

PRESS RELEASE June 2011

Pic attached – Cobra King



DEVIL DANCING UNVEILED AT MUSEUM

They languished in the background virtually unnoticed for years, but now some 20 extraordinary, dramatic devil dancing masks from Sri Lanka form a new exciting exhibition at the Powell Cotton Museum at Quex Park, Birchington.

Purchased by Major Percy Powell Cotton at auction in London one hundred years ago, the masks had been the collection of a Mr GA Jennings of Saltash, Cornwall. When and where he collected them, remains a mystery, despite visits to other collections in the British Museum and the Pitt Rivers Museum at Oxford to try to find out more about the masks.

There are two main masked dance traditions in Sri Lanka – Kolam and Sanni Yakuma. Examples from both feature in the exhibition.

The tradition of masked dancing and mask making was especially strong in the southern part of Sri Lanka, around the town of Ambalangoda and the city of Galle. It continues today, though focussed now very much on the tourist market. The bulging eyes and cobra snake headdresses distinguish these Sri Lankan masks from those found in other parts of the World.

A spokesman for the Powell Cotton Museum said “we think our visitors will love seeing this exhibition as much as we have enjoyed putting it on.”

The exhibition will continue at the Museum until the end of October.

Opening hours: Tuesday- Sunday 10am – 5pm

Entrance to museum: Adults £7 Children/concessions £5 Family ticket £20