

Some 19th Century Visitors To Malaysian Caves

by
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Malaysian caves have been known to man since prehistoric times, when they were used as shelters, campsites or places of refuge. But it wasn't until the 19th century that records appear of caves being visited, generally by European visitors for recreation, curiosity or research.

History of Caves

The earliest traces of man using caves have been found at Niah Caves, Sarawak, where a 40,000 year old skull was discovered. The next oldest finds were those of the Tampanian stone tool industry at Kota Tampan, Perak, from 30,000 years ago but not a cave site. Then there is a large gap in time.

Perak Man is an 11,000 year old skeleton found at Gua Gunung Runtuh, Perak, and is the earliest complete skeleton found. And in the same area at Lenggong, various sites have revealed objects such as stone tools, bones, pottery, dating over the last 10,000 years.

Unlike other countries which have ancient cave paintings—some in France are 31,000 years old—Malaysian paintings only date back 1,200 years, at Niah. The first race of people in the country are thought to be the Semang Negrito aborigines, but the oldest aboriginal paintings are only about 120 years, at Lenggong. However, many archaeological remains have been lost over the years, through indiscriminate digging for guano etc.

The Chinese were visiting caves in Malaya and Borneo during the Ming dynasty (1368-1634), trading in birds' nests. The main industry probably started in the early 15th century. Chinese trade at Niah dates back at least 500 years. The

Chinese admiral Cheng Ho supposedly visited Sabah in 1406, and an Arab missionary Machdom in 1408. These two men probably started the trade. Ming dynasty jars have been found, from around 1600.

In Sabah human remains have only been found from the last 2000 years. Caves in Sabah became burial places from 1500 years ago, and burial jars have been found with tools and pottery. More recent coffins only date to the 15th century.

Records of visitors to caves only start in the 19th century. These adventurers were generally European and explored the caves for interest and curiosity, and then for social outings such as picnics at Batu Caves. Archaeological studies followed. And later caves were used as temples by the Buddhists and Hindus. Caving as a sport was unknown in those days, and although most of the visitors had no more than a passing interest, some of them could be called the first speleologists.

History In The 19th Century

The British had been in Malaya since the start of the 19th century, during which time the Dutch had power in Melaka. The Anglo-Dutch Treaty of 1824 conceded to the East India Company its hold on what became the Straits Settlements and what was later to be British Malaya. Kedah and Perlis were occupied by the Siamese from 1821-1842. British colonial rule began in 1874, when their political control was first imposed on some states. However in 1867 the Straits Settlements of Singapore, Melaka, Province Wellesley and Penang became a crown colony when the Colonial Office took over the Straits Settlements from the India Office on 1st April.

In 1896 the four states of Perak, Selangor, Negri Sembilan and Pahang became the Federated Malay States (FMS). They had come under British rule at various dates from 1874. Johore refused to join the Federation. The other four Peninsula states, Kelantan, Terengganu, Perlis and Kedah, were controlled by the Siamese until 1909 when they were transferred to British rule.

The Peninsula was then divided into the Straits Settlements, the FMS and the Unfederated Malay States (the four northern states plus Johore). It wasn't until 1919 that Britain had control over the entire Peninsula.

Meanwhile over in Borneo, Sarawak was a dependency of Brunei until 1841 when James Brooke, later to be Rajah, took over. The Brooke family rule lasted until the Japanese arrived in World War II. Sabah came under the influence of the British North Borneo Company in 1878 and was known as British North Borneo. Brunei was also under British rule, as a protectorate, from 1888.

There had been Chinese settlers in Malaya from the early 1400's, but in the 1800's they arrived in greater numbers, especially in the second quarter of the century, drawn by the tin mining around Selangor and Perak. They provided labour force, like the Indians who arrived to work in the coffee plantations around 1800-1890, and then the rubber plantations at the end of the century.

Visitors To Malay Peninsula

The earliest record I have found, which actually predates the period covered in this paper, is by Dr. J.G. Koenig, who went to Quedar (Kedah) on 15-30 December 1779. According to his entry for 25 December he saw the Gerai Mountains, and on the 26th the Elephant Mountain. Dr. Jean Gerard Keonig (1728-1785) was born in Livland, and was a pupil of Linnaeus. He became a noted botanist. In 1768 he travelled to India. His original manuscript are in the British Museum.

Various other people later wrote about Elephant Mountain or Gunung Giriyan (now called Keriang). T.Ward was probably the first person to describe it. He was an assistant surgeon in the Madras Establishment. In November 1832 (?) he visited Quedah and examined Gunung Giriyan. He went to the rock on an elephant loaned by the Rajah of Ligore. Guides showed him the caves; he visited four which he explored and recorded. He also knocked off specimens to study. He noted how the hill was surrounded by sea not too long ago.

Lt. James Low (later Captain) came to Malaya in 1820's as an Indian Army Officer, but remained until 1830 in a civilian capacity. He was concerned with British dealings with Perak, Kedah and Siam and was sent to Perak in 1826. In the 1830's he had administrative charge of Province Wellesley. He wrote about the Sakai and Semangs in the *Journal of Indian Archipelago and Eastern Asia*.

In 1849 James Low visited the Langkawi Islands, which were dependencies of the Siamese government of Kedah. He described them as "bold islands, formed and flanked by towering masses of limestone". He also saw Khaw Wong (Gunung Wang at Baling). He died in 1852.

Sir William Edward Maxwell (1846-August 1897) also went to Langkawi and Elephant Rock. He worked in the courts in Malaya and Singapore from 1865 and was an administrator in Province Wellesley and Melaka from the late 1860's. After the Perak War of 1876 he was Assistant Resident of Perak for a short time from February 1878, then British Resident of Selangor from 1889-1892, and Colonial Secretary of the Straits Settlements before going to West Africa in 1895.

During his time in Perak, Maxwell went to Lenggong in 1876 and was taken to see some of the caves on 2 April. They walked through the dark jungle to get to Bukit Kajang. He mentions Lobang Gandang (Gua Gendang) near Tasik. Strangely this cave is not mentioned again until 1993 (Price, Gua Itek).

Also in 1876 he travelled on foot through north Perak to Patani in Kedah, and mentions Gunong Wang at Baling with its caves and bats and swallows. He refers to Gunung Geriyan in Kedah. Also to Gunung Pondok in Perak.

On 26-27 December 1877 Maxwell cruised around the islands of Langkawi with his brother R.W. Maxwell and the Rajah of Kedah, and refers to Low's trip. He gained information to correct and supplement the geographical information in the Admiralty Charts. And he saw the limestone cliffs and mentions the wild bees' nests and edible birds' nests. He visited Goa Cherita and describes the

legends.

William Maxwell played a leading part in establishing the *Straits Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society (SBRAS)* in 1878 and was editor for many years. He wrote a lot about the Sakai and the Semangs. His son, Sir William George Maxwell was a keen hunter.

H.W.C. Leech wrote about the limestone hills in Kedah and Perak, especially Gunung Pondok which he had been told about by a Mr. Deane in 1879. Leech mentions the bat guano was used as manure in Province Wellesley. Like most of the early visitors he describes the limestone rocks as being pure, crystallised and generally white in colour.

Other visitors to Gunung Pondok include Frank Athelstan Swettenham (28 March 1850 - 11 June 1946). He left the UK on 2 November 1870 and sailed for Singapore, reaching Melaka on 2 January 1871, and Singapore on the 4th., where he became a cadet in the colonial office. He first visited Selangor in early 1872, and in August of the same year he went to Pahang, Terengganu and Kelantan. He was posted to Penang in September.

On 13 February 1874 he and Captain Samuel Dunlop, the Inspector General of Police in Perak, passed Gunung Pondok, which is some miles north of Kuala Kangsar, and camped in a Malay hut at the foot of the hill. They travelled by elephant. Swettenham spent the night there again in April with J.W.W. Birch and Speedy, amongst others.

In an extract of the journal by Messrs. Dunlop, Swettenham and Pickering during the crossing from Larut to Kuala Kangsar on 12 February it was noted that Gunung Pondok resembles Elephant Rock in Kedah. This was published as *Geography of the Malay Peninsula* by A.M. Skinner in *JSBRAS*, 1 July 1878.

W.A. Pickering was the only man in the Colonial government at that time (around 1874) who understood Chinese having been an interpreter in the Straits Settlements in 1872. He was protector of the Chinese.

James Wheeler Woodford Birch (- 1875) was the first British Resident appointed to Perak under the Pangkor Engagement of 1874. But only 12 months after taking up the post he was assassinated on 2 November 1875. His death was followed by the Perak War. Prior to taking up the Residency, he travelled through Selangor and Perak. On Monday, 13 April he saw Gunung Pondok, and described it as a hill in a gorge sticking up like Punch's hat. On the 15th he wrote about the caves with huge stalactites in Gunung Pondok. He actually visited the caves on 8 March 1875. In Birch's report on Perak, 2 April 1875, he mentioned Gunung Pondok with its entire caves. He had plans for a new road to Gunung Pondok. On 7 May he visited Gunung Mesa during a 10 day tour of the Kinta Valley, and on the 8th, he wrote about Gunung Gaja. On 12 July he took Booth and George Scott and Speedy to the entire caves (Gunung Pondok) travelling by elephant.

Thomas George Booth was of the 19th Northy Lincoln Regiment. George Scott was a Penang merchant. Captain Speedy was of the Straits Police, and temporary Assistant Resident at Pangkor.

In March 1880, Swettenham decided to move the administrative headquarters from Klang to Kuala Lumpur. Kuala Lumpur had turned into a boom town since the price of tin had soared in the late 1870's. Swettenham bettered the conditions in Kuala Lumpur in 1880's, e.g. by replacing the fire prone wooden buildings by brick ones, and improving the roads and the drains. He was keen on developing the roads and railways. From 1882-1904 Swettenham held a sequence of senior posts in the West Malayan states. He shared with Hugh Low the role of creating the Residential System. He was at odds with Douglas, the Resident, and replaced him in 1882, but faced administrative chaos left by Douglas. His official service period in Selangor was 2 October 1882 - 31 May 1889 although he was often elsewhere, e.g. in Perak at the end of March 1884 - 11 January 1886 during Low's leave.

The caves at Batu Caves have been extensively visited since their discovery by Europeans in 1878. Prior to then they were used by the locals.

William Temple Hornaday (1 December 1854 - 7 March 1937) was the "discoverer" of Batu Caves. He was the chief taxidermist at the US National Museum in Washington from 1882-1890, and spent two years in the jungles of India, Sri Lanka, Malaya and Sarawak collecting specimens for American museums, and for Professor Henry A.Ward's Natural Science Establishment at Rochester, USA.

Hornaday visited Selangor in June-July 1878. He planned a trip into the interior with H.C. Syers, the Superintendent of the Police. They travelled by ponies from Kuala Lumpur to Batu on the Klang River on 29 June. There they met some Jacoons, the local people, who were familiar with some nearby caves which they used as places of refuge from elephants.

On 3 (?) July Hornaday and Syers were on a hunting trip for elephants, and on their way home they were shown a cave, Gua Belah or Double Cave. The next day they explored Gua Lada or Chili Cave where the Jacoons used to catch bats to eat. In the third cave, Gua Lambong, Hornaday sang to appreciate the resonance in the Cathedral Cave. Syers discharged his rifle which sounded like a deep boom of thunder. They entered the caves using torches of dry bamboo. On the way back to Kuala Lumpur Syers had a bad fall off his pony but was protected by his thick pith helmet.

Hornaday and Syers spent a week at Batu. The former collected rock specimens from the caves, and hunted. A short account of his stay in Selangor was read by proxy at a meeting of the *SBRAS* in Singapore on 7 April 1879. It was published in *JSBRAS* 3 July 1879, and reprinted in the *Selangor Journal* 1893. His full report was not published until 1885.

Harry Charles Syers (-1897) was formerly a private in the 10th Regiment before becoming Superintendent of Police at Klang. He was promoted from the ranks in 1875 when he was engaged by Davidson to work as temporary inspector of police aged about 23, and appointed superintendent in 1875 or 1876. In 1891 he became Captain Superintendent and was appointed Commissioner of Police of the FMS in July 1896. He was fluent in Malay and studied the Chinese

and their language. He was the one man Swettenham trusted when he took up his duties in Selangor on 2 October 1882.

Syers played a major part in Kuala Lumpur life until his death. A quiet, efficient young man who could handle his incompetent superior Douglas. By the end of 1882 Syers, Swettenham and J.P. Rodgers were the only Europeans left in Selangor. Syers died on 14 July 1897 in central Pahang from wounds inflicted by an enraged, wounded *seladang*. He was buried in Pekan, but in 1899 his body was exhumed at Swettenham's request with the assistance of Dr. E.A.O Travers, and brought to Kuala Lumpur for reinterment. Some 60,000 mourners attended the funeral parade. He had been held in esteem by all races and classes in Kuala Lumpur society.

Dominic D.Daly (1844-1889) was the man who took the credit for discovering the caves at Batu Cave. A few weeks after Hornaday and Syers explored the caves, there followed the second visit. The party consisted of Daly, Captain, Bloomfield Douglas, Lieutenant R.Lindsell, some orang Sakei and some police.

They explored the same three most accessible caves and Daly gives a good description of them, and mentions the Sakei charcoal drawings outside. In his 1879 report, also read at the SBRAS meeting on 7 April, he admits Hornaday and Syers had found the caves a few days earlier, but erroneously suggests that it was his party which first explored them.

Daly made a rough topographical survey of Selangor in April 1875. From some time in 1876 he was in Perak, but by February 1879 (or earlier) he was back in Klang. He was in charge of the Land Office in 1880's, as Commissioner of lands in Selangor. Chaos characterized his term of office and he was sacked in the summer of 1882 from head of the Public Work Department (PWD) for allowing Douglas to purchase town lots from the government at a public auction conducted by Daly. Douglas also lost his job. Daly was Douglas's son in law. He died from fever at Mempakeli on 15 July 1889.

Captain Bloomfield Douglas (25 September 1822 - 1906) was Her British Majesty's Resident of Selangor at Klang (the capital of Selangor) 1 June 1876-1882. He was a notoriously rude man. Swettenham and Weld were against him and as a result of enquiries, Swettenham managed to unseat and replace Douglas.

Lieutenant R.Lindsell was of Her Majesty's 28th Regiment. During the trip to the caves with Daly, most of the party were too timid to go into Gua Lambong, so Lindsell took the lead. They were using damar torches, but replaced them by split bamboo.

Isabella Lucy Bird (15 October 1831 - 7 October 1904) was the first woman to write about Batu Caves. She was the daughter of an English country parson, and a celebrated traveller who was described as tough and experienced. She was an authoress of travel books. She adapted easily to journeys by elephant.

Bird spent a few weeks in Malaya in the first half of 1879, and later published her accounts. She mentions the limestone hills as being curious features of Selangor and Perak, and described Gunung Pondok with its many caves. She met Daly and Syers during her "unexpected and hastily planned expedition

into the Malay states during five weeks of January and February 1879". She said Batu Caves had been discovered some seven months prior to her visit. Isabella Bird married John Bishop in 1881, and became the first woman fellow of the Royal Geographical Society in 1892.

By the 1880's Batu Caves was becoming a famous show place. It was used for picnics, especially Cathedral Cave, and people would explore by the dim light of candles. By this time the jungles were safer. During 1883 cart tracks were being pushed through to the mining areas, including Batu Caves.

On 12 July 1880, Sir Frederick Aloysius Weld (1832 - 1891) along with Douglas, Swettenham and others went to a shooting party near Batu Caves. They did not find any *seladang* but had lunch at the mouth of the main cave, along with Dr. MacKinnon, Miss Douglas, Captain Rhodes, Dr. Barrington of the Buffs, and Mr. Taylor, an officer of the Ordinance Department and with some Malays and Sakais.

After lunch the party explored the cave. Weld shot one or two bats for Barrington. The 'Governor' was cheered in the caves as he was the first one to penetrate these wilds. Weld's description of the cave was written in his journal which was printed in Lady Alice Lovat's book, 1914. He likened the Batu Caves hill to Gunung Pondok in Perak.

Weld visited the Malay states in the 1880's, having arrived in Singapore on 6 May 1880. Although born in England he began his career as a sheep farmer in New Zealand where he became premier. He was later governor of Western Australia and Tasmania. He was the Colonial Governor of the Straits Settlements 1880-1887 before retiring to England. Port Weld in Perak is named after him. He travelled by elephant in Perak in 1881, although elephants were being replaced by pony or horse drawn vehicles. (Douglas had used ponies in 1879). Although Weld suffered from gout, he could ride a horse, and made numerous tours throughout the Malay states. In August 1880 he travelled from Klang to Penang and Kedah. He and Swettenham set up the Selangor railway.

The SBRAS published a map of the Klang River and area around Kuala Lumpur in 1879, which featured the limestone caves at Bukit Batu. On the 1887 map, limestone caves are marked at Batu Caves, and at Bukit Takun a "remarkable limestone crag". Bukit Takun is now situated in Templers Park, to the north of Batu Caves, but was not mentioned by any of those early explorers, including Leech.

H.W.C. Leech wrote about the limestone hills in Kinta and said "but further east they are not to be found, nor I believe to the south, as I have never met them or heard of them in Selangor, although I saw a good deal of that country while in the service of the Selangor government". This was published in a report in December 1878, but was probably written before the discovery of Batu Caves in July of that year.

One of the next people to write about Batu Caves was Ambrose B. Rathborne. He was an Australian mining engineer and later moved to Sri Lanka to plant coffee, and then onto Malaya in the 1880's. He was a planter and entrepreneur.

He wrote about his life in Malaya and his contact with the villagers. He visited Batu Caves in 1883 and describes the cave in his book. He only mentions one cave, so presumably the general public only went into one cave, situated up the hillside.

Rathborne became a business partner for fifteen years with Thomas Heslop Hill, also a planter. Together they were leading contractors for road works and were invaluable to Swettenham in his overwhelming desire to open up the state. They were responsible for a road to Batu in April 1883, and played a leading part in the European incursion into Selangor tin mining in the 1880's. Hill and Rathborne formed a firm which was regarded as an offshoot of the Selangor PWD. In the late 1880's they were involved with railway construction. And at that same time they acquired 8000 acres of land in Selangor for coffee. They also planted tea at the Genting Bidei Pass in Pahang on an area originally devoted to coffee and cinchona. But it was soon abandoned, in 1887. They had 300 acres of land at Batu Road, two miles out of town, and 10 acres of this was taken back for a hospital site.

Libeian coffee was planted in large areas around Batu Caves, 1882-1883, and in 1885 there is mention of padi areas around Batu. Indian immigrants had settled around Batu caves, and by the late 1880's refused to move from there. Swettenham wanted them to work under Hill and Rathborne. The coffee industry failed but around the same time there was an increased demand for rubber.

The man responsible for the rubber industry was Hugh Low, and not Ridley as is commonly thought. Sir Hugh Low (1824-1905) spent many years in Labuan, then served as British Resident of Perak from 1877 until his retirement in 1889, when he returned to England. He was considered one of the best residents in the history of the country. In March 1884 when he was overdue for leave after seven years in Perak, Swettenham went there to act for him, as Resident in Kuala Kangsar. Low was a keen naturalist, unlike Swettenham who only liked shooting. Low probably helped Swettenham to plan the museum being constructed in Taiping. This museum was for many years the outstanding institution of its kind in the Malay states, attracting some of the most distinguished naturalists of the late 19th century. Low was responsible for the construction of the first railway in Perak, between Port Weld and Taiping. Low along with Swettenham and Maxwell were the three most able British administrators in the Malay Peninsula, and Low was the mentor.

Hugh Low planted the first rubber tree in Perak in 1877, in the Government gardens at Kuala Kangsar. In February 1879 he reported his trees to be 12'-14' high. He continued to do test plantings over the following years. When he went to England in 1884 he left Swettenham with some 400 seeds to plant out.

Ridley arrived in Singapore from England in 1888, some ten years after rubber. He was to become a successful tapper, whereas Low was the pioneer planter. Henry Nicholas Ridley (1855-1956) was the Director of Gardens and Forests, Straits Settlements from 1888-1912 in the botanical gardens at Singapore. He was a plant geographer and economic botanist. He initiated the first

really successful tapping of rubber in 1889.

One of Ridley's first recorded visits to Malaya was in June 1889 when he went to Batu Caves on a botanical collecting trip, travelling by bullock cart. Further visits to Batu Caves followed, including December 1896, July and August 1897, 1898, August 1908 and December 1920 when he travelled by car. The *British Association for the Advancement of Science* (BAAS) appointed a committee to explore the caves in the Malay Peninsula in 1896 and to collect their living and extinct fauna. Ridley undertook these investigations during two weeks in December 1896. In 1898 he made the first attempt to study the fauna of Batu Caves. In his report for that year, he indicated the general character of the caves and their fauna, but no attempt was made at a detailed study, although he listed the invertebrates. But he made the first thorough exploration of Dark Cave which was missed by the earlier European visitors.

Ridley sent some animal specimens from the 1896 expedition to the British Museum in London, including invertebrates from Dark Cave and some molluscs from the limestone cliffs. However some were lost or muddled from the transit. In 1898 he published a paper on the white snake of the Selangor caves. He and Mr. C.B. Harvey captured several in December 1896 and sent them to the British Museum where they were identified by Mr. Boulenger.

Ridley made the first floral studies of the area. In the 1890's there was still forest up to the base of the Batu Caves hill. The jungle still housed tigers, elephant, *seladang*, deer and pigs. Many animals used the caves as shelters. The only cleared area was the Jacksons Coffee Estate, also known as the Batu Caves Estate. Ridley stayed there in December 1896. He collected plants from around the Temple Cave, and found many rare species. He also described the topography.

During his investigations Ridley looked at Fallen Cave, Sakai Cave, High Cave and Quarry Cave, although the latter was destroyed before he left Malaya. He did brief archaeological investigations and describes his findings. He saw the Semang rock shelters at Batu Caves, with bamboo beds, screens of palm leaves, and the walls decorated with charcoal sketches, as noted by Daly. Ridley also collected in other parts of the country, such as Perak and Perlis. He died less than two months before his 101th birthday.

In 1889 Swettenham refused to allow Batu Caves to be turned into a place of worship. A month or two later he refused permission for the Chinese to erect a joss-house at the foot of the caves. Shortly after he denied an application to burn lime there. In 1891 however, the Temple Cave became the Sri Subramaniam Swamy Temple. The first Thaipusam was held in 1892. Quarrying had begun at Batu Caves by 1896 and destroyed some of the caves.

Meanwhile other caves in the country were still receiving attention. J. Errington de la Croix, who was half English and half French, was sent by the French government in the early 1880's to study the tin industry and geology of Perak. He became a big name in the mining industry.

Arthur T. Dew was in northern Perak in November 1883 and went past

Bukit Wang with its numerous caves as reported by James Low in 1849, and by William Maxwell. Dew also mentions Batu Chigar near Baling.

The first cave archaeologist in Peninsula Malaya was Leonard Wray Junior. He was also the first Curator of the Perak Museum, Taiping, which was set up by Low and Swettenham. Wray pioneered cave explorations and excavations in Perak whilst collecting for the museum. He noted shell and bone deposits in 1880 when he dug Gunung Pondok. In 1891 he dug at Lenggong, but not much is recorded. He excavated Gunung Cheroh for several years and found deposits of shells, bones, stone implements, skeletons, during 1886-1891. He also visited the Kota Gelanggi caves in Pahang, but didn't appear to dig there.

Other people had been to Kota Gelanggi. William Cameron mentions four caves there and recorded the stories. Cameron travelled all over Selangor doing survey work, and explored the hills behind Kuala Lumpur. He discovered the Cameron Highlands. He was said to be impractical, especially refinement of his expeditions. He died in Singapore of a fever picked up on one of his trips.

In 1885 and 1888 Abraham Hale wrote about the stone age discoveries in Perak.

Sir Hugh Clifford (1866-1941) in his stories of 1897, referred to Gunung Senyum and Kota Gelanggi in Pahang. He first came to Malaya at the age of 17, having arrived in Singapore at the end of August 1883. He was posted to Perak where Swettenham found him in 1884, and the two men developed a considerable admiration for each other. They spent Christmas 1885 together in Perak. Clifford served as an administrator in Perak. On a trip up to Sungkai River he was charged by an elephant and fled panic stricken only to trip up over the roots of a tree to his companions amusement. He visited Kelantan and Terengganu in 1895 on an expedition in pursuit of Pahang Malay rebels.

Weld sent Clifford to Pahang in January 1896-1901 as British Agent. He lived in Pekan, the capital, and later became Resident. Clifford and Swettenham produced the first part of a Malay-English dictionary in March 1894. Like Swettenham, he wrote a lot, especially short stories of the Malay Peninsula. In 1901 he was Governor of British North Borneo, and transferred to Trinidad in early 1902.

W. Bertrand Roberts wrote about the gold mines and limestone hills in Pahang, north of Kuala Lipis, in 1899. He mentions two caves, Gua Bumit and Gua Senoorat, not referred to by others.

William Walter Skeat (14 October 1886-24 July 1953) was the son of Walter William Skeat, the Professor of Anglo-Saxon. He was educated at Cambridge, and entered the Selangor Civil Service as an administrator in May 1891. In 1899-1900 he and F.F. Laidlaw were joint leaders of the Cambridge University Expedition which was a party of scientists on an extensive tour of the north east Malay states, including those of southern Siam. Skeat was District Officer at Kuala Langat around 1895. He was invalided out of service and left Malaya to return to England in April 1900, when he was seriously ill. He died in 1953, having written about the *Pagan Races of Malaya*.

Frank Fortescue Laidlaw (1876- ?) also went back to England after the Cambridge expedition.

Thomas Nelson Annadale (1876-1924) was also a member of the Cambridge Expedition, from February-August 1899. He was the son of Dr. Thomas Annadale, and was educated at Rugby and Balliol College, Oxford. After the expedition he visited Selangor, Perak and Trang with H.C. Robinson in 1901-1902. He then went on to become Curator of the Indian museum at Calcutta, and Deputy Superintendent in 1904. He started the Records of the Indian Museum and Memoirs of the Indian Museum, and published a lot in *Fasciculi Malayenses*. He later made studies of cave fauna. He was founder and Director of the Zoological Survey of India in 1916.

Herbert Christopher Robinson (November 1874-May 1929) was educated at Marlborough and New College. He and Annadale carried out an anthropological and zoological expedition of the Malay Peninsula under the Universities of Edinburgh and Liverpool. The results were published in *Fasciculi Malayenses* 1903-1907. Robinson was the Curator of the Selangor Museum 1903. In 1908 he succeeded L.Wray as Director of Museums.

Visitors To Sarawak And North Borneo

The birds' nest caves have been known since at least the 14th century, but the discovery of the caves is not really known. Exploration started in the 19th century, prior to then the caves were entered by the natives collecting the edible nests, and using the caves as burial sites. And a few Chinese were searching for gold in alluvial caves. In 1824 John Anderson listed birds' nests as one of the main exports.

Cave exploration was probably first undertaken by Europeans after the Brooke rule began in 1841. The land Dayaks acted as guides.

Sarawak

The earliest record I have found is that of Admiral Sir Henry Keppel (1809-1904) who described a small cave he visited in 1844. Tebang Cave on Bukit Tebang, near Gunung Staat was reputed to be the residence of a fairy queen. Keppel found some human bones probably those of a Dayak.

One year later in 1845, Sir Hugh Low visited some areas south of Kuching. He was in Sarawak before moving to Peninsula Malaya. He wrote about his trip in 1848 although much of his reports and memoranda are unpublished sources.

On 21 November 1845 Low left Kuching by boat, and said that prior to his trip, Europeans had not been so far up the river. His party slept in the boat overnight, and the next day, the 22nd, reached Bow (Bau). Two hours later they arrived at Lubang Angin. The local Malays told him the cave was home to dragons and bad spirits, and went in far with no outlet. Low dispelled these ideas by exploring the cave and finding it to have other entrances. He spent that night in the boat at the cave entrance.

Low also described the surrounding hills and the flora and antimony work-

ings. On 27 November he went back to Lobang Angin and climbed the hill to collect shells and plants. In his diary for December 1845 he described other hills and caves. He travelled up the left hand branch of the Sarawak River. On 1 December he saw a limestone hill with a pretty cave at Karangan Landi (probably Gunung Staat, 12 miles south south west of Kuching). 3 December he described Gunung Coum (Kom). The following day he noticed limestone features as he travelled upriver to Sebayat, at the foot of Gunung Sebayat, and opposite Si Gigi (Gunung Gigit). He said Si Gigi is pierced by numerous caves which house birds' nests. The next stop was Si Budah where the local Dayaks showed him a cave which was a river passage running through the hill (this may be Rumbang Cave). From here they travelled alongside the same massif to Bungoh. Low also described the swallows which build the edible nests, and the collection of the nests.

Spenser St. John also went to the Si Budah area, and to Rumbang Cave which he described in detail. He was the first European to explore Sireh Cave in Gunung Nambi, and he records a lot about this cave, in which a Dayak had been shot. He also wrote in detail the gold workings around Bau.

St. John went to the middle Baram area and visited a cave, probably in the Kejin Valley. He also went to caves at Langusan in the Baram. He was the first European to visit Mulu, entering from the Limbang side. In December 1856 he made a short excursion up the Limbang River. Then in September 1857 he tried to reach the lofty mountains of Molu. He travelled up the Madalam and the Trunan and on the eighth day found Bukit Rikan (Terikan River Cave) which he described and illustrated the entrance. He called the mountain Batu Barit, today it is known as Gunung Benarat and before that as Batu China. The local guide told him few people had penetrated a long distance inside the mountain. He also climbed about 1000 feet up the mountain and found it a mass of honey-combed rock.

In February 1858 St. John and Hugh Low again attempted to climb Molu. They passed Batu Rikan and had a good view of the limestone range with its steep slopes and water worn rock, and saw caves around the base of the hill. They failed in their attempt to climb Molu but St. John described it as well as the vegetation. I suspect it was Gunung Benarat they were climbing, and not actually Gunung Mulu, with its 70 degree slopes, pinnacles and precipices. A local man, Japar, told him about dwarfs living in the caves and supernatural beings in the area. Japar collected edible nests from the caves.

On 27 August 1958, from Gadong Hill which is outside Limbang, St. John managed to get a sighting on the peak of Molu, 9 degrees east of south. He said the Adang Muruts call it Batu Barit. The Murut tribe occupied the land at the base of Molu. On 1 September he again saw Molu, this time from the Limbang River, upstream from the Madalam river, and he saw two peaks and realised there were two ranges. He also mentioned an island of caves somewhere near the Sertab Hills, edible nest caves in the Salingdong Hills and Tiger Cave at Lobang Rimau Peak in the Adang Mountains.

Frederick Boyle also visited Lobang Angin as Low had done. Boyle left England on 1 February 1863 with his brother Arthur, bound for Sarawak. They reached Singapore at the beginning of May, got delayed there for two months, so probably first sighted Borneo about the end of June. Boyle wrote in 1865 about the visit to Lobang Angin. He had been told about the dragons and spirits and he didn't explore beyond daylight. He thought the strong wind to be below freezing point.

Arthur and Mr. Bentley, Agent of the Borneo Company, visited the birds' nests caves near Bidi whilst Frederick was suffering from a painful heel. The next day the latter and Mr. Bentley went together. They entered the caves and that night lit a great fire in one chamber, 50 yards in, intending to camp and shoot animals passing by. Boyle exclaimed "By jove. If we fire a riffle inside here, we shall be crushed by the fall of these huge stalactites". So they moved outside. Later they went back to the entrance chamber to sleep. Frederick Boyle also visited the Bidi mines with Mr. Helms, the manager of the Borneo Company at Buso.

In 1865 the botanist Odoardo Beccari supervised some excavations in a cave near the village of Busso (Busau). They found human bones, shells etc. Beccari also visited Lobang Angin and did some excavations there. He was probably the first cave archaeologist.

The Resident of Mukah sent a letter to the Rajah, Kuching, which was published in the *Sarawak Gazette*, 2 March 1872. In the letter a cave near Oya River is described. But Wilford (1963) thinks no cave actually exists there.

Alfred Hart Everett was a naturalist. He first visited Niah Great Cave in 1873 and made a brief archaeological investigation. Under the patronage and support of the British Museum and the Marquis of Tweeddale, then President of the Zoological Society, Everett had entered on a thorough and systematic examination of the caves of Borneo, in the hope of finding remains of apes in the floor. But his investigations ended when the Marquis died, and Everett moved to Kina Balu.

He probably revisited Niah in 1878. He continued Beccari's work at Busso in 1869 but gave up due to ill health. He continued again for nine months in 1878-1879, and at the same time dug in Lobang Angin and Tupak Cave at Bau. He examined 32 caves in his search for ape remains, and dug in 12 of them. All were in Sarawak proper except for 2 at Subis. But this results were disappointing. However he did the first topographical study of Sarawak.

Hornaday stayed with Everett in December 1878 at Paku, 30 miles from Kuching. They had a lot to talk about, both being collectors. Whilst at Paku, Hornaday went with Mr. Oliver St. John, Inspector of Public works, to some caves, including Ensunah Cave.

In 1878 the BAAS set up a committee to explore certain caves in Borneo. The committee consisted of Mr. John Evans, the president of the Borneo Caves Exploration Committee, Sir John Lubbock, Major-General Lane Fox, Mr. George Busk, Prof. W. Boyd Dawkins, Mr. Pengelly and Mr. A.W. Franks. Money came

from the *Association*, the *Royal Society* and private sources. Everett supervised the study as he had been doing this work for nine months. Generally he found nothing of special interest from an archaeological view. Some 20 caves were explored, and finds sent to the British Museum. Colonel Godwin-Austin examined the shells. Everett wrote a report for the BAAS in 1879, in which he described his excavations and listed the remains found. His 1880 JSBRAS report is more detailed.

T. Posewitz recounted the work done in Sarawak in his 1892 book. C. Haddon in 1901 wrote about Lobang Tulang on the Melinau River at the junction of the Pala River and said that the cave had been visited by Charles Hose and McDougall.

Charles Hose (1863-1929) was a civil servant in Sarawak, and made the first reliable map of Sarawak. He was an ethnologist and naturalist.

North Borneo

The North Borneo Company was established in 1881 and the trade in birds' nests was controlled by the British. William Pryer, the founder of Sandakan, wrote one of the earliest accounts of Gomantong Caves in 1885, although accounts of the exports date back to the Ming Annals. These caves were famous for the edible birds' nests and the guano. Pryer went into the caves using a rotten ladder.

The *Illustrated London News* 1 October 1887 describes and illustrates Gomantong Caves. In 1889 J.H. Allard of the China Borneo Company investigated the caves for phosphate deposits. He recorded the total guano content in the cave to be 19,000 square yards.

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Looking through the *Malaysian Cave Bibliography* (Price 1996) there are other authors not mentioned in this article who have written about caves in the 19th century, especially those who have written in a language other than English. This paper covers the explorers more commonly known, and whose work is in English and readily available.

Spelling of names—people and places—vary throughout the text. These are not typing errors but follow the spelling used by the original authors.

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