

Victoria Memorial Eye Hospital Colombo circa 1900

COVER STORY:

WHEN CEYLON CELEBRATED THE GOLDEN JUBILEE OF QUEEN VICTORIA

BY AVISHKA MARIO SENEWIRATNE AND NILANTHA PERERA

Celebrating the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria in Kandy 1897



The Ceylankam

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The Ceylankam

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From the Editor

Dear Readers

A Happy New Year and welcome to the first issue of 2023. We have just seen through a successful 25th anniversary of the Ceylon Society of Australia (CSA) in 2022. This is largely due to the tireless work of our President Pauline Gunewardene ably assisted by the CSA Committee in organising successful celebrations held on the 28th of August 2022 at the Pennant Hills Community Centre. That was clearly the highlight of 2022. Also, I hope that our subscribers enjoyed the 100th “Bumper” issue of this journal and as Editor, I would like to thank all the contributors and the Committee, especially Amal Wahab and Deepak Pritamdas for, liaising with the printers, preparing the address labels and organising the mailouts. I am deeply indebted to the main contributors Thiru Arumugam, Hugh Karunanayake and Dr Srilal Fernando for their wise counsel and fascinating articles. And of course, I am also grateful to you, dear readers, for your ongoing support of the journal, without which the CSA and *The Ceylankan* could not exist. I encourage more subscribers to write articles and anecdotes on topics of interest to the membership of the CSA as we move forward. New perspectives and points of view make the journal more attractive to new subscribers.

The cover story is about Queen Victoria’s Golden Jubilee celebrations in Colombo in 1887, an interesting piece by Avishka Senewiratne and Nilantha Perera from our Colombo Chapter. The cover photographs were taken 10 or so years after the event but it gives a fascinating insight into life in Ceylon around 125 years ago. Whatever our opinion of the British period this was an occasion in Sri Lanka’s long history and should be noted as such. We are still living with that legacy.

Our Founder President, Hugh Karunanayake has penned two very interesting and different articles. The first is a short history of Galle during the Portuguese, Dutch and British times. This article is replete with famous incidents in the history of Galle, historic buildings and its residents. The second is a history of Walker & Sons Co Ltd, the well-known engineering and manufacturing firm based in Colombo that Hugh worked for as Market Research Manager for five years in the 1970s. Hugh has given a comprehensive history of the company and how it diversified manufacturing in Ceylon during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. In many ways it was a pioneering outfit in the history of manufacturing in Sri Lanka.

One of the highlights of this issue is the review of Australia’s ‘Play of the Year in 2019’ *Counting and Cracking* by Thiru Arumugam. Thiru has given us details of the production, the playwright Shaktidharan and a synopsis of the story and the cast. This is the play that has put Australians of Sri Lankan background well and truly in the Australian theatrical map. The director and co-writer of the play Eamon Flack said that this is an Australian play, despite the subject matter being Sri Lankan, because Australia has benefited from contributions by immigrants from Sri Lanka. Therefore, it forms a part of Australia’s heritage and rich multicultural tapestry.

The other highlight in this issue is the first two chapters of a short 12-chapter memoir by Ernest Macintyre of his time in Peradeniya University during the late 1950s and early 1960s. As these chapters are very short, I thought it would be a nice idea to serialise them in *The Ceylankan*. Ernest has given us humorous insights into university life, full of anecdotes of what they were up to as young people. He has also paid tribute to two great figures in the Sri Lankan theatrical landscape, Ediriweera Sarachchandra and E.F.C. Ludowyk. I hope the readers find it interesting and entertaining.

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.

The two book reviews are different but fascinating, nevertheless. Dr Srilal Fernando's review of *The Little Bike Lost* by Avishka Senewiratne is about Noel Cruz's film of the same name. The book is about Noel Cruz and his filmmaking and mentions members of the CSA involved in making of Noel's film inspired by the famous Italian neorealist film *Bicycle Thieves* by Vittorio de Sica in 1948. Hugh Karunanayake's review of *A Life in the Law* by Nimal Wickramanayake is an appreciation of a great legal mind and a wonderful person. Hugh attended the book launch at the Victorian Bar in Melbourne on the 28th of November 2022 launched by Robert Richter KC.

We have reports of the CSA AGM and Social held on the 19th of November 2022 where Pauline Gunewardene delivered the Presidential Address acknowledging the 25th anniversary of the CSA. Pauline listed the major achievements in the year and readers can see the photos from the event. The Colombo Chapter held its meeting on the 24th of November 2022 where its keynote speaker was Dr Gamini Goonetilleke who gave a very moving description of life as a surgeon in the war zone during the Civil War in the north of Sri Lanka in the late 1990s and early 2000s. This is an inspirational story of a true humanitarian and an exemplary medical doctor who has given selfless service to victims of war. *The Ceylankan* acknowledges the kind permission given by Dinuli Francisco of *The Daily Mirror (Sri Lanka)* to reproduce the report of Dr Goonetilleke's address to The Colombo Chapter. Finally, the Melbourne Chapter hosted a meeting where the speaker was Logan Thurairatnam on the topic of Prof Allen Abraham, a multidisciplinary and talented astronomer and academic.

Finally, in response to a letter to the Editor by Earlson Forbes (Publications Officer of CSA) lamenting the absence of a recipe section called *Meals Ammi Made* (*The Ceylankan* J 100 Vol 25 No 4 November 2022) I set the ball rolling by including one of my favourite desserts my dear departed mother (Carmel Raffel) made. I encourage readers to contribute a family favourite recipe and, include with it, any stories or anecdotes associated with that recipe!

Happy reading!

ADAM RAFFEL

Our Readers write

John de Saram

For those who remember John de Saram a note of remembrance. John de Saram, late of the United Nations Legal Department, former Sri Lankan Ambassador to the U.S. and in his youth an outstanding athlete, a loving father, grandfather and brother passed away December 2022 at Baltimore, Maryland (USA). A good and faithful servant.

Geraldine de Saram Jansz
California, USA



MEALS AMMI MADE



Chocolate Biscuit Pudding

Many a dinner party ended with this dessert that my mother, Carmel Raffel, made with love and joy:

1 packet Marie, Morning Coffee or Milk Coffee biscuits
4 eggs
5 tablespoons sugar
4 tablespoons butter
3 tablespoons cocoa
Vanilla to taste
Milk for dipping biscuits

Mix egg yolks, sugar and butter until very creamy. Take cocoa and mix it with a very little hot water. Add to the mixture. Beat the 4 egg whites until they stand on end. Keep aside. Dip the biscuits in a little milk. Add beaten egg whites to the chocolate mixture and keep on beating. Add vanilla to taste.

In a shallow serving dish, arrange a layer of the mixture, then a layer of the biscuits and so on until both are finished. Chill in a refrigerator for 24 hours.

ENJOY!

Adam Raffel

The Colombo Column

Compiled for the Colombo Chapter by Somasiri Devendra



Loos, De Saram, Julius & Creasy

In 1996, the (then) relatively new Colombo Stock Exchange published a slim volume “*Share Trading Centennial. 1896-1996*”. Though I had retired from Share Trading the Editors invited me to trace the history of Share Trading in Ceylon. I accepted the invitation with pleasure. Writing it was an eye-opener and the things I learnt in the process yet remain in mind. So much so that, when I read Hugh Karunanayake’s piece [“Two acclaimed lawyers who migrated during the ‘White Australia’ Immigration Policies” *The Ceylankan* J 100 Vol 25(4) November 2022], I knew I had something that could add flesh and blood to the factual story of the old lawyers. Having located my original paper, I found it useful to visualize these pioneers at work. Let me quote some excerpts from it. After passing over the year 1796:

“...when one Joint Stock Company, (the Dutch East India Company, or V.O.C.) which had established itself as the “de facto” ruler of our maritime provinces, yielded to the superior forces of another Joint Stock Company, (the British East India Company or “John Company”): thus it was Joint Stock Companies that effectively annexed our country to theirs, even though they did so in the name of commerce, and not colonialism....

I deal with the Crown Lands and Waste Lands Ordinances, the short reign and fall of ‘King Coffee’...

The crash brought the Plantation company and the Agency House system into prominence: to shield the Tea plantations from the mayhem of the coffee crash, and the collapse of the Banking system.”

And, to shield them from anticipated mayhem, Lawyers came into the picture. Sir Thomas Villiers, in his “*Mercantile Lore*” paints this pen-picture of them at work:

“To the ordinary layman the tracing of the title ... remained a mystery;... just as one thought all was clear, it might be discovered that at some previous date a small share had been sold to another party, possibly a relative willing to give a hand in easing the situation, and with the collapse that had taken place, he had disappeared or died and the title to his share was untransferable...

And there sat F. C. Loos, F.J. de Saram and V.A. Julius. Their little offices near the Law Courts, that untidy office in Queen Street, with a large table covered with documents of all sorts and kinds. De Saram, in his sandals, Julius with his pipe in his mouth, working long hours, but as each constituent came to see him, ready to pick up from the pile the particular bundle which appertained to the estate ... in a quiet fatherly, friendly voice he would explain ... Lawyers sitting impatiently in London, wondering what the delay could be and urging the local agent to put the business through. Long explanations by letter followed ...; but there these three sat, each in his own office doing everything possible to complete the business but absolutely immovable as regards the passing of a title till they were satisfied that all was in order...”

I can picture them (can’t you?).

Spare a prayer for Sophia – Sophia who?

More than a millennium ago visitors scribbled poems on Sigiriya’s “Mirror Wall”. But, just two centuries ago, a poet had engraved in stone a poem in praise – of a Banyan tree. The tree had stood “by the roadside near ‘Layard’s Folly’”, which would be where Galle Road today crosses the Wellawatte Bridge. And that is exactly where still stands the stone column with a poem, in English, inscribed on it. It is not decipherable now, though visible, but J.P.Lewis had copied the text in 1913:

To him whose gracious aim in mercy bends,
And light and shade to all alike extends,
Who guards the traveller of his weary way,
Shelters from storm and shades from solar ray,
Breathe one kind wish for her, one pious prayer,
Who made this sheltering tree her guardian care,
Fenced in from rude attacks the pendent shoots,
Nourished and framed its tender, infant shoots,
Traveller, if from milder climes you rove,
How dearly will you prize this Indian grove.
Pause then, awhile, and ere you pass it by,
Give to Sophia’s name one grateful sigh.

A.D.1820

The poem is in praise of the tree, but it is also a plea for a prayer to the writer “who made this sheltering tree her guardian care”. The writer was Sophia Marshall, wife of Henry Augustus Marshal, who lived in Wellawatte or Milagiriya from 1798-1841.

Next time you are in Wellawatte – spare a prayer for Sophia.

(see *The Ceylankan* February 2000, vol 3(1) for details)



Galle Road crossing Wellawatte Bridge 2010

COLONIAL GALLE

Hugh Karunanayake

The City of Galle was for many centuries the capital of the Southern Province. Until about the mid twentieth century it was self-sufficient socially and economically. It had its own harbour, railway links, department stores, hotels, schools, a hospital, a golf course, a racecourse, and cricket esplanade. There was little reason for people of Galle to travel to the metropolis as the needs of all classes were met locally. Travel from Colombo to Galle by steam powered train was a 3-hour journey and quite an adventure with a 15-minute stop for morning or afternoon tea at Aluthgama Station, served by liveried stewards employed by the caterer to the railways, JAD Victoria. With the development of motor transport and the onset of digital mass communication the tyranny of distance was conquered, and the quaint city of Galle rapidly assuming a suburban character serving as a satellite to the metropolis. A brief review of the history of Galle during the colonial era may provide some insights into the gradual metamorphosis of Galle from a Capital city to a suburban satellite town.

The First Colonialists

As early as in 2000 BC, spices such as cinnamon from Ceylon, and cassia from China found their way along the Spice Routes to the Middle East. Other goods were exchanged too - cargoes of ivory, silk, porcelain, metals and dazzling gemstones from Ceylon brought great profits to the traders who were prepared to risk the dangerous sea journeys. Arab traders were an entrepreneurial class which risked the high seas in often unseaworthy craft to ply their trade and thus formed links between countries which had little connection with others. The great navigators from Britain, Spain, Portugal and France made their sporadic links later, but their links were more lasting, with improvements in sailing craft and their ability to travel across the great oceans. It was in the early 16th century that the first conquistadors to Ceylon the Portuguese, arrived. The eminent historian Dr Colvin R de Silva described it thus “if the vagaries of wind and wave brought the Portuguese to Ceylon, the lure of cinnamon kept them here.”

At the time of the “unintended” Portuguese visit to Ceylon in 1505, the Kingdom of Kotte held sway over the island. The King Vijayabahu had three sons who rebelled against their father and established three different kingdoms. The rivalry between the three rulers gave the Portuguese the opportunity to expand their influence within the island. Being a maritime nation, Portugal found the island of Ceylon a useful outpost. Their attempts to conquer the island were however repulsed by the King of Kandy – Rajasingha II – who inflicted severe defeats on them. Nevertheless, the Portuguese had in the meantime, set up fortifications around the island including Colombo and Galle. The main entry into the country at the time was through the harbour of Galle. As a counter measure Rajasingha II entered into a treaty with the Dutch with the aim of driving the Portuguese out

of the island. Portuguese rule in the maritime areas was marked by their extreme cruelty and most feared systems of punishment meted out to the local inhabitants. The Portuguese reacted to the treaty by strengthening the fortifications in Galle and Colombo, more as a defence mechanism from a possible attack from the Sinhalese rather than from European nations. This theory was soon dispelled with the Dutch attacks on both Colombo and Galle. Colonial Galle very much centred around the Fort of Galle which was the de facto nucleus of the Southern Province.

The military campaign that ended with the Dutch laying siege to the Galle Fort and thereafter overrunning it, was led by Willem Jacob Koster who was the first Dutch Governor of Ceylon. With the King of Kandy Rajasingha II getting exasperated with the doings of the Portuguese he opportuned the Dutch and a treaty The Westerwald Treaty was signed at Batticaloa with Rajasingha II. Willem Jacob Koster signed on behalf of the Dutch and then led the onslaught on the Fort of Galle held by the Portuguese. On 13 March 1640, the combined troops under the command of Koster overpowered the Galle Fort and took over the city. As part of the agreement, Trincomalee was returned to the King. When Rajasingha learned that Koster was reluctant to return more of the conquered land, he had Koster and his seven companions killed near Nilgala on the way back from Kandy to Batticaloa—in August 1640. The Dutch ruled the



Killing of Koster- first Dutch governor 1640

maritime areas of Ceylon for the ensuing one and a half centuries until 1796 when it was ceded to the British. Meanwhile it left behind a legacy of Dutch culture including western oriented social customs and a substantial addition of blue eyes and fair skins to the local population mix! Some of the well-known Dutch families who lived within the Galle Fort and who continued to live there well into the British colonial period were the Anthonisz, De Vos, Ephraums, Bogaars, Arndt, Andree, Bartholomeusz, Jansz, Kalè, Ludovici, Colin-Thome, and Ludowyck families who have all contributed men and women of distinction who served Ceylon admirably in later years.

Here come the British!

The British conquest of Ceylon occurred during the wars of the French Revolution (1792–1801). When the

Netherlands came under French control, the British began to move into Ceylon from India. The Dutch surrendered the island in 1796. The British had thought the conquest would be temporary and administered the island from Chennai (Madras) in southern India. The war with France revealed Ceylon's strategic value, and the British consequently decided to make their hold on the island permanent. In 1802 Ceylon was made a Crown Colony, and, by the Treaty of Amiens with France, British possession of maritime Ceylon was confirmed. Ceylon continued to be a colony of Great Britain until independence was achieved in 1948 and granted dominion status. In 1972 the island became an independent Republic.

British Colonial Galle

Ever since 1815 when Ceylon came under total British rule, the customs and manners of the British including the widespread use of the English language took a dominant hold of the country. The language of administration, teaching in schools, were in English and social customs took a western oriented dominance. Although such circumstances did suffocate the development of indigenous culture especially the growth of social and religious activities and practices, there were elements of the local population who by reason of association with the British, or through their own entrepreneurial skills reached a level of near parity with the colonialists. Subsequent governmental policies and social pressures over the years have changed the fortunes of this class, and are mostly obliterated from the nation's psyche.

It has been said that the legacy of the Portuguese in Ceylon was the *baila* or *kaffringa* music, and the Roman Catholic religion, the Dutch left the country a rich legacy of a new ethnic group the Burghers who during the days of Dutch occupation and later during British rule, dominated the country's public service administration. As for the British, their legacy was indeed the English language, the judicial and administrative systems, the tea and rubber plantations, and of course the game of cricket.

According to Sri Lanka's most famous sports journalist the late SP Foenander, cricket was played in Galle as early as 1875, the year in which the Galle Cricket Club met a team of military cricketers who were stationed in the Southern Province. It has since been a nursery for fine national cricketers. EM Karunaratne a former master at Richmond College, and later one of the best criminal lawyers in the country, was associated with the many outstanding achievements of the Galle Cricket Club up to the mid twentieth century.

A stalwart institution in the South which was established in 1885 was the Galle Gymkhana Club. Its first Secretary was Charles P Hayley co-founder of the firm Hayley and Kenney, and flourishing today as Hayleys PLC Ltd. Initially the Galle Gymkhana Club was limited to European residents, but with the increasing popularity of horse racing, Ceylonese participation was inevitable. The Ceylon Turf Club which was the umbrella organisation which sponsored horse racing throughout the island, had its headquarters at

the Colombo racecourse, but the Christmas meet was always at Galle in the Boosa racecourse in Gintota. Initially the Gymkhana Club had its meet on the Galle esplanade but it was restricted due to inadequacy of land available. The shift to Boosa took place in 1922 with the acquisition of over 70 plots of land from private ownership. The conveyancing and clearing of titles were completed by leading Galle lawyer RAH de Vos. The sweepstakes conducted by the Galle Gymkhana Club shoe horned many an impoverished person into a comfortable existence.

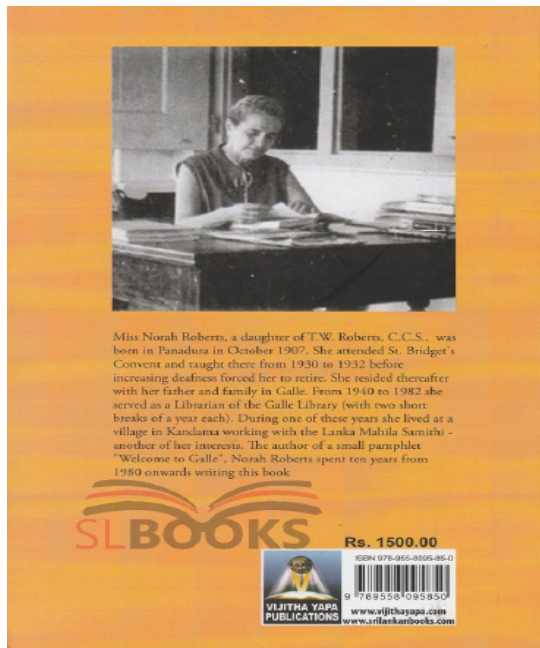
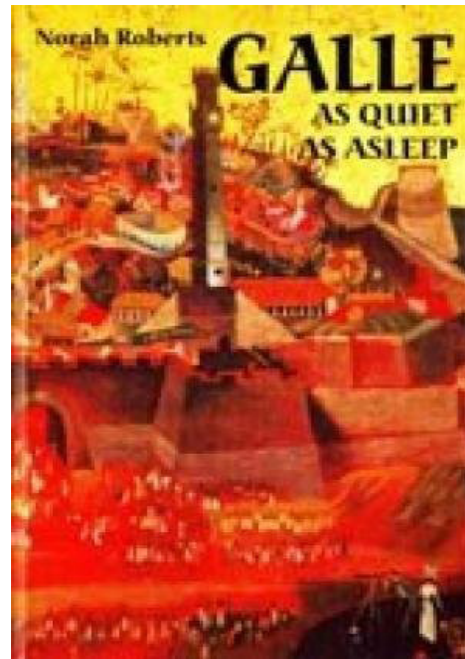
Both Aitken Spence and Co and today's Hayleys PLC owe their establishment to Galle; EG Spence the founding partner of Aitken Spence and Charles P Hayley having established their companies originally in Galle. Walker Sons & Co had its branch in Galle. Another leading firm based in Galle was E Coates & Co which did not venture out beyond the Southern City. Arthur Ephraums who founded the departmental store A.R Ephraums Cooperative Co, Ltd Galle, was based in the Galle Fort. Its departments included wines, spirits, cigarettes, groceries, fancy goods, drugs, haberdashery, patent medicines etc. All provided from its extensive two storied building in the Fort. Arthur Ephraums went on to become a leading hotelier having founded the New Oriental Hotel, in Galle and also owned the Grand Hotel Mount Lavinia, and several restaurants in the Fort in Colombo

The large tea and rubber plantations of the Southern Province used Galle as its centre of operations and many plantation owners were either based in Galle or used the city for its commercial operations. Some prominent estate owners from the South include the Amarasuriya family, whose original family home (since gifted to the government) still stands at Unawatuna, the Perera/Abeywardenes of Closenberga, Mudaliyar Gooneratne of Atapattu Walauwwa, and many other prominent land owners too numerous to mention here. As for hotels and hostelry, there were many hotels within the Galle Fort and in the Wackwella area catering to tourist arrivals at the time the Galle harbour was the main point of entry into the country. Most of them were located within the Fort and included the Oriental Hotel, the Commercial Hotel, the Old Mansion Hotel, Eglinton Hotel, Sea View Hotel, and the Talbot Town Hotel. Most of these hotels had to close down due to lack of tourist arrivals after the opening of the Southwest Breakwater in the Colombo Harbour in 1870.



THE CITY OF GALLE- mural by Donald Friend, 1961

The railway to Galle was established in 1894. The southern city was till then, only accessible from Colombo by the Galle Royal Mail Coach which carried mail and passengers from and to Colombo. There were four rivers to be crossed all by Ferry at Gintota, Bentota, Kalutara and Panadura. Life in the 19th and early 20th Century Galle was slow paced, peaceful, and pleasant. Socially the city was stratified by class, caste, and skin colour, which all combined to form a revolution of “rising expectations” to hit the whole country in the 1950s. Although this writer is tempted to use the much hackneyed phrase “the rest is history” he would urge readers to have an in depth and detailed account of Galle as it stood from the encyclopaedic work of Norah Roberts in “*Galle, as Quiet as Asleep*” first published in 1993, and revised in 2005.



Australia's 'Play of the Year 2019' had a Sri Lankan theme: review of *Counting and Cracking* and its sequel

Thiru Arumugam

Australia's 'Play of the Year 2019' had a Sri Lankan theme. The title of this original play is *Counting and Cracking*. The title is derived from a definition of democracy which says that "Democracy means the counting of heads, within certain limits, and the cracking of heads beyond those limits." Sounds familiar. The play was written by S Shakthidharan who says that he is "an Australian storyteller with Sri Lankan heritage and Tamil ancestry". He had this to say about the play:

The story became less about fitting my community into a simple narrative, and more about presenting a group of people in all their glorious complexity. It became less about discovering 'the truth' of what happened in Sri Lanka, or what brought us to Australia, and more about understanding the stage as a sacred place where many truths can gather at once ... It's a story in which migrants are not asked to discard parts of themselves to fit in, but instead are asked to present their full selves, to expand our idea of what this country can be ... And finally, it's a story about reconciliation, between parents and children, between neighbours and enemies, between your new home and your old home, between society and institutions.

The play was directed by Eamon Flack. Anandavalli (Shakthidharan's mother) was the Cultural and Costume Advisor. The play was presented by Belvoir Street Theatre and Co-Curious and was staged at the Sydney Town Hall as part of the Sydney Festival from 11 January to 02 February 2019, to full houses. It was also staged in Adelaide from 02 to 09 March 2019 as part of the Adelaide Festival. In 2022, forty members of the cast and crew went on an UK Tour and performed at the Edinburgh International Festival from 08 to 14 August and at the Birmingham Festival from 19 to 27 August 2022. The play received rave reviews from the British media including the prestigious *Times* newspaper.

Reviews of the Play

When the play was performed in Sydney it received very favourable reviews. "*The AU Review*" gave it five stars out of five and had this to say about the play:

It's about how migrants manage to forge that new identity in a new land, against odds ... I can only say that this is an urgent work of high importance, and the fact that it exists (and to great acclaim) can only change our theatre landscape for the better. Its joy and its sorrow, and its challenges and histories are far more rewarding than its rather amazing production values. That it essentially tells a truer Australian story – with its core in Western Sydney – while crossing a myriad of boundaries – colour, language, setting and casting – is its greatest strength.

The "*Arts Hub*" review of the play also rated it at five stars and comments were as follows:

Settings span across Sydney and Sri Lanka, Ceylon as it was, the production also ranges across timelines ... With an ensemble of astonishing depth, Director Eamon Flack has been able to strip the production of excessive place setting and populate the evocatively earthy,

gravelly floored, bare stage with actors who speak in other languages ... The entrances and movement around the set balances the freneticism of the sub-continent with an apparent effortlessness of intimacy on the large stage ... The emotive and lyrically beautiful live music is wonderful to listen to and be carried away on and soundscapes, from early morning beach birdsong to Colombo cacophony, are used to considerable effect.

Cassie Tongue writing in "*Time Out*" magazine gave the play a rave review. Excerpts of the review are:

This is a story of refuge, love, power and identity, and despite its three and a half hour running time, it flies by, as easy and essential as breathing ... It is staggering that this is Shakthidharan's debut play, because its narrative structure is tight and artful, its dialogue is pitched almost entirely at the intersection between head and heart, and its story is epic in scale, but never sprawling ... And Shakthidharan's ear for dialogue is very good: almost every single line seems well-judged, and never ignores the so-human reality of happiness, trauma and other emotions occurring simultaneously. This is not an easy thing to pull off, because it's complex and hard to balance ... Flack's direction is expansive and generous; every character shines, and moments linger for the right amount of time before moving to the next ... And this is a story about Australia's national identity as much as it is Sri Lanka's – what it means to live here, what it means to form community, and who we are to others ...

It's only January, but we have an early contender for the best play of the year in *Counting and Cracking*. And we certainly won't see another play like it any time soon.

Awards won by *Counting and Cracking*

The last statements in the excerpts from the *Time Out* magazine review quoted above turned out to be prophetic. The annual Helpmann Awards recognise distinguished artistic achievement and excellence in the many disciplines of Australia's live performance sectors. They are Australia's equivalent of New York's Tony Awards for Broadway Theatre and London's Laurence Olivier Awards for West End Theatre.

The 2019 Helpmann Award ceremony was held on 15 July 2019 at the Arts Centre, Melbourne and was televised live by ABC Television. *Counting and Cracking* won no less than seven awards and it therefore has an undisputed claim to be 'Australia's Play of the Year 2019'. The Awards won were:

Best Production of a Play: *Counting and Cracking*

Best Direction of a Play: Eamon Flack and S Shakthidharan

Best Male Actor in a Play: Prakash Belawadi

Best Female Actor in a Supporting Role in a Play: Vaishnavi Suryaprakash

Best New Australian Work: Eamon Flack and S Shakthidharan

Best Scenic Design: *Counting and Cracking*

Best Sound Design: *Counting and Cracking*

In addition to the above awards, Anthonythasan Jesuthasan was nominated for Best Male Actor in a Supporting Role in a Play but did not win the award. He was born in Ceylon and is now based in Paris and has acted in several European films. He played the lead role as a Ceylonese refugee who comes to France in the French film *Dheepan*. The film won the Palme d'Or at the 2015 Cannes Film Festival.

The script of *Counting and Cracking* by Shakthidharan and Flack was published in book form and won numerous awards. The awards were: Joint winner of the 2015 New South Wales Philip Parsons Fellowship for Emerging Playwrights (Award value \$22,500); 2020 New South Wales Premier's Nick Enright Prize for Playwriting (Award value \$30,000); 2020 Victorian Premier's Prize for Literature (Award value \$100,000) and also the Prize for Drama (Award value \$25,000). The penultimate item is Australia's richest literary award. The award value even exceeds the value of the internationally famous Booker Prize which was won in 2022 by Sri Lanka's Shehan Karunatilaka for his book *The Seven Moons of Maali Almeida*.

Background of *Counting and Cracking*

The theme of the play spans four generations of a family and scenes alternate between Milagiriya Avenue in Colombo and Western Sydney in 1956, 1983 and 2004. The framework of the play is very loosely based on playwright Shakthidharan's great-grandfather, C Suntharalingam (called Apah in the play) and three succeeding generations. Within this true framework, fictional stories have been incorporated in the play. Who is this C Suntharalingam (whose brother C Nagalingam was Acting Governor-General in 1954)? Suntharalingam was a maverick politician who was born in Urumpirai, Jaffna in 1895. He was a student at St Joseph's College, Colombo where in 1910 he obtained several distinctions in the Cambridge Junior Examination and was the only candidate outside England who obtained a distinction in Chemistry. In 1913 he obtained several distinctions in the Cambridge Senior Examination. In Pure Mathematics he was second in the world and was awarded a scholarship to study at University College, London which he entered in 1915. He graduated in 1917 with First Class honours in Mathematics and was first in order of merit. In 1918 he was admitted to Balliol College, Oxford and was awarded an Exhibition, being the first Ceylonese to obtain a scholarship or exhibition to any Oxford College. He graduated in 1920 with a Double First Class in the Maths Tripos and was also awarded an Oxford Blue in Chess.

In what he described as "a second string to my bow", he enrolled as a Barrister-at-Law at Gray's Inn in London, having passed the Criminal Law Examination in First Class and coming first in order of merit of all the candidates in the Roman-Dutch Law Examination. He sat for the Civil Service Examination and was selected and posted to the Ceylon Civil Service. He returned to Ceylon in 1921 to take up this appointment. His career in the CCS lasted only about a year "as he was bored signing gun licences and approving chena cultivation permits".

He resigned from the CCS and joined the Ceylon University College in 1922 as Professor of Mathematics, being the first holder of this post and the first Ceylonese Professor in this College. In 1940 he resigned from this post as a protest against the appointment of Ivor Jennings as Principal of the College. He "warned the Minister that he was committing a grave blunder in having a Welsh Principal who had no knowledge of Ceylon and its people".

He started practising law and got interested in politics. He was elected as the Independent MP for Vavuniya in the 1947 General Elections. He was appointed Minister for Trade and Commerce in D S Senanayake's UNP Government. He had a chequered career as a politician, resigning on matters of principle and re-contesting his parliamentary seat several times. He passed away in 1985.

Synopsis of *Counting and Cracking*

Counting and Cracking has three Acts and a running time of about three and a half hours. The first scene of the first Act is set on the banks of the Georges River in South Sydney in 2004. Radha and her 21-year-old son Siddhartha (Sid) ceremoniously cast the ashes of her mother into the river. She brought the ashes with her when she migrated to Australia in 1983. The second scene is set in a Colombo jail in 2004 and we are introduced to a prisoner named Thirru. In the third scene, set in Coogee, Sydney in 2004 we are introduced to Lily, Sid's girl friend who is of Aboriginal origin. Sid tells her that his great-grandfather, whom the family called Apah, was a famous politician in Ceylon. In 1983 civil disturbances broke out in Ceylon Sid says that his mother Radha, who was pregnant, migrated to Australia. Sid says that he was born in Liverpool Hospital, south of Sydney, in 1983. In scene four Radha says that her husband Thirru was killed in the disturbances in Ceylon 21 years ago. Scene six is set in 2004 in a house in Milagiriya Avenue, Colombo (this was the family home of the Suntharalingam clan). Thirru, who has now been released from jail, enters and asks the householder Sunil: "where is my wife Radha?". Sunil says that he bought the house from Radha and that she has migrated to Australia. Thirru is given money and help to go to Australia as a boat refugee. In the final scene in Act 1, Radha gets a phone call to say that her husband Thirru is still alive.

Act 2 starts off with a flashback to the Milagiriya house in 1957. Apah (who is in his late fifties) is talking to Bala, an itinerant fruit seller. Apah tells him that Radha (his granddaughter) was born yesterday. He reflects on his life – from Urumpirai to Cambridge to Parliament where he is now a Minister. Bala thanks Apah for financing his start in business which is now doing very well and that he has a son named Thirru.

Scene 2 is set in Radha's apartment in Sydney in 2004. She gets a phone call from Thirru to say that he is on his way to Australia.

Scene 3 goes back to Milagiriya in 1977. Apah's wife Acha is trying to promote an arranged marriage for Radha, but she refuses saying that she is in love with Bala's son Thirru. He has qualified as

an engineer with financial support from Apah. Thirru receives a note from the LTTE that as he is the eldest son in his family, he must join them.

In Scene 4, which is set in Sydney in 2004, there is a message from Thirru that he has reached Indonesia and is waiting for a boat to take him to Australia. He eventually reaches Australia and applies for asylum and an opportunity for resettlement.

Act 3 starts off with scenes from Colombo in 1983. Civil disturbances have started in Colombo. Radha's mother phones her from Australia and tells her that the Australian Government has started issuing humanitarian visas for entry into Australia and asks her to apply for a visa. Apah gets a heart attack and passes away.

In Scene 3 Apah's funeral is completed and his ashes are given to Radha for disposal in an appropriate manner. Thirru cannot be traced after extensive searches and is presumed dead. Sunil offers to buy the Milagiriya Avenue house for cash and Radha agrees. In the final scene Radha leaves for Australia and arrives there. Thirru walks into her apartment. Radha introduces Siddhartha to the father he has never met until now. Radha says:

I loved Sri Lanka. I still do. Not just the people, but the land itself. I miss it. Every day. You know, if I had stayed for just one more week – I might never have left. Most probably I would not have left ...

The Sequel: *The Jungle and the Sea*

Emboldened by the success of *Counting and Cracking* the production group created a sequel titled '*The Jungle and the Sea*'. The sequel was written and directed by Shakthidharan and Eamon Flack and Anandavalli (Shakthidharan's mother and granddaughter of C Suntharalingam) was the Set and Costume Designer. About half the cast, including the main character Prakash Belawadi, had acted in *Counting and Cracking*.

Newcomer to the cast was 75-year-old Anandavalli in her first acting role, after appearing on stage as a dancer for more than five decades. She migrated to Australia in 1984 and in 1987 formed the Lingalayam Dance Academy. This Academy is unique as an Australian Indian Dance Company and has contributed over the years to the continuing survival and evolution of an ancient art form, specialising in the Indian classical dance forms of Bharatha Natyam and Kuchipudi.

The Jungle and the Sea was performed at the Belvoir Street Theatre in Sydney to packed houses from 12 November to 18 December 2022. A unique feature of the production was that it was performed on a continuously rotating stage. Belvoir Street Theatre describes the play as follows:

A mother, in a time of war. Members of her family go missing, one after the other – but she never loses hope. A rich sweeping new play that combines two great pillars of literature – the *Mahabharata* and *Antigone* – with the untold histories of the Sri Lankan civil war to forge a new story about surviving loss, discovering love and building a path to justice.

Playwright Shakthidharan has this comment about his play:

During war, life goes on. Even amidst violence and degradation there is still love, determination, cheekiness and delight. *Counting and Cracking* was written in honour of those who tried to halt Sri Lanka's descent into civil war. *The Jungle and the Sea* is written in honour of those who lived through the war and the ways they found to uphold their dignity even when everything else was falling down around them ... That a Sri Lankan story, with an international ensemble might be part of the new normal here in Australian arts industry does feel like a genuine change. It needs to be a change that will continue.

Reviews of *The Jungle and the Sea*

The Jungle and the Sea received very favourable reviews in the Australian media. Some excerpts from reviews are given below:

Time Out (magazine):

Shakthidharan and Flack's text is informative and layered in its representation of the beliefs and experiences of the Sri Lankan communities. The play honours multiple languages, faiths, cultures and different philosophies, but never ventures into pointing fingers or siding with one. Instead, it portrays a reality of war, one in which every individual is doing what they believe is right, and interrogates the systems which create the notion of "right" in the first place ... Anandavalli, a prolific performer and dancer in her own right, is stoic, bringing the audience to tears in the play's final moments ... This is the show to watch in Sydney right now, best book your tickets before it sells out."

The Age (newspaper):

Although essentially about one family, it is epic in its ambition, sprawling across time (15 years), geography (traversing not just Sri Lanka, but stretching to Sydney's Bennelong restaurant), literary sources (from *Mahabharata* to *Antigone*) and from words to music and dance. Not since Opera Australia's 1980s production of *Fiddler on the Roof* have I seen a piece of theatre where the use of a revolve in the staging is so intrinsic to the story telling. Continuously rotating at subtly fluctuating tempos, the revolve is both map and clock.

Sydney Morning Herald (newspaper):

Extraordinary ... this dares to dream on an epic scale.

The Guardian (newspaper):

Another achievement of sustained feeling and empathy, of insight into chaos, power and the human instinct for joy and survival.

Limelight (arts magazine):

There are many strong women in this play, but the majesty and the dignity which Anandavalli brings to her role is nonpareil ... Of course, the power of this moment was cumulative; dependent upon the immense, vivid tapestry of characters and journeys and emotions that had come before ... Melting the distinction between the epic and the ordinary, there is a great, free flowing generosity of spirit to this production ... I tried to tell some of what I've written to my partner, earlier today. But I couldn't; I literally broke into sobs. It's a soaring achievement to end the 2022 Belvoir season, carried by an extraordinary international ensemble. Hugely recommended.

At the Sydney Theatre 2022 Award Ceremony held on 23 January 2023, *The Jungle and the Sea* won four awards as follows: Best Mainstage Production, Best New Australian Work, Best Ensemble and Best Original Score. Will *The Jungle and the Sea* achieve Helpmann awards comparable with *Counting and Cracking*? We will know the results in a few months' time.

Scene from *Counting and Cracking*:
Young Radha (Vaishnavi Suriyaparakash) and Young
Thirru (Kaivalya Suvarna)



Scene from *Counting and Cracking*:
Standing - Older Radha (Nadie Kammallaweera)
Seated from left - Radha's son Siddhartha (Shiv Palekar)
and Hindu Priest (Gandhi Macintyre)



Set from *Counting and
Cracking*

Promotional photograph for *The Jungle and The Sea*:
Madhu (Nadie Kammallaweera) and Gowrie (Anandavalli)



(Photo credits: Belvoir Street Theatre)

A BEND IN THE MAHAWELI – Chapters 1 and 2

Ernest Macintyre

EDITOR'S NOTE: These chapters form part of a short 12-chapter memoir of Ernest Macintyre's time in Peradeniya. It is intended that the remaining chapters of this memoir will be serialized in coming issues of this journal. The characters are drawn from Ernest's play *Rasanayagam's Last Riot*, written and performed in 1996.

Ernest Macintyre, *Rasanayagam's Last Riot*, (Colombo: Vijitha Yapa, 1996)

Rasa, the fictional character in this story, is the same Rasanayagam of the 1996 play. In fictional time the play is a sequel to this story. In real time the play is a prequel to this story. While this story is not dependent on the play, the play gets the close relationship of its three characters from a Peradeniya story.

Chapter 1 – Room Mates

Jayatilleka Hall of Residence



The story now begins with Philip Fernando a Colombo student and Siddharthan Rasanayagam, a young man from Jaffna.

When Philip was deposited, by his van from the railway station, at Jayatilleka Hall, he was, like others, instructed by a hall sub warden, to go to the notice board to find out his allocated room number and with whom he would be sharing it. He looked, and the name of his roommate was one S. Rasanayagam. A little later, there was S. Rasanayagam standing near his bed, a little timidly, waiting to see who his roommate would be. When Philip Fernando introduced himself, "I'm Philip Fernando from St. Peter's Colombo", he sort of apologised, to Colombo, "I am S. Rasanayagam from Jaffna Hindu College, Vannarponnai". Philip smiled and said that he had no idea of a place called Vannarponnai. "It is in Jaffna peninsula", volunteered Rasanayagam. "That I guessed", laughed Philip. And so, they got talking and trying to get to know each other. After a while Philip asked Rasanayagam what his first name was. He said it was "Siddharthan". It is a practice in Lanka to shorten names. Philip felt uneasy, about calling his roommate, "Sid" because the abbreviation seemed to suggest an Anglo violation of a name with profound Asian associations. But even before this thought was halfway through, Rasanayagam interjected.

"Buddhism is not unknown to Tamils. In the fifth century it was the religion of the majority of Tamils in south India, but gradually Hinduism with Bakthi came in and absorbed it. *Manimekalai*, one of the famous works of Tamil literature, is a great Buddhist text of that period" "Yes, I have read about the Buddhist era of south India." Philip said, adding, "I have heard of *Manimekalai*, but what is it about?"

"It is about this beautiful woman, Manimekalai daughter of the married man Kovalan of the earlier epic *Sillapathiharam*."

"I have heard of that epic", Philip came in.

"Yes, that epic comes before *Manimekalai*, and Kovalan of the first epic, initially strayed into the arms of Madhavi, a loose woman, and they gave birth to the beautiful Manimekhalai who eventually became a Buddhist nun on the island of Nainativu, near Jaffna.

"Sinhalese call that island, 'Nagadeepa', interrupted Philip.

"Yes, and both Sinhalese and Tamils don't want to know about Manimekhalai", Rasanayagam added.

"Why" asked Philip.

Rasanayagam laughed, "Sinhalese, because Manimekhalai is Tamil, though Buddhist, and Tamils because she is Buddhist though Tamil!"

They both started laughing, Philip then said, "It will be different in Peradeniya". He mentioned how he met a Tamil girl in the train.

"Ah?", was all Rasanayagam could utter.

Philip went on to explain that in the train on the way from Colombo to Peradeniya one of the females who sat in the same compartment was an old girl of Ladies College, Colombo. They got talking and it was not long, in fact when they had reached Kadugannawa, about three hours out of Colombo, that Philip felt an attraction for her. Sita Ramanathan appeared to respond. They continued talking, and both knew that what they spoke about was driven, not by the subject matter but by an attraction for each other. Philip came to a point in the conversation with this newfound Sita when he said, "That's a long and complicated subject, we can talk some other time. That was enough of a hint that he would like to meet her further. She got the hint. "When" she asked. Philip said shyly, "Why not this evening?". He then told Rasanayagam that this morning before coming to his room he had phoned a Colombo friend, who was a second-year senior at Peradeniya about some other matter but included mention of this Sita he had met. His friend's reaction was, "In Peradeniya these things happen quickly or don't happen at all, out of the blue."

"I am happy you have Tamil connections, because I have no Sinhala connections, till I met you today," Rasanayagam said.

"Have you not known any Sinhalese people, before today?" Philip asked, laughing. Rasa explained that his parents did not have much money, for travelling outside Jaffna. So, he had not been to Colombo or other places of Sinhalese people. There were some Sinhalese people "who came and went", as Rasa put it, whom he had met, "That's all". And the people who owned and ran the bakery in Jaffna, whenever he went to get bread. Rasa explained that the bread baking business in Jaffna was a Sinhalese occupation. Philip asked why, and Rasa's explanation was that the Portuguese had first introduced bread in the Sinhalese south, but it found no favour in Tamil areas where shoru, thosai, vaddai, iddaly and pongal, would fill the stomachs of Tamils, leaving no room for a Portuguese addition.

"But Siddharthan, the Sinhalese also like thosais with sambar and vaddais"

"Oh? I did not know" Siddharthan responded.

Rasanayagam concluded this segment of their getting to know each other, with, "But forget my Siddharthan first name, everybody calls me Rasa". And so it was, that Philip and Rasa were what these room-mates of Jayatilleka Hall became.

Rasa said that, for him, from now everything will change. "Once I graduate, I will have to work, anywhere in Sri Lanka where there are jobs, or where my job will make me go". He went on to say he is therefore keen to know spoken Sinhala, at the least, for a start.

"Philip, as my roommate, I have a favour to ask. Would you help by getting me going by introducing spoken Sinhalese, to me?"

Philip laughed, "I don't know, I automatically speak in English".

"I had a good education in English at Jaffna Hindu College, now I want to try to get used to Sinhalese".

"I don't know, I'll try when I can.", Philip conceded. "About thosais and vaddais there is a song in Sinhala. We call it a Baila song, and Philip sang, "*Sinhala hotele paang kaala bari-wela, thang thosai masala vaddai!*"

"What does it mean?" Rasa asked.

"Enough eating bread in the Sinhalese hotel, now thosai masala vaddai"

The next thing Rasa said, getting up from his bed where he had been seated all the time, was "I want to have a bath, after that long train journey. I hope there is a vali in the bathroom".

Philip seized the moment to accede to Rasa's request to teach him spoken Sinhala "Say *Baldiya*, not *Vali*". Philip said, laughing as he explained. The Portuguese introduced the metal bucket to Lanka, they call it *Balde*. Sinhala has a *ba* sound, so we say *Baldiya*, I don't know why Tamils say "*Vali*" when you too have a "*ba*" like in Balasubramaniam. So your children will say "Va Va vlack sheep, have you any Vool?"

Rasa said learning his first Sinhala word, "I hope they have a *Baldiya* in the bathroom".

"Well said Rasa! But there won't be a *Baldiya*, because we have showers in Peradeniya".

"Oh, so that lesson was all in vain" Rasa laughed.

"Oh no! "Philip corrected, "You have begun learning spoken Sinhala with "*Baldiya*", now go have your shower."

Rasa moved into the bathrooms around the corner.

And so began the process of teaching Rasa spoken colloquial Sinhalese. The next four weeks was a convenient period for the teaching, because the academic term would take time to go into full swing, and more important, the seniors would arrive on campus after four weeks. Once the seniors arrived, the ragging of freshers would begin. That had a history. Being four weeks away, thoughts about ragging were not in their minds.

After Rasa's shower they were reminded by sounds of movement in the corridor outside their room that freshers were going for their first lunch. The dining hall was at one end of the corridor. It was large and rectangular, with long dining tables, running the length. Benches for diners, were on either side of the tables. As they were settling in one could see a social design forming. Colombo school undergrads, chose to sit together, so did young men from Jaffna schools, and those from schools from other provinces. A natural tendency.

Rasa deviated. He planted himself next to Philip and did enjoy a well-cooked lunch of rice and curry, with English conversation as an accompaniment. His hopes for it being Sinhala, in pursuit of his programme was soon out of his mind as he enjoyed a "Pol Mallung" and got to know the word from his English-speaking fellow diners.

After lunch Philip told Rasa he would go to the other end of the corridor, and step outside, to buy a cigarette from the hall canteen, and then return to their room. Rasa said he would like to see the canteen, and so accompanied Philip. As one stepped outside the hall, the canteen was seen deeper on the left. It was a small garage, leased out to a middle-aged man named "Davith". He wore a sarong and shirt, and had his hair tied into a small knot at the back. This knot of hair seemed to interest Rasa. When they met Davith, Rasa was very happy that Philip and Davith spoke in Sinhala. He listened intently. After Philip purchased his single cigarette for some cents, as was the way economic circumstances of the average undergraduate had restricted the smoking habit, they went back to their room. On the way Rasa asked, "What is that small knot, Davith ties his hair into, at the back, called in Sinhalese?". "*Konde*", said Philip. Rasa made mental note, adding, "There is some connection with Tamil, we call it "*Kondai*". "Close enough", said Philip.

They both had good afternoon naps. In the evening, Philip was getting ready to walk to Sangamitta Hall to meet Sita Ramanathan. He asked Rasa, "What are you going to do this evening?". "I will stay in the room till you come back", responded Rasa. Philip thought awhile and suggested, "Why don't you walk down with me to Sangamitta, I'll introduce you to Sita I met in the train this morning, before we go to talk during a stroll."

“Will I be in the way?” Rasa asked.

“I didn’t say I’ll take you also when I stroll with Sita, you walk back to Jayatilleka”, Philip laughed.

The introduction went well enough, with Rasa happy that he had met a Colombo Tamil. Whenever they crossed paths in the lecture theatre areas, in the next four weeks, they would stop and talk. And Rasa used the opportunities, to also enhance his learning of spoken Sinhala, which Sita, the Colombo Tamil, helped him with.

Chapter 2 – Kulturs and O’Facs: English in Colonial Times



The rapid building up of this relationship between Philip, Sita and Rasa, by the chance of the two men being roommates, went on alongside a social structure introduced into the Peradeniya of the 1950’s, the Kulturs and the O’Facs.

Old Ceylon it was that gave the island some of the best and enduring about the human condition, and they were works in Sinhala. Martin Wickremasinghe’s *Changing Village*, or *Gamperaliya* and Sarachchandra’s and Peradeniya’s *Maname*, to mention only two, for economy.

Quite apart from the novel, *Gamperaliya* it was, when Ceylon in 1948 introduced free education. This changed significantly life and opportunity for the young of rural Ceylon. At university level it showed in the large number of students entering in the 1950s, with Sinhala as their natural language of living. The Colombo and other urban city schools sent in students for whom English was their long colonial inherited mother tongue.

In the country at large urban English-speaking people and Sinhala speaking rural ones lived separate lives. But concentrated together in a residential location consciousness of each other became noticeable.

Before going into this cultural division, it is necessary to say a little about the English language, because the Kultur / O’Facs divide had much to do with English being the sustenance of one, and its vacancy in the other.

Sinhalese and Tamils, before the ethnic issue was pushed in by the middle classes of Ceylon in 1956, were not a social divide because they were geographically divided, anyway. They occupied separate parts of the island, Sinhalese in the south, central and northern areas below the Jaffna peninsula. Tamils in the north and east.

Those Tamils who had been attracted by what the capital city of Colombo had to offer materially, were not of consequence in numbers before 1905. In 1905 when the first railway train service from Kankesanthurai to Colombo was begun the numbers increased, of Tamils who wanted to make Colombo their life. Like the Sinhalese middle classes of Colombo, they became westernised, sent their children to schools such as Royal College, St. Thomas’s, Ladies and Bishop’s College. English became their language of communication and thought, like the westernised Sinhalese. Colombo’s middle classes, Tamil and Sinhalese homed in on English as their cultural language. The use of the native languages amongst these colonised classes was sparing and colloquial, with domestic servants and street vendors who came to the door.

The significant result was that class submerged race or ethnicity with the westernised Sinhalese and Tamils of Colombo. When many Sinhalese of Colombo protected Tamils during the much later ethnic killings, they were protections of their class. The protected Tamils were not of the classes like the used bottle collectors who came down the road. Not deliberate but social circumstance.

While culture was inconsequential and seemed to be one and the same amongst Colombo’s westernised Sinhalese and Tamils, in the large rural areas of Ceylon it was very different. Especially as this poorer majority could not benefit from school education which had to be purchased before 1948. Theirs were Sinhala and Tamil derived cultures. In ancient times whatever reading and writing they had was from Buddhist and Hindu temples, which had thousands of years of being the only places where reading and writing could be learnt. And this temple offering was not entirely religious. It was secular as well, though limited. And before the first Christian missionaries started schools that taught English, such as Richmond College Galle in 1876, there were limited rural schools teaching only in Sinhala. Piyadasa Sirisena born 1875 and died 1945 is relevant. There are three schools that



he took his early education which were Warahena school, Induruwa, Bentara school of Bentota and Brohier’s school at Aluthgama, a missionary school where he learned basic English. He could not use English for literary creations. He is widely considered the father of the Sinhala novel, though they were more like Buddhist sermons. He was the most popular novelist of the era. Suggestions that the form of the novel was not entirely a British colonial importation.

In 1948 Education Minister C.W.W. Kan-nangara introduced free education island wide which eventually produced a class of people, mainly rural, who were cultured through their native languages, not through English, though some English began to be taught in the island -wide free education.

To be probably a little desultory, a brief reference to the history of English. That English came to Lanka through being colonized had social relevance at that time, but today has lost that significance because it has become a world language through the historical fact of the European “finding” and British founding of the United States of America, the world impact of which spread the language both for physical science and social sciences as well as world trade and political communication between nation states.

To deviate a little, English originating from Germanic tribes which brought it to Britain, was like all languages progressively invented. English has acquired some casual comparison to maths in its universality and its independence from cultures, unlike a cultural language, Mathematics, did not originate in any culture but was in nature before human existence. Humans discovered its existence.

Einstein’s $E=mc^2$ is the world’s most famous equation, **Energy equals mass times the speed of light squared**. On the most basic level, the equation says that energy and mass (matter) are interchangeable; they are different forms of the same thing. This physical relationship existed in nature before Einstein, before any human. What Einstein did was to discover what existed and give it a formal equation.

The spiral arrangements of leaves on a stem, and the number of petals, and spirals in flower heads during the development of most plants, represent successive numbers in the famous series discovered in the thirteenth century by the Italian mathematician **Fibonacci**, in which each number is the sum of the previous.

English cannot aspire to this no culture universality because it is manmade, not discovered in nature. So, it will show, unlike maths, cultural variation. However, this will not be significant enough to become separate languages in different cultures. Free education in Sri Lanka made English possible across social strata, even though very limited. It took time before the Colombo school class realized that the English-based “Kulturs” was a passing phenomenon of “culture” closely associated with English.

Though Philip and Sita were from English speaking Colombo schools, they didn’t appear to be active in the “O’Fac” and “Kultur” engagement, though aware of the classification in the minds of a segment of Peradeniya students. The origin of the expression “Kultur” may be vaguely associated with the German expression “*Kultur Kampf*”, or generally associated with those who were supposed to be cultured. The origin of its use in Peradeniya is from the Colombo schools. Certainly, the utterance of the term in the Peradeniya of the mid nineteen fifties was amongst the Colombo school-undergrads. The undergrads of the Oriental Faculty were not as involved in this classification as the other “*Kampf*”.

Whatever social phenomena appearing in Peradeniya had to have its base and origin in the country outside.

There is a story about the opening of *Maname* in November 1956 at the Lionel Wendt Theatre in Colombo, that suggests “Kultur” and “O’Fac” was brought into Peradeniya by a segment of Colombo. The extract is from “*Maname in Retrospect*” by Professor K.N.O. Dharmadasa, in *The Island* newspaper, 5 June 2013:

As far as popular taste of the day was concerned the Sinhala theatre was an art form in the periphery, no one being prepared to buy a ticket for a performance except as a matter of charity. This the university students learnt when they tried to walk to houses in the environs of the Lionel Wendt Theatre on the four days, they stayed during the time of first performance. Sarachchandra himself recounted in his autobiographical *Pin Eti Sarasavi Waramak Denne* an incident he faced on the second or the third night. He was seated in the foyer while the play was in progress and all of a sudden, a limousine came to a halt at the entrance and a well-dressed woman walked in. She asked, “What is being staged here today?” and being told that it was a Sinhala play wanted to know when it was going to be over. When Sarachchandra told her that it would be over in two hours she was not prepared to believe him. “What! A Sinhala play being over in two hours? I am sure it will go on till about 9 or 10 pm” Then Sarachchandra told her that he was pretty sure of the duration of the play and if she was keen to see it, she could get in without any payment and leave whenever she wanted. The lady looked disdainfully at Sarachchandra and declared “Shih! I don’t want to see these Sinhala plays. I only wanted to send my servant woman and she cannot be allowed to waste three four hours here” and walked away.

Three much repeated fictions constructed by the Kulturs, indicates that it was English that divided the two groups.

One Dr. Andipala a lecturer in Oriental culture, on board ship as he was on his way to London, had an old Englishman sit by his side on deck. The Englishman complained, “I’m aching from Arthritis”. Andipala responded, “Hello, I am Andipala from Sabaragamuwa”. The same Dr. Andipala was given a lift by Mrs. Doric de Souza on way to a lecture. When he was dropped at his destination, he said “Thank you”. She responded in her western orientation, customarily “Don’t mention”. In this made-up story of the Kulturs, he blushed and said shyly, “You also don’t mention”.

Ramanathan Hall, the tallest of the residential halls, was the only one with a lift. A kultur fiction of the time was that Andipala on his first visit to his hall remarked, ambiguously:

“I was highly taken up by the lift!” The Kulturs did not give him the benefit of the doubt.

In the meantime, *Maname* gathered momentum, largely unknown to the Kulturs, though happening in their times and in the same territory.

Undoubtedly, there were segments that cut across this mental and social divide, both amongst students and lecturers. Ludowyk and Sarachchandra need mention here. Ludowyk, a Burgher developed a deep and worthwhile interest in the culture of the Sinhalese. He studied Sinhala at the Buddhist temple in Kandy. He had much interaction with Sarachchandra about Sinhala theatre, and encouraged the first translations of Gogol, Moliere, and Wilde by Sarachchandra, and has left us evidence of his attempt at integrative search, in his book “*The Footprint of The Buddha*”, about the culture of Ceylon, Buddhism and its teachings. Sarachchandra records all this in his Ludowyk memorial lecture in 1989.



Sarachchandra



Ludowyk

Sarachchandra, in this context, complements Ludowyk. While his search for foundation was his sought-after Sinhala and South Asian culture, after a British colonial childhood, like Rabindranath Tagore, he did not see all the results of the colonial experience as destructive and discardable. The British colonization of Ceylon also happened to provide Lanka's first major contact with the best of Europe. He saw his Sinhala culture as part of the common human story, so he identified the best of the European culture, as integrative with the Sinhalese as part of humanity. And he was not for blind imitation of the West or for the mere revival of Sinhala tradition. Under these circumstances the need was to select and synthesise what aspects of Sinhala tradition were to be revived and how, because traditional art forms arose within a specific social and political milieu and mere revival had little significance against a modern backdrop. How was a synthesis to be achieved so that the "foreign" would no longer be "alien", and the traditional Sinhala culture no longer historical? He utilized tradition to create new works of art. Hence the need for new creations where the essence of tradition, relevant to our times was retained, and integrated with relevant world human culture. *Maname* (1956) is a modern work of art based on Sinhala tradition fusing with culture common to humanity.

That Kultur of the mid-fifties was a fading smudge in Peradeniya, while O'Fac was a growing creative force, was evidenced by the growth of *Maname*. This play though coming off the creative imagination of Sarachchandra, would not have been possible without the enthusiasm for its promise, of the creative students of the Oriental Faculty, organizing for it and providing their talents in singing, dancing and conveying their dramatic feelings to audiences. Peradeniya University is now nearly seventy years, and it is unlikely that in its contributions to the country, *Maname* can be surpassed.

A look, sometimes desultory, at Kultur and O'Fac, a passing social phenomenon, based on a superficial relationship with English by a small number in old Ceylon, feeling elite, in early Peradeniya.



Scene from a production of *Maname*

Sarachchandra's "timeless" sentinels

Ernest Macintyre

2014 was the hundredth birth anniversary of Professor Ediriweera Sarachchandra and also the eighteenth year after his death on August 16, 1996. This is an extract from an appreciation by Ernest Macintyre published in *The Sunday Times*, Sri Lanka, 17 August 2014.

There was once a place, named the Arts Centre Club. It was of the Lionel Wendt theatre, and on many an evening going late into the night, there the imagination was helped to run freely.

As I remember from long ago, Professor of Physics, Osmund Jayaratne was like all of the others in the gathering at the Club that night, in good spirits to engage in fantastic thoughts. He was an accomplished actor from the days of Professor E.F.C. Ludowyk, but that night his inspiration came from Physics. The area of discussion was the criticism about Sarachchandra's use of creativity to fashion dramas, out of the Nadagama, transformed by him using the medieval Noh theatre of Japan which was possibly derived from the classical Sanskrit tradition. It was said that this ancient structure of theatre mainly able to convey individual relationships however profound, was out of joint with modern times with all its social problems. It would not lead the way to a National Sinhala drama with successive generations.

Osmund Jayaratne's reaction, with laughter in high spirits, was intriguing. To say that *Maname* and *Sinhabahu* were created in 1956 and 1961 may be a pointless statement. This could be so because of profound uncertainties in physics, about Time. He explained as we gaped and gulped.

That these plays, will continue to attract audiences, like those of Kalidasa, Sophocles and Shakespeare, is what is relevant. "We may really not know what is meant by TIME, so you can regard these works of Sarachchandra, simply as Lanka's Classical plays, and to say they were written after Kalidasa's *Shakuntala* is to be too cocksure of what is meant by TIME.", he said, as we poured ourselves another drink.

As the night wore on, I think it was Ranil Deraniyagala, then teaching Stage Design at the Aquinas University College Theatre School, who asked "Yes, Sarachchandra is our Kalidasa, but when will our Ibsen come and our Chekhov?" Ranil implied that some prose dramatists in Sinhala, despite their criticisms of the content of musical dance verse drama by Sarachchandra, had yet to show a play that could compare with *Maname* or *Sinhabahu* in magnitude of dramatic scope and power.

Gunaseena Gallapathy, playwright and director, insisted that *Maname* and *Sinhabahu* are crucially functional in determining the arrival of a prose drama as great as these poetic works. What gives *Maname* its status as world drama while remaining vitally Sinhala, is Sarachchandra's using the Sinhala Nadagama medium to explore themes and situations which the Sinhalese would feel as belonging to them but are also of the whole world, of the human condition. We were reminded of Professor D.M. de Silva's thrilling response to *Maname*:

"Sarachchandra's response to the great mystery of evil is not mere bafflement but reverence, an acknowledgement of the littleness of human judgement when faced with the mystery of evil and a refusal therefore to ascribe too easily to any man or woman his or her portion of guilt. Sarachchandra's vision is frightening, and he feels not anger, but pity"- D.M.de Silva.

COVER STORY:

WHEN CEYLON CELEBRATED THE GOLDEN JUBILEE OF QUEEN VICTORIA

BY AVISHKA MARIO SENEWIRATNE AND NILANTHA PERERA



Queen Victoria, shown at 18 in 1837 when she was crowned, and at 68 for her Golden Jubilee in 1887.
Credit: Hulton Archive/Getty Images

Since the fall of Kandy in 1815, Ceylon significant for its innumerable resources and pivotal geographic location, became a colony of the British. Queen Victoria was British Ceylon's 4th monarch after George III, George IV, and her uncle William IV. However, unlike her predecessors or successors, the impact Victoria created in Britain and her colonies was so paramount that even her 64-year reign has been dubbed 'the Victorian Era'. She is associated with Britain's great age of industrial expansion, economic progress and especially the territorial expansion of the empire. When Victoria ascended the throne in 1837, Britain was largely a trade power. During her rule Britain became a mighty empire and the world's most powerful nation. Victoria remained popular in Britain as well as her colonies, throughout her reign. In 1887, the British Empire celebrated Victoria's Golden Jubilee. Ceylon too, a stronghold of the British Raj celebrated the Queen's Golden Jubilee with all the pomp and circumstance.

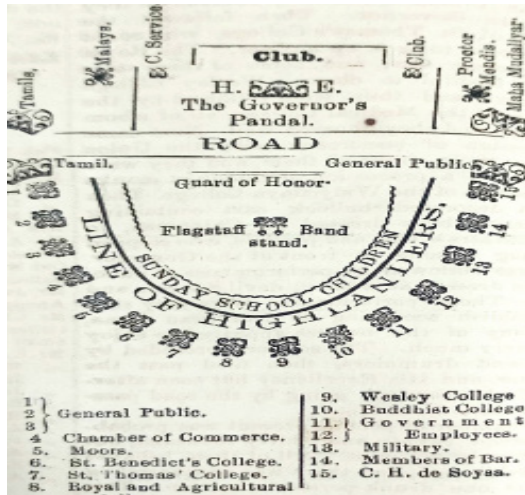
The principal event of the celebrations was to be held at the Galle Face Green on June 28, 1887. Though there were apprehensions that the planned ceremony may be marred by the inclemency of weather, the day went out to be cloudy and breezy, after a short rainfall sparingly enough to polish the floors. This enabled a pleasant show for the outdoor entertainment instead of the usual tropical conditions. The grounds were filled with people of all classes and races, numbering upto around twenty to thirty thousand. This is a guesstimate based on what the broadsheets of Colombo reported.

The event began with the Military Review at 7.00 am in front of the Military Hospital and its surroundings. Over 800 commissioned and non-commissioned officers and the Royal Artillery took part in it. With the arrival of Governor Gordon and the Major General, the customary salute and inspection took place. After its completion, the Major General ordered to fire *feu-de-joie*, which was done in good style. This was followed by three hearty cheers for the Queen by the soldiers.

Next in line was a well planned and well executed march past in quarter column, while drums and bagpipes were played. After the Volunteers left the ground, the Artillerymen and the Highlanders joined in and the Major General presented his address. With a slight drop of rainfall, the spectators believed that the proceedings were wrecked. However, the rain was short lived and hopes were mighty up again.

That afternoon, a number of thanksgiving services were conducted in the leading places of worship in Colombo. Archbishop Bonjean celebrated High Mass at the Kotahena Cathedral, and the singing of *Te Deum* with Benediction took place at St. Philip Neri's Church, Pettah. Other services for the Anglicans were held at St. Peter's Cathedral, for the Presbyterians at St. Andrew's Church, Wolvendaal church and the Fort Chapel, to name a few.

That evening the principal ceremony took place. The Governor's Pavilion took centre stage which was located in front of the Colombo Club. Across the road were the other pandals consisting of different schools, nationalities and institutions. Sunday-school children of various protestant faiths,



accompanied by teachers were placed in front of the Governor's pandal with soldiers before and behind them. John Ferguson of the *Ceylon Observer* commented on the pandals as follows: "Nothing can exceed the graceful beauty of such erections, when the Sinhalese and the Tamils set themselves to do their best; loops of plantain and young coconut leaf, green moss and fern, and yellow olas, and clusters of coconuts, oranges, or other fruits, offer the best possible material for covering the bamboo framework that may be put together in a night". Round the foot the flagstaff of the Royal Standard was a raised bandstand which was occupied by the Volunteers' band under the direction of Ernst Luschwitz.

At 4.00pm the Governor Arthur Hamilton-Gordon, arrived in an open carriage accompanied by the Maha Mudaliyar Conrad Dias Bandaranaike, Mr. W. M. Gordon, his acting Private Secretary, and Captain Christopher, his Aide-de-camp. Governor Gordon was received by the Chief Justice, Sir Bruce Burnside and by the members of the Legislative and Executive Councils.

The Governor's Pavilion was occupied by the Archbishop Christopher Bonjean OMI, the Chief Justice and Lady Burnside, Justices L.B. Clarence and Harry Dias Bandaranaike, the Hon. Mr. Rawonseroff, the Anglican Bishop R.S. Copleston, the Director of Public Instruction and Mrs. Green, Dr. William R. Kynsey, Chief Medical Officer of Ceylon, the official and unofficial members of the Legislative Council, the Foreign Consuls, Fr. Dominique Pulicani OMI, the principal Military Officers, and a number of other prominent ladies and gentlemen.

Having taken his place, the Governor readout the record of Her Majesty's Reign and the proclamation to the people of Ceylon. The message was simultaneously read in English, Sinhalese and Tamil in respective pandals. Governor Gordon made the following three proclamations that day. The first was to thank God for the mercies during her rein and for all her people in the dominion. The second was to restore Crown lands taken during the Grain Commutation Ordinance, back to its former possessors. The third was to give clemency for 137 prisoners who were 1). In prison for debts due to

the Crown. 2). All women who were not undergoing imprisonment for very serious offences. 3). Prisoners whose sentences of imprisonment are shortly to expire. The Royal Standard was then run up and a salute of fifty guns were fired followed by the national anthem "God Save the Queen".

Thereafter, a large procession was followed. The order of the procession was as follows:

1. The Sunday school students, accompanied by their teachers.
2. Malays preceded by a decorated bullock cart containing a party of Malay singers.
3. Orabi Pasha, the famed Egyptian exiled in Ceylon, and suite followed, giving the Governor a military salute in passing and they were followed by a procession of Moor men.
4. Students of St. Benedict's Institute, accompanied by some of the Christian Brothers.
5. Students of S. Thomas's College.
6. Students of Royal College.
7. Students of Wesley College
8. Students of the Medical College, all of whom bore flags.
9. Procession of lascoreens with the Union Jack borne in front of them.
10. Buddhist monks and students of the Vidyodaya College.
11. Decorated bullock cart containing nine native boys dressed as Chinamen in blue with straw hats and pigtails, who stopped and sang a song in front of the Governor.
12. Performances of dancing men dressed as women, devil dancers and others.



13. The soldiers, preceded by pipers and drummers.

The Ceylon Catholic Messenger of July 1, 1887 commented on the ceremony as follows: "These performances were very silly and childish according to European ideas, but many of the natives appeared to enjoy them very much". After the procession was over, the Governor left in his carriage, ending the ceremony. The evening was concluded with a fabulous firework display and illuminations, brightening the wide Colombo firmament. The Queen's House, offices of Volkart Brothers and Aitken Spence & Co., and the Mercantile Bank were illuminated with lanterns creating a beautiful spectacle. Furthermore, the Agency of the French mail steamers presented a fine sight along with the other vessels in the harbour. *The Ceylon Examiner* commented on the day as follows: "Never did the Galle Face Green look prettier and never did so large an assemblage gather on it."

On the jubilee day a large number of poor in towns and villages were fed, each getting a measure of rice and five cents (equivalent to one penny). That very year to honour and commemorate Victoria and her 50th year on the throne, the Victoria Park in Nuwara Eliya was built. Victoria would remain on the throne for 14 more years.

What is truly significant about the celebration, which has now been forgotten by many is that it made a striking resemblance to the very first Independence Day celebration in 1948. Many scholars such as Nira Wickramasinghe have stated that this celebration was the script of the celebrations of 1948. There were hardly any changes between the celebration of the monarch who ruled the colony for fifty years and the celebration of being independent from the same colonial power. There existed the same ingredients of the former such as the Military Review, religious ceremonies, speeches and acts of charity.

"Great events make me quiet and calm; it is only trifles that irritate my nerves"

Queen Victoria

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Victoria Memorial Colombo



According to various sources, this monument was built in 1893.

To commemorate the 60th anniversary of the coronation of Queen Victoria, which is also called her Diamond Jubilee in 1897, her statue was built by George W. Wade, who was well known for the construction of statues of British Royals and politicians.

The statue was originally erected near what was then used as the official residence of the then Governor of Britain to Ceylon (now President's House) and has been placed in several other places until it was erected at its present location.

Although originally placed near the Presidential Palace, it was later removed from the President's House and placed on a plot of land near the Colombo National Library, out of public view, due to a widespread belief that the statue could have some bad effects.

However, at the 2013 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in Sri Lanka, Prince Charles (now King Charles III), one of the grandsons of the late Queen Victoria, attended as the Chief Guest, prompting the authorities to relocate the statue to a more suitable location.

Following the decision, the statue of Queen Victoria was placed near the Viharamahadevi Park, which was formerly known as the Victoria Park in Colombo, where it can be seen now.

The statue depicts Queen Victoria seated on her throne and has been restored on several occasions to this day.

Considered one of the oldest parks in the country, the Viharamahadevi Park in Colombo was also built during her reign. As a result, it was originally called "Victoria Park". However, later, around 1958, it was renamed as Viharamahadevi Park.

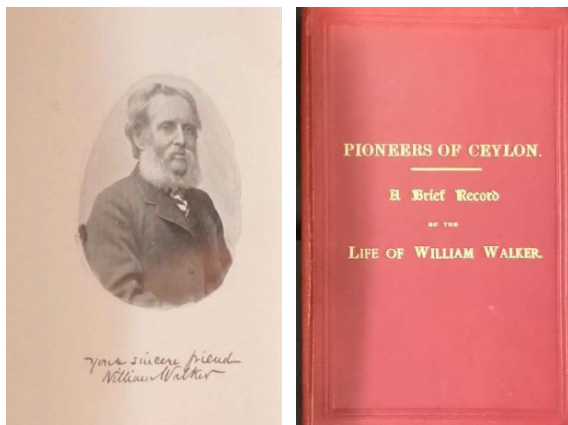
SOURCE: *Sunday Observer* 8 August 2021- Extract from an article titled "Queen Victoria and Ceylon" by Gayan Narandeniya and Ruwan Windsor

Sources for front and back cover photos: *Ceylon Guide* and *Reddit/ SriLanka*

The End of a Corporate Giant: The Story of Walker Sons & Co Ltd

Hugh Karunanayake*

The Early Years



The firm known as Walker Sons and Co was Ceylon's major engineering firm for over 175 years. The founder of the firm, John Walker, was born on 24 August 1819 in Doune, Scotland, the seventh child of James Walker, a cobbler, and his wife Christina (nee Strang). He attended school in Deanston and was thereafter apprenticed in the engineering shop of Deanston Cotton Mill operated by James Finlay and Co. In 1842 he travelled to Ceylon to work as an engineer for Wilson, Ritchie and Co. which owned the Hultsdorf Mills and which revolutionized coconut oil production through the invention patented by David Wilson. John Walker thereafter worked in a number of firms in Ceylon before returning to Scotland in 1854. In Scotland he met William Turner an engineer who he had known in Ceylon, and who encouraged him to return to Ceylon to work in Turner's engineering business in Kandy. Walker arrived in Ceylon in 1854 and established his own engineering firm John Walker and Co at Trincomalee Street in Kandy, manufacturing machinery for the country's rapidly developing coffee industry. The invention of a disc pulping machine patented in 1860 saw machinery exports to other coffee producing countries like Java, Southern India, and Brazil. In a letter written by John Walker to his brother William in Glasgow in circa 1856 he stated that the buildings owned by the nascent company may be valued at £400 sterling. "The motive power is the Malabar coolie, as we have not enough water for the blacksmiths' troughs, and fuel is expensive! Our customers are three hundred planters scattered over the Central Province. As a class I would call them good customers, but some are very long in paying". In 1854 William became the buying agent for his brother John, and they established themselves in Glasgow under the name Walker Brothers.

In 1862 William joined John as a partner and by 1870 the company had opened branches in Badulla, and Haldumulla, and by 1873 branches in Dickoya and Dimbulla. In 1873 Walker founded a new company

Walker and Greig to supply machinery to the new tea plantations. In 1880 the company manufactured the first tea rolling machine. Walker brothers based their headquarters in Kandy, and thrived during the coffee boom, but as early as in 1864 the company contemplated moving to Colombo and leased out premises which however were never occupied. With the construction of the Southwest breakwater in the Colombo harbour, in the 1870s, shipping out of, and into Colombo was the favoured option. The Company first leased out the premises known as "the Corner" at the corner of York Street and Main Street in 1881 and it moved its headquarters and workshops there. The premises were later acquired by the Company and in later years during the twentieth century housed its head offices, and show rooms there, while the workshops including the foundry, and dockyard were constructed on 15 acres of land in Mutwal leased out from the government for 99 years in 1912.

At a dinner given in London by the Ceylon Association in London in honour of the then Governor designate of Ceylon Sir Hugh Clifford, G.C.M.G., C.B.E., Mr. JL Loudon Shand who presided gave an interesting review of the planting history of Ceylon, and in the course of his speech made the following remarks:

There are many other things that we planters have to be thankful for among others, is the Engineering genius which has attended all our efforts in Ceylon. Wherever we have foremost in coffee, tea, and rubber it is in invention and in having the highest Engineering enterprise at our disposal, and I am glad to see here tonight, representatives of the firm of Messrs. Walker Sons and Company, who have done so much for us in Ceylon.



Walkers Head Office, Workshops, and Show Rooms, Prince Street/Main St in 1881

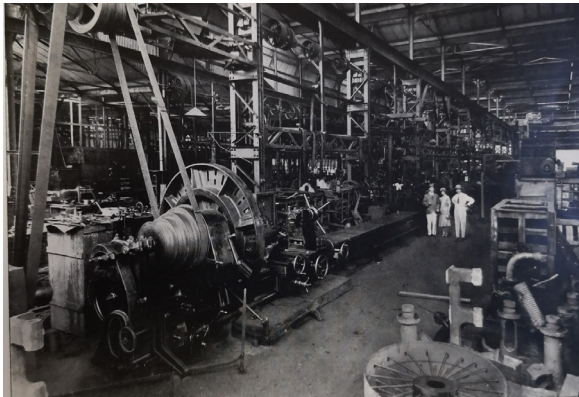
John Walker retired at the age of 60 after steering the company for over thirty years but continued as head of Walker and Greig. Walker Sons was thereafter headed by his brother William who became Senior Partner. John Walker died in Scotland in 1888 and his son John came out to Ceylon to take over the running of the company. In 1891 the firm was incorporated as a limited liability company by the name Walker Sons and Company Ltd and registered on the London Stock Exchange.



Expansion- New Agencies

Walker Sons and Co grew to be one of the earliest corporate giants in Sri Lanka, having dominated the country's engineering sphere for almost two centuries. It was arguably the company which had the greatest impact on the economic development of Ceylon up to the 20th Century.

Walkers Head Office and Showrooms Prince and Main Streets 1928



Heavy Machinery workshop

It was to play a dominant role in the transformation of the country's economy from a peasant based one to a more export oriented plantation economy a process which was well in hand by the end of the 19th Century.. The company prospered and expanded during the first half of the twentieth Century having been appointed as sole agents in Ceylon for much sought after British made engineering products and services. Those agencies included Austin Motor Vehicles, Otis elevators, Carrier air conditioning, Formica products, Lucas batteries, Crittall windows. The first passenger lift in Ceylon was installed by Walkers Sons in the Galle Face Hotel in 1911. Likewise, the first electric fans in Ceylon were installed by Walkers in the Bristol Hotel in the 1890s. Among its engineering services were Power installation, Oil engines for tea and rubber factories, a foundry with capacity for castings up to 10 tons in weight, a machine shop served with a 15-ton electric travelling crane, a heavy machine shop with electrically driven overhead cranes, a blacksmith's shop, and a machinery repair shop, all based in the Mutwal facility.

Motor Engineering

Walkers have been associated with the growth and expansion of the automotive sector in Ceylon more than any other institution in the country. The first motor car was imported to Ceylon in 1902, and in the very same

year Walkers imported its first motor car the "Locomobile" Thereafter it held the agency for Austin cars, and lorries, which were predominant in the nations fleet of motor vehicles. It was also the agent for Lucas Batteries. The company acquired a 2-acre property in Galle Road Kollupitiya to serve exclusively as a motor service centre. The branch in Kandy as well as other branches of the company in Talawakelle, Ratnapura, Bandarawela, and Galle also were equipped with motor repair and service facilities.

Marine Engineering

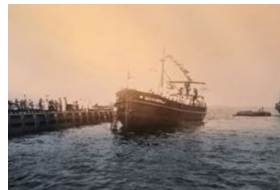
Sri Lanka being an island with many bays around its shores, some of which were used as harbours for a range of shipping craft, would have been an ideal location for a regional maritime service hub, but somehow only Walker Sons rose to the challenge. The graving dock constructed by the company together with the adjacent 9 acres of land comprised the Colombo Iron Works, known popularly as CIW which became the nerve center for all of the company's engineering enterprise. The slipway of the company with a cradle 120 ft long was suitable for repair and maintenance work of craft. The company owned two ships the *Lady McCallum* (below) and *Lady Blake* which operated



around the shores of Ceylon were both commissioned by Walkers.

During the early 20th Century, in September 1926, the company launched the oil barge

"*Mahaweli*" built and engineered to suit special requirements. During the Second World War the firm repaired and refitted 167 major warships, 322 minor warships and 1,932 merchant vessels, including the aircraft carrier *HMS Eagle*, cruiser *HMS Cornwall*, *HMS Cumberland*, *HMS Devonshire*, *HMS Gloucester*, *HMS Kent*, *HMS Manchester*, *HMS Liverpool*, and cruise liners *RMS Queen Elizabeth* and *RMS Queen Mary*.



The oil barge afloat after launching in 1928 (Left) and being built in the slipway (Right)

Buildings

The metropolis of Colombo had as its nucleus the Fort of Colombo first built by the Portuguese, further fortified by the Dutch and British till the fortifications were removed in the late 19th century. The area encompassed by the Fort continued to serve as the centre for commercial activity in the island and the emerging banking and finance sector. The many departmental stores, hotels, restaurants, and banks all came into existence during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Most of the buildings in the Fort are of unique Victorian design and architecture representing

the lifestyles of a bygone era. Almost all the 19th and 20th Century buildings within the Fort were designed and constructed by Walkers.

Buildings constructed by Walkers during the late 19th century include the Galle Face Hotel, Australia Building, the Victoria Building, the P& O Offices, the National Bank of India Ltd, the Kandy Post Office, Messrs Cargills Ltd, Whiteaway Laidlaw and Co, Millers Ltd, The Scots Kirk.

During the first half of the twentieth Century the company built the Hongkong and Shanghai Bank, Imperial Bank of India, National Bank of India, the McKinnon McKenzie block, the new Customs House, the Grand Stand Ceylon Turf Club, the new Observer office, the Times of Ceylon building, the YMCA building, the new hostel for YMCA, the Soldiers and Sailors Institute, the Elphinstone Theatre, Pettah Police Barracks, St Bridgets Convent, etc etc. It could be said without fear of contradiction, that most of the significant buildings in the Fort including the 16 storied Ceylinco Building built in 1957 were all constructed by Walkers.

Staffing

During the 1950s when the company was at its peak, with its workshops in Colombo in full gear meeting the nation's demand for engineering goods and services, it had a skilled and semi skilled labour force of about 4000 workers in Colombo and in the Branch establishments. Office staff included some 50 covenanted staff (Senior Executives), 120 Junior Executives; clerical and other office staff of about 500, possibly the largest for any single company in the island. During the 1950s, the Chairman of the parent company in London was Mr Osborne Walker, while the Ceylon operations were controlled by Mr E A Badman. Most of the Senior Executives were Britishers, but feeling the need for Ceylonisation after Independence was granted to the country in 1948, Mr Badman recruited Ceylonese with outstanding sporting records and a good secondary education as Executives. Most of them were men who were educated at Royal College in Colombo and included Vivian de Kretser who captained the Royal College cricket team in 1945, Mahes Rodrigo who captained the Royal cricket team in 1946, Ashroff Cader who Captained the Royal rugby fifteen in 1949, Lucien de Zoysa who played in the Royal cricket team in 1935/36, and C. Ivers Gunasekera who played cricket for Royal in 1937/36/39.

Reversal of Fortunes

While it is difficult to pinpoint the source of the decline of the company's fortunes, given that the history of the Company's finances are not available now, it may not be unreasonable to surmise that the rot began in the early 1960s when the first signs of exchange controls and import restrictions appeared. That, despite the fact that the previous decade saw unrestricted imports following the Korean boom which sent rubber and tea prices spiralling upwards. The country enjoyed the benefits of that boon as did Walkers, but it failed to conserve and consolidate thus exposing itself to

future vulnerabilities in the foreign exchange sector. Walkers was a company largely dependant on imports and import based production and the first restrictions on imports imposed in 1961 saw a total ban on car and other imports which were 'bread and butter' lines for the company. Another very significant factor especially when gradual relaxation of controls took place in later years, was the emergence of suppliers from non traditional sources into the national imports basket. Post 1960 imports saw a significant drop in imports from the traditional British suppliers, and a diversification of import sources. Countries like Japan, Korea, and non British Europe began to assume dominant positions. This was true even in Great Britain, where the domestic market was flooded with imports from the emerging nations of the Far East with access to superior production technologies inspired from USA. Walkers however, despite these pressures had a reasonable foothold in the estate engineering sector, and also rose up to the challenges by diversification into areas such as fibre glass boat production, and making inroads into the tourism and hospitality sectors. To add another unexpected blow to the company's fortunes, the Government of the day in 1971 chose to compulsorily acquire its Head Office buildings in Prince Street, Fort paying the company a meagre Rs 700,000 as compensation. The building was acquired to house the State Pharmaceutical Corporation whose necessity to be located within the Fort was a question that went a begging, but never answered. Matters were compounded by the departure of the last of the Walker family AC (Johnny) Walker who handed over the company to Mackwoods Ltd, who were appointed managing Agents for the Company for a stipulated period.. The attempt to restore financial stability by Mackwoods by selling off some prime real estate of the company was met with some opposition by the work force. The work force went on strike for several months bringing on more financial burdens to the company. In the mid 1970s George Steuart and Co were appointed managing agents for Walkers for three years.. Its Directors Trevor Moy, Scott Dirckze, and Trevor Rosemale-Cocq, were appointed working Directors, and the company reached a degree of stability. George Steuarts however declined the opportunity to renew the agreement for a further 3 years. In 1978, a new government liberalised import export trading and the possibility of a reversal of fortunes were envisaged by foreign investors looking for healthy returns on investment. The Anglo- Indonesian Corporation part of the Sime Darby Group, headed by John Nightingale, and Charles Berry negotiated successfully with the Walker family who relinquished their controlling interest in the company. In around 1980 the controlling interest of the company was purchased by the Indian conglomerate the Tata Group which nominated two working directors to manage the company. They both resided in the Hotel Oberoi from where they made their daily visits to the different operations of the company. Kapila Heavy Equipment purchased the company in 1990. In 2009 a Malaysian based company MTD Capital Berhad purchased the Company which now goes as MTD Walkers PLC.

While the Company has relinquished its role as a strategic component of plantation development in Sri Lanka, and also in its key position in marine engineering, it has since stabilised itself as a major construction company focussing on infrastructure development. It is the market leader in pile driving operations and continues to sustain and maintain the nearly two century old traditions of Walker Sons and Co.

To conclude, it may be appropriate to quote William Walker the Founding Partner of the firm when he visited Ceylon in 1886:

I desire as much to be your friend as your master. I think that the firm with which I have been connected for so long as its head has done good work for Ceylon. We have brought works to the island that were never brought before. We also have paid large amounts in wages every month to the Sinhlese and Tamil workmen. But we think we can go on a step further and do better. The first thing I will try to do for you will be to afford you medical aid in times of sickness. I wish also that some provision be made for anyone who meets with any accident or in case of protracted illness. The next thing I wish is that something be provided for our men when old age comes on and you are not able to work. If this is carried out, no old and steady worker in the Company's service will ever have to apply to the Friend in Need Society.

The above shows that the founding partners of the firm were inspired to expand its activities but also showed benevolence to its workforce- a sure formula for success.

Reference:

Pioneers of Ceylon, Life of William Walker. (Bedford publishing Co, Bedford 1897)

***(The writer worked on the Covenanted staff of Walker-Sons And Co as Market Research Manager for 5 years in the mid 1970s).**



Ceylinco House Colombo Fort

Book Reviews

Title: *Little Bike Lost*

Author: **Avishka Mario Senewiratne**

Reviewed by: **Dr Srilal Fernando**

This story brings together a remarkable man, Noel Cruz, a remarkable film made by a schoolboy team, and a remarkable book bringing the last two to life after more than fifty years.

I have only a faint recollection of the film being made. I was in primary school then.

Many years later I met Noel Cruz when he accepted the invitation from the Ceylon Society of Australia to speak about his book on the Cocos Island Mutiny.

After meeting Noel our conversation drifted to the film, and since that time, we kept up a correspondence till his death. He also sent me a video recording of the film. I realized that Noel was indeed a man with multiple talents and interests. He had a technical interest in films and had travelled extensively, meeting legendary figures connected to the film industry. He was an educator, a puppeteer, a researcher and writer all rolled into one. It was clear that he had the charisma to influence others.

How he inspired a group of young school children with no experience in making films, to make one of such high quality, speaks for itself. On the other hand, the schoolboys and girls who acted and directed, produced and marketed the film show their capacity to rise to any occasion. Several members of the Ceylon Society of Australia were involved with the film in their younger days.

All this would have faded from memory if not for the young author, Avishka who resurrected the story. He contacted all the living participants of the film, jogged their memories, found interesting side stories and we have this wonderful book.

To cap it all the Video is now converted to CD format and is available with the book. It will bring back memories of St Josephs, Holy Family Convent and the streets of Colombo in the 1950's.

Little Bike Lost is now found!

Title: *A Life in the Law*

Author: **Nimal Wickramanayake**

Reviewed by: **Hugh Karunanayake**

The exclusive Essoign Club of the Victorian Bar in the Owen Dixon Chambers in Melbourne was the venue on Monday 28 November 2022 for the launch of the book “*A Life in the Law*” an autobiographical memoir written by retired Victorian Kings Counsel Nimal Wikramanayake. A gathering of distinguished lawyers including at least a dozen Judges of the Supreme Court, reputed Kings Counsel, and other leading barristers were present at the launch presided over by Barrister Graham Robertson.

Robert Richter KC the leading criminal lawyer in Victoria and former President of the Victorian Bar Council and of the Victorian Council for Civil Liberties, was the keynote speaker associated with the launch. He launched the book following a 45-minute address to the distinguished gathering, on the author’s journey at the bar, and focusing on the highlights of a remarkable career. The occasion also served as a felicitation by the leading lawyers of Melbourne for Nimal Wikramanayake who had an extraordinary career at the Victorian Bar. Nimal’s own family background being the son of a leading Kings Counsel, from Sri Lanka, his exposure to the law at Trinity Hall, Cambridge, his strong and resolute personality, and the unwavering support and affection of his dear wife Anna Maria, are factors that seem to have played a role in his success at the Victorian bar, culminating with the granting of silk, an honour often denied to seemingly deserving aspirants sometimes for reasons other than their legal competence. Robert Richter highlighted aspects of the author’s own experiences at the bar and applauded the manner in which he successfully overcame prejudice and the almost institutionalized blinkered attitude to “outsiders” which seemed to have pervaded the legal systems in Victoria.

Nimal Wikramanayake responded to Robert Richter with some interesting reminiscences of his tenure at the bar and highlighting some notable events during his distinguished career. He ended with the quote “old barristers never die, they only lose their appeal”! Our mutual friend George Fernando and I being the only non-lawyers in that gathering of distinguished lawyers were impressed at the solidarity shown and the warm regard they had for Nimal. It was a memorable occasion indeed, not only because of the choice wines that flowed through the evening! An extraordinary career has come to an end. I would urge anyone interested in the law to enjoy the repast vicariously, by reading the book. In the words of Justice Michael Kirby who wrote the Foreword to the book “uncomfortable reading as it sometimes is, it is good that Nimal Wikramanayake has written his story. We can learn from it.”



From left to right Anna Maria and Nimal Wickramanayake, Graham Robertson, Hugh Karunanayake.



Robert Richter KC launching the book

**CSA
REPORTS OF MEETINGS
SYDNEY, COLOMBO,
MELBOURNE**

**SYDNEY
CSA AGM AND SOCIAL**

**ADDRESS BY PRESIDENT PAULINE GUNewardENE
AT ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF CSA
ON SATURDAY 19 NOVEMBER 2022 AT PENNANT HILLS COMMUNITY
CENTRE**



Good evening, guests and members of the Ceylon Society of Australia. It gives me very great pleasure to welcome you to this our Annual General Meeting and Social in our 25th year of existence!

We have gone forward from our beginnings on the 30th of August 1997 to the celebration of our 25 year anniversary held on Sunday 28th August this year. It was wonderful to reminisce on the pathway that has brought us here, to acknowledge the contributions made by past Committee members, with dedication and commitment to the ideals and mission of the founding fathers, in fostering the great historical and cultural heritage of Sri Lanka.

The celebratory 25th anniversary Cocktail Party was a great success. I went through the achievements of the past years and acknowledged the contributions of past presidents. We had a recorded address on the big screen by Founder President Hugh Karunanayake from Melbourne, then talks by Past Presidents Harry de Sayrah and Thiru Arumugam. Michael (Rohan) Sourjah, the Founder Secretary, talked about his memories of that time, Sumane Iyer, a past Editor, sent in a message for reading out and so did past Editor Doug Jones, both of whom unfortunately could not attend due to health issues. The cake was cut by Harry de Sayrah and Thiru Arumugam, after which the food and wine flowed and everyone enjoyed a merry evening.

Hugh Karunanayake has taken us through the history of the CSA in the November issue of *The Ceylankan*, and I am sure you will find it of great interest to read about the antecedents of your Society.

I would like to mention here with pride the significant achievement of CSA, in that this November 2022 edition of *The Ceylankan* is our 100th issue, having been in continuous publication from inception thanks to the untiring dedication of our Editors. It is a bigger than usual journal, with pictures in colour, and our Editor, Adam Raffel, has made an excellent production which I am certain you will find good reading.

To recap the activities over the past year, we held the two General Meetings in Sydney in February and May addressed by speakers and, as mentioned, the scheduled August Meeting was converted into the CSA's 25th anniversary celebration.

February 2022

The speaker was Roderick de Sylva, a long time Tea Taster of 24 years in all, who spoke on "The Development of the Tea Industry in Sri Lanka". It was a fascinating look at the history of how the most important export industry in the country had its roots, growing and developing into the internationally highly rated "Ceylon Tea", and covering all aspects. The hands on tasting session that followed was enjoyed by all the attendees.

May 2022

Dr Leonard Pinto was the speaker for the May meeting, taking us through “The Evolution of Governance in Sri Lanka”. He covered the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial periods based on the systems of governance developed over time, with first a local monarchy, then a colonial master monarchy, and finally the parliamentary democracy elected by Sri Lankans. The talk gave attendees much information on the historical trajectory of governance in Sri Lanka.

Our overall membership now stands at 294 - 241 in Australia, 24 in Sri Lanka, 21 in other overseas countries, 2 Life Members and 6 gift subscriptions, with 12 Complimentaries of our highly regarded journal being sent out to various institutions.

The Melbourne and Colombo Chapters have begun to hold meetings again post Covid and are actively rejuvenating their membership activities. Our Sydney parent body General Meetings take place on the last Sunday evenings of February, May and August, with the AGM and Social on the one before last Saturday in November. It is only three meetings for the year, and I do hope you will make every effort to attend. Your ongoing interest and enthusiasm for attending meetings will encourage us Committee members running your Society.

My plea as always to you all is to please try to introduce at least one new member to CSA from among your circle of friends and colleagues – that would work wonders for our member base! Can you please try harder in 2023? In particular, new younger age group members would ensure the Ceylon Society of Australia continues to flourish and evokes more interest in the wonderful historical and cultural heritage of Sri Lanka.

The Accounts for the year ended 30 June 2022 have been audited by Rienzie Fonseka. Our thanks to Rienzie for helping us with this over the last seven years.

Copies of the audited Accounts have been emailed to Members for information, and a few explanations would be appropriate, while noting that we use the Australian taxation year of 1 July-30 June although subscriptions are based on a calendar year.

1) The receipts show a healthy balance thanks to the 2021 AGM and Social providing a boost as always to our finances.

2) The AGM Expenditure item for 2022 is showing a much higher figure in comparison to the figure for 2021. This is due to the AGM and Social not being held in December 2020 because of Covid restrictions.

3) The cost of postage for Australia and Overseas has gone up and keeps rising. The initiatives put in place last year by Treasurer Deepak, to use Printpost for Australian journals and for the Colombo Chapter journals to be printed in Sri Lanka, have resulted in a saving of approximately \$1,000 compared with the figure for 2021.

4) Printing costs have also risen by \$1,500 over the period under review.

In the current climate of escalating costs, maintaining subscriptions at the level we are doing now is a very difficult balancing act, although we are striving to do so by identifying savings wherever possible.

I would like to acknowledge here the contributions of the various Committee members, who give of their services voluntarily with the commitment to do the best possible for the CSAs overall functioning. Adam has been in the role of Editor for a year now and is doing an excellent job of maintaining the iconic status of the journal. Sunimal has kept the secretarial function going smoothly, Deepak is constantly on the lookout for savings, Amal is responsible for the mailouts of the journals and makes sure they get to you as soon as they are ready with the printer. Earlson and Kumar, who joined the Committee from this year, have been very helpful in the arrangements for meetings. Hugh and Thiru are great mainstays of regular contributions to the journal, with Harry and Srilal having long time knowledge of CSA.

In conclusion, I would like to thank you most sincerely for your presence here tonight, which makes it all worthwhile for the Committee's efforts to organise this Social for your pleasure. We hope you will enjoy the evening of fellowship and socialising and the Singalong with carols – which will move into dancing as well as singing at halfway point as usual. Please do join in with gusto!

Catering this year again is by the well known Flavour of Ceylon, and I would like to thank Aquinas for his helping us with this function despite his many commitments at this time of year. I hope you will enjoy the menu set up for you.

Let's make the most of this evening and have fun together in a pre-Christmas celebration! Life is a gift – for living well in the moment, in the here and now. Let us make this moment happy and full of joy!

Thank you.

Pauline Gunewardene
President, Ceylon Society of Australia



Outgoing Secretary Sunimal Fernando farewelled by Pauline



PHOTOS OF THE CSA CHRISTMAS SOCIAL 2022

BY MAHAL SELVADURAI and SENANIE DE SILVA



Singalong and Christmas Carols with CSA Choir



Roger Menezes



Shirani Rodrigo



Senanie de Silva, Amal and Rosani Wahab



Devika and Priyanga de Fonseka



Avinder and Nirupa Paul



Shantha and Rienzie Fonseka



Gunasmin and Esmal Lye



*Hyacinth Jones
(Life Member)*



CSA COMMITTEE 2023 (from left to right) Amal Wahab (Social Convenor), Deepak Pritamdas (Treasurer & Public Officer), Sunimal Fernando (outgoing Secretary) Harry de Sayrah OAM (Public Relations Officer), Pauline Gunewardene (President), Adam Raffel (Editor), Presenji Jayawickrema (incoming Secretary) and Thiru Arumugam (Ex Officio). Absent: Doug Jones (Life Member) Hugh Karunanayake (Life Member based in Melbourne) and Kumar Rasiah (ex-Officio).



Earlson Forbes (Publications Officer)



Rohini and Sumane Iyer



*Kanthi Perera
and Chandra
Senaratne*



Harry and Imelda de Sayrah



*Pauline
Gunewardene
(President)*



Deanna and Shankar Sathanandan



*Lucian and Srikanthi
Wijetunga*



Sunimal Fernando



Malini and Thiru Arumugam



*Rex and Ranji Perera with Dr Thilak
and Lalitha Weerasinghe*



*Lucian Wijetunga getting into the
baidi groove!!*



*George Cooke, Elaine Tissera, Amira
Cooke, Kanta Abeyasinghe*

**COLOMBO
CSA COLOMBO CHAPTER
MEETING**

**ON 24 NOVEMBER 2022
AT OPA, COLOMBO**

SPEAKER: DR GAMINI GOONETILLEKE

TOPIC: A SURGEON'S EXPERIENCE OF THE CIVIL WAR

Dr Gamini Goonetilleke is a General Surgeon in Sri Lanka for four decades. He has gained wide experience in managing war injuries, both in combat zones and in hospitals elsewhere, during the three-decade-long conflict in Sri Lanka. He, is the only doctor from the South to have 'crossed borders' to enter rebel-controlled territory in the North, to work at the General Hospital, Jaffna, for short periods; and also, to teach and examine students of Faculty of Medicine, Jaffna. Dr. Gamini has authored two books, "*In the Line of Duty*" and "*The Extra Mile*".

EDITOR'S NOTE: This is a report of talk given by Dr Gamini Goonetilleke reported by **Dinuli Francisco** published in *The Daily Mirror* on 1 December 2022. *The Ceylankan* acknowledges the kind permission of *The Daily Mirror* (Sri Lanka) and Dinuli Francisco to reproduce the article in full.

Dr. Gamini Goonetilleke A Surgeon who valued his patients more than anything



"Knife before the wife is his mission statement", says his wife after I sat for tea at the end of the quarterly meeting of the Colombo Chapter of Ceylon Society of Australia (CSA), held last Thursday (24) at the Organization of Professional Associations (OPA).

Dr. Gamini Goonetilleke brought out anecdotes from his book "*The Extra Mile: A Surgeon's experiences*",

which were courage-filled and adrenaline-driven. The audience was at the edge of their seats, entranced by Dr. Goonetilleke's robust personality and absorbed by his thought-provoking and nerve-racking adventures.

Dr. Goonetilleke received his MBBS (Ceylon) from the University of Colombo and proceeded to the UK for further training and qualifying as a Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons in England (FRCS), returned to serve his country in 1982. His first appointment as a Consultant Surgeon in Sri Lanka was to the Base Hospital Polonnaruwa, where he served as the only surgeon for a total period of six and a half years, catering to a population of 260,000 people, the majority being farmers.

Dr. Goonetilleke harnessed the bare minimal facilities available at the Base Hospital with unmatched enthusiasm and a strong commitment to the care of his patients. While we were sipping tea after the meeting, his wife Shalendra, with a bright smile, said, he valued his patients more than anything and everything.

"It was extremely difficult for me to adapt to a rural environment like Polonnaruwa after being in Colombo for some time. But I had to take that decision to support Gamini. Later on, we all developed an emotional attachment to Polonnaruwa. I can recall one incident where he valued his patients' care more than anything, and that was during Black July in 1983. My first son was schooling at that time; as I remember, he was somewhere between five to seven years of age. People in the whole town were running astray with the message that Tigers were entering the village. I called Gamini but could not get through to him quickly as mobile phones were unavailable then. I had to go through numerous landline codes to get to him. Finally, I got to him, and I told him to pick up the son from school, and his response was, 'I have patients to attend to'. I exactly cannot remember what my response was, but I had to run to the school to rescue my son. I couldn't drive during that time either", she recalled with a bittersweet emotion on her face.

Dr. Gamini began his guest lecture by recollecting that the Civil war compounded the surgical admissions to the Polonnaruwa hospital, with thousands of civilians and military personnel suffering missile and blast injuries brought from the conflict zone in the East and the villages bordering the conflict zone.

"The Base Hospital Polonnaruwa was virtually primitive in 1982; the operating theatre was dilapidated with basic equipment available; I was only 32 years old, having returned from the UK. I had never worked out of Colombo but decided to take the plunge, not knowing what my future would be. In the absence of junior doctors at the hospital, the WHO had to get down doctors from Burma along with a Burmese anaesthetist. I also established a special ward for military casualties and also an Intensive Care Unit. None of the doctors were willing to come to this area due to human-elephant conflicts and malaria", he said.

He elaborated that he was not trained to treat war victims as he had studied during relatively peaceful times. Therefore, the initial exposure to war victims was dreadful and horrendous.



Performing an amputation on a victim of an antipersonnel mine

“In July 1985, a landmine buried on the main road between Polonnaruwa and Batticaloa was exploded by the rebels at Punani, and the army jeep brought six victims. Three with mutilated bodies were dead on admission, and I tried my very best to save their lives first and then their limbs.”

“Once, a man of 30 years was shot on the left side of his belly, and his small and large intestines had come out instantaneously but his friends didn't have a vehicle to send him to the hospital immediately. Anyhow, the victim had said that he was hungry, and the friends who lacked first aid knowledge had given him King coconut, dhal, and meat curry with roti. He was admitted with a ballooned stomach, and his bowels were hanging out. This was a serious condition that I had never seen before or read about in any textbook or medical journal. There was no anaesthetist, and I had to also play the role of an anaesthetist. Once I had connected him to the anaesthetic machine, I requested the house officer to observe his vitals, as there were no monitors to do so. The stomach was later pushed into the abdominal cavity but the large bowel was damaged, so it was safest to keep that “part out” the audience was sucked into his horrendous experiences as they pondered the travails of a time with such little smart technology.”

He also recalled a galling incident concerning a politician and his secretary who had been subjected to a hand grenade explosion.

“Even though the victim was a politician, I had to apply the theory of “Triage,” which means sorting out the patient with severe injuries and treating them according to the seriousness of the injuries. Upali, the secretary of the politician, had his left leg mangled by the grenade blast as it had exploded near his feet. The main blood vessel in his left arm was damaged and impaired circulation to his arm. And also, a metal fragment had penetrated his left eye, and the eye was beyond repair. The politician did not require urgent surgery as he had no internal damage. But his political stalwarts were ravaging the hospital, and I got numerous calls to attend to the politicians first, but if it were so, it would be “curtains” for Upali. I told the radiologist to spend excessive time taking x-rays of the politician till I had attended Upali. I had to

amputate Upali's leg to save him, and he also lost one eye. By the time I had finished treating Upali, I was soaked in blood. So before attending to the politician, I went to change my kit, and to my surprise, while I was in my underwear, the politician's wife was just there kneeling and requesting, “Ane Budu Mahat-tayo, mage manussaya berala denna”. I was in shock, and meanwhile, there was immense pressure from the President's house to airlift him to Colombo, but I was determined to keep him one night at Polonnaruwa, and I did so. Anyhow later, he was dispatched to Colombo on a request by the higher powers. Upali remained at the Polonnaruwa Hospital; he had no regrets; he had lost his leg, job, eye, and his boss. He was completely disabled with no compensation. But he was sure that I would not desert him, I gave birth to him again and rehabilitated him. My advice is, do not get too close to politicians!”

The audience was smiling, divided between tears and happiness.

Furthermore, he said that he did not want the experience he gathered to go to waste. Therefore he volunteered to treat at the High-security zone in Palaly, Jaffna, where casualties from the Northern war-front were being treated.

“I knew flying to the Northern Warfront was a high-risk adventure, but I took the plunge for the service of the nation. I flew to the warfront not only with my healing knife but also with my pocket-size camera Olympus Trip 35mm, which captured the scenes that are of historical importance today. The armed forces lost large swathes of land in the Jaffna peninsula and were confined to only a few areas. The aerial route became the most important route for the transfer of men and material between Colombo and Jaffna. I flew to Palaly in a Chinese-built fixed-wing aircraft that could only accommodate 15 passengers. So the seats were removed, and many men and materials were taken. We had to sit on the floor, which was extremely difficult during take-off and landing. One time, I travelled sitting on metal barrels in the cargo compartment, later realising that those were lethal bomb barrels”, he smiled nonchalantly while the audience was enamoured.

Dr. Goonetilleke stated that the predominant weapons in the initial phase of the Eelam war were landmines and bombs. “The heightened conflict in the North-East of Sri Lanka resulted in many antipersonnel mines being buried in the region by both parties. Soldiers who stepped on antipersonnel mines had their feet blown or lacerated. Some had their foot hanging by pieces of skin or bone. Their cries haunt me even today. Many were unemployed village boys who had joined the army and they believed losing their legs would end their lives as they were the sole breadwinners of their families. But “Save life before limb”. The LTTE had their own antipersonnel mines in the jungle hideouts named the “Jony 95 or the Jony Mine”; the production cost of one was Rs. 250 then”, he sighed.

“After the LTTE's capture of the Jaffna Fort in September 1990, the entire Jaffna Peninsula was under the control of the LTTE, except for the High-

Security Zone in Palaly, Jaffna, and Elephant Pass at the neck of the peninsula. LTTE imposed tough regulations for travel in and out of the peninsula, and people from the south were barred from entering and leaving. I received a phone call in early September 1994 from the only consultant surgeon Dr. M Ganesharatnam inviting me as an external examiner at the final MBBS examination for the Medical student at Jaffna University. He knew that I was keen to visit Jaffna, but I was concerned about my security going to a rebel-controlled land. Then he said that he would get the approval of Prabhakaran, and thus my safety was assured. My appointment as an external examiner was confirmed via the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)", Dr. Gamini said.

The rest of the story is better from what I gathered while sipping tea with Dr. Gamini's wife Shalendra. "I dropped him at the ICRC. He did not look at me as he knew it was an unbearable situation. After he left for Jaffna, there were days when he sometimes went on for more than 15 days without any contact. I had to rely on whatever information ICRC gave me. Most days, I was anxious and tense, not knowing whom to believe and whom to contact. Those were heavy days", she exhaled.

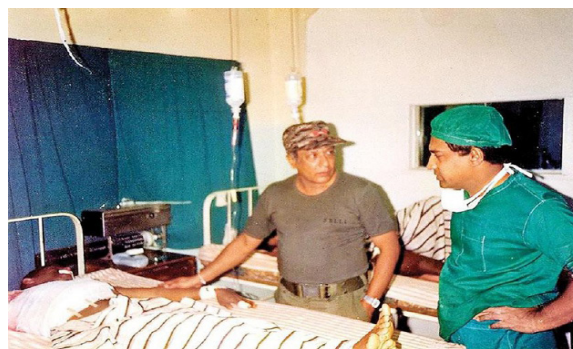
Back to Dr. Gamini's side of the story. "I was the first Sinhala doctor to enter the Jaffna peninsula after the onset of the civil war in 1983. Those in control had no objections to my visiting Jaffna, others were taken to a separate counter for immigration and customs clearance. No one checked me or my luggage for any prohibited items. I did not have newspapers or liquor with me but I had my precious camera. I was cleared in quick time in a special red carpet lounge. I cannot forget the Subhas Tourist Hotel that gave me accommodation. I was the only guest in a 30-room guest hotel. The next day the owner of the hotel brought "Ealanatham" the official newspaper of the LTTE, which indicated the arrival of Professor Gamini Goonetilleke in Jaffna. The people living in Jaffna were kept informed about an outsider in the city of Jaffna who was a Sinhalese doctor", Dr Gamini gave a bright smile.

Dr Gamini was met with another surprise when he found Somaratne while he was examining patients. Somaratne was a fisherman who had drifted to the North-Eastern waters off the coast of Mullaitivu which was in control of the LTTE. He and his friend were arrested. Ranjan had been assaulted, and his face was swollen. Somaratne had developed severe pain in the abdomen and Dr Gamini revealed that he was suffering from kidney stones. "I gathered their details and they were elated to have found someone from the south who could communicate in Sinhala. I promised them that I would do my best to get them released from the custody of the LTTE. Although they were receiving treatment at the hospital, they were to be released from the ward and sent back to the LTTE prison.

I wondered what their fate would be. That evening I went with the determination to liberate them. I approached the Head of Mission of the ICRC

and pleaded with her to hand over the prisoners to me so that I could take them home with me on my return. I sent a message to the head of LTTE via the ICRC. The LTTE hierarchy acceded to my request to release the fishermen from their custody. However, they could not release the fishermen directly to me; only through the ICRC, they could release them. So the ICRC handed the prisoners to me at the Point Pedro Jetty", he said with a sparkling smile.

Dr Gamini's "The Extra Mile" is an immense inspiration that teach us all the value of commitment and perseverance. His manuscript takes the readers through realistic scenarios combined with never seen photographs. It is an essential read that reflects on war and humanity and a doctor's quest to genuinely care about the people of his country.



With late General Denzil Kobbekaduwa at the Base Hospital Palaly 1990

Northern theatre of war



MELBOURNE
CSA MELBOURNE CHAPTER
MEETING - SUNDAY 20 NOVEMBER 2022
TOPIC: LIFE AND TIMES OF PROF ALLEN ABRAHAM (1865-1922)
SPEAKER: LOGAN THURAIRATNAM

Hemal Gurusinghe, Convenor of the Melbourne Chapter presided over a well-attended meeting which featured a talk by Logan Thurairatnam on the life and achievements of Prof Allen Abraham, the multi-talented astronomer and academic.

Before proceedings began, the chairman called upon Hugh Karunanayake the Founding President of CSA to make a brief presentation on the formation of the Society, to mark its 25th year of service. Hugh made a brief recapitulation of the formation of the Society which he thought was due to the collaborative effort from like-minded individuals with a common interest in preserving the heritage of the richly endowed country. He made pointed reference to the formation of the Melbourne Chapter whose first President was Dr Srilal Fernando, ably assisted by a coterie of dedicated members most of whom have unfortunately passed on and are no longer with us, but the excellent record of service continues.

Logan's informative presentation about his extraordinarily talented kinsman kept the audience enthralled. His presentation was supported by detailed historically recorded facts. Prof Abraham who was orphaned at the age of 11 years was placed in the care of American Missionaries who provided him access to an excellent education he received first at Union College, Tellipallai and later at Jaffna College. He had the rare distinction of holding two chairs at Jaffna College, in Mathematics and in Tamil which he held until his death in 1922 at the age of 57 years.

A man gifted with a rare intellectual curiosity, Prof Abraham was deeply interested in astronomy, and had access to the college telescope for his observations. The return of Halley's comet in 1910 was an event that was eagerly awaited by the scientific world, and during a presentation he made at Karaitivu on 26 March 1910, which was reported in the Ceylon Observer of two days later, the professor predicted that the comet would be visible to the naked eye in mid April 1910. He proved his prediction correct when he and his students became the first persons in the world to see and record the comet sighting. That occurred on 14 April 1910 and was duly recorded in the Jaffna College Miscellany of June 1910.

His other predictions including one that foresaw Venus affecting the motion of the comet was explained in detail to the audience by the speaker. Among the Professors other talents was the composition of Christian lyrics. Twelve of his compositions are in the hymn book of the Church of South India. Many of the lyrics have an indigenous base and are rooted in Hindu devotional songs. His efforts constituted a process by which indigenous culture was woven into the practice of Christianity, a feature which has since gathered momentum. Prof Abraham was also an

indefatigable proponent of temperance, a factor behind Karaitivu remaining "dry". The speaker concluded his talk by adverting to the publication of the biography of Prof Abraham on his 100th death anniversary and its listing in the NASA-Harvard Astrophysics Data System as well as in the Houghton Library (Harvard University), Royal Astronomical Society, British Library, and the State Library of Victoria. The presentation was followed by a question and answer session dealt with admirably by the speaker Logan Thurairatnam.

Hugh Karunanayake

References:

<https://ui.adsabs.harvard.edu/>

Allen Abraham (Ambalavanar Subramaniam) and the Halley's Comet, (2021) Neptune Publications



Hemal Gurusinghe kicking the meeting off



Hugh explaining the CSA's 25 years of existence



Speaker Logan Thurairatnam

OBITUARY

ALLAN BERTRAM HENRICUS

10 Feb 1933 – 26 Nov 2022

A STALWART SPORTSMAN OF YESTERYEAR PASSES AWAY



Allan Henricus the youngest of five outstanding sporting brothers who represented their school Royal College, and their country then known as Ceylon, passed away a few days ago. He would have been 90 years of age if he survived up to his birthday in February next year.

The Henricus brothers grew up in Kohuwela where their father a former Feather Weight Boxing Champion of Ceylon lived. He served as an administrator of the sport first as Hony Secretary of the Amateur Boxing Association of Ceylon and later as its President. He helped build the Baptist Church in Nugegoda and was its Treasurer for 25 years. The road leading to their property was named Henricus Mawatha in honour of this outstanding family.

Allan represented Royal in Boxing, Athletics and Rugby, and won school colours in all three sports. He was also a school prefect, highly respected and regarded by both his school mates and staff. The family consisting of five brothers and two sisters were all nurtured in the best sporting traditions of colonial Ceylon. Eldest brother Barney represented Ceylon in boxing at the Empire Games and won a gold medal winning the feather weight title. The next, Basil, held the national record for 100 yards sprint and I believe his record still stands. He also represented the Havelocks Sports Club and All Ceylon at Rugby. The next brother George, for many years the Master Attendant in the Colombo Port was also a champion boxer, as was Derrick the fourth in line.

Remarkable sportsmen such as Allan reached their great heights from a base of raw innate talent fostered by regular training and a disciplined approach to life. When I was a ten-year-old schoolboy I used to watch with awe and admiration Allan doing his training run at 6 am in the morning, jogging all the way from his home in Kohuwela to Havelock Park and back on most weekends. Allan was senior to me in school by about three years and in those days that was an age gap filled with respect and admiration for a senior student. To us younger kids the high achieving Allan was a hero. I recall in one Public Schools Athletics meet for the Tarbat Cup, either in 1950 or 1951, Royal College was able to obtain a total of 15 points only and were never serious contenders for the trophy. However, the 15 points that Royal earned was almost single handedly collected through Allan's efforts. He won the pole vault event, was first in the 120 metres hurdles, and was a member of the 4 X 400 metre relay team which won the event. Although the Tarbat Cup was won by another school, the assembled gathering

of Royalists carried Allan shoulder high around the grounds! From school he was selected for training as a Naval officer cadet in Dartmouth in Devonshire in England. Fellow Royalists the late Norman Gunawardena, and Humphrey Wijesinghe were among the cadets who were selected for Dartmouth together with Allan. On returning to Ceylon after his naval training at Dartmouth, he served the Royal Ceylon Navy for several years until retirement. On retirement from the Navy, he migrated with his family to Australia.

The stint at Dartmouth would carry many precious memories for him, as that was where he met Maureen the love of his life. On migrating to Australia in the 1970s Allan joined the Royal Australian Navy which he served with distinction as Lieutenant Commander. On my migrating to Australia in 1984 I met Allan and Maureen at a Sunday luncheon hosted by the late Brendon Gooneratne. It was the beginning of a beautiful friendship, and Allan and Maureen remained very close friends of ours. Over the years we used to meet every three months at lunch at the Rosehill Bowling Club organised for old Royalist Seniors through the initiative of Chandra Senaratne. Other social engagements over the years have strengthened our friendship, and it is with deep distress that I heard of his terminal illness about two months ago. I rang him immediately and he was stoic as ever, the brave naval officer that he was. He said in no uncertain terms that he was not seeking to extend his life on this earth, and that he would wait in his home until the final call. Allan's departure marks another severance with the old Ceylon we knew, and its traditions and honorable ways. Allan Henricus was a pioneer member of the Ceylon Society of Australia having joined it in 1998 as member No 28, thus completing 25 years of unbroken membership. He was a regular attendee at the quarterly meetings and never ever missed the Annual Dinner.

The Last Post was played at his funeral at the Baptist Church, Epping on Friday 2 December at 3pm. He is survived by his dear wife Maureen, sons Andrew and Richard, daughter in law Caroline and grandson Ryan.

"The song is ended but the melody lingers on"

Farewell dear Allan.

Hugh Karunanayake

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 MEETINGS FOR 2023 SYDNEY

Venue: Pennant Hills Community Centre Main Hall, Level 1, 68 Ramsay Road, Pennant Hills (cnr Yarrara Rd, enter via Ramsay Rd for parking).

6.30-9.00 pm - General Meeting with Speaker followed by mini Social - Guests welcome.

Sunday 26 February 2023

Sunday 28 May 2023

Sunday 27 August 2023

Saturday 18 November 2023 - 6.00 pm - AGM for Members and **6.30-11.00 pm** - Annual Social including Guests.

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.

CSA Meeting on Sunday 26 February 2023 Synopsis of Talk by Maithri Panagoda, AM, LL.B, LL.M

Maithri believes that "success" encompasses not just achievements in the professional sphere, but other elements such as family, friendships, and the opportunity to make things a little better for fellow human beings. The journey started seven decades ago in a small rural setting called Wathumulla, close to the Gampaha township.

His is not a "rags to riches" story as he came from a reasonably well to do middle class family. Maithri will talk about how he persevered through challenging times after deciding on a career in law at the age of fifteen, when he was a student at Ananda College, Colombo.

His ground-breaking work for the First People of Australia and other landmark cases propelled him to prominence, earning respect from fellow professionals and lifelong friendships within the Aboriginal community.

Resisting suggestions from the family to slow down or retire, he quotes the cliché "Choose a job you love, and you will never work a day in your life".

Biodata for Maithri Panagoda, AM, LL.B, LL.M

Maithri Panagoda, lawyer, poet, humanist - a man for all seasons. His is a success story by any criteria.

Maithri's family comes from Gampaha and he was schooled at Ananda College in Colombo, with his Law degree from the University of Colombo, Masters in Law from the University of Sydney, and an Advanced Study in Sociology & Law at Brunel University, England. He has been admitted to practice in Australia, the UK and Sri Lanka.

Maithri has many Memberships and Awards to his credit in the legal arena gained over the years. A man of many parts, his CD of lyrics, written by him for songs by Sri Lanka's foremost musicians, was launched in 2012. His book, "*Whispers of the Heart*", is the English translation of these beautiful sensitive lyrics published in 2021. He went on to produce a collection of English poems, "*Pages of Life*", written by him over the years.

His legal career has risen to the heights in his adopted country of Australia, where he is a Senior Partner at one of the oldest law firms in Sydney, established in 1899, the venerable and prestigious Sydney legal firm of Carroll & O'Dea, and he is Adjunct Professor, School of Law, University of Notre Dame.

Most importantly and bringing fame, his idealism and drive for social justice, have led to his focus on pioneering work representing Aboriginal Australians who are members of the Stolen Generation, and he is also currently handling a large volume of claims emanating from the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

In addition, he has not spared himself in providing legal assistance wherever and whenever requested, more often than not on a pro bono or fee reduced basis, to the members of the Sri Lankan community in NSW.

In 2016, in recognition of his "significant services to the law, particularly in litigation and dispute resolution, and to the Sri Lankan community", he was honoured with the Order of Australia (AM).

Last year in 2022, his firm of Carroll & O'Dea honoured Maithri with a prestigious Felicitation ceremony at the NSW Parliament with the Governor of NSW as the Guest of Honour. Many encomiums of praise were heaped on Maithri by the glittering legal fraternity present.

The ceremony also served as the launch pad for the book of essays compiled in 2022 in honour of Maithri, "*Pursuing a Vision of Justice*" by Senaka Weeraratna. The contributors going down memory lane are high profile achievers in their fields and many are Maithri's contemporaries, all of whom record so much admiration and respect for an outstanding example of success. Three of CSA's former Presidents, Hugh Karunanayake, Sunil de Silva and Thiru Arumugam, have contributed essays to the book.

Note: Copies of the book at the special discounted price of \$30 will be released by Carroll & O'Dea for sale at the meeting. Books can also be pre-ordered in advance from Carroll & O'Dea by using this link and they can be picked up at the meeting -

<https://www.codea.com.au/publication/pursuing-a-vision-of-justice/>

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
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Bank BSB: 062 308
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Note: Please email all payment details in confirmation to deepakpsl1@gmail.com

Congratulations and a warm welcome to our New Members

- SENELI JAYATUNGA - Colombo 04, SRI LANKA
- CHARLES PEREIRA - Nugegoda, SRI LANKA
- SUHEN VANIGASOORIYA - Nugegoda, SRI LANKA
- WENDY WIJESOORIYA - Nugegoda, SRI LANKA

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-controversial.

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.

Notice to Members - Contact Details

Could we please request all members to advise Treasurer Deepak Pritamdas - deepakpsl1@gmail.com - and Secretary Presenji Jayawickrema - presenji@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

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- Melbourne Chapter Convenor Hemal Gurusinghe

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- Colombo Chapter Secretary Avishka Senewiratne

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Email: avishkamario@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.

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Queen Victoria Statue in front of Colombo Museum 2013