

news, views, reviews, & off - grid jungle intel

8 BUFFALOES 3 CHIPS AFFORDABLE BLING MEETING UP WITH JANE AUSTEN AN ARECAUNT IN THE BLADES OF GIRAYA WANTON DELIGHT





NATURE, RAW & FECUND



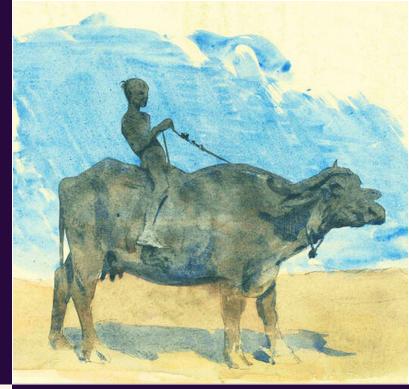
Chandrika Shiromani Asuramana is a Sri Lankan artist whose many exhibitions in galleries have given her an enviable reputation as one of the country's leading wildlife artists.

Her Rousseau-esque depictions of the enchanted riches of Sri Lanka's jungles and paddy, forest, gardens, and deep plantations (often with glimpses of the tiny beasts that live amongst them), fuzes an innate feeling for colour and form with aspects of modernism, primitive expressionism, fauvism – and the island's ancient temple frescos.

Her paintings can be seen at the hotel; with some specially commissioned ones available for sale.

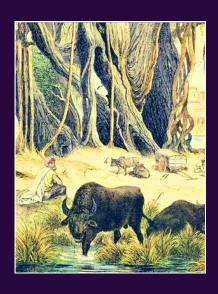


EIGHT BUFFALOES



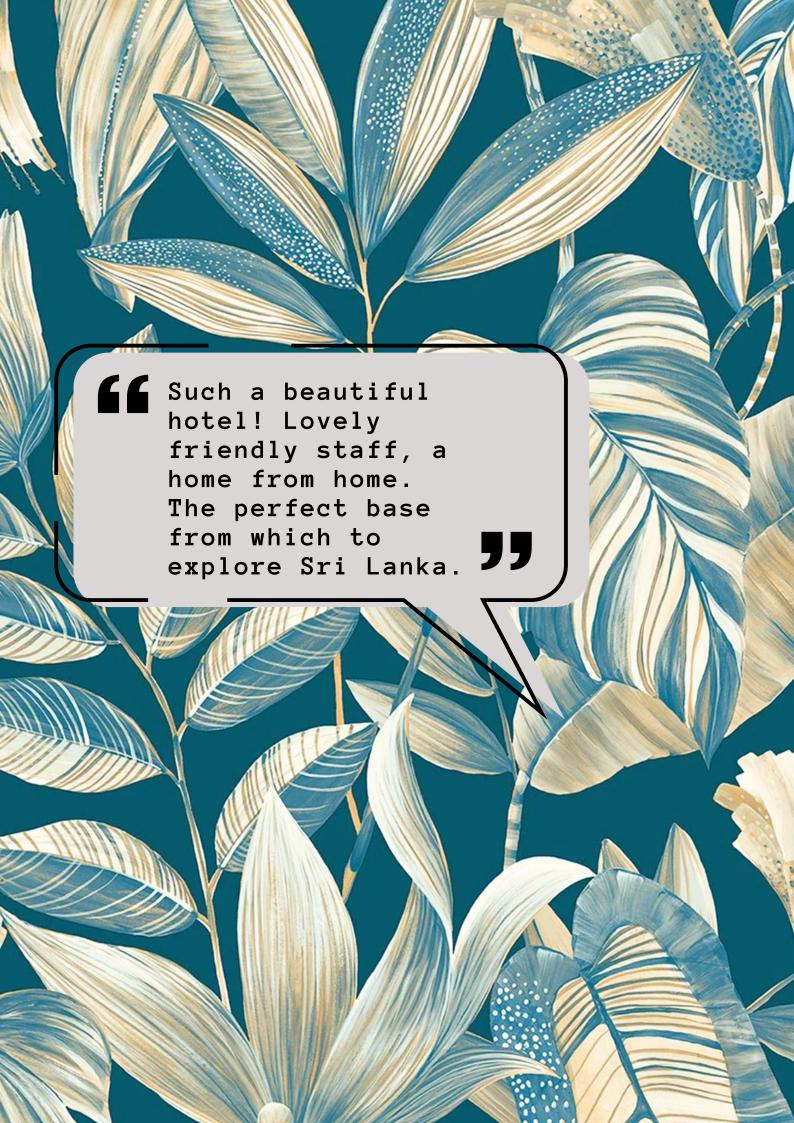


"Buffalo buffalo Buffalo buffalo buffalo buffalo Buffalo buffalo" is a sentence that uses correct grammar. It is often used as an example of how homonyms and homophones can be used to create confusing, hard-to-understand sentences. It has been talked about since 1967, when the sentence was used by Dmitri Borgmann in his book Beyond Language. The sentence does not have punctuation. It uses three different meanings of the word "buffalo". They are: noun adjunct (a noun used as an adjective): the city of Buffalo, New York; noun: the animal called buffalo in the plural form; verb: the word "buffalo", which means to confuse or intimidate.



Constructed by loving gods with luxuriant, solid, confident proportions, the Water Buffalo (Bubalus Bubalis Bubalis) makes its many other bovine relatives come across as whispery ragamuffins. Their literary pedigree dates back at least to the Akkadian kingdom of 2,500 BCE.

They are fine sturdy creatures, fit to grace any field or lawn and seen in the paddy land near the Flame Tree Estate & Hotel. Black to slate grey with generously curved horns and reassuringly stocky bodies, they typically weigh 1,200 pounds, though double that weight has been recorded in some instances. They work hard – often up to forty years with little holiday, living tractors for threshing and transportation. The unlucky ones are raised for meat. The lucky ones produce milk is richer in fat and protein than that of dairy cattle; and all produce the dung that fertilizes fields or is used to light cooking fires.



CHPS, CHPS, CHPS,

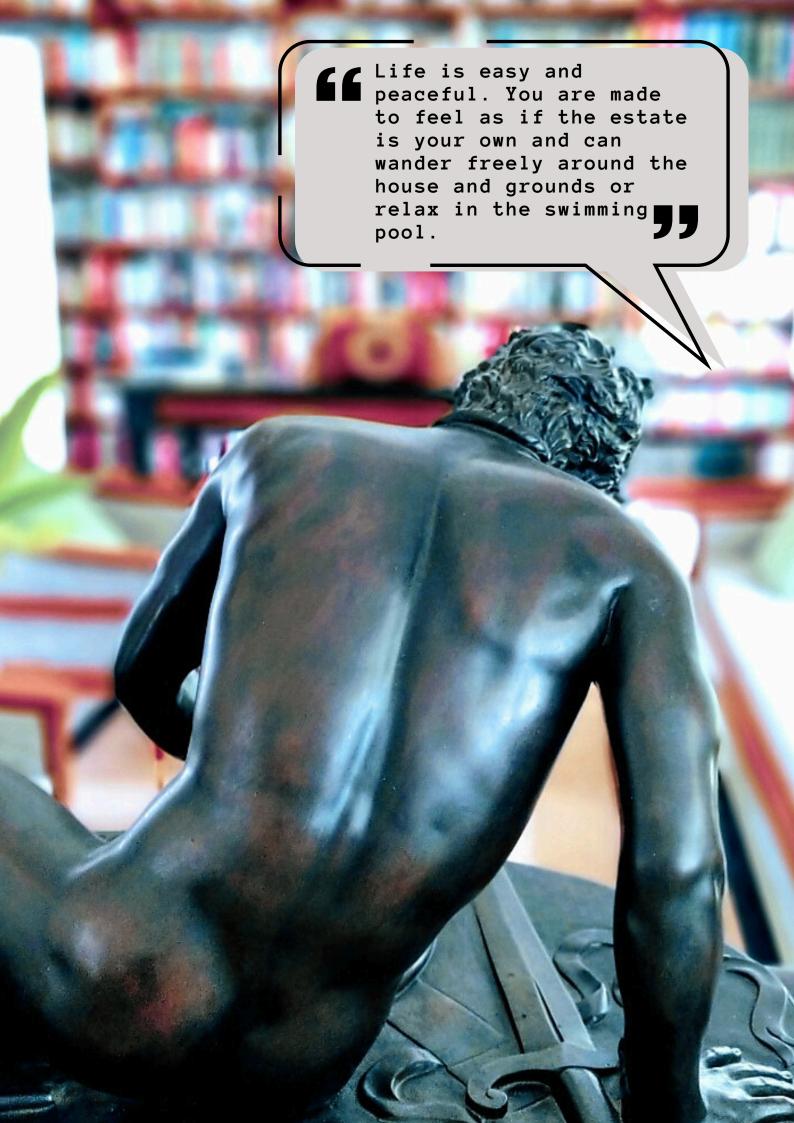


We have tried regular fries. They were fine – ish. Doubling frying them seemed to make things better. And then our chefs hit upon the triple-cooked chips developed by the English chef Heston Blumenthal.

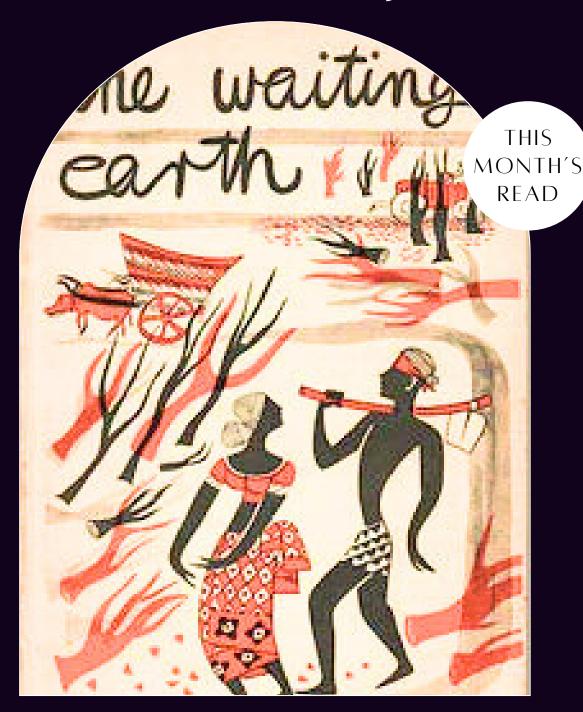
The chips are first simmered, then cooled and drained and cooled again; and finally deep-fried again at 180 °C (356 °F). The result is what Blumenthal calls "chips with a glass-like crust and a soft, fluffy centre".

Blumenthal began work on the recipe in 1993 and eventually developed the three-stage cooking process. The Sunday Times described triple-cooked chips as Blumenthal's most influential innovation, which had given the chip "a whole new lease of life". In 2014, the London Fire Brigade attributed an increase in chip pan fires to the increased popularity of "posh chips", including triple-cooked chips.

But to give them a tropical edge, we developed out own katsup: made with nutmeg to give a jungle thrill to a reworked modern classic.



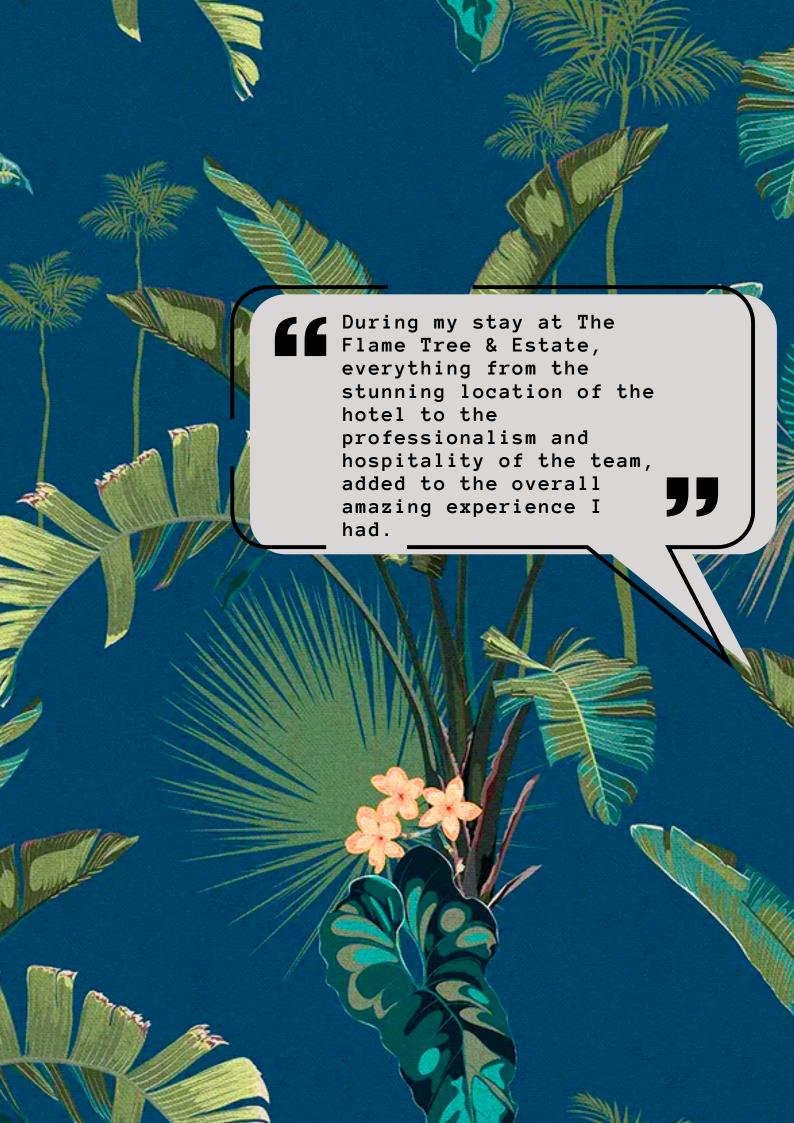
FORGOTTEN GIANT PUNYAKANTE WIJENAIKE



"I could feel the power of her will bending my will," she once wrote, "breaking my strength like the giraya cutting arecanut into pieces. And she would get Lucia Hamy to sweep up the pieces that had once been an individual with a mind of her own, and hide them away in a drawer....."



Writing novels and stories "about men and women who lead their own kind of life in villages outside cities;" who "are real and alive much as anywhere in the world" lies at the heart of Punyakante Wijenaike's many novels and short stories. Her books, such as "The Enemy Within," "Amulet," "The Waiting Earth," "When Guns Fall Silent," "To Follow the Sun" and "Unbinding," do not simply win prizes; they tell the tales rarely told. If ever there was a writer who deserves her entire backlist to be posthumously reprinted it is Wijenaike. One of her 2023 obituaries noted that "through her writing, she demonstrated a clear critique of the aristocracy and the feudal order, while exploring gender roles and the place of women in a patriarchal and classist society. Her contribution to Sri Lankan literature was invaluable, and she has rightfully earned her place as a literary giant in the country's literary history." Her third novel, "Giraya," published in 1971 considered by many to be her masterpiece and one that was later made into a powerful teledrama sets her squarely in the landscape she most revered. "In this story," wrote a reviewer, "recorded in a diary, a sensitive young woman is caught like an arecaunt between the blades of giraya. Surrounded by twisted, abnormal characters, in an atmosphere of frustration, passion and thwarted desire, living in a crumbling old walauwe which is hostile to a fast-changing society, where she is desperate."







KING OF THE MONTH BUDDHADASA, KING OF ANURADHAPURA

The twenty first monarch of the Lambakanna Dynasty; the dates of his reign being 341 – 370 CE.

A blessedly peaceful succession saw Buddhadasa take the throne from his father Jettha Tissa II – and a twenty-eight-year reign beckoned. The Mahavaṃsa has nothing but praise for this king, characterized as a "Mind of Virtue and an Ocean of Gems." Unusually though, the new king preferred medicine to wars, stupas, temples, monasteries and plotting, and his reign was noted for the exceptional medical care he extended to his subjects. He wrote a medical handbook, the "Sarartha Sangraha," built hospitals, appointed Medical Officers, and established infirmaries and asylums for the benefit of the blind, and the lame. Stories abound of his role as doctor to various ailing subjects who he came across. He even took care of animals, including, it is said, a snake with a stomach-ache.

Perhaps his interest in medicine can also help explain the eighty sons The Mahavaṃsa credits him with creating, each one, the chronicle approvingly states, named after a disciple of Buddha. Two were to reign after his natural death in 370 CE. For 116 years the Lambakarna dynasty, recovering from its earlier subversive bout of regicide, had settled down to govern well, fostering a prosperous and growing state. They had, in the words of John Lennon, given peace a chance. In the reigns that were to follow, it was, alas, soon to be time again for bloodletting.







FOREST GOSSIPS

If emeralds are your thing, then Layard's parakeet is a bird for you to cherish.

Sometimes known as the emeraldcollared parakeet, (Psittacula calthrapae), this endemic treasure is about a foot long and a lover of forests, especially

It is also a raucous gossip, its boisterous and rowdy chatter the sort of welcome sound that reminds you that you are in the real jungle – and far from all those other noises that the good Lord is not responsible for

Its flight marks it out as well swift and direct, as it heads for the tree hollows that are its favoured bolt holes.







A WANTON DELIGHT



Quite how ginger got to the island is a mystery but by 150 CE Claudius Ptolemy, the Greek geographer noted how it was imported to the Roman world from Ceylon. A pound of ginger then costed as much as a whole sheep. Thankfully, it is now so plentiful that it can be used with wanton and luxurious disregard to cost.

Compared to Chinese or Rangoon ginger, Sri Lankan ginger is stronger and better suited to being used in cooking. It stars in many dishes from ginger chicken to Injii Sambol – and most especially island pudding such as Bibikkan, introduced to Sri Lanka by the Portuguese in around 1505. This coconut cake is a dark moist madness of shredded coconut, jaggery and semolina combined with a mixture of spices and outlawed by most prudent diets. We grow it in our spice gardens – but we also grow its ornamental cousin whose waxy red flowers look like something

made entirely by AI.



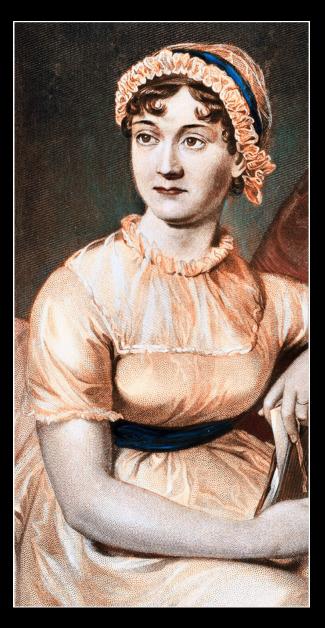
THE LONG READ

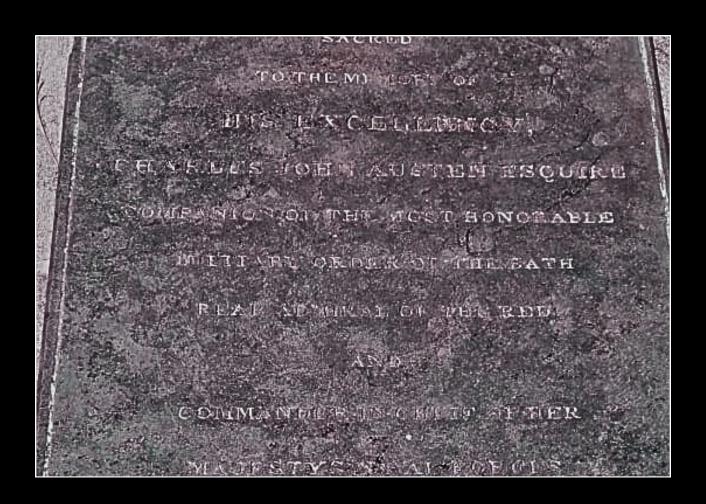
Trincomalee is not what it seems, a small town of passing consequence. Like a true aristocrat, it wears it reputation with uttermost modesty, restrained as crown of sapphires under a hoodie. The great eastern port of the ancient kings, a later key link in the chain of European wars fought from 1652 to the downfall of Napoleon that turned South Asia British, it holds its history with absolute discretion, noticeable only if you look amongst its graves and within some of its almost vanished communities; in the scared walls of temples and buildings linked to the passage of its many gods, its forgotten kings and even great artists – all symbolised by the rare birds that flock to an overlooked lagoons north of the town.

Whilst Sri Lankans and tourists alike cluster around the south coast, and a few choice parts of the centre of the island, barely any make it to this part of the east coast.

Once part of the Rajarata, the homeland of the first island kings, Trincomalee and the east slowly became ever more isolated as the island's development surged around the western seaboard, the hill country, and the far south. The modern world pushed it even further to a back seat thirty years of civil war, a tsunami, and the troubled new decades of the twenty first century, years marked so extravagantly by the fact that it was an island off the town that was selected as one of the only remote safe spots to house a prime minster, toppled by the 2022 Aragalaya that saw so much old government swept aside.

MEETING UP WITH JANE AUSTEN IN TRINCOMALEE





Two main roads lead into the town – the A12 from Anuradhapura, and the A6 from Dambulla, both skirting a large wildlife park, whilst a third, the A15 leads towards the coastal villages of the south. None bring with them that dawning sense of bleak certainty that you are approaching an urban centre. There are no outlying suburbs or factory sites to speak of. Optimistic half-built retail outlets, busted petrol stations, billboards proclaiming glittering but affordable developments of villas and family homes: all are missing. A beautiful sparse and dry landscape borders the roads, ceding very occasionally to almost green forests. A most untwenty first century silence grows as you cut through the countryside, arriving, almost without notice at Trincomalee itself.

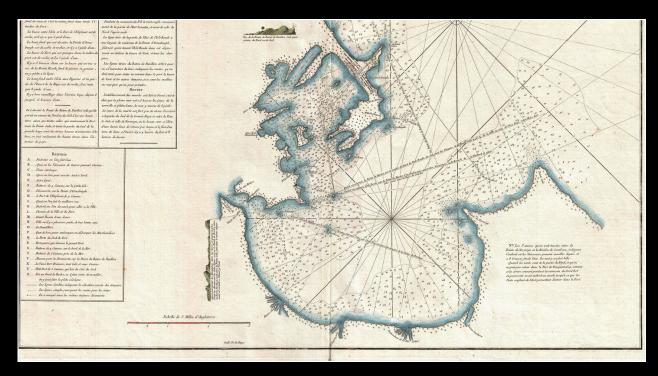
And almost immediately you find yourself driving along an esplanade, the sea on one side and a graveyard of miniature and broken architectural wonders on the other. Within it, most unexpectedly lies a monument connected to the world's greatest novelist: Jane Austen, for the cemetery contains the grave of her favourite brother, Charles Austen - her "own particular little brother," and the model for the manly and caring character of William Price in Mansfield Park.

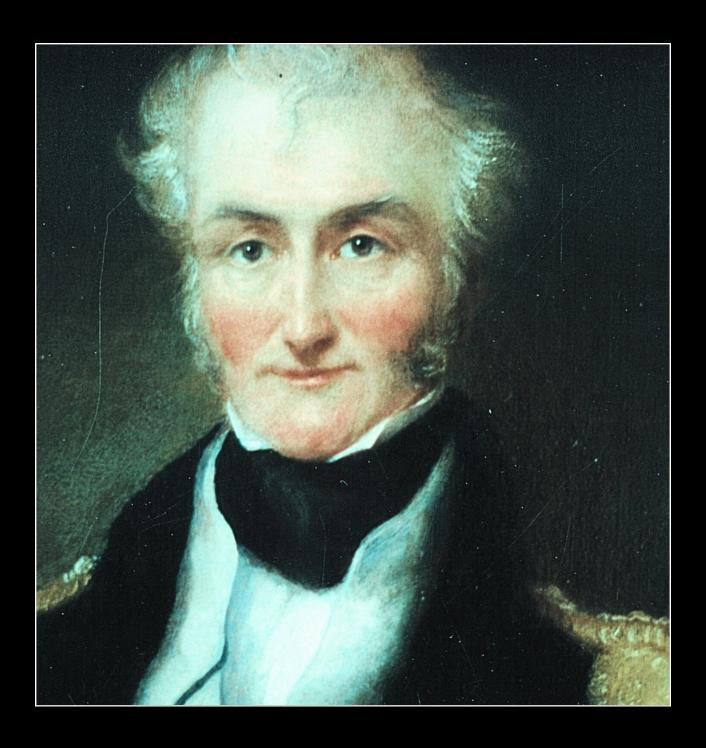
Etched indelibly across a wide rectangle of granite read the words ""Sacred to the memory of His Excellency C.J. Austen, Esq., Champion of the Most Honourable Military Order of the Bath, Rear Admiral of the Red and Commander-in-Chief of Her Majesty's Naval Forces on the East India and China Station, Rear Admiral Charles Austen CB. Died off Prome, while in command of the Naval Expedition on the river Irrawaddy against the Burmese Forces, aged 73 years."



Outliving his more famous sister by decades, Charles was an euthanistic reader of novels – especially hers; and it is perhaps no little accident that the brother of so great a writer should lie in gentle comfort here on an island whose contemporary writers have so recently burst like firecrackers over world fiction – from Sri Lanka itself of course, but also from Canada, Australia, the UK, the US or New Zealand, part of a raw diaspora created by civil war and corruption. Their fiction has become an unexpected globally embassy, bringing humour, a unique sensibility and a sharp, ironic eye to the themes that preoccupy every great novel - from war, sex, fashion, addiction and love to loss, pets, the jungle, fame, fortune, bankruptcy. And, of course, family; for in Sri Lanka, as almost nowhere else, the family really does come inconveniently, beautifully, reassuringly, alarmingly - first.

Family was close to Chales Austen's heart far beyond his famous sister for he was to create a titillation of scandal back home for his serial marriage of two sisters. But this failed to detract from his lasting memory, and he is remembered by one of his subordinates as stoic and dutiful to the end. "Our good admiral won the hearts of all by his gentleness and kindness while he was struggling with disease and endeavouring to do his duty as Commander-in-Chief of the British naval forces in these waters. His death was a great grief to the whole fleet. I know that I cried bitterly when I found he was dead."





All around his grave are earlier and later graves, mostly of British colonists, military officers and engineers who staffed this most distant part of the empire. Out of tombs and obelisks boosting the weathered details of Georgian architecture grow trees and shrubs. Buffalo graze amidst them. "Home at last, thy labours done, "reads the tomb of Charles Frank Miller, who died aged 235 in 1899, "safe and blessed the victory won...angels now have welcomed thee."

It is rumoured that occasionally a few dedicated members of the Jane Austen society fly out to tend Charles Austen's grave; but come more often they must, for within the next few decades the graveyard will be all but obliterated by weather and neglect, like the vanished church of St Stephen's that once oversaw it all.



SPARKLE 8 SHINE



One way to overcome the Pain Awareness Month that is September is to go off and buy yourself something that looks much more expensive than it usually is:

aquamarines, in fact

The presence of iron within the crystal of this semi-precious stone is what gives it its cherished green-blue to blue colour variations. Abundant and comparatively affordable (\$130 - \$900 per carat), it is found in from Rathnapura, to Matara.

Its comparative inexpensiveness has not stopped it decorating some of the world's more famous people, including the French Emperor Louis XV who owned the 109.92 carats Hirsch Aquamarine; Queen Elizabeth II who commissioned an Aquamarine Tiara; Eleanor Roosevelt who collected the gift of a 1,298-carot aquamarine gemstone when she visited Brazil in 1936; and the colossal 225,000 carat Dom Pedro Aquamarine, named after the anachronistic Brazilian emperors, Pedro I and Pedro II.



AYUBOWAN

Angelo Perera

GENERAL MANAGER + 94 77 189 8586

generalmanager @flametreeestate.com

Ajith Molligoda FINANCE & MARKETING

MANAGER +94 71 510 4208

finance @flametreeestate.com

Ranjan Guruge

OPERATIONS MANAGER +94 71 704 3980

operations @flametreeestate.com



The Flame Tree Estate & Hotel

Mudunhena Walawwa Galagedera 20100 Kandy, Sri Lanka

Main Office Landline + 94 81246 1265

www.flametreeestate.com









