

and cut flowers.

And yet Iddalgashinna is not some inconsequential little tea garden. This "bio-tea" estate has a workforce of 1,400 and production to match. It is currently owned by a local company, has its own nursery school, house-building schemes and no less than three medical centres. This kind of infrastructure is standard in the traditional plantation system, but here the ethos is more egalitarian. On most estates, the workers stay respectfully outside the manager's office window. At Iddalgashinna, they are inside, working out the plantation's transition to community ownership.

Many of Wilson's other Ceylon teas have an equally fascinating pedigree, and the sheer selection is paradise for anyone who likes to explore the intriguing nuances of a fine specialist product. Like malt whiskies, each estate has a unique style, as does each district, from the pungent, almost astringent Nuwara Eliyas to the more mellow Dimbulas or the delicate Uvas. Just one word of warning, however: dip your nose into these amazing teas and expect to get hooked •

Robert Wilson's Ceylon Teas, 01460 77508.