

# Libraries of Galle and Hambantota in Sri Lanka



Librarians Jill Bartholomeusz (l) and Kerrie Ludekens (r) visit the Galle Public library and meet chief municipal commissioner of Galle Mr Chandrasiri and the chief librarian of the Galle Public Library Mr R D Samarasinghe.

As everyone knows, the tsunami that devastated many parts of Southeast Asia on Boxing Day 2004 destroyed property and infrastructure worth billions of dollars. What many Australians probably didn't realise was that in many areas affected by the tsunami, people now had nothing to read. In some areas libraries had been wiped out.

The Athenaeum was particularly interested in helping rebuild the libraries in Galle and Hambantota and to organise mobile libraries — which will be a region first. The bookmobiles will help the Galle Municipal Library distribute their collections to other branch libraries in the south, including Hambantota.

Jill Bartholomeusz travelled to Sri Lanka, courtesy of the City of Melbourne, to meet the chief municipal commissioner of Galle, Mr Chandrasiri, and the municipal librarian, Mr R D Samarasinghe. Her trip also included a visit to one of the devastated branch libraries, which was totally destroyed. Books, shelving, everything had been lost. Jill was able to observe, discuss and report the needs of the libraries in terms of collections, support materials, equipment and training. Her report now forms part of the city's long-term plan for the library projects which includes a sister-city agreement with Galle, offering future, as well as immediate, support for libraries.

In response to an article published in the *Herald Sun* about the libraries in Galle, the Melbourne Athenaeum Library had been collecting books removed from circulation to send to the Galle Municipal Library. People also donated books. The Galle library's limited collection included fiction and reference books, used by the general public, students and children. Suitable fiction is urgently needed (as well as the various subject areas listed below) as English is a compulsory subject taught in all schools throughout Sri Lanka. Recreational books, as well as giving pleasure, help to develop students' English-language skills.

The Melbourne Athenaeum Library is requesting donations, assistance and support from its members, from other libraries, and from anyone who would like to help. In addition to books, we need book-trolleys, book-covering materials and stationery supplies.

The needs of the Galle, Hambantota and branch libraries are listed. They are also looking for volunteers to assist with



The Hambantota library

the processing and cataloguing of their new collections.

- Book donations of fiction for adults, teenagers and children are needed, in English, Sinhala and Tamil.
- Non-fiction books in general reference areas as well as engineering, health, business, computing, science, education, accounting, travel, language studies, and sports.
- Library materials would be very helpful: book-trolleys, book covering and processing materials, date due slips, spine labels, date due stamps, and card pockets. Stationery supplies (paper, pens, tape, sheet protectors etc.) would also be greatly appreciated.
- Computer hardware and software.

The libraries are not yet connected to the internet, so there is no e-mail. There is no public computer access to the library's catalogue. If anyone can help with equipment the Melbourne Athenaeum Library would be pleased to hear from you. If we could have e-mail contact with our sister library in Galle, we would be able to respond more quickly to their requests for support and assistance.

**Jill Bartholomeusz, Melbourne Athenaeum Library, ph 03 9650 3100, ath@vicnet.net.au.**



Mr Chanrasiri and Mr Samarasinghe proudly show Jill Bartholomeusz and her son Jack the picture painted and donated by 6th Grade McKinnon Primary School students to the Children's section of the Galle Public Library.

## Donations

Donations of books and library materials can be sent to: **The Melbourne Athenaeum Library, 1st Floor, 188 Collins Street, Melbourne 3000.**

Monetary donations can be sent to: **The Lord Mayor's Charitable Fund (Sri Lanka Library Project), GPO Box 1851Q, Melbourne 3001.** ■



Inside Hambantota library before the clean-up