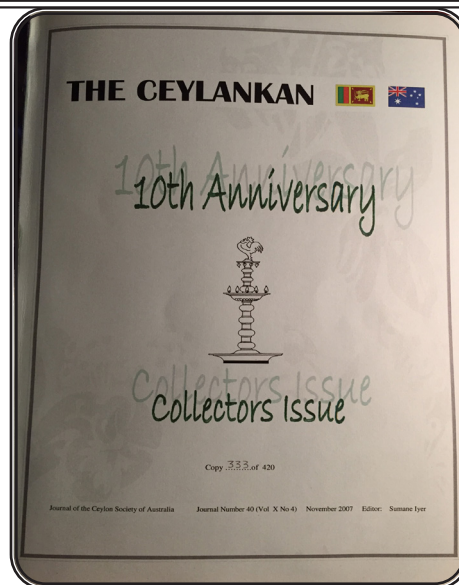
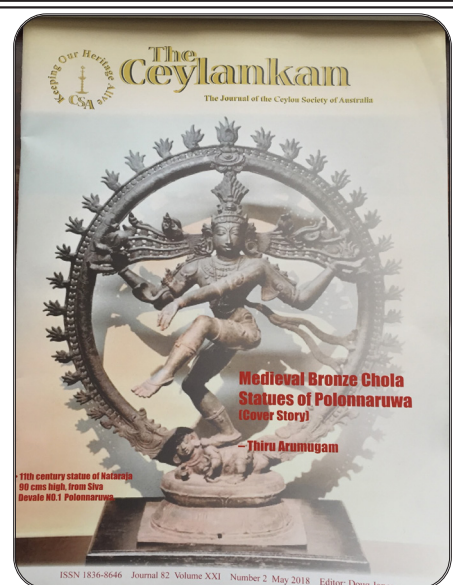


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HAPPY
25th



The Ceylankan

The Journal of the Ceylon Society of Australia



The Ceylon Society of Australia

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Ceylon Society of Australia

The Ceylon Society of Australia (CSA) is a not-for-profit organisation, incorporated in Australia, with the objectives of studying, fostering and promoting interest in the historical and cultural heritage of Sri Lanka.

It is non-political and non-partisan, steering clear of controversial issues. It is a worldwide society of like-minded people, open to receiving and imparting new ideas. While Sydney is home to the parent body and Committee, looking after the overall affairs of the Society, the Melbourne Chapter looks after the meetings in Victoria, with the Colombo Chapter tending to the membership in Sri Lanka. Quarterly free meetings for Members are held in Sydney, Melbourne and Colombo, with guests welcome to attend. Meetings conclude with a Q&A session and a mini Social.

The annual calendar year subscription covers receipt of the Society's journal, "The Ceylankan", published quarterly and distributed to members worldwide. The articles published are authored by members. All opinions expressed are those of the individual writers and do not reflect those of the Editor or the CSA. Articles may be reproduced in other publications, but must be credited to this journal and carry suitable acknowledgment thereof.

The CSA, when meeting in Australia, acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land in which meetings are held and pays respects to First Nations Elders, past and present, as custodians of a rich cultural heritage.

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From the Editor

Dear Readers

Welcome to the 100th 'bumper' issue of *The Ceylankan*! In celebration of this momentous milestone, we have increased the page count to 52 and the illustrations inside are in colour for your reading pleasure. Readers will notice that we have made the Ceylon Society of Australia (CSA) and its journal *The Ceylankan* the cover story, an indulgence that I hope would be appreciated as a worthy way to toast this wonderful journey. Photographs of the Editors of *The Ceylankan* adorn the back cover. David Goodrich was the first editor and set the standard. Sumane Iyer continued that standard and gave the publication a distinct identity. Doug Jones further improved the quality of the material and made it the professional looking publication you see today. When selecting material for publication all the Editors have been faithful to the overall mission of the CSA as being non-racial, non-political and non-confrontational. The cultural heritage of Sri Lanka is a large topic and therefore, the journal does not necessarily limit itself to the colonial and immediate post-colonial period exclusively. It can cover any period in Sri Lanka's long history. The various contributions to the journal over the past 25 years include material on famous historical events in the island, stories of Sri Lankan immigrants in Australia, rare books, archaeology, old coins, stamps, maps, photography, art, famous Sri Lankans, recipes and anecdotes from family histories; to name but a few. Articles that discuss the historical and cultural heritage of Sri Lanka and interrogating it in a non-confrontational way are the ones that have the best chance

of being published in *The Ceylankan*. History is full of conflicts and interpretations and the key to it is to report it in a way that stimulates discussion and debate in a robust, but respectful manner. In my opinion, the articles in the journal reflect that vision. What we steer clear of is reportage of contemporary political events in Sri Lanka. There are plenty of other publications that deal with that subject.

The Founder President Hugh Karunanayake has given us a short history of the CSA on page 21 in the special section celebrating the 25th Anniversary of the Society, which runs from pages 21 to 27. A summary of the 25th Anniversary function held on the 28 August 2022 complete with photographs appear on pages 23 to 25. In the following couple of pages, we have included brief biographies of Past Presidents (including their photographs) and their achievements along with a few photos of past social gatherings of the CSA.

Thiru Arumugam, in his article on Sigiriya and Senarat Paranavitana, explores the work of the great archaeologist Dr Senarat Paranavitana who undertook research on the history of Sigiriya including recording of the ancient graffiti and made it world famous. In the article Thiru also shows two different versions of the Sigiriya story, where in the *Culavamsa* Prince Kasyapa murders his father King Dhatusena and seizes the Crown and in Dr Paranavitana's version King Dhatusena dies in battle and Kasyapa becomes King and the battle for the Crown was between the two brothers Kasyapa and Moggallana.

In his piece 'A Bend in the Mahaveli: a story of the first University of Ceylon' Ernest Macintyre recalls his memories of the University of Peradeniya during the 1960s. Hopefully this will be the first of 12 short chapters of Ernest's memories of various aspects of campus life and how the history of Sri Lanka during the post-Independence period affected the students. No doubt I am hopeful that it can be serialised in subsequent issues of *The Ceylankan*.

Continuing with the upcountry theme there is a fascinating piece written by Bill Mackie about growing up in Ceylon as a son of a tea planter in Galaha, south of Kandy on the road to Nuwara Eliya. Bill's article is a record of British tea planters and their lifestyle in Ceylon during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. It is a historical document for the future generations to know and learn. The story of Bill's aunt, Gladys Forbes and her friendship with the famous photographer, pianist and artist Lionel Wendt gives us a fascinating insight into the early days of the development of western music and culture in Ceylon. There are reproductions of letters written and photographs by Lionel Wendt and Gladys Forbes that make riveting reading.

Hugh Karunanayake has written an article on two famous Ceylonese lawyers Leslie de Saram and Aubrey Martensz. It tells a fascinating story of two high achieving legal luminaries in Ceylon during the early to mid-20th century, whose families had a long connection with each other through marriage. They also were part of the first professional English-speaking Ceylonese immigrants to Australia.

More place names in Wattala have been brought to light by M.D. (Tony) Saldin – Immediate Past President of the CSA Colombo Chapter. It is a very interesting exploration of the origins of street and place names in Wattala that were part of the island's history. Also, from the Colombo Chapter Somasiri Devendra – Assistant Treasurer – has written a short piece reminiscing the life and times of Rev. Fr Marceline Jayakody, who was a connoisseur of both Western and Indian classical music. Dr Srilal Fernando has penned a fascinating piece on a painting by the Australian artist Donald Friend done in Ceylon called *The Puppets*. It traces the intrigue and controversy surrounding the painting's acquisition and subsequent sale to various owners.

The two books reviewed are about two Sri Lankans, one a naval officer and the other a lawyer. They both cover different periods in Sri Lanka's history and also Australia's as well. They are superbly reviewed by Richard Simon and Thiru Arumugam.

We say farewell to two CSA members Dr Carlyle Perera and Dr Channa Wijesinghe who were experts in the field of psychiatry and were well respected by the wider community as compassionate and caring doctors.

Last and not least, it is time for our Sydney members to get together and socialise at the AGM and Social on Saturday 19th November 2022 from 6.30 pm. Details are on page 50. A great evening of good food, wine, song and dance await. Keep the date free!

We look forward to seeing you there.

I hope you enjoy this 100th issue and find the articles and contributions interesting and stimulating.

Happy reading!

ADAM RAFFEL

Our Readers write

Richard Simon's reminiscences of his adventures at Ratmalana Airport in the late 1960's (*The Colombo Column*, *The Ceylankan* August 2022), brought back many memories of visiting that airport in the early 1950's.

They included:

- Several visits to welcome back older siblings returning from India in the old twin-engine Indian Airlines/Air Ceylon Dakotas;
- Accompanying my father, then an Accountant at Treasury, to collect gold bullion flown from England in a BOAC Argonaut (the four-engine version of the Dakota). The gold was securely stored in what appeared to be a steel box hidden under the co-pilot's seat. We were allowed to board the aircraft after the passengers and crew had disembarked; Dad was accompanied by an armed police constable who transported the gold to the vaults in the Treasury building (now the Parliamentary Secretariat) where Dad had to identify himself to the police guard on duty and open the vault to enable the gold to be placed in storage. If I remember rightly (after nearly 70 years!) the Argonauts differed from the Dakotas which had a single wheel under the tail, so the floor sloped upwards to the cockpit;
- Following a school day trip to Sir John Kotelawala's Kandawela estate across the road, visiting one of the airport hangars to 'inspect' a Qantas aircraft being serviced;
- Farewelling Dad off to England in a TWA Constellation in October 1956. As the senior accountant in the Central Bank of Ceylon (CBC), he was to meet with then Governor of the CBC, Sir Arthur Ranasinghe in London, to inspect the special coins being minted for the Buddha-Jayanthi celebrations commemorating the 2500th birthday of the Buddha that year. I remember receiving a picture postcard of the aircraft from him, recounting the country-hopping that air travel entailed at the time - Colombo/Bombay/Karachi/Cairo/Athens/Rome - where he transferred to a British European Airlines (BEA) aircraft for the last leg of the journey to London;
- Seeing the old BOAC observation coaches with their distinctive elevated observation deck at the rear, taking passengers primarily to the Galle Face Hotel. I had a Dinky Toys model of an observation coach, now disappeared into the past.

For a primary school kid at the time, air travel was a dream, much too expensive to even contemplate. All that was to change with the oil crisis of the 1970's when long journeys by sea became too expensive and advancements in jet propulsion made air travel more economical.

Malcolm Kreltszheim
Hallam, VIC

RESPONSE TO RICHARD SIMON ON RELIGION
 Firstly, it is important to understand that Shaivism is a branch of Hinduism and not a separate religion. It is practiced in the South Asian region including Sri Lanka, and involves the worship of Lord Shiva the supreme deity. We have the south Indian tradition in the Murugan temple as well as the Venkateswara shrine in New South Wales.

Indo Aryans did not bring religion to India. The words Indo Aryans refers to a change in the composition of population in north India as described by historians, which occurred about 3000 B C. There was a migration of people from central and eastern Europe to the Indo- Gangetic plains. It was after their arrival that practice of Hinduism as it exists in modern times started. Vedanta is the philosophy of Hinduism contained in the Vedic texts, starting with *Rig Veda* specifying religious practices, culminating with the *Upanishads* and *Bagavad Gita* which contain the fundamental philosophy of the religion.

Mohenjadaro and Harappa in the Indus valley contain pre historic relics, including statues of a mother goddess. However there is no records to specify the nature of religion practiced at the time.. As such it cannot be regarded as the origin of religion practiced today. There is however, an oral tradition which can be traced back several thousands of years, which was a pre cursor to the religion practised today.

Details of pre historic temples In Sri Lanka spread throughout the country, which also reflects a pre Buddhist culture, based on the writings of Paul E Peiris to the Royal Asiatic Society are contained in the lead article by Thiru Arumugam in the August 2021 issue of *The Ceylankan*.

The Ramakrishna Mission and Chinmaya Mission centered in North India are the two main organizations which provide education globally about the philosophy of Hinduism.

Srikantha Nadarajah

Hornsby, NSW

Today I received the handsome copy of *The Ceylankan* magazine. I was delighted to read Premila Thurairatnam's article on Alagu Subramaniam, and Hugh Karunanayake's critique of *The Closing Time*. I had no notion about the role of Sri Lankans in the cultural scene of Australia before I received this impressive magazine. I am really happy about the enterprising nature of the Sri Lankan expatriates there.

EA Gamini Fonseka, PhD

Senior Professor in English

Department of English & Linguistics

University of Ruhuna

MATARA

(Sri Lanka)

Meals Ammi Didn't Make!

As the Fourth Editor of *The Ceylankan*, may I say that you have slotted into the role with professional ease. However, in undertaking this assignment as Editor, as well as being, 'a person in paid employment,' some less obvious features of the Journal may have eluded your attention. I refer more specifically to a light-

hearted and informative feature in *The Ceylankan* over many years titled, 'Meals Ammi made.'

I am without doubt one of the worst cooks in the universe, but I remember one recipe very well. I will give you the back-story to this, before giving you the recipe. Hopefully, this may prompt you to re-introduce *Meals Ammi made*, in issue 101 of *The Ceylankan* and in subsequent issues.

My story goes back to the 1950s in Piliyandala, (greater Colombo) where my family resided at the time. This was an era when there was no town sewerage or even septic tanks in the area. There is no easy way of describing it other than to say that human excrement was collected in buckets and these buckets were taken away a couple of times a week by a certain class of persons employed to do this type of work. Needless to say, these unfortunate workers were looked down upon as low caste or maybe even outcasts. As an 8-year-old boy I was not so much interested in the occupations and social status of these 'bucket carriers', as I was with the fact that they shot down sleeping Flying Foxes with catapults and stones. I was horrified to learn that they in fact cooked a meal with these large fruit bats.

Fast forward 35 years or so and I am in Port Moresby, at a Papua New Guinean friends party. The Bird of Paradise beer is flowing, and short eats/nibbles are being passed around. I am offered a plate that looks to be filled with something like potato chips. I helped myself to a few of the 'chips' but on consuming it realised it was not potato but some kind of meat; in my mind chicken or maybe spatchcock. The plate was offered to me by my host a second time and I politely refused. My host then came back to me immediately with the enquiry; 'why, don't you like Flying Fox'?

'Yes; no, never had it in my life,' I sputtered and took an extra-long sip of Bird of Paradise beer to take all taste of the Fox out of my mouth. Another of my Papua New Guinean colleagues was seated next to me and for reasons unbeknownst to me, proceeded to give me the recipe for cooking flying fox. This recipe has been fixed in my mind to this day.

'It is quite easy to cook', my colleague said to me.

'First, put the flying fox into boiling water for say 5 minutes. Remove all the skin. If the skin does not peel off, pour more boiling water over it and wait a few minutes more. Carefully remove all the flesh from the bones. Lightly wash and season with salt and pepper, egg and crumb (breadcrumbs) or dip in batter and deep fry on medium heat until golden brown. When serving you may add a few drops of vinegar over the cooked meat.'

ENJOY!

Earlson Forbes

Moorebank, NSW

The Colombo Column of the August journal carries a piece titled Summer of 69 by Richard Simon. Reading that piece triggered fond memories of my boyhood days spent playing at the airport.

1960's to early 70's, number 12, Kandawala Estate, Ratmalana was our address. The house was located at the side of a gravel road adjoining BATA Shoe company. The gravel road was off Airport Road.

“Kandawala Estate” belonged to Sir John Kotalawala being part of his residence (now the military academy) opposite the airport. As part of this estate were about 25 houses that housed the senior managers of Bata Shoe company. The estate was Sir John’s territory. His word was law!

We knew that he spent the summer months in England. Once back, he would inspect and survey his estate whilst riding his elephant. This party would consist of at least two elephants whilst Sir John rode one, his brother George would be on the other. The elephants had bells attached and they made a very distinct clanging sound. As children we would instantly recognise the bells and run to the gate to watch the entourage pass by and wave to Sir John, who in turn would wave back to us.

The back yard for us kids was the airport and Sir John’s house. Wandering around the airport, hangars and control tower was the norm. Everyone knew everyone. We were known as the ‘watte’ children. When aircrafts were not expected, we would wave to the control tower staff and then casually wander on to the tarmac. It was the most natural thing to do. Once we were done with the airport, we would turn our attention to “Sir John’s” house. We used to wander around the house and play hide and seek or chase the peacocks and deer around the garden. This was an evening’s entertainment for us.

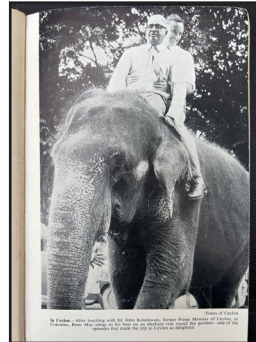
My brother and I used to build model planes and fly them at the airport. One day the model plane we were trying to fly just would not fly. We tried all sorts of adjustments but to no avail. The moment the model plane left my hands it crashed. From the edge of the hangar a ‘foreigner’ was watching our endeavours. When we decided to pack it in and started to dismantle the model plane the ‘foreigner’ walked up to us and said that he would give it a go. He tried and he too failed. He saw the dejected looks on our faces and said, “would you both like to fly in a real plane”. We immediately said yes! He happened to be the owner pilot of a plane parked just outside the hangar. We hopped on board, there was communications between the pilot and the control tower, and we were airborne. For about thirty minutes we flew around Colombo – a flight to remember. The plane zoomed into the clouds then dipped low over the sea and along the beach. For us kids, this was heaven. After we got back, we ran home without stopping to tell our parents. Mother was horrified and yelled at father for allowing us to run wild. Father did not know what to do, so he belted us. That was it for three months, we were grounded. No airport or Sir Johns house.

I also remember vividly the Indian Airlines crash of 1961. The plane was landing during heavy rain, veered off the runway and came to a stop underneath the “BATA” sign. Fortunately, there were no casualties. My father was a keen photographer and an employee of BATA Shoe Company so we could easily access the site and father took many photographs. The website: Crash of a Vickers 768D Viscount in Colombo | Bureau of Aircraft Accidents Archives (baaa-acro.com) has photographs of the crash and of the plane resting under the BATA sign.

There was never a dull moment at Kandawala estate. Whether it be Sir John, his elephants, or new planes big and small to have a closer inspection. Such wonderful memories.

Logan Thurairatnam
Glen Waverley, VIC

Sir John Kotalawala and English Cricket Captain Peter May on an Elephant 1958 - Photo supplied by Malcolm Kreltshheim



Dear Editor,

Re. The very informative article by Earlson Forbes in *The Ceylankan* (J99 Vol 25 No 3 August 2022) about Ceylonese migration to Australia. It is possible that the use of the word “Chingalese” in that manner had its origin in Robert Knox’s *An Historical Relation of Ceylon* (1681) as given below. And Professor Jayasuriya’s explanation is also probable.

“I know no nation in the world do so exactly resemble Chingulays as the people of Europe.” - Knox

“Knox was mainly living in the Hill Country, where people were relatively fair skinned due to the climatic conditions”- Professor Laksiri Jayasuriya in the *Colombo Telegraph*

Ernest Macintyre
Wahroonga, NSW

The Colombo Column

Compiled for the Colombo Chapter by Somasiri Devendra



Saluting the Nation.... and her last Queen



Saluting guns at the Lighthouse

On Independence Day, February 4th, this year, the Sri Lanka Navy fired its traditional “Salute to the Nation” from aboard ship, “*Gajabahu*”, anchored off Galle Face. In 1951, “*Vijaya*” had saluted the then Head of State of a self-governing Dominion, (King George VI) while “*Gajabahu*” saluted the elected Head of State of a Republic.

What happened in between hangs this tale.

Ceylon had become self-governing 1948 and the Navy was formed in December, 1950. February 4th 1951 was a little over a month away and the new Navy decided to salute the Nation. There was the “*Vijaya*”, with a respectable 4” inch gun on deck, and she would do the honours. It was a risk, as the gun had to be fired 21 times at one minute intervals, with no back-up available. The gun crew, however, did just that, but it was not something that could be done regularly.

The Navy went shopping for saluting guns: found, purchased and mounted them— just in time. Princess Elizabeth and Prince Phillip had set off on a honeymoon cruise which would bring them to Ceylon. And the new guns would fire a salute to Princess Elizabeth. That was the plan. But the King died in his sleep and the Princess, now Queen, had to cut short her cruise.

So, when the saluting guns spoke, it was in Sorrow: the final salute to a King. But when the new Queen – our last royal Head of State — decided to complete her uncompleted cruise, calling at Ceylon, the saluting guns finally had their day.

The guns continued to salute the Nation every year from Battenberg Battery, and later from the Colombo Lighthouse, right up to last year. But not this year. And now that they have fallen silent, is that – also – the end of an era?

“Peacocks dance in the mornings and fishing cats prowl at night”

Kirama Oya meanders from the mountains to the Indian Ocean. Between Tangalle and Beliatta, it separates two sleepy, pastoral villages of Aranwela and Angulmaduwa, known for brassware manufacture.

As *purana gam*, both had *purana viharas*, but the Aranwela temple no longer exists: only the stone stumps on which it was built upon remain, nestled in a great clump of trees. For this had been a *tampita vihara*. These had been built on wooden beams resting on short granite pillars, or stumps, in a unique type of 17th-19th century image house incorporating statues, murals and decorative motifs.



(Image courtesy of Asoka de Zoysa and Vajira Nalinda Jayasekera: “*Buddhist Image Houses*”)

Its dilapidated walls, colourful murals and fine sculptures survived till the late '80s. But the building crumbled into ruin. The temple and the artefacts were vandalised. The priceless relic casket was found dumped in a drain many miles away and the solitary monk moved into the safety of the village.

The neglected site became a haven for village rogues, drug addicts, alcoholics and other such.

Then was enacted a human miracle. Between October and December, last year. The village youths did what Kings and Councillors could not do, transforming it into a place of Peace and Reverence. They couldn't restore the old building, with hardly a photograph available, but they did a remarkable job in three months – in the (welcome) absence of archaeologists, architects or engineers. They cleaned the site. They exposed the 16 pillars that had been the foundation. They incorporated the ruined walls in the rescued site, they landscaped the site and added a Buddha image for a focus in Meditation. It had last been cared for 90 years ago when the sanctuary was a living temple.

They did not try the impossible. The deputy head of the *Aranwela purana viharaya* guided the youth, a few kind village donors funded the project: no politicians, nor VIPs. The only favour sought from the government was the use of a tractor of to remove the cartloads of arrack bottles and beer cans!

Now it has become an enchanting place. Passing vehicles slow down, stop in reverence. There will be a meditation centre here, no structures, landscaped as a garden with forest trees.

Already, peacocks dance in the mornings and fishing cats prowl at night.

(read Sasanka Nanayakkara, in *Sunday Times PLUS*, 6th March 2022)

A “Thank you” to the Four Horsemen....

I knew *The Ceylankan* before I knew the CSA. I was introduced to it by Robert Sourjah via my brother, Tissa. I liked the Newsletter format: readable, a mix of subjects, modestly presented. If the Journal was so good, I must get it. And so I joined up, on 30th October, 1999.

I contributed to it before for the Colombo Chapter to come into being. The first Editor, David Goodrich, paid me a visit: he was an absolutely charming man and I could see that the Man and his Journal were one. Our interests coincided but, alas! he had to go. What a lovely way he went!

Along came Sumane Iyer, who had been at Ananda when I began teaching and we had so very much in common. He took *The Ceylankan* from Newsletter to Journal, produced some of the best issues I remember. He, too, visited my home and I visited his plum orchard years later.

Then it was the time for Doug Jones bringing colour on to its pages and its now familiar format.

And now it is Adam who shows promise of professionalism, dedication and accessibility. I have great hopes that he will take the Journal to new heights.

25 years, 100 Issues, 4 Editors. “You’ve come a long way, Baby” (as the Virginia Slims advert blurb) from the first issue (before it acquired its name) of a Society (which also lacked its familiar name). It’s has been a lovely journey. May the road be without end.

Fortifications, the Military Heritage and the Colombo Chapter

The International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) has created a new International Scientific Committee on “Fortifications and Military Heritage” (ICOFORT) which is concerned not only with the structures built for military purposes, but also with the landscapes of military and naval actions.

By the time you read this the “First National Conference on Fortifications and Military Heritage” in Sri Lanka would have been held on 5th and 6th November 2022.

Your columnist, of the Colombo Chapter, has been invited to deliver the Keynote Address. I will be speaking on “Guns, Ships & Empire: the Vasco da Gama epoch of Asian History”, presenting an overview of Sri Lankan studies in the subject area while placing them in a historical context.

“The spur to European expansion in the east was medieval in character, yet the means that led to its success was essentially modern, in that it was underpinned by technological advancement. The specific advances that helped them gain ascendancy in the east were in naval architecture and gunnery. These technological advances led to successful imperialism.”

Two other members of the Colombo Chapter will also read papers, namely, Anandalal Nanayakkara (Vice President) on “Military Use of Rockets by the Sinhalese during the Dutch Occupation” and Rear Adm. Y.N. Jayaratne (a new member) on “‘High Ground’ & the Defence of Kingdoms” (both titles provisional).

BAMBALAPITIYA!

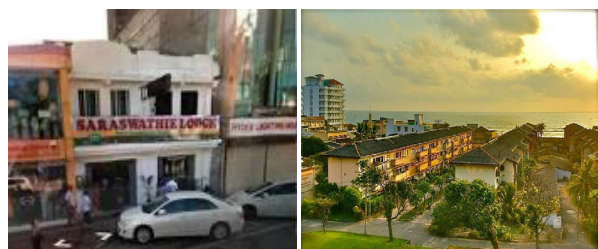
The Bambalapitiya strip between Lion House and Saraswathi Lodge was Colombo’s walk of fame. You did not have to be rich or famous to enter the mythologies that accompanied the virtual sidewalk stars.

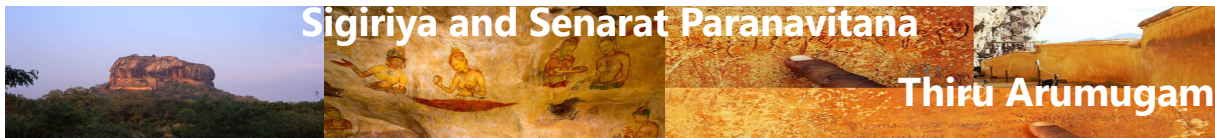
Here’s where Kum and Dougie Roberts faced off. Bamba heaved and trembled as the heavies clashed. Ronnie Steinwall was a mere bystander, the story goes. Here’s where George Siegfertz lazed outside Lion House while he honed his whistle on ‘Hitler had only one big ball...’, everybody knew he had introduced the *Colonel Bogey March* to the film ‘*Bridge on the River Kwai*’. Here, it all started! And these are the Mayfair booths that were crammed with the boys that starred in the crowd scenes. Every day they returned from Kitulgala to tell tall tales of stars and stardust to their awed and envious audience. William Holden, Jack Hawkins, Alec Guinness, were the names thrown around like confetti or dropped, clumsily, like bricks. Machang, today this hand shook the hand of Jack Hawkins....get out you bugger...In Bamba, myths were born, fast tracked to immortality and given an address. Bamba lore was alive and well.

Bang in the middle of the mile stood a testament to the virtues of affordable public housing. The Torrington flats project preceded Bambalapitiya, but was quickly eclipsed in stature by the Bamba flats. It was as much a social experiment as a housing scheme. In less than a decade, the inhabitants had evolved their own subculture and a sense of belonging, alien to an outsider. Ethnicities and languages blended into bonds so real that when the great migration was over, the flatters re-formed their association in the new country. It is likely that a sociologist would attribute a large part of the credit to the Bamba ambience.

Bamba was a magical place in the 50’s!!!

(Courtesy of Harry de Sayrah OAM)





Sigiriya rock fortress is a well-known historical site in Ceylon and a popular site visited by foreign and domestic tourists and was designated by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site in 1982. In the pre-pandemic era, it had about a million visitors a year. It was the site of King Kasyapa's royal palace when he ruled in the fifth century AD.

Senarat Paranavitana was the first Ceylonese Archaeological Commissioner and is considered to be the greatest Ceylonese Archaeologist of the twentieth century. A careful perusal of the past 99 issues of this Journal shows that there is not a single article about these two topics, although the Melbourne Chapter of this Society has held three lecture meetings about Sigiriya, and the meeting synopses have been recorded. It is time to redress the situation. Coupling the two items together in a single article is not inappropriate because Paranavitana did a great deal of research about Sigiriya. He published two books about Sigiriya and wrote at least nine related articles in learned journals.

Sigiriya Rock Fortress

Sigiriya or Sinhagiri (Lion Rock) is located in the northernmost tip of the Central Province. It is in the Matale District and is about ten miles north-east of Dambulla. It is a giant rock boulder which rises 180 m (590 feet) above the surrounding countryside (see Figure 1). The top of the rock is relatively flat with only a slight slope. It was here that King Kasyapa who ruled from 477 to 495 AD built his royal palace, transferring the capital from Anuradhapura which had been the capital for the previous 500 years.



Figure 1

The access path to the top of the rock starts at the bottom of the rock and follows the edge of the rock until it reaches a short staircase which leads to a sheltered alcove pocket in the rock where about 20 beautiful 1500-year-old frescoes can be seen. These are the only frescoes that remain out of about 500 original frescoes which covered the west face of the rock. The others have been washed out by the weather. The frescoes are in rich colour and are of female damsels accompanied by their attendants and only the top part of their bodies are shown (see Fig 2). There are no male figures. The frescoes have been compared in quality to the Ajanta frescoes in India.



Figure 2

Here there is a large wire cage for sheltering from attacks from Bambara Bees (Giant Asian Honeybees).

There are several colonies of these 20 mm long bees in Sigiriya Rock. There have been some fatalities due to their stings, in people with allergic reactions. The Bambara bees normally mind their own business but can become aggressive if provoked by stones being thrown at their hives. They also become upset by the noise of drone aircraft and for this reason flying of drones is prohibited in the vicinity of Sigiriya.

From this plateau which is about halfway up the rock, there is a gateway in the form of a lion made of brick. The lion's head has collapsed a long time ago and only the paws remain (see Fig. 3). Fig. 4 (next page) shows the writer, on the right seated next to his mother, on one of the staircases on his first visit to Sigiriya in 1938.

The staircases lead to the top of the rock which is fairly flat with a slight slope and is about three acres in extent. It is here that Kasyapa's palace was located.

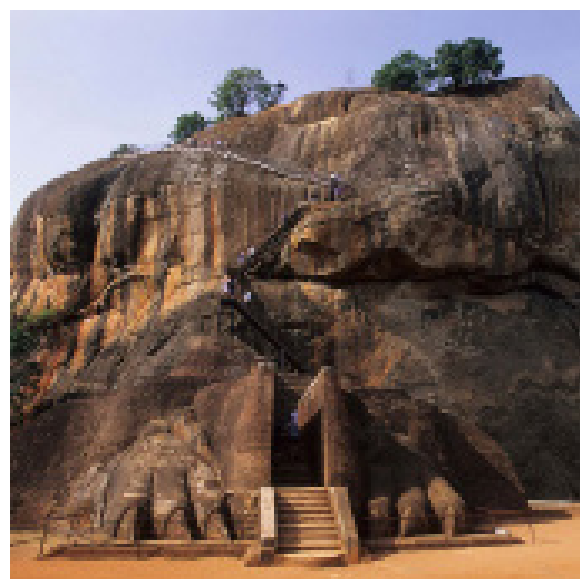


Figure 3

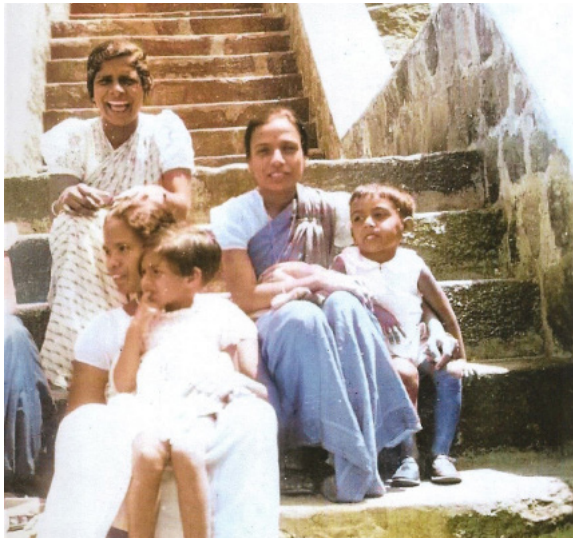


Figure 4

The buildings have collapsed long ago and only the foundations remain today. There are also cisterns carved into the rock for the collection and storage of rainwater.

Sigiriya was not only a palace, but it was a Rock Fortress as well. The area surrounding the Rock was developed into a well laid out city. To help with security, the Rock was surrounded by a moat, walls and ramparts which were about two miles long. On the west side of the Rock there is a large park for the royals which has ponds and water gardens. There are three main gardens with islands. The water gardens are connected underground to the moat and a large reservoir on the south side. There are a total of five gates leading to the Rock and the gate on the western side was reserved for Royalty. The whole site is one of the best-known examples of urban planning and landscaped gardens of its time.

History of Sigiriya

The history of Sigiriya is described in detail in the epic *Culavamsa*, Chapters 38 and 39¹. Kasyapa's father Dhatusena ruled from Anuradhapura for 18 years from 455 to 473 AD. He built twenty-one fortresses for the defence of his kingdom. He built eighteen viharas and restored many others. He built a suitable enclosure for the Bodhi Tree. To the bhikkhus he distributed robes and other gifts. He also built eighteen irrigation tanks so the cultivation of paddy could be increased. About 30 miles south-east of Anuradhapura is the greatest tank that he built which is the Kalaweva which directly irrigates 12,700 acres of paddy fields. He built the 54 mile-long canal, the Yoda Ela (Jaya Ganga) which conveys water from Kalaweva to Anuradhapura.

The *Culavamsa* describes the history of the relevant events as follows². Insertions within square brackets are by this writer:

Dhatusena had two sons: [An elder son] Kassapa by a mother of unequal birth [believed to be a Pallava Princess] and the mighty Moggallana by a mother of equal caste, also a charming daughter who was dear to him as his life. On his sister's son [Migara] he bestowed the dignity of Senapati [Commander-in-Chief of the army] and gave him his daughter (to wife). Without blame on her part he [Migara] struck her with his whip on the thigh. When

the King saw the blood-stained garment of his daughter and heard (of the affair) he in his wrath had his nephew's mother [his own sister] burnt naked. From that time onward [Migara] nursed hatred (against the King), joined Kassapa, awoke in him the desire for the royal dignity, estranged him from his father, won over his subjects and took the ruler (Dhatusena) prisoner alive. Thereupon Kassapa raised the umbrella of dominion ... Moggallana whose intention it was to fight him [Kassapa], betook himself, as he could raise no forces, to Jambudipa [India] to find troops there.

... The deluded [Migara] spake thus to King Kassapa: "There are treasures lying in the King's palace O King, has thy father told it to thee?" On the answer "No" he said: "Knowest thou not his intention, O Monarch? For Moggallana he keeps his wealth". When he heard that ... [Kassapa] sent messengers to his father with the command to make known where the treasure lay. ... Dhatusena spake to the messengers, "if he lets me go to the Kalavapi [Kalaweva] he shall learn it".

... Then Dhatusena betook himself to the tank, plunged as he liked therein, bathed and drank and spake to the King's henchmen: "This here, my friends, is my whole wealth". ... He [Kassapa, when he heard his father's reply] was filled with fury and commanded the Senapati thus; "Slay my father"... Thereupon the brutal Senapati stripped the king naked, bound him with chains and fetters in a niche in the wall with his face outwards and closed it up with clay. ... The Lord of men Dhatusena went thus after 18 years, murdered by his son, to the King of gods.

Kasyapa expected Moggallana to return from India one day with an army. He therefore set about constructing the Rock Fortress at Sigiriya which he completed within the relatively short space of seventeen years. The *Culavamsa* records the return of Moggallana as follows³:

Now in the eighteenth year the royal hero Moggallana came hither at the information of the Niganthas [Jains] with twelve distinguished friends from Jambudipa [India] and collected troops at the Kuthari-vihara ... When the two hosts [Moggallana and Kasyapa] fell on each other like two seas that have burst their bounds, they fought a mighty battle. Kassapa spying a great stretch of swamp in front of him, turned his elephant to seek another road. When his troops seeing that, with the cry: Friends, our commander here flees! Broke up in disorder, the troops of Moggallana cried: "We see their backs!" But the King with his dagger cut his throat, raised his knife on high and stuck it in the sheath. Moggallana carried out the ceremonies of burning, glad at his brother's deed (because he had thereby spared him the necessity of meting out justice himself).

This is the *Culavamsa* story of how the Rock Fortress at Sigiriya came to be built. It is used as the basis of the history of Sigiriya in Ceylon History books such as C W Nicholas and S Paranavitana's "*A Concise History of Ceylon*"⁴. Incidentally, this book says that if the *Culavamsa* had been written by laymen, the achievements of Kasyapa might have appeared in a different light⁵:

His Sigiriya was a stupendous engineering feat as well as a notable work of art: nothing comparable was attempted by any of his successors on the throne of Ceylon.

Senarat Paranavitana

Senarat Paranavitana (1896-1972) was born in Galle. He was educated at Buona Vista High School. He was interested in Ceylon History and his first job was as a

School Teacher for three years. In 1922 he joined the Archaeological Survey of Ceylon as an Epigraphical Assistant. In the following year he was sent to Ootacamund in the Madras Presidency for training under the Government Epigraphist. He was trained in Epigraphy, and he also studied Prakrit and Tamil. He returned to Ceylon in 1926 and started his lifelong career as an Epigraphist. He was a prolific writer not only in epigraphy but also in associated fields of archaeology, linguistics and history. He was appointed Editor of *Epigraphia Zeylanica*, taking over the mantle from D M de Z Wickremasinghe, a task which he handled for many years.

From 1932 to 1934 he was appointed Acting Archaeological Commissioner and in 1940 he was confirmed in the post of Archaeological Commissioner, being the first Ceylonese to hold this post and held the post till he retired in 1956 at the mandatory retiring age of 60 years. In 1936 he obtained the degree of PhD from the University of Leiden. After retiring from the Archaeological Department, he was appointed in 1958 as the first Professor of Archaeology in the University of Ceylon, Peradeniya, a post which he held until 1964. He was awarded the CBE in the New Year Honours list of 1952. He passed away in 1972.

He was an outstanding Archaeologist and as Archaeological Commissioner he supervised the excavation and restoration of many archaeological sites in Ceylon and instigated the preservation of many historic sites. After he passed away, in 1978 a “*Senarat Paranavitana Commemoration Volume*”⁶ was published. In this volume H A I Goonetilleke who was Librarian, University of Ceylon, Peradeniya has contributed “*A Bibliography of the published writings of Senarat Paranavitana*”. The Bibliography shows that Paranavitana was a prolific writer over a 46-year writing career. The Bibliography of items written by Paranavitana includes books, articles, reviews and edited works but excludes newspaper articles. The Bibliography lists an amazing total of 317 entries! Of these, about twelve are books. The items that he wrote about Sigiriya include two books and nine articles. The two books are the two volume “*Sigiri Graffiti*” (1956) considered by many to be his magnum opus and which deciphers and translates over 600 Sigiriya graffiti, and “*The Story of Sigiri*” (1972), the latter published in the last year of his life and presents an alternative view of the history of Sigiriya. His opinion about the concept of Sigiriya is expressed in one of his articles about Sigiriya⁷:

The entire conception, however, is breathtaking in its boldness and, in its execution have been exhibited amazing ingenuity, great engineering skill and unswerving determination to overcome difficulties which would have appeared insuperable even to the most daring. Those who designed the various features of the city and palace and those who saw to it that the designs were accomplished fact, evoke our admiration.

Paranavitana’s own contribution to our knowledge about ancient Ceylon has been summed up as follows⁸:

Senarat Paranavitana is unquestionably the greatest historian, epigraphist, archaeologist and scholar that Sri Lanka has produced in the present century.

Paranavitana’s book “*The Story of Sigiri*”⁹

The Preface of the above book is dated 30th June 1972. Paranavitana passed away three months later on 4th October 1972. The book has 132 pages of text in English followed by 128 pages of Sanskrit transliterated into Roman text. The book gives the history of fifth century Sigiriya as described by Ananda-sthavira, a Buddhist priest who came in the 15th century from Palembang (Sumatra) to the court of Parakrama Bahu VI (1412-1467) as an adviser. Paranavitana says that Ananda-sthavira’s works were incised in minute letters, between the lines of existing stone inscriptions and gives a list of the inscriptions. The history of Sigiriya as attributed to Ananda-sthavira differs from that given in the *Culavamsa* and can be summarised briefly as follows:

1. Samgha, the daughter of Mahanama who ruled in Anuradhapura [from 412 to 434], was given in marriage to Damstranama of the kingdom of Pundra [near the mouth of the Sindhu river in India]. She had a son named Dhatusena. When she heard that Mahanama was very ill she came to Anuradhapura with Dhatusena who was seven years old. Mahanama passed away and Dhatusena was installed on the throne. Samgha appointed a General named Kalabhresvara to administer the kingdom until Dhatusena became an adult and returned to Pundra with Dhatusena.
2. Kalabhresvara did not last long and was killed by a Prince named Purnna who took over the kingdom. He was succeeded by his son followed by the son’s brother named Ksudra Parendra. Meanwhile Dhatusena reached adulthood in India and had a post in the army of the Pallava monarch Simhavarman. There was an attack by the Kalabhra army and Dhatusena played a major role in the Pallava victory. Simhavarman was so pleased with Dhatusena’s performance that he gave his sister Prtha, a Pallava Princess, in marriage to Dhatusena. Their son was Kasyapa.
3. Nineteen years later, Dhatusena set about recovering his kingdom in Ceylon. He raised an army and sailed in 75 ships and landed in Salavatta (Chilaw). He was accompanied by his wife and two year old Kasyapa. He attacked the army of Ksudra Parendra who was ruling in Anuradhapura and put him to flight. He was duly anointed and ruled from Anuradhapura. His Ministers advised him that he would strengthen his position if he married a Sinhalese Princess. He wedded Princess Samgha, daughter of Svatisena and their son was Moggallana.
4. Dhatusena’s advisers told him that he would be more powerful if he attained the status of Parvata-Raja. Parvata is a synonym for cloud. To achieve this status, he would have to rule from a palace on a high rock. Dhatusena chose Sigiriya as the site and started building a palace there.
5. Meanwhile Kasyapa reached adulthood and asked his father Dhatusena whether he would inherit the throne. He was told that his younger brother Moggallana would inherit the throne because his

mother was of local royal blood. Kasyapa went to India and met Dhatusena's brother and with his help he recruited an army in seven months and returned to Ceylon to take over the throne by force.

6. When Dhatusena heard that Kasyapa had landed in Ceylon with an army, Dhatusena personally led his troops into battle and Dhatusena lost. To avoid the ignominy of being taken prisoner, Dhatusena took his own life. Kasyapa told his mother that he was unaware that his father would be leading the troops personally. He said that had he known that he would never have engaged in battle. Kasyapa took over the kingdom and ruled from Sigiriya, after completing the palace and rock fortress. Meanwhile Moggallana had fled abroad.
7. In the eighteenth year of Kasyapa's reign, some palace officials who were sympathetic to Moggallana were able to persuade Kasyapa's wife to poison Kasyapa. A message was sent to Moggallana that Kasyapa was dead and that he could return to Ceylon and claim the throne, which he did, and he also married Kasyapa's widow.

As can be seen, the above version says that Kasyapa did not commit patricide and differs from the *Culavamsa* version of the history of Sigiriya. Paranavitana suggests that a possible reason for the discrepancy is that the *Culavamsa* history of Sigiriya was written in the 13th century by priests of the Maha Vihara who were biased against Kasyapa because he was sympathetic to the Mahayana tradition followed by the priests of the Abhayagiri Vihara.

There was a mixed reaction to Paranavitana's book, but he had passed away and was not there to defend his views. The editors of the "*Senarat Paranavitana Commemoration Volume*" (1978) made this comment¹⁰:

During his last years, Paranavitana attempted to reinterpret the history of Sri Lanka on the basis of interlinear inscriptions which he believed to be inscribed in minute characters on many ancient stone epigraphs... *The Story of Sigiri* (1972), provides a wealth of new material on the history of Sigiriya ... Here, Paranavitana propounds a theory in contrast to traditional history damning Kasyapa as a patricide... The wealth of material supposed to be contained in these so-called interlinear inscriptions has yet to be tested and verified.

Gananath Obeyesekere who is Emeritus Professor of Anthropology at Princeton University, USA, has this comment¹¹:

Then there is the case of the great Sri Lankan epigraphist, Senarat Paranavitana, who in his old age read whole texts written in flawless Sanskrit or ancient Sinhala found interleaved in old rock inscriptions ... staring at nearly undecipherable inscriptions all his life in the glazed wall (known as the "mirror wall") of the sixth century [sic] mountain fortress of Sigiriya, he began to see, with extreme clarity "interlinear writing" mirrored on various rock slabs... For the hallucinating epigrapher the writing on the mirror of rock slabs was no dream or vision, but plain literal grammatical Sanskrit.

Prof. K Indrapala, the Historian who has deciphered many ancient stone inscriptions has made these comments¹²:

What was most incredible about these revelations was the claim that the documents were written in minute characters (not easily visible to the naked eye) in between the

lines of existing stone inscriptions. For this reason, these documents were termed interlinear inscriptions...after examining (along with Sirima Kiribamune and Leslie Gunawardena) [all three were, or became, Professors] the stone slabs on which, according to Prof. Paranavitana, the interlinear inscriptions were indited, the present writer concluded that the interlinear inscriptions were non-existent...After a very detailed examination of the stone slabs, Leslie Gunawardena also concluded that the interlinear inscriptions were non-existent... Whatever the causes that led Prof. Paranavitana to believe in the existence of the interlinear inscriptions, this unfortunate controversy should not blind us to the admirable contributions to Sri Lankan scholarship that Prof. Paranavitana has made over four decades.

Paranavitana has included in his book four plates showing rock inscriptions in which he claims minute interlinear inscriptions have been made. Plate 3 from his book has been reproduced here as Fig. 5.

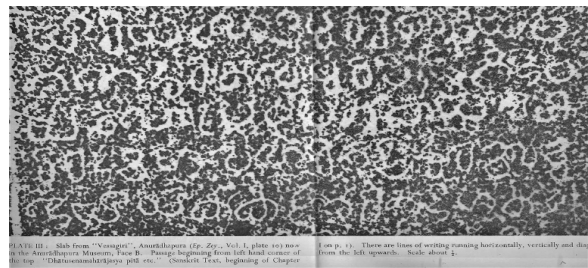


Figure 5

This writer enlarged the Plate and viewed it through a powerful magnifying glass but was unable to see any interlinear inscriptions.

Daya Dissanayake's "*Kāt Bitha*" (Mirror Wall)

In 1998 Daya Dissanayake wrote a novel titled "*Kāt Bitha*"¹³ which means 'Mirror Wall'. The book went on to win the Ceylon Government State Literary Award for Best Novel for 1998 in English. The book includes several translated samples of the Sigiri Graffiti, some of which are reproduced in the next section of this article.

The novel is set in tenth century AD. Sona thera is a middle-aged Buddhist priest who lives in Rohana. He has been to Sigiriya many times and knows its history but is planning another visit. Sagala is a teenage acolyte who is curious to learn something about Sigiriya. The two of them set out on foot and after several days travel, they reached Sigiriya where they plan to spend five days. Tiya is a schoolboy from the village adjacent to Sigiriya and earns pocket money by acting as guide to Sigiriya visitors. When he sees this pair arrive, he latches on to them and offers his services as a guide, which is politely declined. Tiya soon realises that Sona thera is well versed in the history of Sigiriya and follows him to learn something from him.

When Tiya is not following this pair of visitors, he sits in front of the Mirror Wall and meditates. During his meditations he begins to see visions of the history of Sigiriya unfolding before him. The history that he sees is the same as that narrated by Ananda-sthavira and reproduced in Paranavitana's book "*The Story of Sigiri*". Tiya is puzzled because this is quite different from the history of Sigiriya told to him by his elders and which was later related in the *Culavamsa*.

Sagala and Tiya, being of the same age group, have become quite friendly. Sagala feels that Tiya is trying to tell him something about the history of Sigiriya but does not find an opportune moment of privacy. Meanwhile, Sona thera and Sagala have concluded their visit to Sigiriya, say their farewells and set off on their return journey.

In the Foreword of this book, the author Disanayake makes the following comment¹⁴:

I do not expect the reader to judge Kasyapa based on this story, or to accept either of the versions I have given here about Sihigiri. It is my wish that this book would encourage the reader to learn more about Sihigiri, about Dhatusena, Kasyapa and Moggallana, so that someday what happened would be understood.

Sigiri Graffiti

The dictionary definition of the word ‘*Graffiti*’ (singular *graffito*), when used in an archaeological context is ‘any inscription or drawing scratched or carved onto a surface, especially rock or pottery’. Sigiriya is exceptional in having a singular collection of about 1500 samples of ancient and medieval graffiti still extant, inscribed on the plaster of the Mirror Wall. This wall runs for about 500 feet from below the fresco cave and is alongside the path to the summit (see Fig. 6). It has a plaster of limestone mixed with fine sand and has been polished to such an extent that one can almost see one’s reflection. The graffiti (see Fig. 7 for an example), which are in old Sinhala, have been inscribed on the plaster with a fine stylus and some have been painted over with red paint. The letters are small in size, about the same size as ola leaf inscription letters. In some cases, the inscribers have included their names. On palaeographic grounds, the graffiti have been assigned dates from the 8th to the 11th century, with the more significant ones dating from the 8th and 9th century. After the 11th century, Sigiriya was no longer a visitor’s destination, and the jungle tide took over.

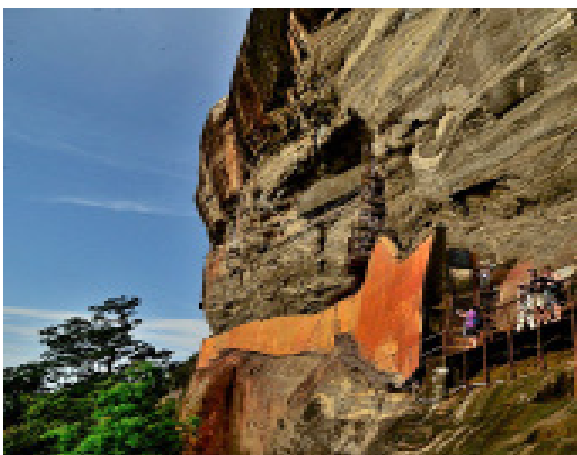


Figure 6

The presence of the graffiti at Sigiriya was first recorded in 1905 by H C P Bell, Ceylon’s first Archaeological Commissioner. In 1939 Paranavitana read a paper¹⁵ about the graffiti at a meeting of the Royal Asiatic Society (Ceylon Branch). He said that he had so far in-

terpreted about 150 graffiti, but that this was a small fraction of the graffiti that could be read today. Many more have been lost forever because sections of the Mirror Wall have collapsed. He said that these graffiti are older than the oldest Sinhalese work now extant. He said:

But if history is concerned not only with kings and nobles and their conflicts and intrigues but also with the life of the common people and the state of their culture in times past, these verses, recording the various reactions on the minds of different types of people on seeing a remarkable achievement of human art, are not without their interest to the historian.

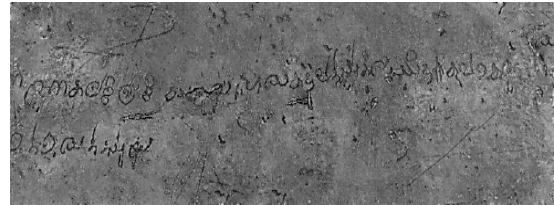


Figure 7

During his talk, Paranavitana gave several examples of the graffiti, both in the original Sinhala version and his English translation of the original. In the discussion that followed the talk, C W W Kannangara, the Minister for Education, suggested that for the benefit of future generations the speaker should publish a book on this subject. Paranavitana accepted the suggestion and in 1956 he published a two volume 472 page book¹⁶ titled “*Sigiri graffiti, being Sinhalese verses of the eighth, ninth and tenth centuries*”. In the book he has deciphered and translated into English, over 600 examples of Sigiri graffiti. Although Paranavitana wrote many books, commentators describe this book as his ‘magnum opus’.

Given below are some translations of samples of Sigiri graffiti. In the first verse,¹⁷ the ninth century poet Kit Samboya says that Sigiriya has left Mount Meru far behind. In Indian cosmography, Mount Meru is described in Hindu mythology as a very high mountain which is the abode of the Gods. This graffito also confirms that at that time (9th century) there were over 500 Sigiriya frescoes, although today only about 20 have survived the ravages of the weather:

*Did not Sihigiri in our Siri Lak
Leave Mount Meru far behind.
Five hundred beauties
Impede one’s path to heaven.
Their gentle smile and fluttering eyes
Enslave me.*

This ninth century versifier says that if you have not seen the graffiti in Sigiriya, you have not seen anything¹⁸:

*Where did you descend, in a hurry
Having seen Sihigiri.
Not seeing the Mirror Wall
Have you seen anything?*

In this graffiti the ninth century poet gives a lame excuse for lingering to view the beautiful frescoes¹⁹:

*Forgive us fair beauties
For disturbing you
As every path leaving the summit
Leads here and we do not know
Of any other way down.*

One worries about this versifier who has been completely captivated by the stunning frescoes. The original graffito in old Sinhala is also included²⁰:

කනපටිවෙලු හරක්වල් පිහිටි කොටි ලී
දකු මන ම නියලු බෙයන්දිම් රක්වනක් දිස්නෙක්

*Having seen in the cave a golden coloured one
With long eyes, who has coolingly deposited
Colourful blooms in the folds of her bodice.
My mind is troubled.*

And the eighth century poet Sival from Padagama wonders what the true feelings of the fresco beauties are²¹:

*The painter is trying to depict
Your feelings
If only he knew
What was really on your mind.*

This ninth century poet who signs off as “Cupid” seems to have been truly captivated by the frescoes²²:

*How could anyone write songs
About her unmoving eyes
While seeing the tender breasts
Of the golden hued ones.*

And this poet feels that the frescoes are not speaking to him because of some bad things he did in previous births²³:

*Water lilies your eyes are blue
Mind you mine unsatisfied
In previous lives I did bad things
No speech for my worthless karma.*

According to local folklore, when the damsels of Kasyapa’s palace heard that the King had died, they jumped from the top of Sigiriya Rock and this graffito reflects that belief²⁴:

*The golden-coloured ones in the cave
Appear as if they are hurling themselves down
From the summit of the rock,
Being unable to console their hearts,
As indeed, the King has died.*

Although there were originally over 500 frescoes, most of them were obliterated by the weather. The 20 frescoes which have survived 1500 years till today are in a rock pocket where they avoided the full force of the weather. This ninth century versifier is already lamenting the fading of the frescoes and is pleading for their restoration²⁵:

*The paintings of the amiable damsels
Are at present damaged in some places
And in some their colour has faded.
Are there none whose hearts
They captivated in those days?*

This poet sums up his visit to Sigiriya thus²⁶:

*We saw in Sihigiri the King of Lions
Whose fame and splendour
Remain spread throughout the world,
And the wonderful damsels
With eyes like water lilies.*

And finally, this versifier is confident that one who visits Sigiriya will come back again²⁷:

*Who visits Sihigiri
Will visit again,
Always remembered
Even if all else is forgotten.*

C E Godakumbura succeeded Paranavitana as Ceylon’s Archaeological Commissioner from 1956 to 1967. He had this comment to make about the Sigiri versifiers²⁸:

Finally, we must in concluding express our gratitude to the poets of yore, most of them unknown and unheard of, who wrote their songs, so carefully and in such fine letters, on the gallery wall at Sigiriya, to last there until the wall collapses, or even longer if they are preserved in the libraries of the world in facsimile reproduction.

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Photo citations

Figs. 1, 2, 3 and 6: Sri Lanka Tourism

Fig. 5: Paranavitana (1972)

Fig. 7: Wikimedia Commons

A BEND IN THE MAHAWELI: A story of the first University of Ceylon

Ernest Macintyre

INTRODUCTION

The Mahaweli River, three hundred and thirty five kilometres long, the longest river in Lanka, begins in a remote village of Nuwara-Eliya District in the central hills, and reaches the sea at the Bay of Bengal on the east coast at Trincomalee. As it passes Kandy, the main town of the central province, and goes south about six kilometres, it bends at an elbow to the shape of an arm, to cradle within an expanse of habitation born from nature accommodating Lankan classical and colonial architecture, the residential University of Ceylon, Peradeniya. From the sandy banks of the river the richly vegetated land slopes gently upward till it reaches the old Galaha Road along which on either side, from the Botanical Gardens junction, north to the ancient Buddhist village of Hindagala South, are the buildings designed by architect Shirley D'Alwis. Sir Ivor Jennings, the first Vice Chancellor took the lead in proposing and constructing the sober and dignified monument in architect Shirley D'Alwis's honour that is situated at the first roundabout on this central road of the campus. It has a shallow pond all around it.

The Mahaweli from which we rose up to Galaha Road is only one side of the story of nature's promise. On the other side of Galaha, all along, the land rises further to reach in the distance, the Hantana chain of mountains. Hantana is a chain of seven mountains, surrounded by forest. From the top of the mountains is seen at the rising of the sun, the University, faraway.



Hantana Mountains

This sunrise in 1955, all was quiet on the campus. There were no students, yet. Ones already at university had four more weeks before term started. But shortly, the many hundreds of new students, those who had just gained entrance would arrive.

So, we have a little time to take a walk along Galaha Road. Near the village of Hindagala, in the south, where in the mid nineteen fifties the campus ended, was the large Ramanathan Hall. It was the largest of the halls of residence, with three floors and named after Sir Ponnambalam Ramanathan who was associated with the movement for independence from Britain for the colony of Ceylon. Turning back from Ramanathan along Galaha Road, returning northwards, quite close to Ramanathan was Sangamitta Hall and Hilda Obeyesekera Hall, and also close by, up a hill on the Hantana side was James Peiris Hall. All three

for female undergrads. Sangamitta Hall needs a little more in telling of its name; it being the only one with an ancient historical name. Sangamitta was the title or description given to the daughter of King Ashoka of India (about 270 BC). Her name was Ayapali and was referred to as Sangamitta when she joined the order of Buddhist nuns. Sangamitta and her brother Mahinda were sent by Ashoka their father to spread the Word of The Buddha south across India and ending in Lanka. James Peiris and Hilda Obeyesekera whom the other two close by halls were named after, were prominent and wealthy social and political figures of the early twentieth century.

Central Administration and lecture rooms



Jayatileka Hall of Residence

To divert now to an undergraduate activity allowable in adulthood in a residential facility of both sexes. The young men called it Kissing Bend. Despite the mischievous manipulation of language enjoyed freely in Peradeniya, Kissing Bend was not a curved component of the physical make up of one of the genders. It was an area of hard asphalt on the ground on Galaha Road, where we are now on our walk through the campus. A location of love's reluctant closing moments of an evening after Mahaweli meetings. The Kissing Bend, with a big tree covering on one side. Kissing goodnight was just before seven in the evening, the stipulated time for women to be back in their halls, after returning from sessions close together on the banks of the Mahaweli. Young males and females, without the cultural restraint of Pirivena origin, in a

university of Western imagination allowed them freedom of nature. An old English song, “I Met My Little Bright-Eyed Doll, Down by The Riverside”, may have had its Sinhala version, much sung in Peradeniya at the time, “*Mage Ass Dheka Dhillisina Bonika, Ganga Ainey Sambuna*”, emerging from the banks of Peradeniya’s Mahaweli.

Kissing Bend was an important landmark, for as Professor Sarachchandra is reported to have once said to undergraduates, “Peradeniya is not only for passing exams, but also for the for the passing of young lives, at a time when it is surging”. He did not mean kissing at the bend, yet it relates, for human surge and emotion in youth, and accompanying thought, extends to works of art, which the professor had in mind. It requires imagination to extend to the surge of art, closely pressed bodies and upright, with entangled legs at Kissing Bend. Today it is probably called “Imbina Wangua”, with the growth of the use of Sinhala.

Architect Shirley D’Alwis Memorial



Moving from alongside Hilda Obeysekera Hall now in the other direction from Hindagala, the next important structures in those times were the impressive administrative buildings, library and lecture rooms on the left and Arunachalam and Jayatilleka Halls side by side on the right, named again, after important political figures of the time. From Jayatilleke Hall can be seen the Shirley D’Alwis Memorial. D’Alwis who in design gave to Peradeniya, man’s complement to nature. These buildings were given special mention, whatever the intention of the words mean, when the recently departed Queen of Britain and her husband Philip formally declared the University of Ceylon open.



In the view from Jayatilleka Hall beyond this memorial was sports ground and tennis courts. To the right of the sports field was a makeshift accommodation, the Faculty Club. The evening club for the academic

staff, who in keeping with their intellectual claims could think better with a drink. This club, apart from private homes was the only place arrack could be had on campus. The two immediate progressions from schooldays to university were “all but” freedom with the opposite sex and arrack. The former was easily and discretely available, the latter prohibited on campus, yet consumed growingly, in the town of Peradeniya and the city of Kandy, bringing back its heartily displayed consummation to the campus.

Further north to the right on Galaha Road, beyond Jayatilleka Hall was a narrow asphalt strip branching upwards to the seventh student residence, Marrs Hall, named after an important academic and university official, in its early Colombo days. We now move outside to a place that served the campus. The steam train from Colombo had arrived at the small close by Peradeniya railway station.



That morning the small station was packed with young men and women. From all parts they had come. A good many were from Colombo schools, Fernandos, Silvas and Pereras, amongst names of Sinhala and Tamil origin. They were well matched in numbers by those from the rural south and northwest below the Jaffna Peninsula which brought into the campus names like Deekiriwewa and Manikdewala. The north westerners converged at Polgahawela, and then to Fort, Colombo to change trains for Peradeniya. The Central Province provided a mixture of Colombo and Rural types. Breckenridge and Dhanapala and Senaratne are three we remember from Trinity College and Premaratne the cricketer from Katugastota. They were not at the station, because they were close enough to Peradeniya. There were the not so westernised Tamils from Jaffna and the Eastern Province. Not as westernised as the young men and women of the Colombo schools who had a long history of migration to Colombo, from 1905 when the first train left Kankesanthurai for the capital city. Singams, Lingams, Moorthys, Samys amongst others. The Ceylon Moors were well spread, Colombo, Kandy, Jaffna and the Eastern Province. We remember Raheem, Lafir, Mohamed, Mustapha, Ibrahim.

So, the chatter on the station platform was very mixed. English, mostly from the Colombo schools and the Burghers, Sinhala from the very large area of provinces outside Colombo and Tamil from north and east.

Females, jostled with the males, in a way schoolboys and schoolgirls (which they were a few months ago) had not been allowed. They would all be in close residence very soon, after transport from the station, in vans. With the exception that females lived in separate halls, morning to evening they were free to be with males, including evening privacy on the banks of the Mahaweli, and at dusk, parting proximities of “Kissing Bend”. Men together with women hiking up to Hantane in the weekends was another opportunity by which this university helped indicate, conservatively and intelligently, that men and women were meant by nature and civilization to prepare, to mate, in proper time.

Significant on the station that morning was the race or cultural mixing together. Peradeniya was probably the first social formation in Lanka where Sinhalese and Tamils, Ceylon Moors, Malays and Burghers in significant numbers would actually live closely and rub against each other, sharing rooms, dining tables, sport, art, social events and academic discourse. Colombo campus had Sinhalese, Tamils and other minorities, living in small numbers in College House, but that university was largely non-residential. Government departments and commercial firms had both Sinhalese and Tamils and other ethnicities. But no institution in Lanka, before Peradeniya had thousands as one community living, day and night, closely together. Peradeniya especially opened the opportunity for Sinhalese, Tamil, Moors, Burghers, and Malay youth to explore and conclude that they were one humanity.

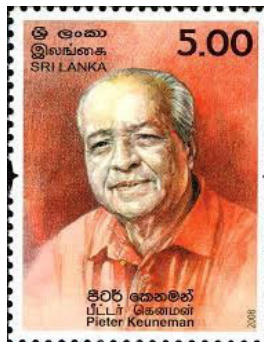
Two other identifiable “cultural” groups, outside of ethnicity, that did not initially mix, that is in the 1950’s, were what students called the “O Facs” and the “Kulturs”. The students of the oriental faculties, largely from rural schools who opted for Pali, Sanskrit, Sinhala apart from Economics and History and the urban school students, mainly Colombo, Kandy, Galle and the like who did English, Latin, Greek, Economics, Western Philosophy and History. It was unfortunate that this unreal social divide very likely created by the cultural snobbery of Colombo school products came into the campus, for it was the “O Facs” who within a year stamped Peradeniya with a cultural creation hallmarking Sri Lankan culture and launching it into South Asian recognition - Ediriweera Sarachchandra's play *Maname*, a Sinhala creation that stands alongside any dramatic work, anywhere. In time this remnant colonial division imperceptibly wore out.

Members of The Orient Club 1907



Burghers of old Ceylon

A Burgher visitor to Peradeniya, Pieter Keuneman, frequently addressed students at campus



This day of Peradeniya also saw the last congregation of Burghers, in significant number, benefiting university contribution to the country. Though it is common to hear of Portuguese Burghers and Dutch Burghers of Ceylon, they are of varied European descent like in the composition of the mixed European De Meuron Regiment first employed by the Dutch, then serving the British

and finally being disbanded in 1816 in Colombo to become part of the population. From that station platform or directly onto the campus that morning, there were names like Ludowyk, Pietresz, Ondaatje, Roosmale- Cocq, Taylor, Hingert, De Zoysa, Elhart, Vander Gert, De Lay, Moldrich, Wouterz, Solomons, Jansen, Roberts, De Saram, Nicole, Scrader, Forbes and Hepponstal. Most were unaware this morning that Peradeniya was to be only a short stopover, on their way to Melbourne. The government’s language policy change, displacing English was a year later. Hepponstal sensed the change. He migrated to Melbourne after only one term in Peradeniya, causing Vander Gert to quip, “What happened to Hepponstal can happen to us all”. And it eventually did. A lost tribe of Lanka. Still identifiable mainly in Melbourne.

Soon the station platform was again empty. Vans, organised by the university transported the freshers to their halls of residence where a small number arriving in their parent’s cars were already establishing themselves.

A wonderful blessing of nature and human architecture was to be theirs for the next three or four years. And no stories of people, can be dislocated from the setting nature and architecture gives it, as sketched in this introduction. Human distress, hopefully from circumstances, as Aristotle may be broadly interpreted, and not from just the nature of humans, have usually been challenged, in imagination, by the hopeful settings nature paradoxically puts them in, as is the story of this university and indeed the story of the Lanka of our times.

(End Introduction.)

Chapters to follow:

1. Room Mates
2. Kulturs and O’Facs
3. Growth of a Tragic Princess
4. Jokers of Peradeniya
5. Things merely Theatrical
6. Ethnic Conflict Brushing Past
7. “Kondu Waada Masalai Waadi”: Bucketting and Ragging
8. Arrack and Ideology
9. 1956, Eventful for Peradeniya
10. Thoughts from ‘58 Riots
11. Death of a Father
12. The Bend: a Memory



A long, long way from the Bagpipes

Somasiri Devendra

Last month, when I began a personal tribute to Barbara Sansoni, recalling how I first met her:

“I was the only unmarried officer, in our ‘ship’ in Diyatalawa – Her Majesty’s Ceylon Ship “*Rangalla*” – living in solitary splendour in the Wardroom (the Officers’ Mess). That made me the official host to visiting dignitaries.....”

I was reminded of meeting, at the very same Wardroom, another cultural icon of the times, Rev.Fr. Marcelline Jayakody OMI.

That Wardroom was, then, a spacious, gracious house, perched on the tip of a spur, looking down on the plain below. The location, silence, peace and tranquility charmed all those who visited us and I was privileged to live there. We were talking, in the verandah, on the first day of his visit: first, about the queer, mundane reason for his visit. Rev. Fr. Jayakody (Alumnus of “*Viswabharati*”, steeped in Bengali lyrical and Catholic choral music, Sinhala culture and Buddhism and welcomed by Sangha and laity alike as “*Pansale Piyathuma*”) was the Master in charge of the Band at St.Peter’s College, Bambalapitiya. The Management had decided that the Band should learn to play the Bagpipes from the Navy Pipe band. And, as the Pipers were at Diyatalawa training Recruits, the boys were sent there to be introduced to the “infernal pipes” and the Master-in-charge was sent in charge of them.

Rev. Fr. Jayakody had no great regard for the scheme. He told me – no, not on that first evening, but later, when we were more comfortable with each other – “What Bagpipes for our boys!? Phillip Gunawardena is right – this is all ‘*Thuppahi* * *Culture!*’” Anyway, that accounted for his presence as our Guest.

Over a few days, we got to know each other and for us to realize that “One common note on either lyre did strike” and long were our talks each evening. So it was Music that we were speaking of: the current state of Sinhala music, and the emerging exotic influences. I knew just enough to keep up with him and he was pleasantly surprised that I had heard of the Viswanath Lowji, the Parsi eminence grise of John de Silva. We talked of Sunil Shantha’s tribute to Radio Ceylon at its Silver Jubilee (“*Ridee seenu handala-la...man-gala geetha gaya..*”); of his own entry for the competition to choose a National Anthem (“*Baethiyena pem pala....Namadimu Lak Matha...*”). He spoke of the influence of Tagore’s Shantinikethan and Bengali melodies on the Sinhala music scene. Thus far, I could keep up with him.

But more gems of new information slipped from his lips.

“Do you know the words of India’s alternate national anthem “*Vande Mataram*?”

“I remember hearing it played by Subash Chandra Bose from Japanese-held Sio-nan during the war, but, no, I don’t know the words.”

“Well...*Namo Namu Matha* is a translation of that. Look,

there is nothing called ‘*Bhakthi*’ in Buddhism, is there? No, because it is connected to the worship of God....But there is ‘*Bhakthi*’ in Hinduism.... in ‘*Vande Mataram*’... and in ‘*Namo Namu Matha*’. This is just one clue”

And so on...

While Sinhala music had been a formative feature of my childhood, I had recently discovered Indian classical music. During one of our more reflective pauses I asked him...

“Father, have you heard the new Indian Classical Music LP put out by HMV?.....”

He is surprised: he had not known.

“.....It’s the first in LP format and has Morning and Evening Ragas. Ustad Ali Akbar Khan on the sarod and Chatur Lal on the tabla, and Yehudi Menuhin introducing Indian Classical Music to the West.”

He is hooked!

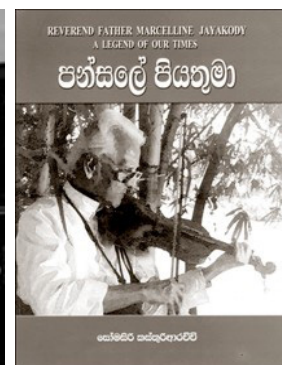
“Would you like to hear it?” ...“What? Now?”...“Yes! Now!”

- and he whispers “Yes!”

So I carefully bring from my cabin my recently bought Hi-Fi player (a table model Pye “Black Box”) to the verandah and we listen together in silence: first to Menuhin’s introduction to the concept and structure of the raga and tala, counting aloud the 14-beat cycle of the tala that was being played. And then we let the magic of the Rag Sindhu Bhairavi on the sarod overwhelm us under the starry sky, a cool breeze swishing through the deodars providing the only accompaniment, for even the cicadas have stilled their stridency, in reverence.

After the performance we sit in silence. And, in the soft voice one speaks when the music dies, he muses:

“....and to think I had to come to Diyatalawa, to a Navy camp, to listen to such heavenly music”.



**Thuppahi* - of mixed ethnic-stock. Colloquial Sinhala for low, inferior, mongrel, pariah.

Two Acclaimed Lawyers from Ceylon who migrated during the days of “White Australia” Immigration Policies

Hugh Karunanayake

The names Leslie de Saram and Aubrey Martensz are not likely to evoke sentiment of any kind from contemporary Sri Lankans. They were two outstanding lawyers who not only dominated legal practice and legal education, but also were very influential members of the profession and of Colombo's social scene. Both de Saram and Martensz were at various times partners of the well-known legal firm FJ and G de Saram, founded by Leslie de Saram's grandfather FJ de Saram Senior, in 1841. FJ de Saram (Snr) was the grandson of Maha Mudaliyar Christoffel de Saram the son of Johan Henriques de Saram who was only 14 years old when taken to England by Governor Maitland, handpicked from among the leading “native” families as suitable for higher studies. That head start created a dynasty of lawyers.

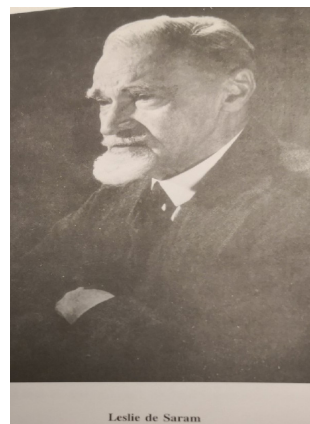
It is widely acknowledged that the transformation of the island's economy from a peasant based subsistence economy to a surplus making plantation economy after the British conquest of Ceylon, was characterised by a massive transfer of ownership of both Crown land and private holdings. Lands were sold to entrepreneurs from Britain who initially planted coffee, and later with tea and rubber. The legal conveyancing which was necessary to establish ownership was dominated by three legal practices viz that of FJ de Saram, VA Julius and FC Loos. All three virtually monopolised the conveyancing associated with the sale of Crown land, as well as commercial properties associated with the plantation sector in Colombo. FJ de Saram later formed a partnership with his relative George de Saram to form the well-known firm of FJ and G de Saram. FC Loos whose son Hermann is best remembered for the Hermann Loos trophy, awarded to the best cadet contingent among competing schools did not perpetuate his legal practice through succeeding generations. VA Julius in association with his partner Harry Creasy formed the redoubtable firm of lawyers Julius and Creasy, which virtually monopolised the legal work of British companies in Ceylon during the 20th century. The partnership created by FJ de Saram (Snr) is now in its 181st year of existence and still in command of extensive legal work from the country's large mercantile sector.

It may be appropriate if we discuss the lives of Leslie de Saram and Aubrey Martensz in relation to their family and its position in Sri Lankan society in order to give a better understanding of their roles in public life. A fact that is hardly remembered today is that the family was dominant in national life from the beginning of the 19th Century when the British took over the administration of the country, continuing well into the 21st century.

The De Saram and Martensz families began their association when FJ de Saram (Snr) commenced work under proctor Andries Martensz on 13 May 1841. Proctor Martensz was the administrator of de Saram's grandfather Maha Mudaliyar Christoffel de

Saram's Estate. De Saram just 19 years of age at the time applied for enrolment as a proctor two years later. The association between the two families became closer when de Saram sought the hand of Martensz's daughter Ann in marriage. The couple married on 12 October 1843, the groom just over 21 years old and the bride over 16 years of age. While the de Sarams considered themselves Sinhalese in ethnicity, Ann Martensz's mother and maternal grandparents were Dutch. The link between the two families bonded by marriage, was to last over 140 years. FJ de Saram's (Snr) marriage to Ann produced 12 sons and daughters. He died at 49 years of age. His son FJ de Saram (Jnr) was only 22 years of age at the time.

The partnership continued with FJ de Saram (Jnr) and his brothers until the entry of Leslie de Saram the eldest son of FJ de Saram Jnr who had two other sons Stanley and Eustace. Eustace died in 1919. Stanley joined the firm and was a partner until he was invited by Leechman and Co to be the Partner on its Board and was its first Ceylonese Chairman. He was appointed Chairman over the heads of many senior British executives who were assured by the departing Chairman that Stanley de Saram's position will enhance both the reputation and the business outreach of the firm. Leslie continued to be the Senior Partner of FJ and G de Saram's, a position he reached in 1918. It has been said that Leslie's father FJ de Saram (Jnr) trebled the volume of business to which he succeeded, and it could be safely concluded that under Leslie's leadership, the business would have even expanded more. Like his grandfather, Leslie married a Martensz; Theodora Martensz who was a first cousin, thus continuing the close links between the de Saram and Martensz families. Three of Theodora's brothers became partners of the firm. Two of them Aubrey and David became Senior Partners.



Leslie de Saram

Leslie was known to be an avid collector of antiquities of which he had amassed a large and unique collection and was on display at his home “*Brentham*” in Cambridge Place. Some of the more notable unique items in his collection included a grandfather clock once owned by a Dutch governor. He also had guns, swords and other implements of warfare used by the last

King of Kandy Sri Wickrama Rajasingha. The clock and his collection of rare books were donated to the newly established Peradeniya University, the Vice Chancellor of which Sir Ivor Jennings had been a

close friend. The clock however came to a sorry end during a student uprising. The students were apparently unaware of the historical significance of the antique clock, or perhaps not bothered about its significance even if they were aware. Another notable donation was his donation of his 35-acre farm at Gurutalawa to St Thomas College. Although Leslie, his, father, grandfather, and great grandfather had all received their education at Royal College, (the school of their fathers who learnt their way before them!) they were all very supportive of the Anglican Church, hence the donation to St Thomas College of which he was a member of the Board of Governors. Another notable donation was the gift of two personal contributions of 5000 British pounds each, to the war effort during World War 2. The gift was made with the request that the source be not revealed but the Governor Sir Andrew Caldecott made a personal request that the gift be given publicly as it would encourage others to follow suit. Philanthropy was nothing new to the de Sarams as FJ de Saram Jnr, Leslie's father had donated the cost of an aircraft to the British war effort in World War 1. Leslie's brother Stanley like Leslie also resided in a large mansion in Cambridge Place called "*The Eyds*". He and his wife Aimee were gracious hosts to Lady Clementine Churchill the wife of Sir Winston Churchill who spent a fortnight's holiday with the de Sarams in January 1956. Clementine was recuperating from an illness and desired to spend some time in Ceylon. The British High Commission in Colombo felt that it would have been good if the visitors were hosted in a private home rather than in an impersonal hotel. They were aware that Stanley de Saram and his wife lived in a splendidly fitted home and served by a dozen domestic staff including a butler, chef and others. At the time social life at the upper end in Colombo was dominated by British expatriates who dominated the Mercantile sector of Ceylon. However, the High Commissioner felt that Stanley de Saram was the best suited and equipped to play hosts to the VIPs and approached the de Sarams who readily agreed. That visit by Lady Clementine Churchill and her cousin and closest friend Sylvia Henley was reciprocated by an invitation to spend a holiday with the Churchills in their home "*Chartwell*" in Kent where the de Sarams enjoyed a memorable holiday a few months later. Both Leslie and Stanley had no children. Leslie however adopted the two children of a sister of his.

A man described as "to the manor born" Leslie chose to spend his retirement in England, but later decided on Australia as he could not withstand the cold winters of England. His home in Cambridge Place, opposite the Colombo Museum was purchased by the Australian Government and served as its High Commission for several decades. Leslie de Saram settled down in Canberra but also had a home in Sevenoaks, Kent, in England where he passed away at the age of 84 in 1961. A great Ceylonese who had played a significant role in the development of the country passed away as quietly as he lived.

J Aubrey Martensz born on 5 September 1885 and educated at Royal College was a Senior Partner of the firm of FJ and G de Saram in 1947 and

1948. He was a close friend of the Prime Minister DS Senanayake who appointed him as Ceylon's first High Commissioner to Australia in July 1948. In April 1947 the First Australian High Commissioner in Ceylon Mr CW Frost cabled to Canberra on the impending appointment of Mr Aubrey Martensz. His cable stated:

Mr Martensz aged 63 is a nominated member of the House of Representatives. He is a Burgher and a prominent Solicitor until he discontinued practice on appointment to Parliament. Of high social standing he is well liked by all communities and all members of Government.



After completing his tenure as High Commissioner, he returned to Ceylon where he was appointed Chairman of the Associated Newspapers of Ceylon Ltd. Mr Martensz was a bachelor and he later migrated to Australia where he lived in Canberra in retirement. He died in March 1963 aged 78 years. In the biographical note which

was maintained by the Australian Government regarding Mr Martensz's ethnic makeup was described as 62 ½% Dutch, 25% Scottish, and 12 ½% Sinhalese.

On looking back at the family structures of the de Sarams and the Martenszs the many intermarriages between the two families suggest that they were from one composite family rather than of two branches. Both Leslie de Saram and Aubrey Martensz were legal professionals who shone in their sphere of work and were elite members of an urbane society dominated by European manners and customs. Their philanthropy, the concern for the less fortunate, and the leadership given to setting the pace for high public standards, integrity in public life, and dedication to the country, are some values sadly lacking in the Sri Lanka of recent times. Their lives however could be hailed as of such quality and standard as could be emulated by contemporary and future Sri Lankans.

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The Ceylon Society
of Australia

The
Ceylankan

CELEBRATING 25 YEARS

100TH ISSUE

From the Beginning Onwards: A History of The Ceylon Society of Australia (CSA)

By Hugh Karunanayake – Founder President of the CSA (1998 to 2004)



EDITOR'S NOTE: This article appeared in *The Ceylankan* November 2007 (J 40 Vol 10 No 4) as part of the 10th anniversary of the CSA. It is re-published, with a few amendments, here with kind permission of the author.

It all started with one man's interest in antiquarian picture postcards of Ceylon. In fact, he owned over 1500 pre-1920s picture postcards – a huge number for a single collector.

The seed which was later to become the Ceylon Society of Australia (CSA) was planted on a wintry evening in 1997 when Dr Chris Puttock (then working in Canberra as a botanist) and his wife Zena were on a weekend visit with Tulsi and me in Sydney. He raised the possibility of getting a group of people together with interest in the cultural heritage of Ceylon/ Sri Lanka. Chris was an ardent "cartophilist" confining his interest exclusively to the collection of antiquarian picture postcards of Ceylon. Though born and raised in Australia, Chris, after a few visits to Sri Lanka was totally enamoured with the country and became an unmitigated "Ceylonophile".

Whenever there was an antiques exhibition or fair in Sydney he would drive over from Canberra, grab us and go in pursuit of whatever was on offer. A drink and dinner usually followed these forays, to which we would invite a few friends with similar interests. On meeting them, Chris realised that there were a few others in this country besides the four of us, who were deeply interested in the heritage of Ceylon/ Sri Lanka. There were those who collected antiquarian books on Ceylon, others who collected art

works by Sri Lankan artists, some were interested in genealogy, still others interested in various aspects of the country and its history. He suggested that we get together of an evening with these friends and discuss the feasibility of forming a regular group. The idea was to meet periodically, discuss matters of scholarly interest and at the same time develop an informal social network.

And so it was, that a Foundation Meeting was called in our home in Sydney on 30 August 1997, at which, Michael (Rohan) Sourjah, Vama Vamadevan, David Goodrich, Chris Puttock, Helen Harrison, Charmaine Vamadevan and Tulsi Karunanayake were present. Dr M B Kappagoda, Dr Srilal Fernando (Melbourne) and Mike Udabage who were in at the beginning were present in spirit. All were keen on the idea of formalising this group into a society or association. Those present agreed to contact other like-minded people and invite them for the next meeting. This was held the following month at the residence of Vama and Charmaine Vamadevan. All those who attended the foundation meeting including those who sent apologies were deemed foundation members. Similar meetings were held in the ensuing months in the homes of Michael (Rohan) Sourjah, Dr M B Kappagoda and David Goodrich. Within six months, interest had grown rapidly, and time was ripe to hold a public meeting. This was held on 28 February



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1998 attended by 31 people. The Foundation Office Bearers were elected at this meeting. They were Hugh Karunanayake (President), Michael (Rohan) Sourjah (Secretary), Vama Vamadevan (Treasurer), David Goodrich (Editor), Brian Parker (Public Relations) and Mike Udabage (Publications Officer). Chis Puttock took up an appointment in Hawaii at this time and was unfortunately not available for election to office. He continued to be a loyal member of the CSA.

David Goodrich, who had a Ceylonese grandmother but never been to Sri Lanka, put up his hand for the Editor's job. He pioneered this magnificently until his untimely death in December 2001. It was he who laid the literary pace and developed the image of *The Ceylankan*. David was able to fulfil his great desire to visit Sri Lanka during the last year of his life. After its early formative years, the Society's structure and image gradually developed to a more or less permanent profile. By the second meeting in 1998 we decided on the name of the Society after many deliberations and much discussion. The decision to call it the Ceylon Society of Australia rather than the Sri Lanka Society of Australia was intentional. Most of us felt that if we called ourselves the Sri Lanka Society there would have been confusion with other active organisations with a similar name. Also, since we were more research and history oriented, especially with much interest in the period of colonial rule in the island, the name of Ceylon seemed more appropriate. We were however not about to jettison completely the nationalistic title of 'Sri Lanka'. David Goodrich suggested the brilliant combination of the words 'Ceylon' and 'Sri Lanka' to make it '*The Ceylankan*', the title of our quarterly journal which has been our standard bearer ever since.

In our early days we were short of funds to finance our activities and took a decision to charge membership fees. For the first couple of years at least, all the expenditure incurred in hiring the hall for meetings, and cost of production of the journal was borne by a few dedicated members of the Committee. The Society set itself targets which were 50 members at the end of the first year, 100 members at the end of the second year, etc all of which were attained and exceeded without much trouble mainly due the interest and enthusiasm created by the journal. The journal was moving across interstate and international frontiers and members from other States as well as from overseas were enrolling in encouraging numbers.

The first 16 issues of *The Ceylankan* were produced by a team comprising David as Editor, who organised all the articles and editorials, and our son Sumal who had the software skills, which we did not, to design and layout the multiple pieces of the original document into print format. The first ten

issues were in fact printed on my office photocopier with paper supplied by the Society. With the expansion of membership, we were soon able to afford the services of a commercial printer. David Goodrich in his farewell editorial in *The Ceylankan* of November 2001 summed up the Society's philosophy when he said that:

"It is important that we maintain the standard of non-confrontational, non-political, non-racial and non-sectarian outlook. Those principles must be maintained."

We have faithfully adhered to these principles and will no doubt continue to do so.

The Committee of Management of the Society has over the years, included many eminent persons who have contributed immensely to the development of the Society. The late Tony Peries steered the activities of the Society most admirably during his tenure as President from 2005 to 2007. Tony Peries was the second President of our Society, bringing with him not only his personal acumen, but also introducing many of his contacts from the corporate world of Sri Lanka where he previously worked with great eminence as the first Ceylonese Chairman of George Steuart and Co. He was followed into the Presidential Chair by Sunil de Silva, former Attorney General of Sri Lanka, and a well known thespian. Sunil was President from 2008 to 2010 providing the Society with outstanding leadership skills. Tragically, Sunil passed away in February 2021. Harry de Sayrah OAM became President from 2011 to 2013, followed by Thiru Arumugam who was President from 2014 to 2017. And finally, in 2018 the Society chose Pauline Gunewardene, the first woman to serve as President of the CSA, who is currently doing a magnificent job steering the Society to new horizons. Other than the foundation members, we had Sumane Iyer who took on the key job of Editor in 2002 in succession to the late David Goodrich. Sumane did a remarkable job until 2009. Doug Jones took over as Editor in 2009, making changes to the style and format of the journal giving it the professional look it has today. Doug gave the journal a trademark, a recognisable face with an insignia and an identity. During his period as Editor the journal became widely read and looked forward to by the members of the CSA. Doug retired from the role in 2021 and was given an Appreciation of Service Award by the Committee at the Annual General Meeting of the Society on 19 December 2021 in recognition of his immense contribution to the Society as Editor of *The Ceylankan*. The current Editor is Adam Raffel. Chris Piachaud, Gerard Velayuthen and Doug Jones all of whom took up the mantle of Hony Secretary; Sumane Iyer, Rienzie Fonseka and Sriskanda Nadarajah who functioned as Hony Treasurer, have all contributed immensely. The Committee itself had the privilege of



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valuable and distinguished service in various capacities, from Mike Udabage, Brian Parker, Dr Robert Sourjah, Dr Srilal Fernando, Chandra Senaratne and Harry de Sayrah OAM. In 2007 Sunil de Silva and Ron Murrell joined the Committee. We also have had members who have contributed in many ways towards our activities by advice and counsel. Names readily come to mind are those of Victor Melder, Joe Simpson from Canada, the late Kingsley Siebel, Rodney St John and Michael Roberts.

Melbourne Chapter

With the growing number of members in Victoria it was time to for a Melbourne Chapter, which was inaugurated with a meeting held on 19 March 2000. Dr Srilal Fernando, current Vice President of the Society and the late Shelagh Goonewardene were the convenors of the Melbourne Chapter. The current convenor is Hemal Gurusinghe. Other contributors to the Chapter were Dilhani Kumbukkage and Victor Melder. The late Darnley de Souza and Rodney St John were stalwarts of the Melbourne Chapter during its early years. This Chapter continues to flourish, drawing members from the sizeable contingent of Sri Lankans resident in Melbourne.

Colombo Chapter

In 2007 with around 30 members on our membership roll in Colombo, a Chapter was inaugurated in June 2007. Mike Udabage, who lives partly in Sri Lanka, was the prime mover. In 2007 the office bearers were: Somasiri Devendra (President), Daya Wickrematunge (Hony Secretary) and Mike Udabage (Hony Treasurer). The opening of the Colombo Chapter heralded a significant watershed in the development of the Society's activities, and we could reasonably expect other national chapters to be established in future years.

The Society was incorporated on 3 October 2001 and now has around 300 active members. Around two thirds are from Australia – with about 100 members from Sydney and Melbourne each and around 50 from other States in Australia. The others are located in the UK, USA, Canada, Belgium, France, Netherlands, Austria, New Zealand, India, Israel and of course, Sri Lanka all aggregating to another 100 members.

On looking back over the work of the past 25 years, it is important to recognise the invaluable contributions from our many learned guest speakers too numerous to single out by name, who have given their time and energy to share their scholarly works and experiences with us. Equally important are the many talented writers who have contributed such excellent articles for *The Ceylankan*, which has made it a unique journal unsurpassed in quality among periodicals of its genre.

The Society has brought together kindred spirits from across the globe, people with diverse backgrounds, outlooks and philosophies of life, but all linked together by a common heritage. As we move towards the future the Society can, with justifiable pride, look back on 25 years of active service which have been received with much enjoyment and gratitude by our members.

The germ of an idea originated by one man's interest in antiquarian postcards of Ceylon being the little acorn, found fertile ground and continued to grow to a robust Society of likeminded people in exploring and recording their immediate past.

The Ceylon Society of Australia 25th Anniversary Celebrations

By Adam Raffel

The Ceylon Society of Australia (CSA) held its 25th Anniversary celebrations on 28 August 2022 at the Pennant Hills Community Centre. The hall was decorated with balloons and banners celebrating 25 years of the CSA. All this was the tireless handiwork of Pauline Gunewardene, the President of the CSA, with the able assistance of all members of the CSA Committee.

There were approximately 80 people in attendance. Pauline presided over the formal proceedings. She highlighted the achievements of the CSA during its 25-year existence, acknowledging the contributions of all former CSA Presidents. A special mention was made of dearly departed CSA Past Presidents Tony Peries and Sunil de Silva, who served the Society with distinction and affectionately remembered by all attendees. Pauline, then, outlined the program for the evening and introduced each speaker. The evening commenced with a video presentation given by Hugh Karunanayake, the Founder President of the CSA, who was unable to attend. There was a photo of him on screen with caption of name and dates of service and a very enjoyable YouTube interview by Hugh's grandson prompting his grandfather to give a potted history of the early days of the CSA, replete with tales of the foundation members. Most importantly, Hugh mentioned the original purpose of the Society as a vehicle to disseminate and share information about the people, culture, history, and heritage of Ceylon. Harry de Sayrah OAM, as next senior former President, addressed the audience giving his recollections and memories of his time presiding over the CSA, followed by Thiru Arumugam another senior former President, who also shared his experiences with everyone. Thiru is a regular and prolific contributor to *The Ceylankan* sharing with the readers his considerable wealth of knowledge of a wide range of



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subjects from ancient temple architecture to radio and hydro engineering! Michael (Rohan) Sourjah, Founder Secretary of the CSA, addressed the gathering thanking everyone for keeping alive the ideals of the original founding members of the Society. Sumane Iyer, a former Editor of *The Ceylankan* was to address the gathering, but due to a sudden misadventure Sumane couldn't attend and Pauline read out his speech to the audience. Hyacinth Jones, the wife of previous Editor Doug Jones, read out Doug's speech for the occasion recalling 12 productive years as Editor of *The Ceylankan*. Unfortunately, Doug also could not make it to the function due to ill health. One of the highlights of the evening was the cutting of the 25th Anniversary Cake, superbly made and decorated by Rosani Wahab – a magnificent work of art and a feast for the palate! Past Presidents, Harry de Sayrah OAM and Thiru Arumugam did the cake cutting honours. Everyone charged their glasses with wine, sparkling wine and soft drinks, and toasted the CSA for achieving the milestone of 25 years and for 25 more to come! Once the formalities were complete everyone mingled and socialized; nibbling on tasty short eats, catered by Joyce Weinman, washed down with wine and soft drinks, generously donated by Amal Wahab. It was a joyful evening and a fitting tribute to the Silver Jubilee of the Ceylon Society of Australia thanks to the efforts of Pauline Gunewardene and the CSA Committee.

Photos thanks to Senanie De Silva, Earlsan Forbes and Nihal Dias



Cutting the Cake! Past Presidents Harry de Sayrah OAM and Thiru Arumugam applauded by current President Pauline Gunewardene



Pauline Gunewardene paying tribute to Founder President Hugh Karunanayake. From left to right - Harry de Sayrah OAM, Thiru Arumugam, Hyacinth Jones and Sunimal Fernando





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Past President Harry de Sayrah OAM addressing the attendees. Watched on by Thiru Arumugam and Pauline Gunewardene



Michael Sourjah

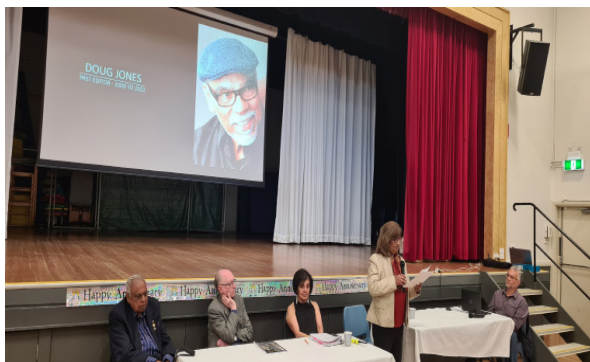
Rosani Wahab and friends



From left to Right - Standing Earlson Forbes, Sunimal Fernando and Amal Wahab. Seated - Adam Raffel and Deepak Pritamdas



Hyacinth Jones reading out speech by Past Editor Doug Jones



Guests at the Function





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PRESIDENTS OF THE CSA



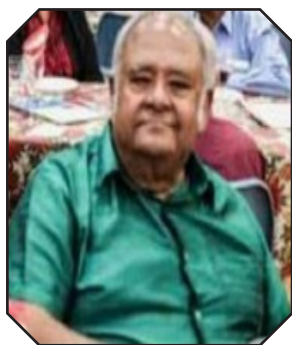
Hugh Karunanayake - Founder President - 1998 - 2004

Under Hugh's Presidency the Society's structure and image gradually developed to a more or less permanent profile. The decision to call it the Ceylon Society of Australia rather than the Sri Lanka Society of Australia was intentional. Most of the Committee felt that if the Society called itself the Sri Lanka Society there would have been confusion with other active organisations with a similar name. Also, since the Society was more research and history oriented, especially with much interest in the period of colonial rule in the island, the name of Ceylon seemed more appropriate.



Tony Peries - Past President - 2005 - 2007

The second President of our Society, bringing with him not only his personal acumen, but also introducing many of his contacts from the corporate world of Sri Lanka where he previously worked with great eminence as the first Ceylonese Chairman of George Steuart and Co. Tony passed away in 2007.



Sunil de Silva - Past President - 2008 - 2010

Former Attorney General of Sri Lanka, and a well known thespian. Sunil provided the Society with outstanding leadership and legal skills formalising the structure of the Society. Sunil passed away in February 2021.



Harry de Sayrah OAM - Past President - 2011 - 2013

A proud recipient of the Order of Australia Medal Harry introduced new blood to the Committee by sponsoring Doug Jones who later became Editor and inviting Sunimal Fernando to join a vacant position in the Committee and his promotion as Secretary.



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PRESIDENTS OF THE CSA



Thiru Arumugam - Immediate Past President - 2014 - 2017

Thiru continued running CSA along the lines set by his predecessor Presidents. A highlight of his Presidency was his talk and screening of the film *The Song of Ceylon* directed by Basil Wright, which won the Best Film of the Year award at the Brussels International Film Festival in 1935.



Pauline Gunewardene - Current President - 2018 to the present

The first woman to serve as President of the CSA. Pauline Gunewardene is currently doing a sterling job guiding the Society to new horizons! Pauline's mission on taking up the Presidency was to revitalise the CSA with a strong membership drive and introducing a more proactive profile in the meetings to develop interest in the Society. She has also had to bring in four new replacement Committee members during her tenure, including recruiting Adam Raffel in 2021 to the important role of new Editor when Doug Jones stepped down after twelve years due to ill health.

CSA GATHERINGS OF YESTERYEAR! circa 1998-2000

Former Editor Sumane Iyer (bottom right), next to Sumane is P de Sylva, MS Perera & Mrs Perera



Second President of CSA Tony Peries and first Public Relations Officer Brian Parker



Second from right is Rex Olagasegeram and next to him is his wife late Navaranjini



From left, Brian Parker, late Dr Robert Sourjah, late Tony and late Srin Peries

Thanks to Hugh Karunanayake
for supplying these photos!



As a sequel to my article “*What’s in a name - Place names in the precincts of Wattala*” which appeared as “*Place names in the precincts of Wattala*” in *The Ceylankan* of November 2021 (J 96 Vol 24 No 4) and as Parts 1 and 2 in the *Ceylon Today* of Sunday 31st Oct and 7th Nov 2022, after further research, I found some more place names which would be of interest to our readers.

MABOLE

The name Mabile, which is a village bordering the main Negombo road in Wattala is associated with four countries viz: Sri Lanka, Portugal, Holland, and Britain. According to Fredrick Medis a historian, King Rajasingha II who used the aid of the Dutch to get rid of the Portuguese had a small section of the army – amounting up to about 100 men – who were Lankan nationals. These people were all recruited by one man. So, as a mark of gratitude to him, the King gifted him a large tract of land in Wattala. This area came to be called “*Maha Budale*”. (“*Boedel*” which means “inheritance”, “estate” in Dutch. This word is now part of the Sinhala vocabulary). The “d” sound in Budale is pronounced as a cerebral “d”, making a strong “th” sound. However, the Portuguese were only able to pronounce it as an “r”. Hence, it became “*Maha Borale*” which the British later shortened to “*Mabile*” (Ref: 1).

WATTALA

According to an academic who wishes to remain anonymous who quoted from publications from the Central Cultural Fund on the Gampaha District, the name Wattala is said to be a corruption of the word “*Wastrala*” which means clothing in both Sinhala and Sanskrit. Apparently, the warrior King Dutugemunu who reigned from 161 BC to 137 BC and who is renowned for re-uniting the whole island of Sri Lanka by defeating and overthrowing Elara, the usurping Tamil king from the Indian Chola kingdom who had invaded Anuradhapura, is said to have hidden his royal clothing here and hence the name *Wattala*. This is possible since King Dutugemunu’s mother was Vihara Maha Devi, whose father was King Kelani Tissa of Kelaniya which is close to Wattala. Even though Dutugemunu was from the Kingdom of Ruhuna (Down South) ruled by his father King Kavan Tissa, he may have had interactions with his grand-father’s kingdom from time to time.

ST. SEBASTIAN MAWATHA



Saint Sebastian (in Latin: *Sebastianus*; c.AD 256 – 288) was an early Christian saint and martyr. He was a Captain of the Praetorian guard, Roman soldier and healer. According to traditional belief, he was killed during the Diocletian persecution of Christians. He was initially tied to a tree and shot with

arrows, though this did not kill him. He was, according to tradition, rescued and healed by Saint Irene of Rome, which became a popular subject in 17th-century paintings. In all versions of the story, shortly after his recovery he went to Diocletian to warn him about his sins, and as a result was clubbed to death. He is venerated in the both the Catholic and Orthodox churches.

The oldest record of the details of Sebastian's martyrdom is found in the *Chronograph* of 354, which mentions him as a martyr, venerated on January 20. He is also mentioned in a sermon on Psalm 118 by 4th-century bishop Ambrose of Milan (Saint Ambrose). In his sermon, Ambrose stated that Sebastian came from Milan, Italy and that he was already venerated there at that time.

Saint Sebastian is a popular male saint, especially today among athletes and was regarded as a saint with a special ability to intercede to protect from plagues and pestilences.

In Sri Lanka especially along the coastal areas, St. Sebastian is venerated as a patron saint amongst the Roman Catholics, and in every year in a certain month the statue of St. Sebastian is taken in procession along the streets. In the Wattala area alone there must be more than 10 “St. Sebastian Lanes or Mawathas” to honor this saint, and the many statues erected at intersections is an indication of the popularity of this saint amongst the Catholics of the area. (Ref: 2)

I interviewed Rajapakse Pathiranalage Alfred fondly referred to as “Alfred Mudalali” from Pokuna Junction, Kerawalapitiya, who is a long-time resident of Wattala. He earlier ran a grocery store and is now retired. In his mid-80’s Alfred Mudalali is a knowledgeable guy on the folklore of the area and gave me some insights into the place names of the roads, mentioned below.

SRI WICKRAMA MAWATHA

This road which is opposite Averiyawatte Road is in the popular “market junction” of Wattala, bordering “Thilakawardena Cellular Centre/HSBC” on the Negombo Road. This area is also identified as the “Gemunu Palace” bus stand because of the Gemunu Cinema.



King Sri Wickrama Rajasinghe (born 1780 in Madurai, Tamil Nadu, India – died 30th Jan 1832 at age 52 at the Vellore Fort in India) was born as Kannasamy Nayaka and was the last of the four Nayakkar (*Waduge*) kings to rule the Kingdom of Kandy in Sri Lanka. Even though the Nayakkar kings were of Telugu origin who practiced

Shaivite Hinduism, they were patrons of Theravada Buddhism, and played a significant role in reviving Buddhism in Sri Lanka. The Nayakkar rulers spoke Telugu or Tamil which was the court language of the Kandyan kingdom, alongside Sinhala.



King Sri Wickrama Rajasinghe (pictured left) is primarily known for constructing the picturesque Kandy Lake (Sinhala – *Kiri Muhuda*) and building the “*Walakulu Bemma*” or parapet wall around it. The land adjoining the palace was previously a vast stretch of paddy fields and marsh before it was converted into a lake. The

reason for naming this water body as *Kiri Muhuda* was due to the profuse number of turtles (Sinhala – *Kiri Ibbo*) in the lake. The *Paththiripuwa* or Octagon of the sacred Temple of the Tooth, which is an architectural marvel, was commissioned by King Sri Wickrama and built in 1802 by Devendra, the *Mulachariya* (the Master Craftsman and Royal Architect) who was instrumental in designing and building both the lake and the parapet wall as well. The King and the Master Craftsman were very close, and this made many of the *Nilames* jealous. Gradually the *Nilames* were able to poison the mind of the King by carrying false tales, so much so that in a moment of rage the King threatened to cut-off the fingers of the Royal Architect. These words saddened the *Mualchariya* so much that he is said to have committed suicide by drowning in the very lake he built.

King Sri Wickrama was subsequently captured and deposed by the British under the terms of the Kandyan Convention in 1815, ending over 2300 years of domination by the Sinhalese Crown. Ceylon was then incorporated as a part of the British Empire, and Sri Wickrama was succeeded by King George III of Great Britain.

When the captured King, his two queens and the Queen Mother were brought by horse-drawn carriage from Kandy under heavy armed escort to Colombo, to be banished to the Vellore Fort in Southern India, the route taken was from market junction in Wattala to the ferry (*Thotupola*) on the Kelani River. They were then ferried across to the opposite bank which was Mattakuliya and thence to Colombo by carriage.

Earlier, this roadway was known as “Galwetiya Road, due to the presence of the “Galwetiya Buddhist temple”. However, after the late Kandyan King used this road to be transported to Colombo, this road came to be known as “Sri Wickrama Mawatha”. According to Alfred Mudalali, the original location of the ferry crossing was at this point down Sri Wickrama Mawatha, and not at Grandpass on the site of the former Victoria Bridge. Prior to the construction of the Victoria Bridge, that site was the location of the “Bridge of Boats” constructed by the British colonialists.

The present bridge which replaced the old iron Victoria Bridge is now known as the “Lanka Japan Friendship Bridge”. This was a gift from the people of Japan to the people of Sri Lanka. (Ref: 3)

WELIAMUNA ROAD, HENDALA



This road used to get inundated with water after heavy rains. Since this was an undulating road, pockets of river sand used to get collected in the paddy fields and low-lying areas of this road and subsequently the villages named this road as “*Weliamuna Road*” “*Wel*” meaning sand and “*Amuna*”, the gap in the bund to allow water to flow.

MATTAKULIYA



The neighbouring village to Elakanda, once you cross the bridge over the Kelani River is Mattakuliya. In days gone by during the time of the British Raj, a well-built thug used to rape numerous women of the area. According to folklore, he was caught on an occasion by the

Police and produced before the Magistrate who was an Englishman. When the Magistrate asked the wronged woman kindly as to “where she lived” in English, she presumed that the Magistrate was asking about the incident and pointing her finger at the rapist said “*Mu Mata Keliya*”. Accordingly, the Magistrate wrote “*Matakeliya*” as her place of residence. In the space of time according to legend, “*Matakeliya*” became “*Mattakuliya*”.

JAMBURE KUMUBURA MAWATHA



This road is in a by-lane of Kerawalapitiya Road near the entrance to the Outer Circular Highway. Originally this lane ended in a particular area of the Muthurajawela Marsh which was a flooded low-lying land waterlogged at all times.

This particular area had a very deep peat bog with floating vegetation on top and was a dangerous place for humans and animals especially cattle who would “disappear” if they ventured into this place.

This entire area has now been reclaimed by the Sri Lanka Land Reclamation and Development Corporation (SLLRDC) when they gave a contract to a Scandinavian company to reclaim thousands of acres of the Muthurajawela marsh for development into an industrial zone, by pumping sea sand.

ELAKANDA

Elakanda is a sleepy fishing village on the banks of the Hamilton Canal. This canal also commonly known as the Dutch Canal is a 14.5 km long canal connecting Puttalam to Colombo, passing through Negombo, built by the British. Fishing boats can be seen moored on both sides of the canal at all times of the day.

When excavations to construct the canal which is connected to the Kelani River began in 1802, the excavated earth was thrown on to the sides which created a mound, which also became a roadway. This area close to the Kelani river mouth then came to be known as Elakanda, i.e. *Ela* (Sinhala – canal) and *Kanda* (mound or hill).

There are also many roads and byways with interesting names and associated folklore, but unfortunately, I am reluctant to highlight them due to its association with people of various castes which primarily includes an occupation such as *Kumbal* (Potters), *Radaa/Dhoby* (washerwoman), *Nakethiya/Berava* (drummers) etc. According to the caste system in Sri Lanka, there are about 15 hierarchical main castes and several sub castes from the ruling *Radala* (nobility) to the lowest which is the *Rodi* (scavenger) caste. (Ref:4) However, the caste system in Sri Lanka is not so rigid when compared to India. Caste is still a somewhat sensitive subject amongst the Sinhalese and Tamil communities, especially when it comes to marriage.

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High Achievers of Post Independent Sri Lanka

Srikantha Nadarajah

Despite the recent downturn in Sri Lanka, there has been much progress in the post- independence period in various sectors, as well as outstanding personalities in various fields of activity.

In the medical profession there were outstanding surgeons like Dr P R Anthonis, Noel Bartholomeusz and Cabral. Professor Siri Kannangara is a world-famous rheumatologist practicing in Australia, including consultant to Olympic and World Cup teams. He was professor of Medicine, University of Sydney, and was awarded the Order of Australia for his contribution to medicine. Professor David de Kretser had an outstanding career in medical research in Australia. He was an infertility specialist. He was foundation director of Monash Institute of Medical Research and Associate Dean of the Faculty of Medicine. He was appointed Governor of Victoria in

2006 and awarded the highest honour Companion of the Order of Australia. Professor Raina Macintyre is a leading authority on infectious disease management in Australia. Prof. Earle De Fonseka was Professor of Public Health University of Ceylon and was also in the forefront of humanitarian work during a difficult period. He was also Conductor of the Colombo Symphony Orchestra. Nihal Fernandopulle was outstanding as Head of Audit, Reserve Bank of Australia and Consultant to World Bank and ADB. Shemara Wickramanayake is in the forefront of Investment Banking in Australia as Managing Director, Macquarie Bank.

In the legal profession Professor Christopher Weeramantry was Professor of Law at Monash University and Judge of the International Court of Justice. Dr Wickrama Weerasooriya was Associate Professor of Law at Monash University and an authority on Law of Banking in Australia. Professor Nadarajah was Dean of the faculty of Law at University of Ceylon and a world authority on Roman Dutch Law. H N G Fernando and his son Mark were outstanding Judges of the Supreme Court of Sri Lanka. Sriyan de Silva was the foremost authority on Industrial Law in Sri Lanka. Foremost among legal practitioners in Sri Lanka were H V Perera G G Ponnambalam, P Navaratnarajah, Colvin R De Silva and Sam Kadirgamar. Faiz Mustafa is a more recent lawyer who is highly regarded. ‘Bunty’ Soysa was an outstanding prosecutor. Neelan Thiruchelvam was a leading authority on Constitutional Law. Colvin R De Silva was also a historian, well recognised for his work on the British period.

In the academic field there were Professors G C Mendis, K M de Silva and Sirima Kiribamune in Ceylon History, Sinappah Arasaratnam was outstanding in Sri Lanka and Australia in teaching European History. Senarath Paranavitana, Karthigesu Indrapala supported by Sudarshan Senaratne, Arjun Gunaratne and Sriyan Deraniyagala in Archaeology. George Thampillai was an outstanding lecturer in Climatology and Professor Sirinanda in Geography. Prof. Ediriweera Sarachchandra was outstanding lecturer in Sinhalese, especially introducing stylised drama. Martin Wickremasinghe was outstanding in Sinhalese literature, and Gunadasa Amarasekara was also well recognised in the same field. Profs. G P Malalasekera and Methananda were well recognised for oriental studies. Professor Stanley Thambiah and Gananath Obeyesekere were well recognised in the field of anthropology. Ernest Macintyre was in the forefront of English theatre in Sri Lanka and Australia. Among the leading academics in Australia were Yasmine Gooneratne - Professor of English, Macquarie University, world authority on Jane Austen; Laksiri Jayasuriya - Professor of Social Studies, University of Western Australia; Premachandra Atukorale - Professor of Economics, ANU, Consultant to World Bank and ADB; Michael Roberts in Anthropology, University of Adelaide, and with Percy Collin Thomé author of a landmark publication on the Burgher community of Sri Lanka.

Cyril Ponnampereuma and Chandra Wickremasinghe were leading scientists in the USA. Ponnampereuma is a world authority on chemical evolution and origin of life. Chandra Wickremasinghe is a world authority on astrobiology. Professor Sivanandan in the USA is a world authority on Environmental Science. Lakshman Guruswamy was Professor of Environmental Law at Colorado University. Dr Sandy Warren was a leading paediatric neurologist attached to Rutgers Hospital, New Jersey. No doubt there were several

outstanding Sri Lankan medical practitioners in USA and Europe. Jayantha Dhanapala and Kanni Wignaraja were leaders in disarmament and development in the United Nations.

In the field of education Fr. Peter Pillai was outstanding as Rector of St Joseph's College, Colombo, as well as founder of Aquinas University College, first of its kind for tertiary studies. R L Hayman of St. Thomas's Gurutalawa and Canon R S De Saram of St Thomas's were also outstanding as school principals.

In arts and culture, Lester James Peris and D B Nihalsinghe were in the forefront of revival of Sinhala film industry, which was previously generated from South India.

Chitrasena's school of oriental dancing, supported by Vajira and Upekha reached a high standard and was popular locally and overseas. Bharatha Natyam was popularised by the Kalalaya school of dancing in Colombo.

Walpola Rahula Narada and Piyadassi Thera were in the forefront of teaching Theravada Buddhism. Ramakrishna Mission and Chinmaya Mission gave education for Vedanta in Hinduism.

Navaranjini Olegasegaram and Sunethra Nadarajah were outstanding teachers and performers of western music in Sri Lanka and Australia. Michelle de Kretser was an outstanding writer and novelist and received several awards in Australia, including the Miles Franklin on 3 occasions.

In the banking sector, C Loganathan as the first General Manager of Bank of Ceylon, helped to build up the bank with over 500 branches, to make it the leading retail bank in the country. M Dharmarajah was outstanding as founder General Manager of Hatton National Bank, and generated business to make it the leading local bank for commercial & corporate business. Kumar Abeynayake was outstanding as the first General Manager of Sampath Bank, winning international awards.

While there may be several other high achievers of Sri Lankan origin, lack of space does not permit them to be included, but special mention needs to be made of Sri Lanka's world-famous architect Geoffrey Bawa, which needs a separate column on its own! Also, a brief acknowledgement needs to be made of Suhanya Raffel currently Executive Director of M+ Museum of Contemporary Art in Hong Kong and Rev Kanishka Raffel currently the Anglican Archbishop of Sydney.

Sinhala replaced English as the national language from 1956, which together with onset of Swabasha education in local languages created considerable political and social unrest. In respect of system of government, parliamentary system of Westminster model with Executive under a Cabinet of Ministers since independence was replaced by a Republican system with unlimited powers to Parliament including control of Judiciary. The Constitution of 1978 introduced the Executive Presidential system with concentration of power in an elected President. Indo Lanka Accord of 1987 provided limited autonomy to the provinces and made Tamil a national language.

In respect of the economy, there were wide fluctuations over a long period of time which had the effect of major downturns and recovery. Due to a decline in external assets, the government introduced a controlled economy from 1960 to 1976 with stringent

restrictions on imports and foreign exchange, which proved counter-productive for recovery due to a loss of confidence in the business sector during this period. Nationalisation of tea plantations under state ownership was a major setback for this sector. Complete liberalisation of the economy from 1977 with change of government resulted in a rapid recovery. Establishment of an export processing zone in Katunayake with access to foreign ownership, generous tax concessions and access to foreign exchange, resulted in a rapid expansion of industries, especially manufacture of garments. A climate of confidence boosted tourism and increased foreign remittances. Sadly, onset of the civil war due to an unresolved ethnic problem from 1983, together with insurgencies in the south resulted in another downturn in the economy until about 1989. There was a second wave of liberalisation from 1989 to 1993 with a temporary resolution to the ethnic problem in the north and end to insurgencies in the south under President Premadasa. There was further incentives for liberalisation, with concessions for import on tariffs, taxation and devaluation of the Rupee as well as garment manufacture outside the Free Trade Zone. By 1992 the garment industry became the largest exporter, overtaking tea. Share of manufactured exports grew from 5 % in 1977 to 70 % by 1995. Brandix and MAS Holdings are largest manufacturers and exporters of garments, covering over 70% of total production and exports.

In the field of tourism there was rapid growth in the industry after liberalisation from 1977, subject to downturns in the country as discussed. Foremost among the Corporates was John Keels, which was a market leader in tours through Walker Tours, hotels both in Colombo and outstations. Mark Bostock and Ken Balendra as CEOs were an outstanding success in facilitating growth of the business as one of the leading corporates in the country. Aitken Spence under the leadership of Ratna Sivaratnam was also in the forefront of the industry especially as a tour operator.

This period saw an upgrading of plantation industries, such as introduction of tea bags by Dilmah under Merrill J Fernando, to offset increased competition by Kenya, while bulk tea remains a major export. In rubber, Sri Lanka became the largest exporter of solid tyres in the world with Belgian collaboration, and a major exporter of rubber gloves. Hayley's under Chairmanship of Dhammika Perera became the world's leading exporter of coconut fibre products, as well as a major manufacturer of fabrics for the garment industry, and world's leading exporter of coconut shell activated carbon products

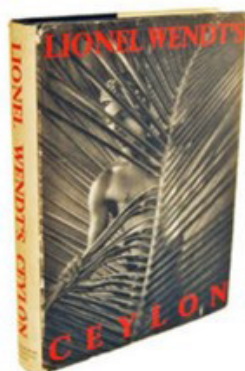
The Mahaweli Development scheme, starting from early '80s with foreign collaboration was the major project of its kind in modern times and generated substantial irrigation and hydro- electricity which was a major achievement for development.

Some history of an Australian family in colonial Ceylon

Bill Mackie*

Mackie family and the tea industry in Ceylon

* Bill Mackie was a CSA member and his articles have been previously published in *The Ceylankan* and he has made a presentation to the Melbourne Chapter on Lionel Wendt and the Forbes family.



I have two books that depict Ceylon/Sri Lanka in two different periods and from different aspects; they inspire me to discuss my family's connection and my birth in Ceylon. The first has a title pointing to the fascinating environment in which my parents lived early in the twentieth century. Both books show the multicultural nature of Ceylon's society that began centuries before that of Australia, and they

display the island's beauty and interesting features. The second book also induces me to chat about my family's contact with Lionel Wendt and his music and photography.

My family had two generations working in the tea industry. My story starts in about 1876, when my grandfather Copland Mackie joined the tea trade in Glasgow, Scotland, and ends when the last of our family connections left Ceylon in 1959. It makes me ponder on some social conditions prevailing in the British colonial period during the first half of the twentieth century and the changes since the country became a republic in 1972.

Three Mackie Generations in Ceylon

1. Copland Mackie

- 1860 Born at Fort Hare, South Africa, when the regiment of his father, Quartermaster William Mackie, was fighting in the 3rd Kaffir War in South Africa.
- 1871-1875 At George Watsons College in Edinburgh, Scotland.
- 1876-1885 Started work in the tea trade in Glasgow.

- 1886 Emigrated to Melbourne. Set up business as Copland Mackie & Co., tea brokers.
- 1892-1893 The severe recession and crash of many banks in Melbourne eventually forced Copland to merge his business with Fraser, Ramsay & Co., tea brokers. Melbourne.
- 1893 Copland married Mary Beatrice Walsh of Melbourne; lived in Caulfield area.
- 1909 Copland was moved to Colombo to manage Eastern Export Co., a subsidiary of Fraser, Ramsay & Co. which later merged with Harrisons & Crosfield to form Harrisons, Ramsay & Co.
- 1919-1921 Copland was sent to Harrisons office in Wellington, NZ. He retired in late 1921 and died in Melbourne in December 1921. His widow returned to her family in Ceylon and later to Mackie relatives in Scotland.

2.1 William Copland Mackie (Bill)

- 1894 Born in Melbourne. At school until end of 1911.
- 1912 Travelled to Ceylon in 1912; worked as an SD (assistant manager) on Waldemar tea estate, Udapussellawa. Was a keen sportsman as a member of Colombo Hockey & Football Club he gained the high jump record for Ceylon in 1913.
- 1912-1917 When working on tea estates he joined Ceylon Planters Rifle Corps.
- 1917 Travelled to England. Joined RAF and trained unsuccessfully to be a pilot; then joined an infantry regiment as an officer but was discharged due to chronic bronchitis and returned to Ceylon in 1918.
- 1918-1921 Worked as an SD on Hingurugama Estate near Badulla. In March 1921 at Nuwara Eliya he married Eileen Bates of Melbourne. In November 1921, just before lunchtime on a Sunday, a car with the Colombo agent and a director of the company owning the estate arrived at the Mackie bungalow without prior warning. On finding Bill Mackie having a glass of beer before lunch the company's director sacked Bill immediately on the spot! Bill remained at Hingurugama until a replacement arrived in early 1922.

1922-1927 In January 1922 their son William Bruce Copland Mackie (Bill Jr.) was born in Nuwara Eliya. Bill Mackie joined the Galaha Ceylon Tea Estates & Agency Co. Until the start of 1927 the family lived at its Dunally Estate, Galaha, where Bill was manager; all tea produced was delivered to the Galaha factory. In 1927 he was PD and manager of the Galaha Estate and factory, so the family resided in the manager's bungalow. A second son James Austin Copland Mackie (Jim and later Jamie) was born in Kandy in September 1924. Because of the prevailing British belief that 7–15-year-old children born in the tropics could not survive the cold winters of Britain or southern Australia these kids were sent off to boarding school or relatives in the home countries, so the Mackie family arranged in 1926 to move permanently back to Victoria in late 1927.

1928 Bill Mackie and family moved to a farm in northern Victoria.

Copland's two daughters

2.2 Beatrice Marjorie Mackie (Marjorie)

1895 Born Melbourne. At school in Toorak until end 1912.

1912 Moved to parents' home in Colombo.

1914 Moved to Edinburgh. Served in nursing service during WW1. Her fiancé was killed in action. In 1918 she returned to Ceylon. In 1919 she married Ernest Napper, PD of Glentilt Estate, Maskeliya. They had a daughter and a son, both at boarding schools in England. They retired to England in 1945.

1970 Died in Exeter.

2.3 Gladys Irene Mackie (Gladys)

1897 Born Melbourne. At school in Toorak until end 1912.

1912 Moved to parents' home in Colombo.

1914 Moved to Edinburgh, where she studied piano and singing for 4 years, and played professional accompanying in concerts. Married Oswald Boyd Forbes (Ossie) in Edinburgh in November 1919, then returned with him to Colombo. She taught piano and singing and played in concerts. From 1921 to 1931 she accompanied visiting international musicians in concerts in Colombo and Kandy. She was keen on tennis and golf, winning in 1936 the Ladies Golf Championship of Ceylon.

1931 Commenced playing music for two pianos in concerts with Lionel Wendt. More about Gladys and Lionel Wendt later.

1959 Moved with husband Ossie to London.

1978 Died in London.

Colombo Hockey & Football Club Sports 1913
New Ceylon record for High Jump set by William C. Mackie at 5 ft. 6½ in. (In 1927 Ceylon student Carl van Geyzel at Cambridge University cleared 6 ft. 2½ inches)



Grandstand with spectators



Copland and Mary Mackie with daughters and friends, Colombo, Ceylon 1913

L-R, standing: Copland Mackie, Mary Mackie, Eileen Wingrove (on holiday from Melbourne), Marjorie Mackie, others in row not identified.

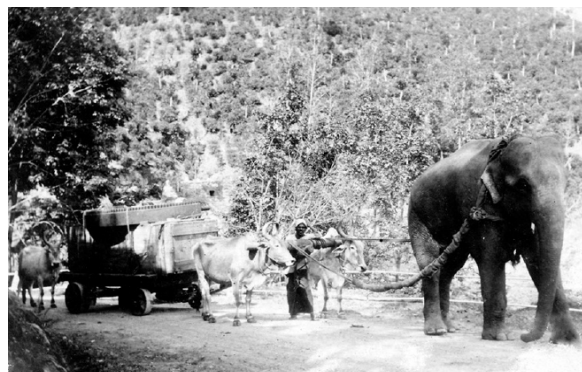
sitting: Gladys Mackie and two unidentified friends.



Heywood the Colombo home of Copland and Mary Mackie and family, with Marjorie and Gladys relaxing downstairs. This building in Horton Place is now occupied by the University of Visual and Performing Arts.



In about 1913 local personal transport was mainly by a gig and horse, or by rickshaw, for family members.



Heavy haulage of tea factory equipment by elephant.

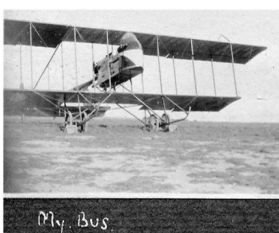


Photo in Bill's album of his aircraft when training with RAF in 1917



Marjorie and Bill Mackie in uniform in 1917

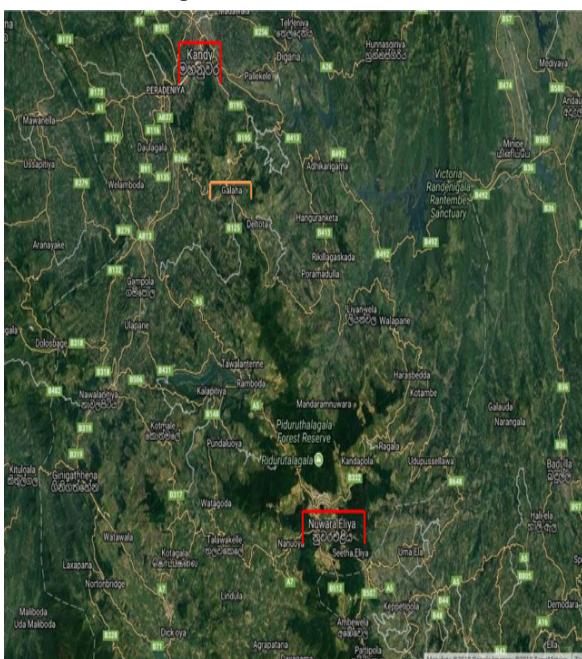


Photo in Bill Mackie's album of his aircraft when training with RAF in 1917. Marjorie and Bill Mackie in uniform in 1917.

View of Galaha Factory in 1982 when it was state-owned after nationalisation by the Government in 1975. In the brown areas behind the factory the tea plantings had been destroyed by tea blister blight and, following the change to state ownership, arrangements were made to establish small holdings on former plantation land and the production of silk by silkworms in part of the tea factory. The twin peaks mountain officially bears the name Dethanagala but has other names as well.



Satellite view of part of Central Province, Sri Lanka



A Land Reform Commission office occupied part of the Galaha Factory site in 1982. The Commission was established in 1972 to implement the regulation of ownership of agricultural land under Land Reform Acts passed by the Bandaranaike socialist government. In 1975 large foreign-owned plantations were nationalised, including the Galaha Group. This action effected many changes in the management of the tea plantation enterprises.



View of Galaha factory from Manager's residence in 1982. In the top floor of the factory the former racks for wilting freshly picked tea were converted to racks carrying silkworms for silk production.



Silkworms were maintained for silk production on the former leaf wilting racks on the top floor of Galaha Factory in 1982.



Kath and Bill Mackie with Doraiswamy and two members of Galaha Factory staff in 1982. Doraiswamy was secretary/shorthand typist for my father Bill Mackie in 1927.



Inside the factory's entrance was a notice installed in 1980 to celebrate the centenary of the factory's construction. This claim as 'The first tea factory in the island' is difficult to reconcile with the history of Loolecondera Tea Estate, where in 1867 James Taylor began to replace a coffee plantation with tea plants and to develop a facility for processing the leaf into a saleable product.



James Taylor, regarded as the founder of Ceylon's tea industry, arrived in about 1852 at Loolecondera, then a coffee plantation where he became manager by 1857. With coffee-rust fungus killing off most coffee plantations Taylor planted his first area of tea in 1867, then making his first saleable tea on his bungalow veranda. It is not clear in the literature when and where the first factory was built. See below satellite image of location of Galaha and Loolecondera Estates.



Before nationalisation of foreign-owned tea estates the Galaha bungalow had an attractive garden, as in this 1959 image. During Mackie's sojourn there was a nice lily pond and a nearby tennis court.



Galaha manager's bungalow and garden in 1927. Galaha bungalow and garden with young Bill and Jim, in front, playing beside the lily pond. One day Jim fell into the pond, and young Bill grabbed his legs and called for help while Jim's head was under water and blowing bubbles. Jim was duly rescued without mishap, but Bill Jr. was admonished for not letting go of Jim's legs, so his head was out of the water. His response was 'But Mummy, you told me not to let him get his new shoes wet!'

Staff of Galaha Estate Tea Factory assembled at Manager's bungalow garden in late 1927, before departure of Mackie family for Australia.

Seated at centre, L- R: Alec Hudson, SD, Jim Mackie, Eileen Mackie, Bill Mackie Jr., Bill Mackie Snr, PD, seated on left of Bill Mackie is Ayaswamy, Chief Clerk, and behind him is Doraiswamy, shorthand typist/secretary for Bill Mackie Snr.

This assembly on Galaha Estate is perhaps indicative of parts of British colonial social structure.



In strong contrast to the previous image were the living conditions in most 'coolie lines', where indentured Tamil labourers from India and their families lived in single rooms per family, and for all occupants one tap for water outside the building and a single toilet facility under the ventilator pipe above the roof. This photo was taken by Bill Mackie Snr on another tea estate in 1959, where accommodation conditions may have been slightly better than earlier in the century.



During my 1982 visit to Sri Lanka, I was taken to the 1,500-acre Bandarapola State Plantation where S.I.D. Swamy, son of Doraiswamy and an agricultural graduate of Peradeniya University, was on his own initiative renovating the rather derelict old coolie lines by joining four single rooms into one family unit.



In the plantations the male coolies undertake the heavy tasks. Photo taken by Bill Mackie Snr in about 1916 on Waldemar Estate.



Male coolies are here constructing propagation beds for growing new tea plants.



Image from Bill Mackie's album of female coolies planting tea seeds into germinating beds in about 1916 on Waldemar Estate.



Picking over tea prior to packaging employs females in the factory.



Another 1916 vintage photo from Bill Mackie's album: Upcountry postal service



A 1982 view of plucking the tea - the most commonly observed task for female labour. I have had no contact with Sri Lanka since 1982 so I am unable to report on recent labour conditions on tea estates, which have since been largely returned to corporate ownership. I understand that in recent times all 'plantation Tamils' have been able to gain full citizenship.

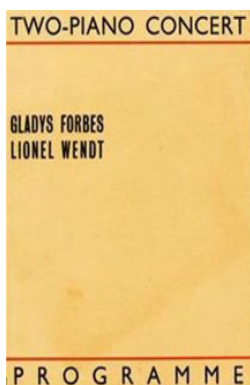


Gladys Mackie and Ossie Forbes

Bill Mackie's sister Gladys married Oswald B. (Ossie) Forbes in Edinburgh in 1919, then lived with him in Colombo until he retired in 1959, when they moved to London. Ossie was 10 years older than Gladys; they did not have any children.

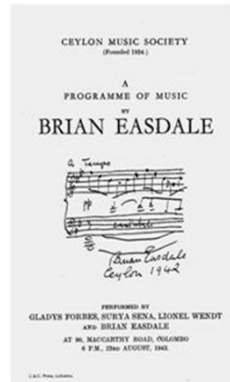
Ossie's main interests were the Forbes and Walker tea and rubber broking business, some sports, as an officer in the Ceylon Defence Force, and Member of the Legislative Council. He had only a shallow interest in the arts. Ossie's elder brother was Admiral Sir Charles Forbes.

Throughout the 1920s Gladys's life centred on music, teaching piano and singing, accompanying visiting artists in concerts, giving solo performances in public and private recitals. She was president of the Music Teachers Association for three years, and president of the Ceylon Music Society from 1938 to 1948. From 1931 to late 1943 she played numerous recitals and concerts with Lionel Wendt.



1936 concert

Photo by Lionel given to Gladys



Lionel Wendt, Gladys Forbes and Brian Easdale who performed together for the Ceylon Music Society in August 1943

Photography

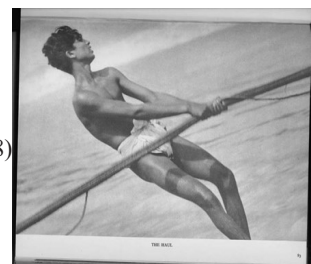
Lionel Wendt had a keen interest in photography from his schooldays, and it replaced music as his main interest during the 1930s. In 1934 he and others established the Photographic Society of Ceylon. He taught Gladys Forbes how to use a Rolleiflex camera and to prepare large bromide photos of a quality acceptable for the annual exhibitions of the Photographic Society in 1938 and later. Similarities between some subjects photographed suggests they had some excursions together.



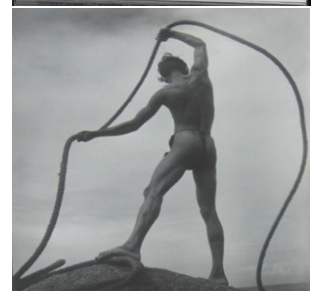
An exhibition photo by Gladys Forbes (left). A page from '*LIONEL WENDT'S CEYLON*' (Right). Kantaka Cheitiya Polonnaruwa 1938

A page from '*LIONEL WENDT'S CEYLON*'

The Haul (1938)



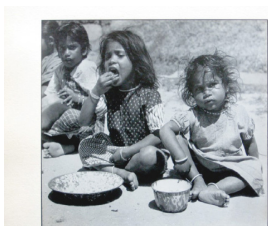
The New Rope (1938)



Two Exhibition photos by Gladys Forbes (1938)

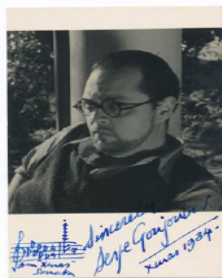


The Last Launch



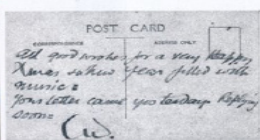
'Bon Appetit'

Beside his flair for exhibition types of photos Lionel loved to send fun postcards to his friends. Gladys had a rather special collection.

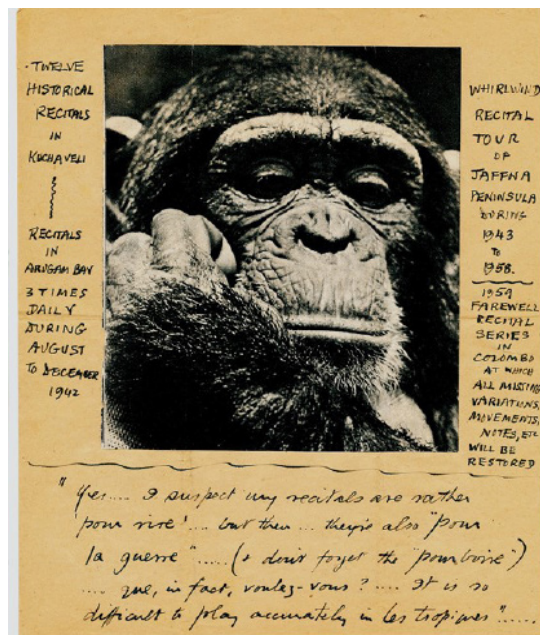


A 1934 Christmas Card and two fun cards.

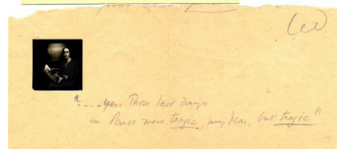
"Absolute quiet is essential when growing a beard, if a wave is to be avoided".
Saying of the week. (weak!)



A Christmas card and a fun card for Gladys (1936)



A fun letter from Lionel to Gladys, undated but maybe sent in about 1940 when they did recitals and concerts together, and 'la guerre' in the footnote may refer to the war at that period.



Two enlarged portrait shots of Gladys, plus a contact print; all taken at the same sitting with Lionel's Baby Rolleiflex.

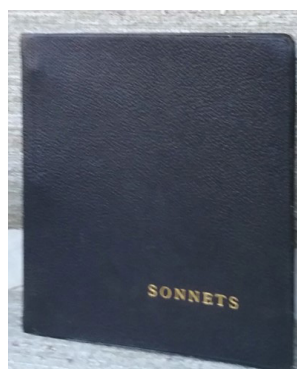
The contact print has been stuck on the sheet of note paper used in the letter signed with Lionel initials, of which only the footnote was retained by Gladys.

The fun footnote, matching the concerned facial expression, states: "- - - yes. Those last days in Paris were tragic, my dear, but tragic"

A Book Named 'SONNETS'

A smallish loose-leaf, leather-covered folder with the name 'SONNETS' embossed in gold on the front cover was among the collection of photos, pictures, and other items I inherited from my Aunt Gladys after she died in 1978.

It contains 37 pages, with one sonnet typed on each page. It bears the signature 'Gladys Forbes'

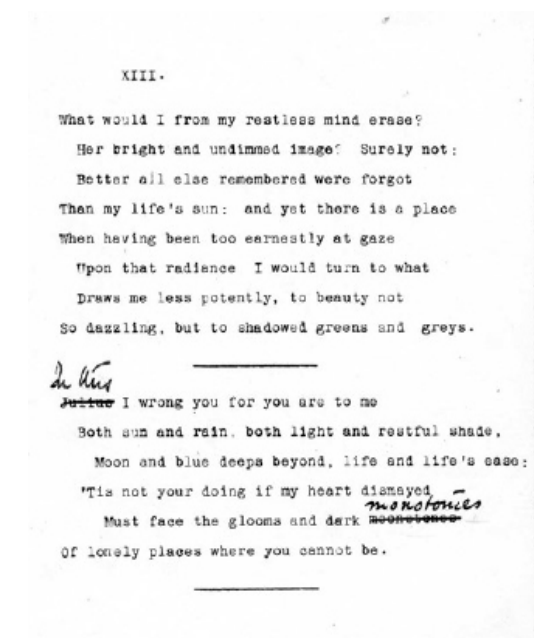


pencilled inside the flyleaf inside the front cover. Typing errors on a number of pages are corrected in ink in Gladys's handwriting. Being a pianist, Gladys typed virtually all her correspondence, so it seems she typed this document. Pages are numbered by Roman numerals, but no titles lie above the sonnets, except page 21 is headed 'January 17th 1935'; on page 22 is 'FIRST ANNIVERSARY'; page 30 has 'Sunday June 9th 1935'; page 34 has 'Of Valerie'; page 36 has 'December 14th 1937'

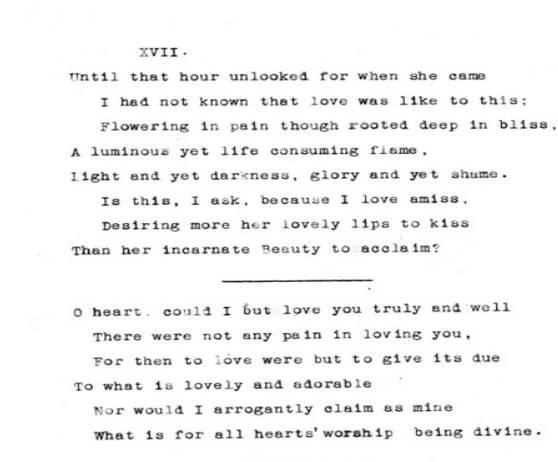
No record of the writer of these sonnets exists, but some relatives of Gladys and of Ossie consider that Lionel Wendt was the author, because of their obsessive expressions of friendship and love for a certain lady, who shared the love of beauty in its widest manifestations in the arts and nature.

The sonnets appear to have been written in the mid-1930s at a time when Lionel was often involved in piano recitals and concerts with Gladys. Besides music, they developed a parallel interest and artistic skill in photography.

Letters from Wendt to Gladys, that have survived and passed on to me, are written by pencil, so it is probable that the sonnets originated in that form and so were typed by Gladys. She had never shown any literary talent, whereas Lionel studied law at Inner Temple, London, and music at the Royal Academy of Music, London, and he had great interest and skills in literature and the arts. He had the practice of using Roman numerals in dates, so their appearance in the numbering of the sonnets may support the view he authored the sonnets.



Gladys's handwriting is well illustrated in this page with Sonnet No. 13, numbered by a Roman numeral.



In my search to discover the author of these sonnets, in 2009 I gave a scanned copy of the sonnets to Neville Weeraratne for his opinion. In 2010 he and Sybil went back to Colombo, so he took the copy and consulted Lester Peries, who at that time was the only surviving person who knew and worked with Lionel Wendt. In some of Lester's notes responding to Neville he stated:

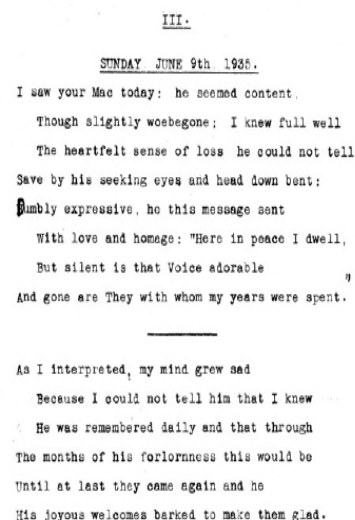
Now, could he be the author of those extraordinary sonnets? I would like to believe he was the author but to my knowledge he was a brilliant prose writer. I had never seen nor heard of him as a poet.

(However), reference the sonnets. Lionel Wendt could very well have been the author. The relationship between Lionel and Gladys Forbes was unusually intimate, true, but passionate? I certainly think not in a physical sexual context.

Lionel rarely played in public. The two-piano concerts were very special. He obviously admired her as a virtuoso pianist – but, for instance, there was a similar relationship with Hilda Naidoo. He would send her letters addressed to "my darling Hildakins". This relationship could have been nothing but platonic. I know Hilda was tiny and hardly Hollywood material. Gladys Forbes was a striking woman but again in a mannish kind of way.



These sonnets seem likely to remain a mystery that will induce much speculation about their source.



Lionel Wendt's Buried Treasure

In the August 2010 issue of *The Ceylankan*, I published an article about a copy of a letter that Lionel wrote in July 1928, when he was building his new home that he named *Albarado*. The original letter was placed with a small collection of personal effects in a casket that was buried in the foundations of the new house. There is no report that the casket was found when *Albarado* was demolished, and the new Art Centre was built on the same site. The sole copy of the original letter was given, many years later, to his special friend Gladys Forbes, from whom I inherited the document.

Beauty, especially in its aural and visual forms, was a passion of Lionel Wendt. This passion is manifest in his perfectionist's approach to performing

piano music, in his writing on art, literature and music, and in his creative aspirations in photography. Burying the casket containing the letter and some of his chosen treasures suggests a pagan rite and sacrifice by Lionel to secure beautiful outcomes on this piece of land. The last paragraph is notable.

"May this house prosper. May all honest endeavour in the service of Beauty flourish therein, and win its reward of inward content and the Peace that is only in ceaseless effort."

This is the end of my account of my Mackie family's relationship with the beautiful island and nation Sri Lanka, and with Lionel Wendt, its famous citizen.

I have enjoyed assembling the information and pictures of the people and places encountered by our family. I hope time has not dulled this vision of a period when the society of a British colony matured to a self-reliant nation and many of its members developed an environment of creativity and appreciation of the arts, beauty and cultures on this island.

Others have tried to improve the living conditions for Sri Lanka's less fortunate inhabitants, and now today some contribute to the well-being of Australia.

GARSTON ESTATE
LUNUWILA.

The eighth Day of July 1928.

Tomorrow, 9th July 1928 between 10 and 10.42 am, I, Lionel Wendt, living today in the house called Wentworth in Guildford Crescent, Colombo, Ceylon, shall place in among the concrete of the foundations of the house that I am building and hope soon to occupy, the Copper Kandyan work casket that will contain this writing, for a symbol of my loves and my desires that are bound up in the house that will with good fortune rise above these foundations.

For a symbol, then, of my loves and my desires, there is first, a photograph of my father, Henry Lorenz Wendt, but for whose love and foresight there had been never a thought of building a house. There are

GARSTON ESTATE
LUNUWILA.

also placed a drawing by Charles Bringer, an Englishman, a drawing by George Keyt, a Dutch Burgher of this island, a drawing by Gupta, an Indian, the printed notes of an Etude of Frederic Chopin, and the programme of a piano recital of my own.

And, that material things be not neglected, there are a gold and diamond ring that I had of my mother, a silver rupee, an English penny-piece, a Ceylon Copper coin, a brass ornament, a turquoise set in gold, a moonstone, and - material things having in their very essence the element of death - a cut stone I know not the value of, nor whether it be gem or glass.

May this house prosper. May all honest

Page 2

GARSTON ESTATE
LUNUWILA.

endeavour in the service of Beauty flourish therein, and win its reward of inward content and the Peace that is only in ceaseless effort.

Page 3

The Story of a Masterpiece

Dr Srilal Fernando

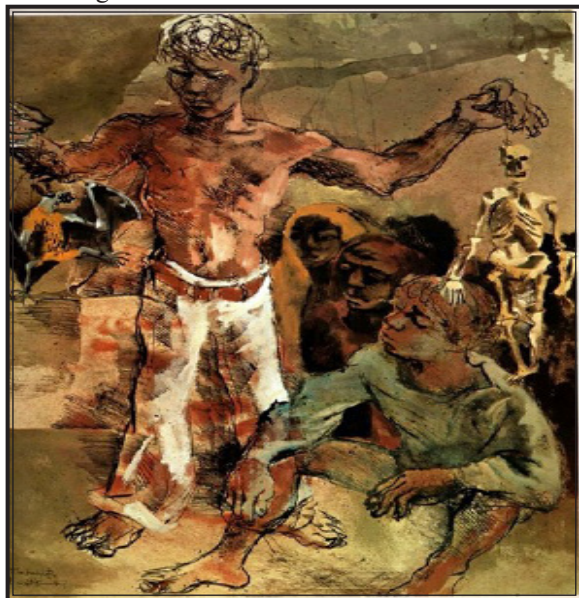
In 1969 James Gleeson, a well-respected authority on Australian painting, wrote a book called the *Masterpieces of Australian Painting*. It covered a full range of Australian painting from the colonial period up to the 1960's.

Of the nearly 75 artists selected, one was Donald Friend, who as most of the readers know spent 5 years in Ceylon, as a guest of Bevis Bawa. Of all the paintings by Friend he selected one which was titled *The Puppets* (see painting below).

Donald Friend did the painting in 1965 in Australia after returning from Ceylon, but before settling down in Bali. In his introduction Gleeson writes that Donald Friend was considered the one of the great, if not the greatest figurative artist in Australian Art.

The painting itself was a large one, in gouache and ink with highlights in Chinese white, with the central figure of the puppeteer with his arms outstretched in a semi crucifixion pose. The left hand is holding a puppet of a miniature skeleton and in his right hand a bat. The symbolism of the painting needs more work. The skeleton is a reminder that death is always not too far off, and frequently used in puppetry. The bat signifies many things according to the culture but in the east is a symbol of longevity and persistence. The puppeteer is balancing these two.

There are smaller figures huddled in the foreground but are indistinct so that the eye is immediately drawn to the central figure. With all his imperfections as a person Friend was the recipient of the Blake prize in religious art. It is possible that he identified with the puppeteer. While living in Ceylon at the Bevis Bawa estate "*Brief*" he was not far from the puppet theatre and mask industry in Ambalangoda and Balapitiya. He also did a painting of the Marionette Theatre in Ceylon. As such the inspiration for the painting was from his time in Ceylon and so was the model for the central figure.



This narrative however is about the life history of the painting, and the colorful characters associated with it. It always makes sense to look at the back of the frame and the labels there can give a useful history as they did in this case.

The Artist

The story starts with Donald Friend, a remarkable character in every sense. Much has been written about him including several books, the most substantial of which is by Robert Hughes the main art critic at the time in Australian Art. A book sponsored by the Australian High Commission in Sri Lanka documents some of his work such as the City of Galle in the boardroom at John Keels Ltd, and the City of Colombo.



Bevis Bawa, Dooland de Silva and Donald Friend

His most famous work during the Ceylon period are the doors he painted, which were at the residence of Geoffrey Bawa. They are now at the Art Gallery of New South Wales. A copy is at the Geoffrey Bawa residence and a much gaudier version is at the Galle Face Hotel in Colombo. His works can be seen at Bevis Bawa estate, "*Brief*" and at Lunuganga the country residence of Geoffrey Bawa. In Ceylon, Friend was associated with others who have become household names in Art such as Laki Senanayake, Ena de

Silva, Barbara Sansoni and architect Ismeth Raheem. In addition to painting, he experimented with clay tiles along with Barbara Sansoni. With the backing of architect Ulrik Plesner he exhibited aluminium sculptures which are now collector's items.

Friend kept a diary from the age of 13 till the day before he died. After his death these were published in four volumes by the Art Gallery of New South Wales. This detailed diary led to accusations of pedophilia and led to the decline in popularity of his work.

The Gallery Owner

The next character in the story is Gallery owner Hugh Reskymer (Kym) Bonython. The painting drew the attention of Kym who had a gallery in Sydney at the time. He was a multi-faceted personality at whose death in 2011 was accorded a state funeral in South Australia. He was a pilot in the RAAF and was awarded the DFC (Distinguished Flying Cross), with a number of near misses on his life while in service. He was the youngest child of Sir John Bonython and Lady Jean a former Miss South Australia.

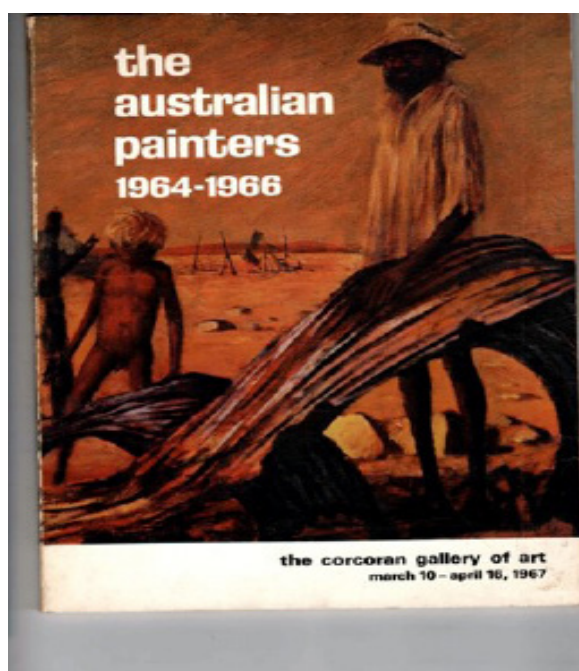
At the end of the Second World War, he was a drummer in a jazz band. He opened a record store and started his own concert promotion company. He brought to Adelaide the greats of jazz including Dizzy

Gillespie, Count Basie, Dave Brubeck, Duke Ellington and Louis Armstrong. He was on first name terms with some of them. Later he expanded his range to Rock and Roll bringing Chuck Berry to Adelaide. The Beatles toured Australia in 1964 Kym had a hand in getting them to perform in Adelaide.

He was also a Motor Sport enthusiast. He worked on getting Formula 1 racing to Adelaide in 1985. He himself was the National Hydroplane Champion and survived many crashes. He raced speed cars winning the South Australian Championship in 1959. His passion for Art led to his own collection, starting the Hungry Horse Gallery in Sydney and later the Bonython Art Gallery in Adelaide. He promoted contemporary art and attracted famous names such as Sir Sydney Nolan and William Dobell. He fostered one of Australia's greatest artists Brett Whiteley. He wrote books on Art and an autobiography called *Ladies Legs and Lemonade*.

The painting *The Puppets* was shown at the Adelaide Festival of the Arts in 1966 and it was he who introduced this painting to the next character in the story.

The Texan Millionaire



Donald Friend noted in his diary:

"Harold E Mertz came into my life in 1965. This slight Chaplinesque figure, wearing a red checked sports jacket and green pork pie hat, atop an unruly mop of curly white hair, and brandishing a silver cane, accompanied by his elegant wife, Lu Esther."

Mertz was a Texan who inherited a publishing business and a millionaire who became enthused with Australian Art. Over the next few years, he visited Australia many times to purchase paintings. He entrusted Kym Bonython to gather the best works of art from the greatest artists in Australia. He had a flexible budget "which kept growing as more opportunity presented". Mertz and Bonython visited Australian artists living in England. Eventually 153 paintings became

the Harold E Mertz collection of Australian Art. The collection was exhibited at the Adelaide Festival of Arts in 1966 before it commenced its international journey. In March 1967 the collection was exhibited at the Corcoran Gallery in Washington DC. *The Puppets* was the again the only painting by Donald Friend in this collection.

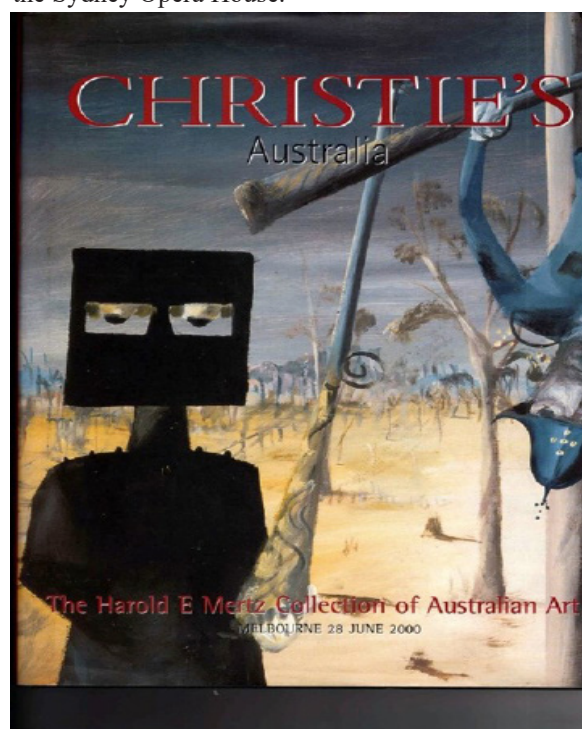
The cost of buying so many paintings, their freight, packing and insurance costs, printing of catalogues attracted a US tax concession if the collection was accessible to the general public or located in an institution that would offer this. Thus, the collection was handed over to the University of Texas at Austin in 1971.

Patricia MacDonald writes "Mertz felt that the art was a direct reflection of the strength and vigor of the land itself and wanted to acquire the best available at the time. The resulting collection is therefore a slice of Australian Art History".

Some of the paintings were on loan at different times but the American public had little appreciation of Art from Australia. Harold Mertz passed away in the 1980's and his wife Lu Esther always felt the collection should be in Australia. The celebrated author James A Mitchener made a huge bequest to the University of Texas which took up most of its space and the Mertz collection went into storage. After some years the University decided to sell off the collection.

The Auction

The collection was auctioned by Christie's in Melbourne on the 28th of June 2000. Roger McIlroy was the Managing Director and the chief Auctioneer at Christie's Australia. He is now an Art Consultant in Melbourne. He recounted making several trips to Texas to win the contract for the auction. There was competition from Sotheby's Australia whose pitch was that if they won the contract the sale would happen at the Sydney Opera House.



The auction itself attracted plenty of attention. The well-researched and lavishly produced hard cover catalogue of the auction is itself a collector's item. Further the GST was introduced on the 1st of July 2000, so the rush was to have the auction before this date.

The auction was held at the Darling Street Function Centre in South Yarra next to the Christie's head office. Prior to the auction the paintings were shown in Sydney and Brisbane.

Some of the famous paintings sold at the auction were Sir Sydney Nolan's *Death of Constable Scanlon*, and Arthur Boyd's *Mourning Bride I*. John Brack's only self-portrait was purchased by the National Gallery of Victoria. The auction fetched a staggering \$ 18 million which was a record at the time for a single owner collection.

Intrigue

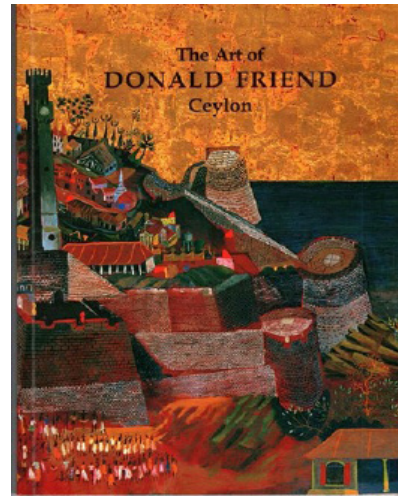
The story does not end there. *The Puppets* was bought by Edward John Congdon a collector. He reported that "someone I knew called Guy Morel saw it in my home and suggested that if ever I wanted to sell it he could help as he shared a studio with an art restorer called Mohammed Aman Siddique". A few years later Congdon wanted to downsize into an apartment and decided to sell the painting. He contacted Morel who handed the painting to an art dealer contact of Siddique called Peter Gant.

When Congdon found it difficult to contact Peter Gant, he wanted the painting back. He found that *The Puppets* was to be auctioned and the highlight of the auction was to be this painting.

He contacted the auction house and informed them that he was the rightful owner of the painting. They withdrew the painting from the auction.

Congdon asked Morel to return the painting and as there was a poor response, he filed action at the Victorian Civil & Administrative Tribunal (VCAT). An order was made on the 5th of May 2014 in favour of Congdon for Morel to pay the value of the painting. Morel then returned the painting back to Congdon. What is interesting is that Siddique and Gant, starred in the biggest case regarding an alleged Art fraud in Australia. This came to court in 2016, Peter Gant was accused of creating three paintings by Brett Whiteley. They were sold to well-known personalities such as the chairman of the Sydney Swans and investment banker and another to a luxury car dealer at million-dollar prices. Guy Morel had secretly photographed the paintings allegedly being made in Siddique's studio which he shared. He was the whistle blower in this case. The court room drama unfolded with high profile figures being cross examined by eminent legal counsel, Barrister Robert Richter appearing for Siddique. There were fiery exchanges especially with Wendy Whiteley the widow of Brett. When asked by Robert Richter whether she knew every painting that Brett painted, her terse reply was "No, but I know very well what he did not paint". Siddique and Gant were found guilty of Art Fraud in 2016 but acquitted on appeal in 2017. A book called "*Whiteley: On Trial*" by Gabriella Coslovich, a Melbourne Senior journalist, specialising in Arts writing for the *AGE* newspaper documents the case and the characters around it.

Once again, the painting came up for auction in April 2022. What more adventures will it have in the future.? Only time will tell.



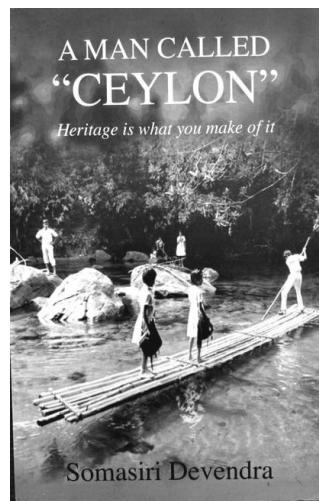
BOOK REVIEWS

Title: *A Man Called Ceylon*

Author: Somasiri Devendra

Publisher: S. Godage & Brothers (Pvt) Ltd, 2022.

Reviewed by Richard Simon



Two uniformed school-girls, satchels in hand, balance expertly on a raft made of nailed-together planks while a boy, also in school uniform, punts them towards a landing-place on a riverbank somewhere in the hinterland of Sri Lanka. The crystal-clear water and sandy stream bottom tell us that we are looking at a forest scene; the clothing and relaxed postures of the children

on the raft make it obvious that it is an everyday one. It is, we realise, how these children normally travel to school.

Such is the illustration Somasiri Devendra has chosen for the cover of *A Man Called Ceylon*, a book I found, I must confess, utterly delightful. It brings together a number of essays and articles produced by the author over many years and is probably the result of a computer spring-cleaning effort like the one he describes in 'The Forests of the Night' (herein). Yet judging by its structure, Devendra clearly intends us to take the book as a record – though by no means, I hope, the definitive record – of his life.

What a remarkable life it has been, and how beautifully the sagely-chosen photo reflects it. The plank raft, with its ancient, functional design, evokes the author's enduring (indeed, hereditary) involvement with boats, ships and navigation. It also refers, in a glancing way, to his learned accomplishments in marine archaeology and the study of vernacular marine architecture. The clear, fast-moving stream shaded by overhanging trees, meanwhile, gives us the forested interior of Lanka, Devendra's preferred environment when on dry land. The children represent education, which the author values so highly that he has turned its acquisition and dissemination into a lifelong project. The children's disposition and activity are also full of meaning for those who know our country well: traditional folkways adapted to modern needs, the peaceable acceptance of well-established social roles, even the extraordinary lengths to which Lankans are known to go in order to obtain a decent education – all these are in the picture, just as they are in Somasiri Devendra's life.

A Man Called Ceylon is divided into halves. The first of these, subtitled *Waterways & Watercraft*, deals with what we might call the author's maternal heritage. The title story is that of Lloyd Oswald Felsianes, a Ceylonese teenager of mixed race who ran away from home to enlist as a cabin boy on a British merchant ship. Nicknamed 'Ceylon' by his white shipmates, Felsianes sailed the world for seven years before returning home to marry, settle down and become, in the fullness of time, a tugboat captain or 'driver' at the Port of the Colombo and the grandfather of Somasiri Devendra.

This section largely features articles about boats and the sea, and about the author's experiences as an officer in what was then the Royal Ceylon Navy – but to describe it so gives no idea of the scope of the material. There are lapidary disquisitions on ancient Indian Ocean trade, Arab navigation techniques and the construction of *sambuqs* and *boums* – traditional wooden ships – by Indian craftsmen in Sharjah. There is an account of the voyages of the *Annapooryanamal*, a Jaffna-built sailing ship that circumnavigated the globe under a variety of different names (and a number of different captains, one of whom was the film star Sterling Hayden). There is a scholarly account on the evolution of inland watercraft in Sri Lanka, as revealed by archaeology, and an item about the surrender of an Italian naval vessel, the *Eritria*, to a ship of the Ceylon Naval Reserve during the Second World War. Also in this section are a scholarly meditation on the Malwatu Oya, a river that served the ancient Sinhalese capital of Anuradhapura as its main link to the sea and thus to the world beyond the shores of Lanka, but whose course is now almost dry; a tentative identification of sailing-ships in a drawing scratched into the surface of a temple mural in Kandy by a seventeenth-century Dutch vandal; and much more besides.

Though the material is sometimes recondite, the style is easy and clear, often elegant and never affected or over-literary. In spite of the editorial and proofreading howlers that all writers who publish in English in this country must suffer, it is a pleasure to read.

The second half of *A Man Called Ceylon*, subtitled *History & Heritage*, deals with Lanka – its history and prehistory as well as its timeless quiddity. It is presented to us as the author's legacy from his father, the educator, archaeologist and man of letters Don Titus Devendra. The elder Devendra, a co-editor of the *Buddhist Encyclopaedia*, was a Sinhalese nationalist during that hopeful period (roughly 1920 to 1950) when the term had not yet been besmirched and travestied by vandals. Appropriately, the heritage dealt with here is in large part a Sinhalese one, though the author also deals with the prehistory of the island and its peoples before the coming of the legendary Sinhalese ancestor Vijaya, and includes a number of pieces relating to more recent times as well.

The material here is even more wide-ranging than in the first part. Since much of it is based on personal experience, it also gives a better indication of what a varied and adventurous life Somasiri Devendra has led. Its centrepiece, however, is a three-part pre-historical essay of astonishing scope, '*Ratna-dweepa, Janma-bhoomi*', which begins with a description of the geological evolution of the island of Lanka from the supercontinent Pangaea by way of the Indian Plate and its wanderings, and concludes with a speculative account of native society at the time of Vijaya's putative arrival. Speculative, yes, but informed by science and scholarship: Devendra eschews both nativist mythmaking and the flights of imaginative fancy indulged in by the likes of the late C. Rasanayagam, the author of *Ancient Jaffna*. 'No man or god built this bridge', he states flatly of the barely submerged isthmus connecting Lanka to South India, putting confabulators on both sides of the Palk Strait firmly in their place. His attitude – even when wandering through the dreamtime of ancient myth and fable – is determinedly empirical. 'History...depends only on written records,' he writes in the same essay, 'but science has provided us with tools to use and draws credible conclusions that can be tested.' A generalist and a polymath, he often glimpses connections that a specialist might not see and is not shy about discussing them: the one he draws between Buddhist veneration for the *peepul* or *bo* tree and prehistoric fertility rites, by way of a Sinhala *kavi* he heard chanted by pilgrims before the Maha Bodhi in Anuradhapura, is a particularly intriguing example.

It is hard to give a fair description of the riches Devendra has crammed into this part of the book. His writing owes something to the prose-poetry of John Still's *Jungle Tide* – a debt he frankly acknowledges – but the experiences he describes are all his own. He gained them first as a schoolboy accom-

panying his father on reconnoitres and ‘digs’, then as a naval officer helping to set up and man military outposts in the middle of nowhere, and finally – after intervening decades in the Colombo tea trade, a period of which he tells us nothing – as commanding officer of a group of irregular volunteers (he does not say so, but we gather that they were special ops of some sort) during the Sri Lankan civil war. There is a wealth of knowledge about Sinhalese history and folkways interwoven with this, gained largely in the form of personal encounters and experiences.

And there is more – a review of Noel Cruz’s book on the Cocos Island Mutiny, and another of Lew-cock, Sansoni and Senanayake’s *The Architecture of an Island*, personalized with reminiscences of Barbara Sansoni and her family. There are colonial curiosities: forgotten surveyors’ benchmarks discovered in unlikely places, a stone slab at the end of Wellawatte Bridge. The inscription on the latter is effaced and illegible, yet Devendra manages to trace the provenance of the slab, only to find that it was an English lady resident’s poetic tribute to, of all things, a banyan-tree.

My favourite anecdote from this section, however, is the author’s description of the excavation of a ruined *dagoba* or stupa in the middle of the forest: he evokes vividly the jungle sounds and scents, the painstaking archaeologists at work, the long-concealed relic-chamber slowly coming into view.

The chamber was now visible, but more delicate work remained to be done. The remaining [granite] beams were cracked: each cracked piece had to be secured by rope and every one lifted out at the same time... It was a solemn moment to see the chamber after eight centuries. In the middle was the Meru gala, the square stone pillar representing Mount Meru, the Cosmic Mountain. Resting on it was the main reliquary. Around the central pillar and at the corners of the chamber were multi-headed cobras in terracotta. Set into niches on the four walls were images of the Buddha made of gold foil filled with sandalwood paste. The walls were covered with a paper-thin plaster, painted – but in a manner never before seen in this country – black background with beautiful red line-work figures, classical in simplicity and rendering.

No matter what he is writing about, Devendra’s mind and personality are vividly present on every page. It is an inquiring and capacious mind and a friendly easy-going personality, as free of prejudice as it would be possible to find, I think, anywhere on Earth. He has a gift for describing personal experiences, so that it is easy to empathise with his feelings and share his sense of wonder. But there is something else here as well, something that can only rightly be described as love – the unconditional, all-encompassing love of all being that Buddhists call *metta*, and which Christians refer to as *agapé*.

It shines undimmed throughout the book, adding its grace to these haphazard, unsystematic yet thoroughly enchanting gleanings of an extraordinary life.

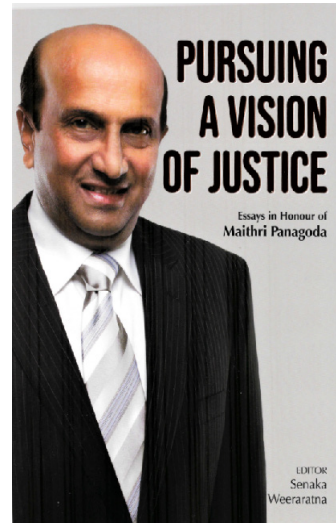
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Title: *Pursuing a Vision of Justice: Essays in honour of Maithri Panagoda*

Editor: Senaka Weeraratna

Publisher: Vijitha Yapa Publications, 2022, 484 pages, price: Rs 5900.

Reviewed by Thiru Arumugam



CSA Member Maithri Panagoda is a Lawyer practising in Sydney and this book is a collection of essays by Judges, colleagues, academics, diplomats, historians, family and friends, about his life, times and work, compiled and edited by Senaka Weeraratna, a friend of his since their schooldays. Of the 25 essay contributors in the book, six are members of CSA.

The Sydney launch of the book was on 30 September 2022 in the Strangers Room of New South Wales (NSW) Parliament with Her Excellency the Honourable Margaret Beazley, the State Governor, as the Chief Guest and Keynote Speaker.

Maithri grew up in the village of Wathumulla, which is about four km from Gampaha. In 1961 he entered Ananda College for his secondary education. He was editor of the Sinhala section of the school magazine and in his final year in school he won the two gold medals that were on offer. He entered the Law Faculty of the University of Ceylon, Colombo Campus in 1969 and graduated with a LLB degree in 1972. In the following year he was admitted as an Attorney-at-Law to the Supreme Court of Sri Lanka.

In 1975 he proceeded to UK for post-graduate studies and there that he met Ramya Nanayakkara, a fellow Lawyer. They were married in 1977 and in 1981 they decided to migrate to Australia. They arrived in Sydney and Maithri applied for 42 jobs but each time he was not selected on the grounds that he did not have any NSW legal experience.

He responded to an advertisement for a Solicitor by the Western Aboriginal Legal Services (WALS) who are based in Dubbo, a town 400 km north-west of Sydney with a present population of about 40,000. He arrived for the interview on a hot summer’s day dressed in a three-piece suit and found that most of twelve First Nations members of the interview board were dressed in T-shirts and shorts! Although he was

the only non-Caucasian candidate, he was offered the job which he accepted. He and his family moved to Dubbo in 1981.

He worked in WALs for seven years for First Nations clients mainly in civil matters such as debt, social security, tenancy, discrimination, false imprisonment, family law, and accident and injury matters. He built up a good rapport with his clients but they had difficulty pronouncing his name and would ask for a Lawyer called “My Tree”!

A significant case was when he appeared for a young man named Stephen Bates who crossed the railway line in Broken Hill but his leg got stuck in the tracks. An oncoming train caused the loss of his legs and arm. It was a difficult case establishing negligence by the railways as he had to show that there was common use by the public crossing the tracks and that the railways were aware of this usage. After years of legal battles, Maithri was able to win substantial damages for Stephen.

In 1991 his children reached secondary school stage and he decided to move to Sydney. He applied for a job in the 120-year-old firm of Carroll & O’Dea Lawyers who now have over 200 employees. Michael O’Dea, a former Managing Partner of the firm, said at the book launch that one of the best business decisions that he made was when he interviewed Maithri in 1991 and offered him a post in the firm. He has worked there for the past 31 years and is a Partner in the firm.

At Carroll & O’Dea Maithri continued his work with First Nations people. His most significant work has been with regard to the Stolen Generation. These are mixed race children who were forcibly removed from their mothers between 1883 and the 1970s. They were placed in foster care and suffered abuse. Because their removal was legal, compensation for these victims could only be obtained if it could be proved that they suffered abuse. In 2014 a scheme was agreed in NSW that Stolen Generation claims would be dealt with in an informal manner and up to 75,000 dollars per claimant would be paid. To date, Maithri and his team of 15 have successfully finalised over 250 such claims.

In 2015 Maithri was appointed Adjunct Professor of the School of Law, Sydney, in the University of Notre Dame. In 2016 Maithri was awarded the Order of Australia for significant service to the Sri Lankan community and to the law, particularly in litigation and dispute resolution. He is recognised as one of the country’s leading compensation lawyers.

The hard cover book “*Pursuing a Vision of Justice*” has 15 Parts and 30 Chapters and runs to over 500 pages. It is very interesting reading and recounts

Maithri’s journey ‘Along the dusty road’ from rural Gampaha to metropolitan Sydney. It is well recommended reading. Space does not permit outlining Maithri’s other numerous social service activities.

Chapters written by CSA Members include Chapter 2 where Somasundaram Skandakumar recalls his friendship with Maithri when he was High Commissioner for Sri Lanka in Australia. In Chapter 17, Thiru Arumugam outlines Maithri’s work with First Nations Australians. Chapter 21 has been written by the late Sunil de Silva where he gives some details of Maithri’s other activities. In Chapter 27 Hugh Karunanayake writes about “*Two acclaimed Lawyers from Ceylon who migrated during the days of ‘White Australia’ policy*”. The Lawyers are Leslie de Saram and Aubrey Martensz. In Chapter 29, Maithri’s lawyer wife Ramya recounts how she was trapped in Nilaweli Beach Hotel during the 2004 Tsunami. She was among the 30 survivors out of the 180 guests in the Hotel. Ramya also related her story at a CSA Meeting on 22 February 2009.

Australian residents can purchase the book through the Media release dated 30 September 2022 in the website of Carroll & O’Dea. The cost is 50 dollars including postage.

OBITUARIES

DR CARLYLE PERERA

11 November 1938 - 15 September 2022



EXCEPTIONAL LEADER

What does it take to be a great leader? Moral and spiritual strength? Courage? Discipline? The ability to battle against the odds? Caring for those he is leading? Put all these together and add Cricketing skills and you have Carlyle Perera, the greatest ever captain of the Ceylon University Cricket team.

His moral and spiritual strength and discipline stemmed from his upbringing. His father Wilton Perera was a Major in the Volunteer Army of Ceylon in the Second World War. The family were staunch members of the Catholic Church. He was educated at St. Joseph's College, Colombo, a school known for high moral standards.

Leadership and teamwork were instilled into him from his young days. He was the leader and eldest in a family of five, with brothers Travis, Brian, Chris and sister Heloise all closely knit and highly supportive of each other. The strength of his character and leadership qualities were recognised at St. Joseph's College by the Rector, Father Peter Pillai and the staff and he was made Head Prefect of the College in addition to being Captain of Cricket.

Though his focus seemed to be on cricket, he was a well-rounded person in his activities and education. He played the violin. He played soccer and took part in athletics in school. He learned elocution in Wendy Whatmore's famous Elocution School and took part in the Light of Asia Elocution Contest. When he was 15 years old, he was in a group of students who visited Holland where he showed card tricks to the Queen of Holland and told her that she was not thinking enough to catch his tricks. On his return he wrote to the Prime Minister of Ceylon and recommended that Ceylon should open an Embassy in Holland. If Carlyle had taken to politics, he could well have become Prime Minister himself!

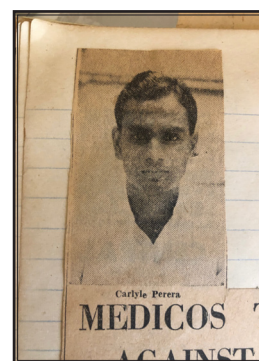
His ability to put his head down and work hard saw him through Medical College, and then a specialist Qualification, A Fellowship of the Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists, in a field well suited to his kind and caring nature. His reliability in the performance of his duties and his leadership qualities saw him elevated to the position of Chief Psychiatrist of the State of Victoria. His dedication to his duties in this high office resulted in the award of the Public Service Medal (PSM) in the Australia Day Honours List. His work in Psychiatry, in caring for the anxious and depressed extended to helping the poor where he spent the little spare time, he had in serving soup and meals to the homeless of the streets of Melbourne.

While we may regard his greatest achievement as being captain of the University of Ceylon Cricket team that won the Sara Trophy, the greatest sporting prize in Ceylon, I have no doubt that he would say his greatest achievement was bringing up a beautiful family with his wonderful wife Megan. Anyone who knows his daughters Sharon, Samantha and Siobhan and son Carlyle would no doubt agree. My close association with Carlyle was in the years we played cricket together for the Varsity from 1959 to 1964 and particularly during the year of his captaincy. One feature of his captaincy was his togetherness with the team on and off the field and in decision making. When an opposition wicket fell, the whole team would run to the centre and tell Carlyle of any observations and suggestions we had regarding their incoming batsman. He would listen to us intently and then make his decisions. We all felt that we were in it together. Our team formed the strongest of bonds with him and I was fortunate to become one of his closest friends. We were bonded together by a cricket pitch 22 yards long in Colombo and many years later, bonded by a strip of road six minutes long in Melbourne. The final match for the Sara Trophy in 1963 was a nail-biting finish when at 6.00 pm, with the University leading by just 4 runs, the trophy was ours when Umpire Alan Felsingher called "Time."

Now the great umpire above has called "Time" for Carlyle, and he triumphantly returns to the Great Pavilion up on high to play an unending innings. I close with a salute from vice-captain to captain.

Buddy Reid

Varsity Cricket Team 1962-63



DR CHANDRA (Channa) WIJESINGHE
1 June, 1934 – 18 September, 2022



Dr Channa Wijesinghe, well-known psychiatrist in Sri Lanka and in Victoria, Australia, passed away peacefully on September 18, 2022 in Melbourne. The funeral was held in the Boyd Chapel of the Springvale Cemetery on Saturday, 24th September in the presence of a large gathering. Channa's wife, Dr Malkanthie (Malky) Wijesinghe, pre-deceased him. Channa leaves behind his four sons, Nalin,

Ajit, Asoka and Chandi, three daughters-in-law (Anjali, Shyamani and Chamari) and six grandchildren.

I have known Channa since our medical school days as we were both in the same batch of undergraduates. After graduation, we were intern house officers living in the same house officers' quarters of the General Hospital, Colombo. At this time Channa married Malky, who was a first cousin of my wife, Chandrani. The four of us found ourselves together in London doing our respective postgraduate studies, living in the same hall of residence, Lilian Penson Hall, of the University of London. On his return to Sri Lanka from London in 1966, after training in Psychiatry, Channa worked in several hospitals, including the General Hospital, Colombo, often concurrently, because of the dearth of psychiatrists in Sri Lanka at the time. Dr Quintus De Zylva, who gave one of the eulogies at the funeral, related the story of how Channa travelled by bus to Galle to attend to patients there, while working in Colombo.

After a three-year stint in government service as, in his own words, a 'roving psychiatrist', Channa embarked on an academic career, first as Senior Lecturer and then as the Foundation Professor of Psychiatry in the newly created Psychiatry Department of the Faculty of Medicine in Colombo. Through his pioneering work in Sri Lanka, Channa, together with Professor Angelo Rodrigo, who later started a similar department in the Faculty of Medicine, Peradeniya, played a critical role in improving psychiatric services in Sri Lanka through training medical students in Psychiatry as a subject in its own right. Channa also played a prominent role in setting up postgraduate education in Psychiatry in Sri Lanka through the Ceylon College of Psychiatrists and the Ceylon College of Physicians. He continued to assist in the progress of academic Psychiatry in Sri Lanka even after he migrated to Australia.

Channa migrated to Australia with his young family in 1975 and settled down in Melbourne, where he served in the State Psychiatric Services, holding senior clinical and administrative positions. He was appointed Honorary Associate Professor in Monash University and was a regular External Examiner for the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists. He was a member of the Medical Council of Victoria, Chairman of its Impaired Practitioners' Committee and member of its Sexual Misconduct Committee. He helped establish the Victorian Doctors' Health Program and was a member of the Board of Directors of this program until he resigned in 2008. Channa was a member of the Ceylon Society of Australia (Melbourne Chapter).

I had the good fortune to see him regularly after we migrated to Australia in 1976, even though we resided in Sydney. In the 1980s and 1990s, I used to visit Melbourne at least three times a year for Board and Committee meetings of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons. Even though the College provided me accommodation in the city, Channa and Malky insisted that I stay with them in their home in Strathmore over the three-day period, which my visit usually lasted for. Although I knew him well as a friend and colleague, I was now able to see him as a family man, and to see his young boys grow. He was indeed a dedicated husband and father, undertaking many household chores, in spite of his busy working life.

Channa's generosity and hospitality knew no bounds. He would insist whenever he came to Sydney (and that was fairly often, as Ajit's family lived in Sydney), that three of his batchmates, the late Dr Palita Abeywickrema, Dr Gamini Hettiaratchi and I, with our wives, meet him for dinner. This became a regular feature, and the four of us were labelled '*The Four Musketeers*' by his daughter-in-law, Shyamani. Alas! Only two of the *musketeers* remain.

I never imagined that the Channa I knew at medical school would become a psychiatrist. That is just what he did, however, and with great success. I realized later that he had those attributes which make a good psychiatrist: the patience to listen, then think before responding to any problem brought to his attention.

Channa, to me, presented a picture of contrasts: often hilarious, but serious when necessary; pensive at times, gregarious at others; he was up to all the tricks, but knew where and when to draw the line. As a medical student, Channa was the 'life and soul' of any gathering, be it the Law-Medical cricket match, Block Concert and Dance or batch trip. He gave me the impression of one with a 'happy-go-lucky' attitude, but very serious about his studies. This latter attribute earned him honours with distinction when he graduated from medical school.

He was an expert on horse-racing and was an inveterate gambler. Perhaps he honed his skills, in this regard, at the Common Room 'cut-table' in medical school, where he was a frequent participant in the card game known as 'asking-hitting'. The Melbourne Cup parties he threw at his home were legendary. He was a serious Bridge player and an avid reader.

It was immensely sad for us to see this bubbly personality fade away in recent times, when he became seriously ill. However, he lived his life to the full, and we must rejoice in the fact that he gave so much for the betterment of us all.

May he rest in peace.

Raja Bandaranayake

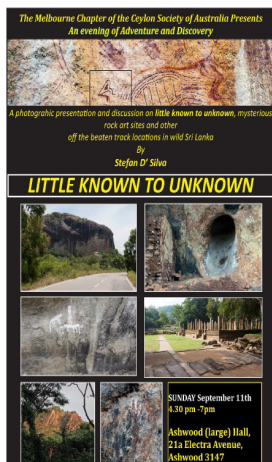
**Obituary notices published
in *The Ceylankan***

All Obituary notices and Appreciations of Life recorded on these pages are restricted to deceased CSA members only. In keeping with that policy all notices are accompanied with a note indicating such membership status.



CSA Notice Board

MELBOURNE CHAPTER General Meeting of 11 September 2022 presentation by Stefan D'Silva *Little known to unknown places*



At the third meeting for 2022 held on Sunday the 11th of September, that intrepid traveller Stefan D'Silva, presented his talk, "Little known to Unknown places" to a packed audience of members and guests of the Melbourne chapter of the Ceylon Society of Australia.

He took us on a photographic journey to unknown places in Sri Lanka, far off the beaten track, starting with Kurullangala Rock Art, off the Ella-Wellawaya Road. A large bird figure along with many palm prints of the left hand. Another bird

resembling a Cassowary, all painted on rock in ochre. These are yet to be dated. There is no conclusive information of the age of the art by the Archaeological Department. In short, we do not know.

Next was the Hennagala Rock Art and Monastic site within the Maduru Oya National Park. On the way there were miles of paddy laid out on the road to dry. The villagers live in harmony with wild elephants, leaving aside a bag of paddy which the elephants whisk away.

Moving onto the Rajagala Ariyakara Vi-haraya with its ancient artifacts and granite Buddha statues, he showed images of ancient sluice gates at Rambatan Oya. This was a glimpse of the legendary irrigation system of that time. At Rajagala the rock statue of the Buddha is an unfinished one. It is lying on its side and is not known as to why the work stopped. As far as Stefan knows, the information remains the same.

At Kiripokunahela and Bowatugala, within the Kumana National Park were the white figured Vedda paintings on rock, which have stood the test of time exposed to the elements and the animal's brush-past.

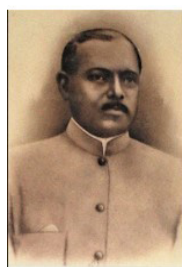
He concluded with two aerial views of the top of Sigiriya rock as well as the adjoining landscape extracted from the archaeological reports done during the time of the British. Predating the drone age, the accuracy of the etchings was marvellous.

After the talk many stayed back to see more images known only to those brave enough to venture the lesser-known places of Sri Lanka.

Dr Srilal Fernando

MELBOURNE CHAPTER Sunday, 20th November 2022, 5.00pm At our next meeting

LOGAN THURAIRATNAM
will present an illustrated talk on
*"The Amazing life of Prof Allen Abraham:
first Ceylonese elected Fellow of the
Royal Astronomical Society of UK"*



Born as Ambalavanar Subramaniam on the island of Karaitivu, off Jaffna peninsula in 1865, Allen Abraham became an orphan at an early age. Brought up in a humble abode, with very limited access to educational resources, he went on to become a famous astronomer, a Professor of Mathematics, a Tamil Scholar, and a music composer. He continued

to live in Jaffna and was a teacher at Jaffna College until his death in 1922. His curiosity and interest in astronomy led him to predict the transit of Halley's Comet most accurately in 1910. Viewing from earth using a simple optical instrument (a 3.5-inch tabletop telescope) and using his impressive mathematical skills, he was able to include in his prediction the gravitational effects of planet Venus on the path of Halley's Comet (more than what was known then). For this work Prof Abraham was elected Fellow of the Royal Astronomical Society in 1912.

Logan (Allen) Thurairatnam

is the great grandson of Prof Abraham and has published a biographical book on the 100th death anniversary of his great grandfather titled "*Allen Abraham and the Halley's Comet*". The book has been a labour of love for Logan as he wanted the world to know about the life story and achievements of Prof Abraham. Copies of Logan's book was accepted by the libraries at Harvard University (Houghton Library), Royal Astronomical Society, British Library and the State Library of Victoria.

**Sunday, 20th November 2022, 5.00pm
at ASHWOOD HALL B (small hall)
21a Electra Avenue, Ashwood**

for enquiries contact Hemal 0427 725 740

AGM & Social (Sydney)

- Saturday 19 November 6.00 pm to midnight

Please note: All meetings are subject to Covid 19 restrictions / lockdowns. Events that go ahead will be held strictly in compliance with safety regulations as required.



The Ceylon Society of Australia

25th Annual General Meeting and Social

on Saturday 19th November 2022
at the Pennant Hills Community Centre
Ramsay Road, Pennant Hills, NSW 2120

6.00 – 6.30pm: AGM for Members
6.30 - 11.00pm: Social with Dinner for
Members & Guests

Tickets: \$50 per person
Drinks: BYO, and soft drinks provided
Dress: Smart Casual

Dinner, Dancing & Singalong
Music by Roger Menezes

Come and Enjoy!

For reservations and tickets contact:

Deepak Pritamdas	0434 860 188
Pauline Gunewardene	0419 447 665
Amal Wahab	0411 888 182

WANTED...YOUR LITERARY CONTRIBUTIONS

The Ceylankan is published quarterly and the Editor is on the look-out for your literary contributions. Be assured that your work will be given careful consideration with a view to publication at all times.

Original, previously unpublished, articles relating to the history, culture and heritage of Sri Lanka are sought, while any material of an anecdotal nature will also be considered provided they conform to the CSA's ideals of being non-racial, non-political, non-religious and non-confrontational.

While every effort is made to print material that is relevant and correct, we do not take the responsibility for errors. The Editor would appreciate any inaccuracies being brought to his notice without delay.

To facilitate the design/layout of the publication, we request that your word processing / typing be unformatted. Where applicable, contributors are also requested to annotate bibliographical references for copyright reasons and to help further research and study by interested members.

MEMBERSHIP RATES

- **General Subscriptions for Australia:** \$35 per calendar year;
- **Pensioners' subscriptions:** \$25 per calendar year;
- **Sri Lanka:** Rs.3000 per calendar year;
- **Overseas members from USA/UK/Canada/Israel/ Thailand and other countries:** \$50 per calendar year. If payment is not possible in Aust Dollars, please pay by Bank Draft or Bank Transfer in US Dollars or Pounds Sterling and add Aust \$10 to the Aust \$50 for bank charges due here for converting a foreign currency payment to Aust Dollars.

Payment Methods

1. Pay by cheque in favour of the Ceylon Society of Australia and post to Deepak Pritamdas, Treasurer, PO Box 489, Blacktown, NSW 2148, Australia.
2. Pay by Bank Transfer to:
Account Name: Ceylon Society of Australia
Bank Name: Commonwealth Bank of Australia
Bank BSB: 062 308
Account No: 10038725
Swift Code for overseas remittances: CTBAAU2S
Reference: Payee Name

Note: Please email all payment details in confirmation to deepakpsl1@gmail.com

Notice to Members - Contact Details

Could we please request all members to advise Treasurer Deepak Pritamdas - deepakpsl1@yahoo.com - and Secretary Sunimal Fernando - smfernando@tpg.com.au - of any changes to contact details for phone, email address and home address. We need to make certain our records are correct for mailing *The Ceylankan* as well as for getting in touch with members, and would appreciate your assistance. Thank you.

WE NEED SPEAKERS

The CSA welcomes professionals and others interested in speaking at our General Meetings. Meetings are held in Sydney, Melbourne and Colombo, quarterly in February, May, August and November.

If you know of anyone, please contact as relevant:

- CSA President Pauline Gunewardene

Mobile: +61 419 447 665

Email: paulineg@ozemail.com.au

- Melbourne Chapter Convenor Hemal Gurusinghe

Mobile: +61 427 725 740

Email: hemguru@hotmail.com

- Colombo Chapter Secretary Anandalal Nanayakkara

Mobile: +94 77 327 2989

Email: anandalal10@gmail.com

ADVERTISING IN

The Ceylankan

For some time, CSA members and others have indicated an interest in advertising to promote their goods and services in the Journal. However, we have been maintaining the ideal of the founders of the CSA, that the Journal must not be made a means for commercial profit, but only as a vehicle for research, study and promotion of the rich heritage and culture of Ceylon/Sri Lanka.

Now, with the constant rise in costs of delivery of the Journal to members worldwide, we need to look at additional sources of revenue. Accordingly, the Committee has decided to accommodate advertising and promotional matter in the form of loose-leaf flyers, but not as part of the body content of the Journal.

Suitable material, in keeping with the non-political, non-partisan aims and ideals of the CSA, will be considered. All such copy is to be submitted to the Editor for consideration.

Once accepted, the advertiser will need to supply the printed flyers in sufficient numbers for inclusion in that particular issue of the Journal.

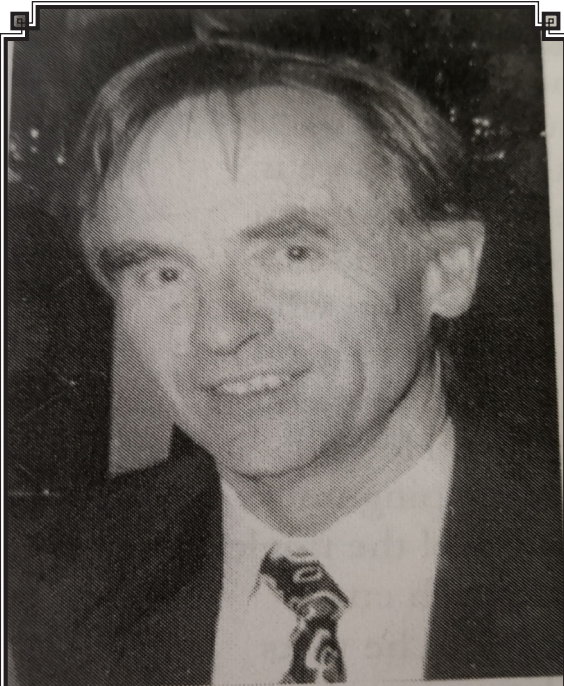
The cost of inserting such flyers is \$500 per issue of the Journal, paid in advance.

Make a valuable
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EDITORS OF THE CEYLANKAN

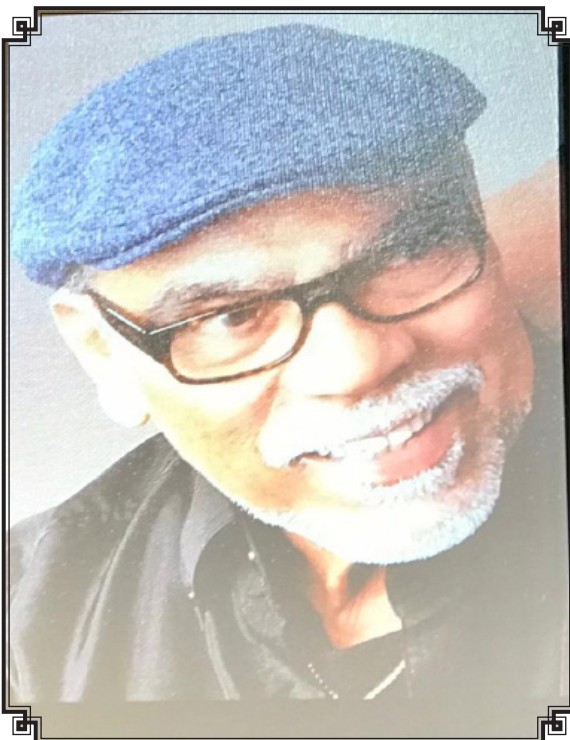


David Michael Goodrich

DAVID GOODRICH - 1998 TO 2001



SUMANE IYER - 2002 TO 2009



DOUG JONES - 2009 TO 2021



ADAM RAFFEL - 2021 to the present