaurants and shops. The sprucing up of the shophouses is part of the URA's conservation of the Singapore River front area.
This year is election year

The two-year term of office of the current Executive Committee is up and nominations are invited for office in the 1993/1995 committee.

This year is election year for the Society which will be holding its Annual General Meeting on Wednesday May 26. Once again it will start at 6.30 pm. At press-time the venue for the 6th AGM had not been decided.

Nomination forms will be circulated to members. They will also be available at the meeting. Nomination forms must have a proposer and a seconder.

All nominees must be Singapore citizens or permanent residents and above 21 years old. The nominees must consent to be nominated before their names can be put up for election.

The current Ex-Co consists of:

President: William Lim
Vice-president: Kwa Chong Guan
Honorary Secretary: Claire Chiang
Honorary Treasurer: Bobby Wong
Committee members: Y.P. Chee, William Sim, Goh Eck Kheng, Stella Kon, Geralidine Lowe.

Keep May 26 free for dinner after AGM

There will be a buffet dinner following the Annual General Meeting to give members an opportunity to socialise. The cost for members will be a nominal $10 and for non-members it will be slightly more. To assist the catering arrangements will members who are interested in coming to the dinner please make your reservations early.

Anyone game for committee work?

Besides the Executive Committee, there are also four other committees which organise various activities for the Society. These are the committees and their current officeholders:

* Heritage of the Physical Environment headed by Bobby Wong (S) School of Architecture, National University of Singapore, Kent Ridge (0511); tel. 772-3520, fax 779-3078
* Written Heritage headed by Goh Eck Kheng, 12-A King Albert Park (2159); tel. 734-4579, fax 235-3487
* Heritage of Performing and Visual Arts headed by Claire Chiang, 67 Faber Drive (0512); tel. 772-3724, fax 462-0186, pager 207-4001
* Heritage of Culture and Lifestyles headed by Y.P. Chee, 15 Queen Street, #03-01 Tan Chong Tower (0718); tel. 339-7633, fax 339-5605

Members who are interested in these areas or who want to help plan activities can get in touch with the chairperson concerned.

---

New book on architectural heritage

The Society’s publications programme is going on swimmingly. In the pipeline is an Architectural Heritage book scheduled for publication in November. The working title of this book is The Conservation of the Singapore Heritage and is conceived as a follow-up to Pastel Portraits first published in 1984. Pastel Portraits is recognised as being instrumental in highlighting the need for conservation in a graphic fashion.

The 160-page book will give a historical overview of the conservation movement briefly in words and amply in photographs. It will be a pictorial record of different types of conservation. The aim is to show a good mix of buildings from residential to commercial properties to institutional buildings. The selection of buildings will also attempt to reflect the different popular styles during Singapore’s short history.

The man behind the book is Associate Professor Robert Powell of the National University of Singapore School of Architecture. The committee working with him on this project is chaired by Goh Eck Kheng. The members are Malone-Lee Lai Choo, Suna Kanga and Dr Benson Kwok.

The photographers working on the project are Albert K.S. Lim, a multiple STPB Tourism Award winner for photography, and Luca Tettoni. The designer of the book is Ko Hui-Huy who designed the Society’s tree with roots logo and Pastel Portraits.

The book is part of a series of heritage books being sponsored by Mobil which is celebrating its centenary in Singapore. Mobil first set up shop selling fuel products in Singapore in 1893 at 10 Robinson’s Quay.

Move to make Society a charity

At an extra-ordinary meeting held on October 31, 1992, the constitution was amended to turn the Society into a charity registered under the Charities Act.

The matter is now in the hands of the Registrar of Societies and the Inland Revenue Service. It is being handled by the Society’s firm of accountants, Price Waterhouse.

The Vice-President, Kwa Chong Guan, said such a registration would make donations and gifts of money to the Society exempt from taxes. This would give the Society funds to run its activities such as the Heritage Hunts and publications programme.

However, registering the Society as a charity under the Charities Act did not mean that the Society was in a position to issue tax-exemption certificates. Only full charities such as the Community Chest can give out such tax-exemption certificates.