Tribute to the Father of Ceylon Tea

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Dr John Rankin, the British High Commissioner to Sri Lanka unveiling the 16-foot monument

Mlesna Tea Castle marks a day in the history of Ceylon tea as it pays a monumental tribute to the Father of Ceylon Tea, James Taylor. Mlesna Tea Castle in Talawakelle has created a 16-foot monument to pay tribute to James Taylor, the Father of Ceylon Tea. Dr John Rankin, the British High Commissioner to Sri Lanka ceremonially unveiled the monument and plaque. Sculptor, Dr Sarath Chandrajeewa took on the arduous task of creating this monument, following a four month study of the life of James Taylor.

James Taylor, was born in Scotland and arrived in Sri Lanka in 1852 at the age of 17. He took up the position as a Trainee Coffee Planter at the coffee plantation of

Loolecondera in Hewahetta. During the Coffee Blight crisis, Taylor decided to transform coffee to tea in 1867 with his experimental plot at Loolecondera, thus marking the beginning of the tea industry of Sri Lanka (then Ceylon). It is interesting to note that he met Thomas Lipton during one of his visits to Sri Lanka where they discussed the business of exporting tea from Sri Lanka.

Speaking at the ceremony, Dr John Rankin, the British High Commissioner said, “James Taylor was interested in new technology and he wrote about his success in developing a larger tea operation. In 1875 he managed to send the first shipment of Ceylon Tea to the London tea auction. In 1893 one year after his death one million packets of ceylon tea were sold at Chicago’s world fair. It is his legacy that has ensured today the continuing renown of Ceylon Tea.”

Arjuna Perera, Director of Mlesna gave the vote of thanks drawing the ceremonial occasion to a close.

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