

An invitation to judge at 'The Ceylon Kennel Club' was enthusiastically accepted by Graham Kerr – a Qld. All-Breeds judge whose 45 years experience in our dog world has seen him visiting and subsequently importing dogs from both the UK and the USA. During the 1970's Graham imported some of the first Bearded Collies from such well-respected British kennels as 'Deanfield', 'Robdave' and 'Willowmead'. His enormous contribution to the establishment of this breed in our country was then followed by an equally successful venture, whereby he introduced the first Wheaten Terriers in 1978. Asia, however, is one geographical area that has always held a certain fascination for this fellow whose pioneering efforts are well respected throughout our country.

His interest in this exotic island, lying to the southeast tip of India, was about to be answered.

Ceylon is shaped rather like a pear and its narrow northern end is almost joined to one of India's southernmost islands by a chain of sandbanks called Adam's Bridge. This close proximity to India probably accounts for the fact that all animals entering through its quarantine facilities need to be inoculated for rabies. Many dogs have been imported – some from as far away as the U.K., Germany and Australia. However, good quality animals are also exhibited and shown in the 'Country Bred' class.

'The Ceylon Kennel Club' was first established in 1899 and is one of the oldest Kennel Clubs in Asia. The current President of Sri Lanka (Her Excellency Chandrika Bandaranaike Kamaratunga) is its patron and her family's history shows a long-term involvement in both the showing and breeding of dogs. The Club comes under the auspices of the 'Sri Lankan Department of Youth Affairs and Sports', which takes an active role in helping to promote and foster the ongoing interest of dog showing within their community. The Department also provides free housing space for the holding of all official Club records and documents.

Established in approx. 1865, 'The Galle Face Hotel' obtained its name from the fact it faces towards the township of Galle - about 100 km. to the south. The beautifully spacious, fully air-conditioned rooms, each with their own en suite, provide some magnificent sea views and tropical outlooks over an impressive lawned frontage.

This frontage is about the size of three football fields and locals use the area for recreational activities such as kite flying, picnics as well as a variety of get togethers. It is an elegant hotel, steeped in old world charm, and also a very popular wedding venue. On the Friday morning, as Graham enjoyed a leisurely buffet breakfast, in the "Veranda Restaurant", the first of several wedding ceremonies commenced.

Around midday Graham was collected by the club's secretary and began a conducted tour of Colombo. This journey, however, was a totally new experience. Gone were the deserted streets encountered during the early morning hours. Instead the norm is a congestion of traffic that seemingly obeys no apparent set of roads rules. After a skilful 'dodgem car' ride through streets bustling with activity - lunch was served at the cricket club where Australia recently thrashed Sri Lanka and everybody subsequently thrashed the Poms. More scenic touring and shopping were on the agenda after lunch, before a return trip to the hotel around dusk. While the weather was not as humid as might have been expected in late autumn, our exhausted traveller enthusiastically welcomed an early night.

Saturday was another day of leisure. At about 10.30 am Graham was given an excursion to some of the northern sections of the township before being taken up to the Mt Lavinia Hotel. This five star luxury



A SOJOURN INTO THE SRI LANKAN SHOW SCENE

report by Jane Thomas

dessert, made from solid treacle called 'Jaggery' (a product from a local tree), as well as the unusual soursop cake. He knowledgeable assures me that both are absolutely delicious.

After lunch, there was a visit to some local Buddhist temples – one of which featured a giant reclining Buddha. Then a journey to

about to begin. After an official welcome, including great clapping and formal salutations, the judging eventually commenced at about 9.00am. It was at this festive and celebratory moment that Graham realised there is a fairly casual approach, by most locals, to the timing of their events. No one was the least bit concerned that things were running a little behind time. In fact, in everyone's opinion, everything to date had been a rip roaring success and after the last few days of outstanding hospitality, Graham was certainly not about to disagree.

At this point it should be mentioned that the Club holds only one show a year, with the rival club holding its show around September. Consequently each event is of major importance and this is clearly reflected in the size and quality of the trophy table. The magnificent trophies, mostly perpetual, that have been donated and collected over many years, totally overpowered the lovely display of ribbons and certificates. These trophies form an incredibly impressive collection of silver cups and salvers - having been removed from their bank vault and immaculately prepared for presentation – after which they are duly returned to the bank vault, for safe keeping, until the next occasion.

Mr Kerr had already been informed as to manner in which the judging is conducted and it certainly differs from that of Australia. Firstly, the show follows the English Grouping method: being divided into Sporting (Terriers, Gundogs and Hounds), and Non-Sporting (Pastoral, Working, Utility and Toys). The Working, Gundogs, and then Pastoral, comprised the largest number of entries.

To obtain a Championship an exhibit must win three C.C.s. The awarding of a Reserve C.C. is equivalent to half a C.C., and counts towards the achieving of a Championship Title. The withholding of CCs is encouraged, as it was stressed very clearly that a judge must hold a firm conviction as to the quality of the animals awarded. It is very important in the eyes of all exhibitors that winners be seen as totally worthy of their presentations. Our judge did in fact withhold several CCs as well as some Reserve CCs. On these occasions, as throughout the entire event, he was most impressed with the excellent sportsmanship displayed by all exhibitors. Also, throughout the entire day's judging, as awards were presented each winner received a round of applause from all spectators and fellow exhibitors.

In order to achieve a CC there is a bewildering variety of classes available. Not



Above View from Mt Lavinia.

Left Galle Face Hotel

Eddy's home (an elegant residence, surrounded by large, wide verandas) provided a perfect setting for the sampling of authentic Ceylon tea. The day's activities ended with a stopover at the Show grounds, which proved to be a large football field. Here, their Australian judge was acquainted with the following day's location. While thoroughly enjoying all the sightseeing and outstanding hospitality provided by his hosts, it was at this stage that Graham started impatiently looking forward to the next day's judging.

Sunday finally dawned, bright and sunny. Graham arrived promptly in the downstairs lobby to eagerly await the arrival of his transport. His schedule clearly stated a 7.45am hotel collection with an 8.00am start for judging. There were nearly 200 dogs and everyone was most excited about the fact that this was the biggest entry for ten years. At 8.15am Graham started to feel a little concerned that no one had arrived. At 8.20am our diligent Australian representative made a quick phone call. It seemed that there was no cause for concern. Graham was duly informed that the club's organisers were not yet ready for him and would come as soon as possible.

At 8.45am the chauffeur eventually arrived and finally the day's programme seemed

establishment, once used as the Governor's residence, was named after the girlfriend who eventually became his wife. It has breathtaking views of the city as well as the picturesque countryside to the south.

Graham and Eddy (Brindley's father and a past president of the Kennel Club) had a most enjoyable lunch sampling the local dishes. While some of the dishes were a little spicy all were quite delicious. Did you know that a 'hopper' is a pancake with a fried egg in the middle and on top of this curry or rice is added? This combination is then rolled up and eaten like a donor kebab. However, it is the desserts that sound particularly exotic and memorable. Graham described the treacle

On the 21st November at 1.45pm, Graham bordered a Qantas flight at Brisbane's international airport and arrived in Singapore at approximately 8.00pm local time. Around midnight, he departed for Colombo, Ceylon's capital. The Emirates flight arrived at 2.30 am in the morning and he experienced his first taste of Sri Lankan hospitality. An enthusiastic group of greeters were awaiting their Australian judge – headed by the club's secretary, Mr Brindley de Zylva.

At the time Graham acknowledges that he was totally unappreciative of the speedy manner in which his car travelled through the city - transporting him to the oldest and most historic hotel in Colombo.