

# Some Madras street names and their history

A four-page pull-out by the *Madras Musings* team

With the Corporation of Chennai taking a decision that it will rename after Tamil scholars all those streets that still sport the names of our erstwhile colonial masters, a whole host of re-namings is just around the corner. *Madras Musings* has already highlighted the futility of such an exercise, for street names are hardly the way to commemorate anyone in these modern times. It has also pointed out that those who live on streets that are being renamed will be put to enormous hardships, having to notify various agencies and institutions about changes of address. But as all these arguments are likely to fall on deaf ears, especially when populism is the name of the game, this publication had appealed that, before the old names were all changed in one sweep, it would be best to look at what had led to the streets being named after a particular person in the past – and that, we must say, the Corporation has been, in a show of consideration, doing. *Madras Musings*, for its part, while helping the Corporation offi-

cial has been pointing out that in many cases roads and streets were named after obscure Company/Government servants and businessmen to whose properties and garden houses these thoroughfares had once led. But in a few instances, the names so commemorated are still worthy of retention thanks largely to the individual's service to the city, to the world at large or even, as in the case of F.W. Ellis, to the cause of Tamil. These names, *Madras Musings* strongly feels, deserve to be retained.

Having said that, we are glad to inform you that *Madras Musings'* volunteer staff, in the wake of all this inquiry, decided to embark on an exercise to identify the streets named after Europeans and colonial servants. We used the Eicher City Map of Chennai (2008 edition) as our basis, referring to its index of street and locality names. In this activity, we decided to concentrate only on those localities that existed in Madras city in 1947, for the Corporation has made it clear that it wants to

rename only those streets that commemorate British names. Our boundaries were, therefore, clear – Tiruvottriyur/Washermanpet/Royapuram in the North, T'Nagar/West Mambalam to the West, Adyar to the South and, of course, the sea to the East. We have, however, included Guindy and Saidapet in our listing, as these are old areas which had close links with the city though being not within it in 1947.

In our search, we found a few streets in different localities having the same names. In such cases, we have tried to discover whether the streets commemorated the same person or different people.

Successful or not, in those cases where a street name is common to different localities, we have repeated the street name, but indicated the locality in brackets. In all, we found that there were 176 roads/streets/localities that still bear colonial names. This does not include roads that have already been renamed (though it must be pointed out that the old names are still in popular

currency). You will thus not find Lloyd's Road or Moubray's Road in this list.

This was the easier part of the exercise. The more difficult task was to identify who was being commemorated in each instance. In this task we have been greatly helped by Love's *Vestiges of Old Madras* (1913) (referred to as Love in this listing), in which the third volume has a list of some street names with the history behind each one of them. It must be pointed out here that even when Love wrote the book, several names had become obscure and he too had difficulty in definitely attributing a street to a particular individual. In our times this has become even more speculative. In addition to Love's work, we referred to J. Talboys Wheeler's *Madras In the Olden Time* (first published in 1882, identified here as MIOT), J. Chartres Molony's *A Book of South India* (first published in 1926, identified here as JCM), *The Madras Tercentenary Commemorative Volume* (1939, identified here as MTV), *Southern India, Its His-*

*tory, People, Commerce and Industrial Resources* by Somerset Playne (1914/15, identified here as SI), and *The High Court of Madras Centenary Commemoration Volume* (1962, identified as HCM). We also found a resource on the internet to be most useful. This is a 'Madras Notebook of 1833' (identified as MN) which is featured in the web site <http://valmayukuk.tripod.com/index.html>. This has the names of some British officials and their places of residence. Wherever we are hazarding a guess about the origin of the name, we have cited MM.

Based on these resources, the *Madras Musings* team has put together a list. Against each name we have given the details that we have been able to find in a couple of weeks. There are, however, several names about which no details were found and these have been listed but the reason for the naming left blank. We invite readers of *Madras Musings* to send in any information they may have that will help fill in these blanks.

Adam Street (George Town)	MM	Possibly after Sir Frederick Adams, Governor of Madras, 1832-1837.	Arathoon Road (Royapuram)		Old Armenian family of John Arathoon, c. 1819.
Adam Street (Washermanpet)		_____	Arundale Street (Mylapore)		Sir A.T. Arundale, President, Madras Corporation in the 1890s, and the man who ensured VP Hall became a reality.
Adam Street (Mylapore)		Love quotes from the 1784 work <i>Genuine Memoirs of Asiaticus</i> whose author Philip Dormer Stanhope writes of having dined in June 1775 with Reynold Adams, Free Merchant and by then Master Intendant, at Fort St George, who has a "most elegant mansion in the parish of St Thomas" (this being San Thomé now).	Aspiran Garden Colony (Ayanavaram)		_____
Adam Street (Triplicane)	MTV	Reynold Adams, who came in 1764 as a free merchant and later became Master Attendant, owned a house here.	Atkinson Road (Vepery)	Love	Is believed to take its name from Edward Atkinson, a civil servant of 1783 and Secretary to the Hospital Board in 1788, who appears to have had a house in this street.
Alexander Road (Choolai)		_____	Austin Nagar (Alwarpet)		_____
Anderson Road Nungambakkam/ Egmore)	Love	Dr. James Anderson, Physician-General in 1786, renowned botanist who had his home and botanical gardens in the area.	Baker Street (George Town)	Love	This street was probably named after George Baker who owned property in Peddanaickenpet and who first mooted the Seven Wells scheme for water supply to Madras. He was the Master Attendant.
Anderson Street (George Town)		Love has it that this street too was named after Dr. James Anderson, but it is more likely (MM) that it was John Anderson, the founder of the General Assembly School which later became the Madras Christian College.	Bishop Waller Avenue (Mylapore)		The Church of South India records the Rt. Rev. E. Waller being the Archbishop of the Diocese of Madras from 1922.
Anderson Road (Ayanavaram)		(NOTE: Most Ayanavaram and Perambur roads are likely to have been named after officials connected with the Loco Works.)	Blavatsky Avenue (Adyar)		Madame Blavatsky, founder of the Theosophist Movement.
Annie Besant Street (Tondiarpet)		Freedom fighter, Theosophist, women's rights activist, educationist.	Ballard Street (Perambur)		_____
			Balfour Road (Kilpauk)		Dr. Edward Green Balfour who in the 1840s came to Madras as Surgeon-General and founded the Madras Zoo and Museum. He also helped found the Mohammedan Library in Triplicane and helped in making the Nawab's Madrasa a public school.

Bamford Road (Ayanavaram)		Constable Road (Ayanavaram)	SI	Col. W.V. Constable, Director on the Board of the Madras & South Mahratta Railway, c.1900.
Barnaby Road (Kilpauk)		Cox Street (Park Town)		
		D'Monte Colony (Alwarpet)		John de Monte, 19 <sup>th</sup> Century business magnate and philanthropist of Madras.
Barton Wright Road (Ayanavaram)		D'Silva Road (Mylapore)	Love	Called so after Francis De Silva, a publican who, in 1798, received a grant of 6 acres in Luz (San Thomé).
		Dams Road (off Mount Road)		
Besant Avenue Road (Adyar)		Davidson Street (George Town)	Love	Doubtless named after Alexander Davidson, Acting Governor of Fort St George in 1785.
Besant Gardens (Theosophical Society)		De Caster Main Road (Ayanavaram)		
Besant Road (Triplicane)		De Mellow Road (Ayanavaram)		
Binny Road (off Mount Road)	Love	De Monte Street (San Thomé)		Probably after John de'Monte (see D'Monte Colony).
		Doomingkuppam (San Thomé)		
		Dooming Street (San Thomé)		
		Duncan Road (Ayanavaram)		
		Edward Park Road (Choolai)		
		Eldam Road (Teynampet)	Love	Yeldham Road was laid out before 1816. It is named after Richard Yeldham, a free merchant who in 1801 was the last of a long line of Mayors of Madras. In 1803 he was a Commissioner for the Recovery of Small Debts and Muster Master of the King's Troops and in 1811 was Treasurer of the Government Bank. He acquired one and a half acres in Teynampet in 1796 and built the residence now called <i>Luz House</i> (this is confusing, as the <i>Luz House</i> of today is in Luz and belonged to the Buchi Babu family).
Binny Colony (Madhavaram)		Ellis Road (off Mount Road)		F.W. Ellis, Civil Servant, Orientalist and the man who first propounded a Dravidian origin theory for Tamil.
Binny Gardens (Pulianthope)	MM	Elphinstone Bridge (Adyar)		John, 1 <sup>st</sup> Baron Elphinstone, Governor of Madras between 1837 and 1842.
Binny Road (Poe Gardens)		Fisher Road (Perambur)		
Bishop's Garden (RA Puram)		Flowells Street (Guindy)		
Blacker Road (Chindadripet)	Love	Flower Street (Saidapet)		
		Flower Road (Kilpauk)	Love	Probably named after Austin Flower who was resident of Madras between 1803 and 1822. In 1811 he was Clerk to the Justices and later became Clerk of the Peace and Collector of Assessment.
Branson Garden Street (Kilpauk)		Foxen Street (Perambur)		
Breithaupt Road (Vepery)	Love	Francis Joseph Street (George Town)		
		Frazer Bridge Road (George Town)	Love	Named after John Frazer, Municipal Engineer who planned the waterworks.
Brighton Road (Pulianthope)		General Collins Road (Vepery)	Love	Derives its name from Edward Collins, who obtained a grant of ground in Vepery in 1803. He entered the army in 1765, became Maj. Gen. thirty years later and died in Vepery in 1808, aged 75.
Brooks Road (Perambur)	MM	General Patter Road (Royapettah)	Love	Named after John Pater of the Madras Cavalry who was a Captain in 1784, became Major General in 1805, and died in Madras a Lieutenant General in 1817.
Burkit Road (T'Nagar)		George Avenue (Poe Gardens)		
		Gilchrist Avenue (Chetput)	MM	Possibly the brainchild of Dr. S. Swaminadhan, the well-known barrister who returned to India after a Gilchrist scholarship and built a house here called <i>Gilchrist Gardens</i> .
Casa Major Road (Egmore)	Love	Gill Lane (George Town)		
		Gill Street (George Town)		
Clemens Road (Vepery)		Goome Street (George Town)		
Coats Road (T'Nagar)	JCM	Graeme Lane (off Mount Road)	Love	Takes its name from Henry Sullivan Graeme, who entered the civil service in 1797 and was a Member of Council for five years from 1823. At that time he owned <i>The Mansion</i> to which Graeme's Road leads from Mount Road. The adjacent property was called <i>Graeme's Gardens</i> .
Cochrane Basin Road (Basin Bridge)		Graeme Road (off Mount Road)		(Same as above.)
Collettpet (Tiruvottriyur)	Love			
Conran Smith Nagar (Choolai)				
Conran Smith Road (Gopalapuram)				
Cook Road (Ayanavaram)				

Gray Nagar (Choolai)		Lloyd Colony (Royapettah)		
Gregory Street (George Town)		Lock Street (Ayanavaram)		
Haddow Road (Nungambakkam)	Love	Maddox Street (Park Town)		
		Madley Street (T'Nagar)	JCM	Madley was the Engineer of Madras Corporation who laid the city's drainage network. c.1914-1925.
		Molony Road (T'Nagar)	JCM	J. Chartres Molony, President of the Madras Corporation in 1920s. He was one of the prime movers behind the Madras waterworks scheme.
Hall Road (Egmore and Kilpauk)	Love	McLean Street (George Town)		
		McNicholl Road (Chetput)	Love	This existed in 1798 as an avened highway. It derives its name from Robert McNichol, who was Assistant Master Attendant between 1811 and 1822.
Harley Road (Kilpauk)	MM	Menad Street (Purasawalkam)		
		Miller Road (Purasawalkam/Vepery)		
Harrington Road (Chetput)	Love	Montieth Road (Egmore)	Love	William Montieth joined the Madras Engineers in 1809, became Lt. Col. in 1826 and Lt. Gen. in 1854.
Harris Bridge (Chindadripet)		Moore Road (Egmore/ Nungambakkam)	Love	One of the earliest roads in Nungambakkam, this communicated with <i>Moore's Gardens</i> , probably so named after George Moore of the civil service who was Civil Auditor in 1814 and died in Madras in 1834.
Harris Road (Chindadripet)		Morse Road (Ayanavaram)		
Heaton Road (Perambur)		Murray's Gate Road (Alwarpet)	Love	Leading from Moubray Road to <i>Dunmore House</i> , this is named after the Hon Leveson Granville Keith Murray, son of the 4th Earl of Dunmore who owned the house between 1822 and 1831. Murray entered the civil service in 1793, and in 1822 was Collector of Madras and Member of the Road Committee. He retired in 1831.
Hopman Street (St Thomas' Mount)		Nancy Street (Purasawalkam)		
Hunter Road (Vepery)	Love	Nimmo Street (Mylapore)	Love	Love states that Erskine Nimmo was a Free Merchant who had had thirty years of Indian experience as early as 1797. He was a firm believer in the power of lotteries and recommended one for funding a native hospital.
		New Boag Road (Kannammappet)	MM	Possibly Sir George T. Boag, Census Superintendent in the 1920s, later Chief Secretary to the Government and Governor of Orissa.
Jeenis Road (Saidapet)	MM	New Faren Road (Pulianthope)	Love	Called after Gen. Farran who owned a house near the present Buckingham Mills. He entered the army in 1788 and became a Maj. Gen. in 1837.
Jeremiah Road (Vepery)		Noble Street (St Thomas' Mount)		
Jesson Street (Park Town)		Norton Road (Mandaveli)		Eardley Norton, the famous lawyer, who owned a vast property here.
Jones Road (Saidapet)		Old Smith Tank Road (Washermanpet)		
Jones Street (George Town)	Love	Parry's Corner (George Town)		The firm of Parry which has stood here for over two centuries.
		Patullo Road (Royapettah)	Love	Connecting Mount Road with White Road, it takes its name from Capt. Archibald Erskine Patullo who entered the Madras Cavalry in 1802, became Captain in 1818 and died in 1824 when commanding the Body Guard. In 1822 he owned a house called <i>Hicks Bungalow</i> here which once formed a part of the Madras Club premises. <i>Hicks Bungalow</i> was obviously the house of a Mr. Hicks. Today, this is all part of <i>Express Estates</i> .
Kelly Road (Kilpauk)		Peters Road (Royapettah)	Love	Captain Thomas Peters of Madras who died in 1798 may have given the thoroughfare its name.
Kennett Lane (Egmore)		Philip Street (George Town)		
Lafford Street/Lane (Chindadripet)		Phipps Road (Perambur)	SI	C.E. Phipps, Locomotive Superintendent, Perambur Loco Works, 1900.
Lambeth Avenue (RA Puram)		Pilkington Road (Perambur)	SI	A. Pilkington, Dy.Locomotive Superintendent, Perambur Loco Works, 1900.
Lamech Avenue (Nungambakkam)		Poe Gardens (Poe Gardens)	Love	Named after a Poe who owned <i>Sudder Gardens</i> in 1822.
Landon Road (Kilpauk)	Love	Poe Road (Teynampet)	Love	(Same as above.)
Lang's Garden Road (Komaliswaranpet)	MTV			
Lawrence Road (St Thomas' Mount)	MTV			
Lettang Road (Vepery/Purasawalkam)				

Pugh Road (RA Puram)	Love	Probably named after Joseph Pugh, owner of <i>Bishop's Gardens</i> , Adyar, who in 1816 was head of the firm of Pugh & Breithaupt. Pugh Road led from Chamier Road to the river and gave access to <i>Pugh's Gardens</i> .	Stringer Street (George Town)	Love	Named after James Stringer, who was appointed Master Bricklayer in 1763. He owned a house on this street. He died in 1787 after 24 years of service. His tombstone describes him as Superintendent of Public Buildings, HEICS.
Pycroft Street (Royapettah)		See below. Pycroft Street leads off from Bharati Salai, which was earlier called Pycroft Road.	Stringer Road (Vepery)	Love	There is uncertainty wheather this street is named after the above Stringer or his son. The family owned property here too.
Pycroft Garden Road (Nungambakkam)	Love	The residence of Dr. James Anderson was placed at the disposal of the Government for the use of the College of Fort St George. On the transfer of that establishment to the Old College Building in 1827, it again became a private residence and, after occupation by Dr. Annesley, passed to Sir Thomas Pycroft. The latter entered the civil service in 1829 and was stationed at the Presidency from 1846, becoming a Member of Council in 1862. He gave his name to Pycroft Road in Triplicane.	Sullivan Street (Mylapore)	Love	Named after Sir Benjamin Sulivan, Advocate-General and afterwards a Judge of the Supreme Court (c. 1798).
Queen Victoria Road (Poonamallee)		Need we say any more?	Taylor Road (Kilpauk)	Love	Laid out between 1798 and 1816, it probably takes its name from James Taylor who received a grant of 11 acres in Chetput in 1800. He entered the civil service in 1795, was Superintendent of the Investment in 1802, and became a Member of the Council in 1828. He retired in 1833.
Rex Street (Egmore)		_____	Teed Gardens (Perambur)		_____
Ritchie Street (off Mount Road)	HCM	Ritchie was Registrar of the High Court. Love also speaks of a Ritchie who was Marine Surveyor of Fort St George in the 1780s. This was an important position as he was in charge of seeing how the port could be made to receive ships throughout the year.	Thomas Street (Teynampet)		_____
Ritherdon Road (Vepery)		_____	Todhunter Nagar (Saidapet)		Sir Charles Todhunter, Member, Governor's Executive Council, Acting Governor of Madras in 1929, later Secretary to the Maharajah of Mysore. Was associated with the founding of the Teachers' College in Madras. The road runs along the walls of the College.
Robertson Road (Vepery)		_____	Trevelyan Basin Road (George Town)		Sir Charles Trevelyan, Governor of Madras 1859/60.
Rundall Road (Vepery)	Love	Was formed between 1798 and 1816. Its name is perhaps due to Col. Charles Rundall, who entered the army in 1800, became Lt. Col. in 1830 and died in Madras the following year. He occupied the post of Military Auditor-General in 1822.	Trevithick Avenue (Perambur)	MM	Almost certainly named after Richard Trevithick (1771-1833), pioneering British inventor, whose unnamed locomotive in 1804 made the world's first train journey in Wales.
Rutland Gate (Nungambakkam)		_____	Tucker Lane (George Town)		Leads to Tucker's Church.
Samson Road (Ayanavaram)		_____	Turnbull Road (RA Puram)	MN	J.G. Turnbull lived in Adyar.
Sargent Road (Ayanavaram)		_____	Umpherson Street (George Town)	Love	Umpherson Street probably takes its name from Thomas Umpherston, a coach builder, who is mentioned in 1792 as a resident of Black Town. In the map of 1837 the street name has degenerated to Humpherson (wonder what Love would say now!).
Slaterpuram (Mylapore)		_____	Waddel Road (Kilpauk)	Love	<i>Dare's Gardens</i> , Kilpauk, belonged to a Waddell in 1816.
Smith Lane & Road (off Mount Road)	Love	Gen. Smith owned a garden house in this area.	Wallace Garden (Nungambakkam)		_____
Solomon Street (St Thomas' Mount)		_____	Waller Road (Chindadripet)		Named after Thomas Parker Waller who owned property here. A part of his land was made over to the church in the 1840s and Christ Church on Mount Road stands on the land where his livery stables were.
Spring Haven Road (Port Trust)		Named after Sir Francis Spring, Secretary to the Madras Government's railway department and later Chairman of the Madras Port Trust, 'The Father of Madras Harbour'.	Wheatgrofts Road (Nungambakkam)		_____
Stanley Road (Ayanavaram)		Probably after Charles Henry Stanley, Supdt. of the Perambur Loco Works in 1907 (Source: Institution of Engineers List on the web - <a href="http://www.archive.org/stream/listofmembers1907instuoft/listofmembers1907instuoft_djvu.txt">http://www.archive.org/stream/listofmembers1907instuoft/listofmembers1907instuoft_djvu.txt</a> ).	William Street (Perambur)		_____
Stephenson Road & Lane (Vyasarpadi)	MM	Given the proximity of the Perambur Loco Works, could this have been named after George Stephenson (1781-1848), creator of the first locomotive engine?	Westcott Road (Royapettah)	Love	Derives its name from George Westcott who entered the civil service in 1764. He was the son of Foss Westcott, one of the commissioners appointed to receive Madras from the French in 1749. George Westcott was senior member of the Board of Trade. He died in Madras in 1809.
Sterling Road (Nungambakkam)	Love	Shown as a cart track in 1816 it takes its name from the former owner of an adjacent property, Luke Hauterville Sterling, a subaltern of HM's 74th Regiment, who came to Madras in 1791, exchanged sword for quill and became in 1799 Sealer of the Recorder's Court. In 1803 he was Sealer of the Supreme Court and Clerk to Sir Thomas Strange. In 1822 he was one of the Sessions Justices.	Whannell Road (Kilpauk)	Love	Named after Major Peter Whannell whose house stood at the angle between this road and Poonamallee Road. He was Military Auditor-General in 1822, became a Major in 1832, and died in Madras in 1854, aged 76.
Strahan Road (Vepery)	MN	Major W. Strahan lived in Royapettah but J.M.D. Strachan lived in Vepery. Perhaps this road was named after the latter.	Whener Road (Egmore)		_____
			White Road (Royapettah)	Love	Derives its name from J.D. White who in 1809 built a house which formed the nucleus of the original Madras Club's home.
			Wood Road (Royapettah)	Love	Derives its name from Edward Wood who entered the civil service in 1800. In 1811 he was Registrar of the Sudder Court and in 1822, when Chief Secretary, owned the house which became the Castle Hotel.