

ABE INTERNATIONAL



Centre: Pat Reddin. To his left: Dr Ahmed Ramly, ABE representative at ABE Centre, Faizah Ahmed and her husband. To his right: Professor Arbi, Dean of Faculty and his wife; Dr Ramly's wife

BUILDING ON FOUNDATIONS IN MALAYSIA

The second flight from Heathrow to Kuala Lumpur in 4 months. A shorter journey this time though. Fewer diversions around the Middle East and Afghanistan.

Arriving in Kuala Lumpur, known generally as "KL", on Saturday evening, work starts straight away. Dinner with Malaysian ABE members and discussion of the week's programme. I am here representing the Association of Building Engineers on a Trade Mission, sponsored by Trade International, part of the DTI.

The ABE is visiting Malaysia for a series of Meetings to expand its membership in south-east Asia and beyond. When I was here in November with David Gibson, your Chief Executive, we found that this country was aiming to become the technology education capital for the whole region. The Malaysian education system is based on that of the UK, and it seems that everyone has studied for at least part of their education in the UK.

The first full day, Sunday, was a day for relaxing, so I went to a British Council-organised Expo of university education establishments from the UK. Not being an academic, I always used to have a fairly rosy view of universities, believing they were establishments above the grubby world of commerce. Not so, they are all there, recruiting like mad with overt competition for students for undergraduate, top-up, masters and other post-graduate courses.

Sunday: Meet University Malaya. They are hosting the ABE Centre in KL for us. In August 2002 they will have an Outstanding Student Award and we discuss the possibility of an award by the ABE. At their convocation this year the ABE was formally mentioned and recognised for the first time.

The ABE Centre will be an office with a computer terminal for use by students and ABE members. At this meeting I also met representatives from the New Islamic University. They are just starting their courses in this new University. Students are drawn from other Islamic countries and China. They are already running a Masters course and a BSc in Building Engineering will start in July 2003. We agree that the ABE will undertake an accreditation process of their course and assist its development before it starts. This, for me, makes a change. Most accreditation is on existing courses with the natural difficulty in implementing changes which we, the ABE, require. Here we are at the outset!

Monday: Off to the British High Commission for the Trade Mission briefing. Meet the High Commissioner and his staff again.

Extremely warm welcome for the ABE. Real encouragement to develop our presence in KL. Then off to meetings with Institution of Surveyors, Malaysia, and



L-R Prof Bill Hamilton, D B Das Gupta, Mani Usilapann, President of ISM, Pat Reddin, Dr Ahmed Ramly

Institution of Engineers, Malaysia. Both welcoming and the IEM positively enthusiastic about co-operation with the ABE. We really can do business here.



Pat Reddin and Dr Gue, President of IEM

The initial thoughts that we might be perceived as competitors are dispelled and we achieve an understanding of the complementary benefits of working together.

Tuesday: Too long in one place! Off to Penang to meet with the Universiti Saens Malaysia. Initial contacts were made in November and here I am off to present a Certificate confirming the Universiti as an ABE Training Affiliate. Seems simple enough, but I should know better! I am met by Dr Zhary of USM and also Mr Mohammed Fathi, President of Alumni of School of Housing Building and Planning.

Then the meeting is not just with the Universiti as an educational establishment, but with its Alumni. The Universiti was started in 1969, the campus was established in 1972, and the School of Housing, Planning and Construction was opened in 1972, with the first intake in 1973. The current intake is 225 undergraduates. The Alumni has some 2-3,000 members with degree and experience. These are interested in becoming ABE members and how can I assist. I deliver membership forms, give a presentation on our routes to membership and encourage individual applications for corporate membership from suitably qualified candidates.



Pat Reddin, Dr Zhary, Mr. Mohammed Fathi

Dr Fathi and I sign a Memorandum of Understanding between the ABE and the Alumni to explore ways for acceptance into corporate membership of existing Alumni members. Then, I get some really good food – not at the hotel but at street stalls and restaurants. Lucky I am not wearing “the gong” (sorry – chain of office) – it would have splashed even more into the food. I also visit a construction site for the new Institut Kemahiran Mara which will provide science and technology facilities for students from all over south-east Asia.

Wednesday: Back to KL and into the traffic. Off to meet CIDB (Construction Industry Development Board) and get confirmation of real encouragement for the ABE to become increasingly active in Malaysia.



Pat Reddin with Mr Amir Abdullah (Deputy Chief Executive)

On Thursday, I meet with the Association of Consulting Engineers Malaysia (ACEM) and British Council. The ACEM members are also members of IEM. Membership is restricted to the owners of consulting firms. ACEM represents 260 firms, over 60% of all consultancy firms in Malaysia. Fees finance about 30% of all expenditure and seminars generate the remainder. ACEM run courses accredited by Malaysia Board of Engineers, including an induction course for new engineers. ACEM members volunteer to teach on these courses. For example ACEM set up a subsidised AutoCAD training centre.



Pat Reddin presents ABE tie to Ir Chem Thian Leong (President ACEM)

At the British Council I again find a really warm welcome. We discuss the recruitment of students for study in the UK. Entry to UK is relatively easy. No advance visa is required and work is allowed for up to 20 hours/week during term time and unlimited during holidays. It is also now possible to change from student to employee with a Work Permit without leaving the UK.

Dr. Tom Craig-Cameron, Director of the British Council, was enthusiastic about the ABE's active involvement in Malaysia and the establishment of a Centre at Universiti of Malaya.

So what did I bring back? No, not the Duty Free! The ABE is welcomed by the construction and academic establishment of Malaysia. We must work hard to support and develop our existing members in Malaysia and to expand our membership, both from those already qualified and students.