

British Club Active Living Section

Lunch Presentation titled: “Thonburi the Capital of Ancient Siam: King Taksin’s Vision, Thailand’s Future ”

Chairperson’s Introduction of the Speaker:

Ladies and gentlemen, good afternoon and welcome.

Our speaker, Kenneth Barrett, is a London-born journalist and author whose career has taken him across more than sixty countries and, happily for us, to a long and fruitful life in Thailand. He learned his craft in the tough discipline of newsroom production, beginning as a chief sub-editor on a weekly newspaper, an early grounding that gave him the precision, clarity, and curiosity that shine through every page he writes.

In the late 1970s Kenneth was reporting on major infrastructure projects across the Middle East, before moving into editorial leadership for several travel magazines based in Bangkok. A move to Singapore followed, where he served as editorial director for a new publishing venture, then on to Hong Kong, where he made his mark as a restaurant critic, feature writer, and chairman of the Hong Kong Press Club. He even ran his own Thai restaurant during that period, which perhaps gave him a more direct understanding of the challenges of writing honestly about hospitality!

Kenneth returned to Bangkok in the early 1990s and has made it his home base ever since, balancing his life between Thailand and London. His best-known work, *22 Walks in Bangkok*, remains one of the most engaging guides ever written about this city, leading readers through hidden lanes and historic enclaves with stories that connect past and present. He has a remarkable gift for seeing what the rest of us walk straight past—and then making us care about it.

In recent years, Kenneth has continued to write widely on Thailand’s heritage, architecture, and travel culture, and is now completing a major two-volume work on Asia’s heritage hotels. Through it all, he has remained exactly what he began as: a clear-eyed journalist, a patient observer, and a storyteller with a deep affection for this country and its people. These days he claims to be a little more settled, and he provides a range of editorial services to corporate accounts, along with working on a lengthening list of books on subjects that interest him.

So please join me in welcoming Kenneth Barrett, who will take us back in time to explore *Thonburi – the Capital of Ancient Siam*, and reveal how King Taksin’s vision still shapes Thailand’s future today.

