

February-20



Time Travellers Club

Dear Club Members,

February 2020 is the anniversary of the collapse of the UK's oldest investment banking institute; Barings bank. In 1995 a trader called Nick Leeson lost \$1.4 billion by speculating on the Singapore International Monetary Exchange.

Now that doesn't sound too promising for colour inspiration, however, if we take a slightly sideways jump we end up at something that I did manage to use to inspire your fibre this month. Singapore is one of the major centres in the global economic marketplace, and is a modern thriving city state. Historically however it was part of the British Empire, the origins of the present day city date back to 1819 when it was founded by Sir Stamford Raffles. The country was occupied by Japan during the Second World War, but was returned to British control in 1945. Singapore gained self governance in 1959.

Now the one thing that I have no wish to do is to glorify the days of the British Empire, the actions of the British government in many countries was shameful. The narrative of the founding of Singapore is one of Raffles in the role of white saviour. The popular story is that Singapore was just a sleepy fishing village until he came long and transformed it in to a global port. It is true that he established Singapore as a thriving port, and important link in trade between Asia and Europe. But in the 17th century it was the site of Johor (a state formed of modern day Malaysia and Singapore) Sultanate's naval base, and a busy trading port. The arrival of the British did bring prosperity for the Europeans, but the local people didn't benefit from that prosperity, in fact their standard of living declined.

Raffles now gives his name to many plants and animals, he has a reputation as being a naturalist, and in the Victorian style he collected a great deal, relying on the work of locals, secretaries and other naturalists to form a huge collection. Unfortunately much of this was lost when the ship taking him back to England, *Fame* set alight. Alas it wasn't just his collections that were lost, in his time in Asia he had collected many Malay books and manuscripts. Raffles own secretary wrote the following after the burning of *Fame*-

'When I heard this news I was breathless,' wrote his secretary, 'remembering all the Malay books of ancient date collected from various countries...The books could not be recovered for none of them were printed but in manuscript..'

Raffles name is now used in the latin names of many Asian plants and animals, and his name is also used at the famous Raffles Hotel in Singapore. The hotel itself wasn't built until 1887, long after the death of Raffles. However it became synonymous with a certain level of luxury that the European traveller expected when travelling in Asia. The Long Bar in the hotel is the birthplace of the Singapore Sling cocktail. It's origin story may possibly owe more to mythology than truth, but we do know it was created by Ngiam Tong Boon, a Haianese bar tender sometime before 1915. At that time women drinking in public was not socially acceptable, and the rumour has it that the Singapore Sling was invented to give them a drink that looked like fruit punch, but still with a kick of alcohol. Another rumour is that it was created in reposes to a request to "make a drink the same colour as that lady's lips". Either way, it's a fabulously vibrant drink and is our colour inspiration for this month.

Happy Spinning

Katie

Further Reading-

Barings Bank-

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Barings_Bank

Singapore-

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Singapore>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Singapore

Sir Stamford Raffles-

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stamford_Raffles

Criticism of Sir Stamford Raffles and his celebration at Singapore's 200th anniversary-

<https://www.dw.com/en/raffles-bicentennial-stokes-debate-in-singapore-over-colonization-legacy/a-47963993>

<https://mothership.sg/2019/03/raffles-racist-bicentennial-founding-singapore/>

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/01/pirate-hero-raffles-bicentennial-fuels-singapore-debate-190128005711434.html>

Naturalist Paintings from Stamford Raffles collection-

<https://blogs.bl.uk/asian-and-african/2015/08/bird-paintings-sir-thomas-stamford-raffles.html>

<https://rafflesiantimes.wordpress.com/2015/02/12/a-walk-on-the-wild-side-with-raffles/>

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/1999/mar/13/books.guardianreview6>

Information about Raffles second-in-command William Farquhar, the man who actually did much of the work to establish Singapore-

<https://www.spectator.co.uk/2018/01/how-raffles-stole-the-jewel-of-singapore/>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Farquhar

The Raffles Hotel-

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Raffles_Hotel

Singapore Sling-

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Singapore_Sling

<https://imbibemagazine.com/origins-of-the-singapore-sling/>

<https://www.independent.co.uk/travel/asia/singapore-sling-recipe-cocktail-how-to-make-raffles-hotel-history-a9025201.html>

Michael Portillo's Railway Journey TV series is currently exploring Asia, including Singapore. It's a surprisingly interesting watch, and doesn't do too bad a job at white-washing the troublesome colonial past-

(Sorry BBC TV programmes are only available in the UK, and you'll also have to be quick, episode 1 becomes unavailable in 12 days)

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episodes/m000dtbn/great-asian-railway-journeys>

If you enjoy reading about the origins of alcoholic drinks then I was given this book for Christmas, and it's fascinating.

<https://www.bookdepository.com/Drunken-Botanist-Plants-That-Create-Worlds-Great-Drinks-Amy-Stewart/9781616200466>

Fibre Content- In case your parcel is missing the label
25% Rambouillet, 25% Baby Camel, 50% Merino