

THE CEYLANKAN

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Editor : Sumane Iyer

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EDITORIAL

You have a new Editor—warts and all. I must confess to feeling a bit apprehensive in this my first attempt particularly when our dear departed David has set a cracking pace. Some time ago when he took a back seat I called him to get a few tricks & tips. What he said to me gave me a degree of comfort. He said, "it will be right mate, its like hopping into a bath of cold water you will feel the tingle a few seconds and then warmth envelopes you". I guess the warmth he talks about is reflected in the letters to editor and many notes of appreciation he got for the production of this journal. This newsletter is produced by amateurs but reaches a discerning audience—and the production team is cognizant of this. So, you out there who read its contents please do not hesitate to be constructively critical. More than this I would welcome contributions and your wish list of things you like to read about so our research team is kept on its toes.

We have in this issue a most exciting find—the story of the first Ceylonese convict to be transported. Read all about it on page 14.

ΩΩΩΩ

An Appreciation

David Michael Goodrich.

" I've croaked ! but I've had a marvellous, imaginative life and great friends. I go happy in the thought that the world is still full of wonderful things, but sometimes you have to dig for them!".

This was the final message David left for his friends. The curtain came down at the Pine Wood crematorium, Sydney, on

Friday 21st December, 2001 to the strains of Louis Armstrong's captivating rendering of the song " What a wonderful world". This was at the request of David: he wished to be laid to rest with this melody as the Last Post. David was a founder member of the Ceylon Society of Australia, and the first editor of THE CEYLANKAN. Even the name of our Bulletin was coined by him. He built it up into our Association's flagship. As every issue of the bulletin left his editorial desk there was a corresponding surge in applications from all over the world to

19th Century Images



Rickshaw Puller

join the society.

David and Helen hardly missed a single one of our quarterly meetings, driving down from their beautiful retreat in Bilpin (some 60 km from Sydney). David was a man of many talents, one of which was embroidery. Those of us who visited David and Helen in their Bilpin home were stunned by the beauty of the place, for the walls displayed his embroidery skills, a feminine art to which David added his masculine gusto. The tapestry

continued on page 2

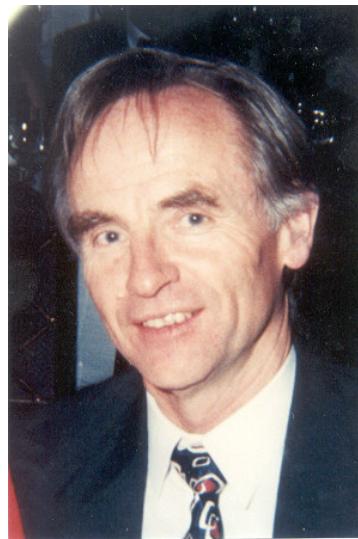
Continued from page 1

of his life and his embroidery equally reflect the same degree of perfection. David was born in Auckland, New Zealand. When his grandmother (a Burgher descended from the well-known Dutch Burgher family of Prins) died, he found a diary which gave details of her life in Ceylon (now Sri Lanka). From then on he pursued a tenacious quest to track down the Prins family. He succeeded in this endeavour, and brought a scattered clan together. There was nothing David touched that he did not adorn.

The culmination of his effort was the visit to Sri Lanka a year ago, to trace his roots, something to which he had long looked forward. Members will remember his talk on his visit to Sri Lanka, warts and all.

In the final tally, David was a person who took the least from others and gave the most to everyone he knew. He fought his terminal illness with determination, fortitude and dignity. He had a smile for everyone up to the very end. We mourn the passing of a good friend, and a stalwart of The Ceylon Society of Australia.

Vama



David Michael Goodrich

About some lesser known communities of Sri Lanka Part 5

Afghans

By Vama Vamadevan

The Afghans and Afghanistan have been in focus these past few months. It will be of interest to readers that there was a recognisable Afghan ethnic grouping in Sri Lanka in the early 1900s.

Afghanistan is a great landmass located between Iran in the West and Pakistan in the East. It has vast steep-sloped mountains and valleys. There are also harsh deserts. It is a varied land, with a history of both internal strife and outside conquests. The Afghans who came to Ceylon were mostly Pathans and Baluchis living close to the Pakistan border. It is believed that the Afghans were brought to Ceylon by the British as Horse keepers, in the same way the British took Afghans to Australia, to ride the camels, in their exploration into the unchartered deserts of Central Australia. By the early twentieth century they had become a very visible ethnic community in Ceylon.

The Afghan in Sri Lanka was at once feared and sought after. His loans helped many to tide over their misery, and his ruthlessness reduced many to penury. The picture presented by Harry Williams sums it up well: -

"... the gigantic Afghan, those superlative money lenders, loathed by all, who have reduced the breeding of money by money to an exact science..."

Aubrey Collette in his cartoons in the *Ceylon Observer* in the 1940s and 50s drew caricatures of Afghans making them synonymous with money lending and their ruthless methods

of collecting their debts. The Afghan outside the office door and the pitiful clerk hopping out of a window, to avoid him, on his way out, will be vivid in reader's minds.



Caroline Corner, a visitor to Ceylon, around 1908, describes the Afghan dress. In her book *Ceylon - the Paradise of Adam (1908)* she says, "... with elaborately embroidered zonave in red velvet and gold, a cummerbund of crimson silk in which were carried poignards and pistols, sandals and turban, the latter with the conical centre marking the nationality and religion of a Muhammedan Afghan."

When an Afghan left his home he was a turbaned man in baggy trousers and long over shirts. He wore a waistcoat liberally embroidered in gold and silver. One invariably saw them carrying a pouch filled with dried fried nuts and dried fruits, which they often munched, and it formed an important component of their food. They were given to gambling and betting, and freely played with cards and dice.

They were also fond of indulging in the gruesome and cruel sport of cock fighting. The paraphernalia for this sport includes a fighting pit for the roosters to fight in a make-do arena. The cocks wear spurs and in the course of the fight many lose their combs. It is an absolutely outrageous pursuit. The birds suffer a

very long and drawn out painful death. It is a cruel game in every sense of the word and the birds are used for their gratification through this sport. The whole of the mechanism of the sport is to fix the birds with razor sharp spurs, put them in the pit and stir them up. The birds



An Afghan pausing beside a tree on Chatham Street, Port, for a picture taken in the year 1935.

(ANCL Library file photo)

then fight each other until one dies. The Afghans squat round the pit and take bets and side bets.

Those of the older generation will remember them gathered together on a Sunday evening at the Slave Island roundabout. Mothers who wished to bring recalcitrant children into line invoked their fierce countenance. Fathers ducked by habit when an Afghan was around. Very few had not availed themselves of his services. He bestrode the estate roads in the hill country like a colossus, looking for debtors

among the coolies. The Afghans by their ruthless money lending policy were in no small measure responsible for the aggravation of the pauperisation of the Indian Tamil labourers.

C. Brooke Elliot in his book '*Real Ceylon*' (1924), is of the view that the Afghans who came to Ceylon were really Pathans. But whatever their origin, these Afghans came to the island with a paltry sum of money of about a hundred or two hundred rupees, but when they left after a stay of two or three years, they took back an enviable fortune. All their earnings were from their money-lending profession. A study of the title deeds of houses in Colombo will show that many of the Colombo households have at some time or another has been owned by the money lending Afghans.

W.S.Weerasooria quotes the Banking Commission report in his book "*Natukottai Chettiar, Merchant Bankers in Ceylon*" 1973 (page 60) and the Afghan is described there as follows:-

"The Afghan is reported to be a most rapacious type of money lender. He is always on the look out for someone who is in need of a loan badly and whose capacity to repay is not totally extinct. He will inveigle him into his meshes. His prey lies mostly among the poorer and lower middle class section of society..... In his scheme of credit there is no question of sentiment or sympathy. According to the money lending Ordinance the maximum rate of interest is fixed at 20% but this will not satisfy the Afghan. He overcomes the obstacle by making his borrower write the promissory note for double or treble the amount of money actually lent. At times he takes a signature on a blank piece of paper keeping him free to enter whatever sum he likes.... He usually issues no receipts for amounts paid to him. It is said in respect of his borrower, "once a debtor, always a debtor".

"... They fatten themselves on the misery and

improvidence of the poor"..... But in view of the great menace the Afghans are to their debtors, we recommend that they should be permanently banned from coming into the island or engaging in money lending here. The police should be on the look out for the detection of malpractices by Afghans and ask for exemplary punishments where the offence is proved."

The presence of the Afghans came to the special notice of the British Colonial Government in 1880 due to the English-Afghan war on the sub-continent. It was rumoured that Afghans in Ceylon were being drilled and sent back to Afghanistan to fight the British. This was however found to be untrue, and was probably a mischievous story started by an insolvent debtor sufficiently close to the corridors of power. But this suspicion led to an inquiry being initiated, which threw a lot of light on other aspects of this small Muslim community.

W.S.Murray, an Assistant Superintendent of Police, made the inquiries. It transpired that the Afghans were first brought as horse-keepers from different parts of Afghanistan. After arrival some of them in due course took to petty trading. They penetrated remote Kandyan villages and traded in textiles of Indian manufacture. They carried on a lucrative trade in second hand goods, from clothing to foot wear. They also specialised in the sale of warm clothing to Indian coolies on estates. They gave goods on credit and collected their dues without recourse to the law, often taking the law into their own hands. Eventually, they took to giving loans, purely as moneylenders, at prohibitive interest rates.

To intimidate their clients they carried pointed knives and small axes fixed to walking sticks. They lived together in small closed communities, helping each other in money matters and being subject to a local chief of their own who settled their disputes.

Even as vendors they carried themselves with a certain amount of haughtiness. As itinerant vendors they were hawking oriental silks, stuffs and embroideries. They would attire themselves in embroidered waistcoats, slippers and baggy trousers gathered in at the ankles. They struck an imposing figure as a vendor. A coolie carried their wares, and the coolie would be the one who would open up the box or bundle and hold them up to the prospective buyer to behold. The Afghan would stand-by with a certain '*hauteur*', calmness, dignity and detachment almost amounting to disdain. Once the sale was concluded the Afghan would command the coolie to cord the bundle and would retire with a salaam.

In and around 1880, there were about 1000 Afghans distributed across the island as follows:

Kandy District	300
Trincomallee & Batticaloa....	100
Colombo District.....	150
Jaffna, Kurunagalle, Badulla	
Haldumulla & Ratnapura. ..	450
<hr/>	
Total -	1000

Quite often the Afghan served as a sort of mobile bank, and served a useful purpose in the economy. Instead of the debtor going to the creditor, the process was reversed and the Afghan lender went to the debtor with his offer of loans when it was likely to be required. It is reported that even during the pearl fishery in Mannar, the Afghans in their ferocious panoply were at hand. They mingled with the business community offering quick, on the spot loans, at high rates of interest, probably to be repaid also on-the-spot, after the days catch. The Afghan was indeed a perambulating bank, and coupled with his unorthodox method of recovering his loans, be aptly called a 'Bankster'.

The law was weighed quite heavily against them in view of their uncompromising prac-

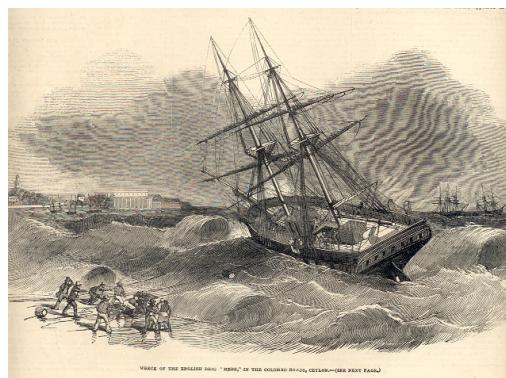
tices. Under the money-lending ordinance No. 2 of 1918, the burden of proof whether a person comes under the operation of this ordinance rests with the party alleging it. The only exception was in the case of the Afghans who are presumed to be moneylenders unless the contrary is proved to the satisfaction of the court.

The Afghan was a conspicuous figure on the Ceylon Scene with his tall and imposing figure. The turban with its conical centre sat gracefully as well as jauntily on his flowing hair, the walking stick hung from his arm menacingly. He was dreaded but needed. In the 1940s the Afghans went back '*en masse*' and are no more a recognisable ethnic group in Sri Lanka. The few who stayed behind have changed their attire to shirt and trousers and are indistinguishable from the rest of the population, except by their facial features.

ΩΩΩΩ

Fake Lighthouse

The ruins of a fake lighthouse built during the Dutch period can be seen on Roomassala ranges in the village of Unawatuna a short distance from the Galle-Matara road. It was used to give wrong signals to enemy sailing vessels and lure them towards large rocks where the result was inevitable. The spot where this lighthouse was built is now known as "Kulunu Kanda".



In Search of Arab ships and sailors - a personal Odyssey

By Somasiri Devendra

Text of a lecture delivered before the Sri Lanka Historical Association—continued from Journal No: 10

In 1990 I had the chance of working nearly one year in Sharjah, in the United Arab Emirates. My work on the Arab connection had, by this time, become focussed on the structural characteristics of Sri Lankan craft and the influences of Arab techniques on them.

Without going into much detail, I must say that it was obvious that we had borrowed, or we had shared some common features. One was the fact that we - I mean both Sri Lankans and Arabs - did not use nails to fasten the ships' timbers, but "sewed" them together with our coir rope. We both used oils for preservation, vegetable or fish oils.

The ships were of a shallow draught, enabling them to be beached or careened for self-refitting and repair. A definite adoption by us, in our larger sea-going vessels, was the Arab/Indian lateen sail and fore-and-aft rigging used in combination with a fixed rudder astern. We had previously used square rigging in combination with steering-boards, outriggers and double-ended hulls. The new sailing rig & rudder improved ship's performance, enabling them to sail a long reach with a following wind and to tack effectively to windward: both essential requirements for long voyages.

In these ways, we belonged to a particularly west-Asian technology zone. In other ways, (such as the use of double-ended hulls with steering boards in our smaller craft, our attachment to the outrigger even on such large ships as the "Yantra Dhoni" which shows a

triumph of tradition over technology, and the use of square sail) we were part of another technology zone which passed India, but linked us to South East Asia and East Africa. It is for this reason that I am unconvinced by the reference to Sri Lankan ships being the largest ships to visit China, being several 10's of feet in height, with stairways for loading and unloading. The Chinese, even in the 7th century, described the K'un Lun Ships of the southern seas as being sewn ships. As of now, I cannot reconcile the description of the large ships from the Lion Kingdom with any ship-building technology known in Sri Lanka. Other details of the description also appear in the Marco Polian character.

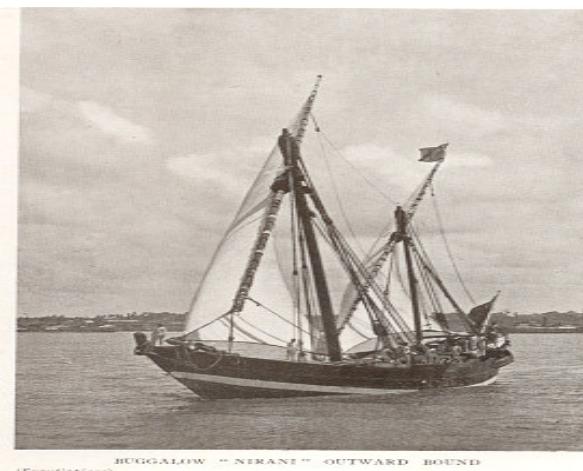
But to get back to my story, by the time I reached Sharjah, my prime interest was to locate a traditional Dhow-building yard and to follow the progress of a wooden ship being built in the traditional manner from the keel upwards. I was afraid that the traditional yards building wooden ships would have disappeared, as they did here during this century. As it turned out, I had no cause for worry, as the yards were still operational. The problems I faced were completely different ones. The first was the outbreak of the Gulf War: having come so near the Euphrates, I could not even dream of going the rest of the way. The other was language: I had to know Arabic to ask questions and learn, or I had to know Hindi or Urdu, since most of the workers were Indians or Pakistanis. But I had none of these. All I had was a camera...not even a measuring tape. However, I was lucky enough to find a shipyard within walking distance from my flat, near Khan post office in Sharjah. So I decided to visit the yard every couple of weeks and photograph selected vessels under construction, judging height above ground in comparison to my own height and making linear measurements through pacing. For the rest, well, Inshallah! The result of all this was copious album of photographs, fol-

lowing the construction of selected ships from the keel-log upwards, some drawings following a naval architectural conventions, and pictures of different types of vessels ashore and afloat and under maintenance.

The shipwrights, as I said were Pakistani or Indian, the latter mostly from Cochin or Kerala. Initially, I could not understand why, but later came to feel that they could have been traditionally part of this scene. The worlds oldest, commercial liner route, yet serviced by wooden ships, serves India, Pakistan, the Arabian Peninsula and the Gulf area, and East Africa. This was one unified shipping area. Teakwood for the ships came from India. Coir rope for lashings came from India & Sri Lanka - the 1st century coconut plantations probably serviced a demand for coir rope. West Indian and Arabic ships are very similar and the technology only marginally different. For more than centuries, regular maritime trade took place across the Arabian Sea. The West Indian shipwrights were so skilled that every colonial power used them to build their own ships, from Caravelles to East Indiamen. In British colonial times, the U.A.E. - then called the Trucial States - were under the administrative control of the Viceroy, and British Indian currency was in use. So I came to accept that these shipwrights had been part of the scene for so many centuries. They were useful to me too, being more tolerant than Arabs of a fellow sub-continental and some even knowing a smattering on English. The workers may have been Indian but the ships they built were emphatically Arabian: their lines were so very aesthetically pleasing. Traditional Indian Sailing vessels are also beautiful. In Gujarat, near Dwarka, I saw ships that brought to life the meaning of the poet's line; "I have seen old ship sail like swans asleep". European artists too have realised the curvilinear elegance of ship and boat design. In these Arabian ships, there was no single straight line to be seen. Sharp prows slanting

upward to a characteristic fins aft. They were the lowest in the water where they were the broadest. Seen under sail from one side, they were curved crescents cleaving the water.

They are an artist's dream. The type I saw being built were the common fishing craft called the "Baggarah", though I have been told by an expert that they were "Sambuq" - there are several types in use. They are not sailing ships, now, being fitted with inboard engines, but the lines have not changed. I examined several old hulks abandoned in the creeks and the beach. - Some even sea going types, with



(Frontispiece)
BUGGARAH "NERANT" OUTWARD BOUND

faded painted transoms. Obviously, the type is suited to the conditions in the Gulf, since fibreglass clones are now being built. Timber is, as usual, the problem there, and very inferior woods are being used in the yards, instead of the teak used for the sturdy workhorses of the commercial fleets. Scrambling around the partly built ships I found shark and other fins laid out to dry on the decks. They were not only being dried for sale. The hot sun extracted the fish oil to be absorbed by the wood as a preservative, and to give these crafts a fishy smell they have been renowned for throughout history. The builders made good use of the blistering heat of the sun: planks were bent into required shapes, using templates, and left to be warped into shape by the sun. Appropriate technology is the best description.

(To deviate slightly, on the subject of wood; I used to hang around their archaeologists rebuilding 100 yr old houses of coral blocks, with the original carved teak Corinthian pillars, and they asked me if Sri Lanka could help them get certain types of wood they wanted. To give lateral strength to coral walls, there were embedded long mangrove poles very closely and tightly bound from end to end by coir rope, to prevent the radial splitting characteristic of the wood. One archaeologist was very interested in my copies of our Kufic inscriptions, as he was from the village of Kufa, near Baghdad, where this script had originated.)

The older ships in use are looked after carefully. At regular intervals, they are sailed up the creeks and beached by the ebbing tide. Then, when they are resting on a side, the exposed ship's bottom is scraped, patched, painted etc. Later it is made to expose the other side for similar treatment. Well-made ships were treasured. How appropriate a haven, I realised, would Nicholson's Cove have been to these sons of Sinbad.

Apart from the Khan shipyard, I discovered a sand flat in a creek where very long boats, with nothing above the deck-line, were completely covered over, and kept on wheeler trailers. For many months, nobody came near them and I despaired of seeing them. But with Ramazan nearing, things began to happen. The boats were the property of an affluent Arab and were kept for the annual ceremonial boat races. When the cocooning was removed, I found that they were rowing galleys made of good teakwood and beautiful pieces of workmanship. Using my usual methods, I measured them at over 82 ft in length and not more than 5 ft. at the broadest point. They sat low in the water and at lowest point, the gunwale, or edge of the boat was only 2 1/2 ft. above the keel. When fully loaded, it

must have been much less. There were planks or thwarts for seats and footrests for the rowers, and rowlocks for the oars. There was room for 47 oarsmen and counting the steersman & the master, a crew of 50 was needed to race it. In preparation for the race, the boats were lowered into the water, allowed to get timbers thoroughly soaked and swelled, cleaned, repaired, all in a thoroughly seaman-like way. After the race, it went through the full treatment, in reverse, and the boats were cocooned again and laid up until the following year.

The ceremonial races did not involve rowing galleys only. There were races for sailing boats, very much like the Viking long-boats in general, and the event was to commemorate the race at home of the pearl-fleets at season's end. (In Mannar too, during the pearl-fishing days, there was a race home every evening!) Only traditional technology was permitted. I missed a chance to see it from sea, as the weather was muggy and visibility too low for my friend to put out to sea in his own little yacht. At the last minute, visibility improved and he was able to sail though I missed out. These boats, with huge single lateen sails, hoisted by block and tackle on for'ard raking masts, must need very good crews and it was a very proud master who sailed first into port, through the haze, turning into wind at the last moment to stop dead in the water to secure. I realised that traditional Arab seamanship was yet very much alive.

By the time my work in Sharjah ended, many of the answers I had sought for had been found. There is too much for me to talk about here, for example, the similarities between certain types of Arabian and Sri Lankan craft, particularly in the northeast. But one has to stop sometime. I will therefore, only add one more, very practical dimension to the story. I spoke of the aesthetic beauty of the ships, but how did they perform at sea? I will

quote from Capt. Allan Villiers, a veteran sailor who, preparing himself to sail the "Mayflower II" to America, acquired a feel for small sailing ships abroad Arabian Dhows and Maldivian Buggalows which were the nearest ships in size to the "Mayflower" that were still in use. I will therefore end this talk with his words:

I was crowded with something like 200 other passengers. The ship was about 180 tons, with a high poop....with a longboat cluttering up the deck, with little spare fresh water, with a small smoke-box for the only galley and a couple of small boxes slung outboard over the sea as the only bathroom and lavatory accommodation. She smelled. She rolled. She pitched. The passengers all lived on deck (except for the women who were crowded into a loathsome great cabin below the poop) and the smoke from their little fires and the clutter of their living and their cooking drifted over the whole vessel. They filled every nook and cranny, sleeping wherever they could... Many, who were migrating either in small tribal groups or families, made up their own part of the deck...and set up house for the voyage. All prepared their own food and looked after themselves in all ways. The ship carried them, and that was the end of her obligation towards them.

The sailors also lived in the same way except for the fact that the ship fed them. All their work was in the open, on the main deck, round which they were wont to rush at headlong speed shifting the huge mainsail...or some such job and woe betide any stupid passenger who then got in the way! The 200 -odd passengers lived full and eventful lives, punctuated by the five daily prayers of good Muslims and exalted by an awareness of God"...

And thus they sailed from Baghdad, past Sealediba, to distant Cathay.

ΩΩΩΩΩ



More tributes to David Goodrich



I wish to pay a brief tribute to David whose ability, knowledge and skills made such a crucial contribution to the success of THE CEYLANKAN.

This aspect of his work has already been lauded by many so I will not elaborate except to say that David's intense enjoyment and satisfaction in what he was doing was an inspiration to all of us who wrote for the journal. He had a genuine feeling of connection with Sri Lanka and did a considerable amount of research on Sri Lankan subjects in a comparatively short period. He worked steadily and methodically to complete his book and so persevered bravely to the end. His immense courage, calmness and dignity as he faced death are also sources of inspiration and consolation. He often emphasised that his mind was completely at peace, he was grateful for his life and satisfied that he had accomplished all he wanted to do. He reminds us that it is not enough to live well, one must also die well, and this he did, providing an example to us all. Vale, David! May your soul rest in peace.

Shelagh Goonewardene

Dear Hugh & other Friends:

I received Hugh's message about David with sadness but also some degree of acceptance, as I knew that he had been battling cancer for some time. I received a brief e-mail from David about 6 weeks ago saying that he was nearing what he termed "the finito" and that he might not be able to write to me again, but that he regretted that we had never been able to meet. Not long ago another message arrived from him. Judging by the subject line it was something to do with the Galle notes that he had included in his last edition of the Ceylankan. But the word.doc attachment would

not open as the Badtrans virus had infected it, and my anti-virus software quarantined it. I sent David a message to let him know that I had been unable to read his message for that reason, and that I was thinking about him. That was the last I ever heard from him. Although of course we never met and I do not even know what he looked like, his sense of humour in our periodic correspondence over the past 18-odd months, made me feel a sense of friendship and even kinship with him. For that I will miss him, even at this great distance. I hope that he managed to finish his book. My thoughts go out to his wife and family, and I would like to add - wherever you are now, David, I hope that you are at peace and where your spirit wishes to be. Maybe one day we will get to meet, after all. Ayubowan, machan.

Joe & Penny Simpson
Canada



THANK YOU

I would like to thank everyone for their phone calls and cards of sympathy.

David left us in Peace believing the world is full of wonderful things. He felt very fulfilled in getting the CEYLANKAN under way, feeling this was a great connection to his ancestors born in Ceylon.
Thank you all

Helen



A CORDIAL WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS



Dr Gamini & Chandrika Beneragama
WHEELERS HILL VIC
Mr H A J Abeykoon
AMPITIGALA SRI LANKA
Mr Ronald & Chitranganie Perera
BRAMPTON UK
Mr Bryan & Mahal WICKREMARATNE
GLEN WAVERLEY VIC
Dr Lucien & Srikanthi WIJETUNGA -
WAHROONGA NSW
Dr Varna & Deepthika AMARASINGHE
CAMBERWELL VIC
Dr Nihal & Unie KURUPPU
GLEN WAVERLEY VIC

...have joined since publication of
The Ceylankan Journal no: 16

.....and sadly we farewell



Kingsley Siebel 1917- 2001

Member since 1998, passed away after a brief illness on 20th November 2001 .

Douglas Fernando 1926-2002

Member since 2000 died suddenly at his home on 14th January 2002

See Obituaries on page 28

The Anniewatte Tunnel - Kandy

Governor Edward Barnes commissioned this historical, longest road tunnel in Sri Lanka in 1823. It was formerly known as the Halloluwa Tunnel.

At that time the tunnel was of strategic importance to the British as it provided an alternate route to Kandy via Gannoruwa and Halloluwa. The road connected Kurunegala and



thus was originally called Old Kurunegala Road subsequently renamed Halloluwa Road. At present it bears the name of a prominent Kandy personage George E de Silva. The tunnel when completed was a catalyst to development of land with many orchards, tea and rubber plantations springing up. The Anniewatte tea estate with its impressive factory and many bungalows for the British planters was the largest of them.

According to a report by Dr Udeni Amarasinghe, lecturer at the department of Geology - University of Sri Lanka Peradeniya, the tunnel is a masterpiece of rock craft with geological value and it should be preserved for future

generations. The composition of the tunnel is a great resource for geological studies and invaluable for students in the subject.

The tunnel passes through several groups of rock and according to Dr Amarasinghe it is of exemplary construction and achieved entirely by manual labour. Governor Barnes had no problem on this score as his predecessor Governor North had purchased Kaffir labour from Bombay, Goa and even as far as Mozambique for his Kaffir Corps. Barnes had some of these Kaffirs billeted at the Hantana end of the proposed tunnel. This place is still known by its adopted name of Kapiriwatte" - abode of the Kaffirs. The British also had access to slave labour from the Cape Colony and Natal.

In the course of time when bridges provided shorter access to Kandy the tunnel went into neglect and the centre caved in due to seepage from the perennial springs located on top of the tunnel. It is reported that the landmass on top was a veritable swamp, a breeding ground for pythons and a variety of bats and other exotic flora and fauna. Over time the tea estates lost their glamour and were no longer in production, prompting sale of small blocks for residential buildings. The blocks fetched low prices, as there was no direct access. The most inconvenienced were the villagers travelling to Kandy in search of employment or to peddle their wares. Women were probably the hardest hit, being beasts of burden in those wicked days, carting firewood over the hill into Kandy markets.

In 1950 Kandy Municipal Works Engineer the late C E Fonseka started the Herculean task of restoration of the tunnel which had been declared unusable by the British Provincial Engineers. Fonseka, worked within his limited maintenance budget with no access to extra funds or foreign expertise and gave it the best he had. Some of the concrete arches

he designed to support the caved in sections were precast on his official residence grounds, fortunately located near the tunnel. The restored tunnel stands as a monument to his ingenuity and diligence and ushered in an era of prosperity to those who had purchased residential building blocks. Today, Anniewatte is an upmarket residential area but the tunnel is not yet out of danger of collapse again if proper maintenance is ignored. The vegetation on top of the tunnel, which encourages accumulation of water with no proper drainage in place, poses a continuing threat according to Dr Amerasinghe. This tunnel is not merely means of access to road traffic, which has multiplied over the years, it is a national monument which deserves urgent action towards its preservation.

Information contributed by Dr Udeni Amerasinghe, Tissa Amerasekera and Nihal Fonseka.

The Editor invites comments and suggestion from those interested to see this monument preserved for future generations.

REMINDER MEMBERSHIP DUES

There are some members still in arrears of 2001 subscriptions. Please see enclosed individual reminder. 2002 subscriptions are now due. Kindly draw your cheque in favour of the Ceylon Society of Australia and mail to Sumane Iyer—P O Box 170 Berowra NSW 2081.

Annual subscriptions are:

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Joe Simpson writes or more appropriately, e-mails

I found this image in an old (1913) stereograph card that I just bought for \$20 from a bookstore in Australia that listed it on the Web - I've enlarged it on the scanner and look at what it reveals - steamships, outriggers, the lot! What a bustling commercial scene - on the eve of the First World War. Little wonder the presence in the



Indian Ocean of the German battleship "Emden" caused such a scare for the British in 1914-15!

The commentary on the back - in the classic imperial fashion of the times - says "the large steamers shown in the picture are ships of the Peninsular and Oriental ("P. & O.") and other lines running to India, China and Australia. The small native boats are catamarans, made from a tree trunk hollowed out and fitted with an outrigging of two poles extending at right angles from the canoe and connected at the ends by a float. The upper part of the canoe is made of boards lashed on..Contrast the steamers of Christendom! Better fifty years of Europe than a cycle of Cathay!"

The "blurb" on the back goes on to inform

the reader (*inter alia*) that Ceylon is a little over half the size of Cuba, with 4,000,000 people [nowadays it is over 18,000,000] and that in 1913 Colombo has 150,000 residents. Oh, and "*there is a little railroad from Colombo to Kandy in the center of the island, which runs through a country rich in tropical vegetation, and ruined temples of an ancient civilization*". How very quaint and amusing..

Note the spelling - all-American. The copyright was held by the Keystone View Company of Neadville, Pa., New York, N.Y., Portland, Oregon, London, Eng., and Sydney Aus.

ΩΩΩΩ

An invitation from the Editor

Who would like to join The Rambler and write up about stately homes of yesteryear down your favorite road in Sri Lanka?

Rambler has done 'The homes along Havelock Road' in Journal No: 8 and Turret Road Kollupitiya in this issue. Put it together in your own style and let us make this a regular feature. To avoid duplication of subject road, let me know which one you pick so I can co-ordinate.

Vama Vamadevan's series on "The lesser known communities of Sri Lanka" is another illustration of the type of article that can effectively explore subjects. The fifth part of the series appears in this issue and the subject is very topical - The Afghans.

Brian Parker has given his nod to do a focused series on the people who bring that cheering "cuppa" to your table. Look out for this in future issues.

So friends go for your quills .. oops! for your keyboards and roll out your favorite subject and share it with fellow members. If research material is required contact me or any of the Office Bearers who would be glad to help.

THE FIRST CEYLONSE FAMILY IN AUSTRALIA

In February 1816 the residents of Sydney were alerted by the *Sydney Gazette* to the arrival of a family of five from Ceylon. The appearance of this "little family" was reported to be "*truly interesting*", as it was "*scarcely conceivable that they could contribute to their own support*". Despite the circumstances that surrounded the family's forced migration to New South Wales, historical records reveal that this family and its descendants established successful lives and made a significant and worthwhile contribution to colonial society.

The article in the *Sydney Gazette* of 17th February 1816 (page 1) reports:-

The "Kangaroo" has brought hither from Colombo several convicts, some of whom are prisoners who had escaped from this Colony.... One of the prisoners brought by the "Kangaroo" is a Malayan, who was drum major of the 1st Ceylon regiment in the memorable Kandyan war in 1802-03; and having gone over to the enemy, was upon the late capture of the Kandyan country taken prisoner, and condemned to be shot; which sentence was commuted to transportation for life to this territory; whither he is accompanied by his wife and three fine children. The man, who appears to be intelligent, gives an account of the death of several officers who were made prisoners by the Kandyan Monarch; among whose unfortunate number were Major Davey, of the 1st Ceylon, and Captain Romley, of the 73rd regiment. He is dark complexioned, approaching to a black, and is about 5 feet 10 inches in height. His wife, who is a Singlasse, being a true descendant of the aboriginal inhabitants of the island, is of a small stature, handsomely formed, of a dark olive complexion, and agreeable features, as are also her three children, of whom the two youngest are boys.

The appearance of this little family is truly interesting; and the more so, when the feeling mind considers that

misfortune has brought them to a part of the world in which it is scarcely conceivable they can find any means of contributing to their own support. Their native country abounds in fruits, and all the natural luxuries of the East, which are attainable almost without the necessity of human exertion.

Employment in Australia

The Malayan drum major was Odeen. The difficulties in researching this family arose due to the almost constant name changes on records and documents in the Colony. From 1818 he was known as William O'Dean/Odeen. However in the census and musters from 1822 to 1825 the family name is recorded as *Hoodine*, (1) while in the 1828 census the name is *Wooden*. (2) By the 1840's the first name had changed from William to John. O'Dean and his family had been put on board the H.M. Brig "Kangaroo" on 17th August 1815, which sailed to New South Wales via Penang arriving in Sydney on 7th February 1816.(3)

By December 1818 O'Dean had been employed for 2 years and 4 months as Watchman at HM Dockyards. In a petition to Governor Macquarie for mitigation of sentence he requested an increase of rations from the Government Stores to enable him to furnish house, rent and procure food and Raiment for a wife and four children". He also requested the further indulgence of a ticket of leave. (4) Subsequently Governor Macquarie "was gratiouly pleased to take Petitioners good conduct into his consideration and grant him an Emancipation". (5) In January 1825 William O'Dean sought improved employment by petitioning for a position as a Constable of the Government Domain as he had "a large family consisting of a wife and 6 children". (6) The request was granted the following March. (7)

Appointment as Malay interpreter

In May 1827 the family's life took a completely different turn when O'Dean was appointed as a

Malay Interpreter, a position which required his presence on the far north coast of the country. O'Dean was required to interpret for the Colonial Officers with the Macassan fishermen. For various reasons the Australian Government had been urged by the British to form settlements in the area. An immediate concern was to weaken Dutch control of the eastern Indonesian islands to provide an easy trade route to China. The Malay fishermen, who were based in Macassa, had a lucrative trade with China for trepang (sea worm) which they harvested and preserved on the Australian coast. It was considered advantageous to British objectives to establish trade with these fishermen. Hence the need for a Malay interpreter.

William O'Dean, presumably the first officially appointed interpreter between Australia and South East Asia, arrived with a son at Fort Wellington, Raffles Bay on the Coburg Peninsula in July 1827. This son would later be asked to interpret for the Malay fisherman during his father's absence. Although the name of the son is not recorded it can be assumed that he was one of the two boys born in Ceylon.

The settlement consisted of about 90 people including thirty soldiers, twenty-two convicts, two women and five children. (8) O'Dean's salary was seventy pounds per year plus a residence. (9) By June 1828 O'Dean had built a house in readiness of the arrival of his wife and children. After requesting leave of absence to collect his family, he returned to Sydney in August to discover that the family had sailed a week previously. (10)

The family

It is interesting to note that the list of household goods that Eve O'Dean and her five children took with them to Raffles Bay revealed that Eve was a practical housewife. The list included:

a table and four chairs
beds and bedding
box of clothing
a cross cut saw and other tools
a gun
a basket of soap
2 boxes of 'Delph' and glass
box of pipes
some kitchen and laundry utensils
a bag of 'grasstree gum'
one goat and fodder

This remarkable family, having survived the Kandyan wars, was later to survive living in the harshest of environments on the far northern coast of the Colony, now known as the Northern Territory

The journals of Captain Collett Barker, the commandant at Raffles Bay, from August 1828 until August 1829, provide a delightful insight into the

lives of O'Dean's children who, having gone from a relatively populated and civilized town, were then living in one of the most remote and desolate areas of the world at that time. In December 1828 when a group of aborigines were hesitant to enter the settlement Noni (later known as Esther) the Malay interpreter's child, took one of them by the hand and led him into the camp, the other aborigines then followed. Another entry two days later describes Mary, a six year old native girl, who had not spoken to anyone in the camp after witnessing the shooting of her mother and brother a few months previously. Mary on this day was surprisingly seen talking for the first time to Coopey (O'Dean). (11)

Before O'Dean could leave Sydney and follow his wife to Raffles Bay the government refused permission for his return. It was at this time that for various reasons the Government was considering the total abandonment of the settlement and was reluctant to pay for O'Deans passage back to Raffles Bay. In response to the refusal, O'Dean wrote a most heart rendering letter in November 1828 to

Governor Darling describing "*that owing to my poor wife and children being separated from me my feelings are wounded to beyond conception*" and further wrote that "*he was in want of the common necessities of life having no house or home*". In desperation he also offered to provide his services at a greatly reduced salary. This letter must have weakened the Governors heart for he granted permission for O'Dean's return to Raffles Bay on the ship "Lucy Ann".⁽¹²⁾ He arrived in Raffles Bay in February 1829 to find that his wife and children were to board the same boat to return to Sydney. Fortunately it took two weeks for the unloading of supplies from Sydney and the loading of goods to be returned. It is presumed that at the very least O'Dean had this two weeks with his wife and children before they had to leave for Sydney. O'Dean, on the other hand had to remain in Raffles Bay until its abandonment in August of that year.⁽¹³⁾

On his return to Sydney he returned to a previous employment as a Watchman at "H.M. Dockyards". He continued as an interpreter for the Government when required, at least until 1842 when his name is listed as being paid as an interpreter in two cases for the Police Office in Sydney.⁽¹⁴⁾

Despite a prolific number of documents regarding O'Deans' activities, records have not provided such an accurate account of all the children. This is due to the fact that the three children born in the colony were not baptized as well as the constant changes in their names on records such as census, musters and church registers.

The descendants of Odeen

The descendants of the two boys born in Ceylon has not been established. Their names on the census and St. Phillips Church Registers changed, or varied from Sampson, Sancho or Cameron to Thomas, Samuel or Hassan Dean. In 1829 Samuel O'Dean married

Barbara McLaughlin a servant in the Clarence St., household of the O'Dean family. They had three children that did not survive infancy. The following year Thomas O'Dean married Elinor Kennedy.⁽¹⁵⁾ There are no children recorded from this union. It appears that the wife of Samuel or Thomas died as, in 1841, Hassan Dean married Alice McGovern of which union a daughter Esther was born in 1845. Records indicate that Hassan was almost certainly one of the two boys born in Ceylon. He died at Sussex Street in 1847 and his occupation is listed as a 'cowkeeper' and 'dealer'.⁽¹⁶⁾

Sarah Harriett, O'Dean's eldest child born in Ceylon, married Nuary Dean Harris, a mariner, in 1829 to whom she had a son Joseph Nuary Dean Harris in 1831. Both husband and son thereafter disappear from the records. By 1835 Sarah and her common-law husband, Frederick William Evans, a convict from Worcestershire, England, resided at Windmill St. Millers Point as shopkeepers, where they remained until their deaths in 1850 and 1842 respectively. From this union two children were born. Martha Harriett born in 1836 married Louis Miller, a native of India, to whom she had a son Thomas before they settled as farmers at Tiaro in Queensland. Her second child Henry Richard John Evans born 1841 was, when orphaned in 1850, raised by O'Dean's youngest daughter Esther and her husband. Henry married Jessie Weir Smeal, Scottish Bounty immigrant and moved across the harbour to Blues Point. While establishing a successful carpentry business, the couple produced six children some of whom later became well known identities in the Ferry and other Water Transport businesses of Sydney Harbour. The majority of the members of this family are buried at St. Thomas' Cemetery, North Sydney.

The first child of William and Eve born in the Colony in 1817 was Coopey, also recorded as

Cooper, who married John Marshall, a sail maker and mariner, in 1841. In 1847 Coopey, by then a widow and known as Charlotte, married Thomas Alin Purcell "a native of India". Their deaths in 1867 and 1876 respectively, show that there were no children to either marriage.

The next child to be born in the colony Emma, previously known as Moore, married Frederick Thomson in 1839. Although the children of this marriage have not been extensively researched it is known that a daughter Emma born 1851, married Finlay McMartin, a Scottish immigrant. Many descendants of the McMartin family still live in New South Wales.

Records relating to the youngest child Esther, born 1825, provide a clearer picture of her life than that of her siblings. Previous to her marriage she was known as Noni at Raffles Bay and as Mimo on the 1828 census. In 1842, at the age of seventeen, Esther married Joseph Vizey Brady born in Madras circa 1815. Joseph owned hotels in Woolloomooloo and Sussex Street and was well known and respected as a businessman and member of a number of committees. He was also a very generous man in his personal life.

Various records show that Joseph took on the responsibility of the entire O'Dean family. He was a witness to most of the O'Dean marriages and was guardian to Sarah Harriett's children upon her death, he looked after William O'Dean until his death and also in his will provided for the nieces and nephews of the O'Dean family as well as his sister-in-law, Charlotte (Coopey) Purcell. Esther died in 1861 aged thirty six years and Joseph died the following year. The family are all buried together at St. Stephen's Church of England Cemetery Camperdown. Their surviving three children produced many

descendants, some of whom live in Sydney today. (17)

Mrs. O'Dean known as Eve died in 1839 aged 50 years at the home of the eldest daughter Sarah Harriett. For unknown reasons the St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church conducted Eve's burial at Devonshire St. Burial Ground. The entire family's religion was recorded on the 1828 census as Muslim while in all other church registers they are recorded as Church of England. Unfortunately there is no record of Eve's gravesite or monumental inscription. (18)

The deaths of John & Eve Odeen

When O'Dean died on 23 rd May1860 the



Tombstone of John Odean & family at St Stephens Church Camperdown



Inscription: Sarah Evans
John Odean
Mr & Mrs Brady
*loved father of Mrs. T.
Purcill and of Mrs. J.
Brady, of Woolloomooloo,
an old and re-
spected colonist, and many years Government Interpreter
in this city. He leaves a large circle of relatives and
friends to mourn their loss".*

His death certificate stated that he was born in India, Cause of death - old age,. Place of death - 101 Woolloomooloo Street, Age at

Marriage - about 20 years. Time in colony - 44 years, and Children of marriage - 2 girls living. He was buried with his eldest child Sarah Harriet Evans and two of his grandchildren, Esther Charlotte (5 years) and Thomas Brady (5 months). His youngest daughter Esther and son in law Joseph Brady were later interred at the same grave site. (19)

The story of William O'Dean and his family has provided many hours of exciting research. As the first Ceylonese family to arrive in the colony they had to adjust to significant cultural and religious changes. This remarkable family, having survived the Kandyan wars, was later to survive living in the most harshest of environments on the far northern coast of the Colony, now known as the Northern Territory. However there are many questions yet to be answered. For instance, why was O'Dean's sentence commuted? Was it for humanitarian reasons or perhaps because he provided information on the demise of the British officers captured 12 years previously? Is there any way of finding out who Eve, O'Deans wife, was? Also, when and where were the first three children born?

Researched and written by Glennys Ferguson, three times great grand daughter of Sarah Harriett O'Dean, the eldest child of William and Eve O'Deans.

January 2002

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ΩΩΩΩ

How Colombo got its name.

There are different theories about how Colombo got its name. Sir Emerson Tennant in his book CEYLON (1860) explains that the city got its early name KALAN-TOTA, meaning Kelani Ferry by which it is mentioned in the Rajavaliya. The Moors in the 12th & 13th Century converted the name to KALAMBU. When the Portuguese arrived they gave the name COLUMBU and it became COLOMBO. There are others who have different views. Robert Knox explains it is derived from the word 'Ambo' a tree resembling the Mango tree but had only leaves, hence called COL-AMBA.. So we have two theories.

A

h this animal world!!



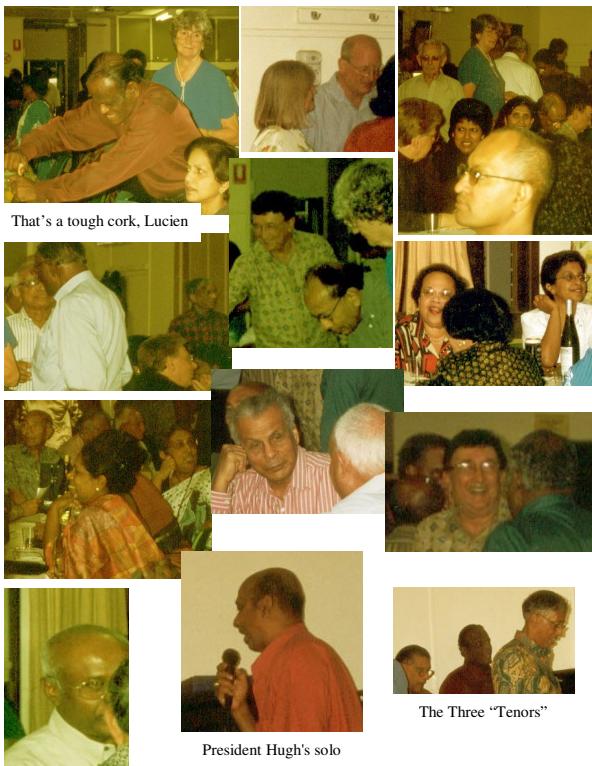
The male praying mantis cannot copulate while its head is attached to its body. The female initiates sex by ripping the male's head off. ("honey I am home, what the.....")

An ostrich's eye is bigger than its brain. (I know some people like that)

Starfish don't have brains. (I know some people like that too)

They say to "eat like a bird" is to eat very little. (Do they know that birds eat eight times their body weight every day?). And drink like a fish!! (I will leave you to figure that out.)

**...and here are some candid shots at the
Sydney AGM dinner & sing along,
2nd December 2001.**



DILEMMA OF AN ISLAND

Merril Gunaratne - Vijitha Yapa Publications
Sri Lanka 2001
Paperback pp 185 Rs 400.00

Book review by Brendon Gooneratne

Well thought out with the sequential marshalling of facts, and their interpretation, make this a balanced and intensely riveting book to read.

During his 35 year career in the Police Service, Merril Gunaratne served in many different parts of the island, and had to deal with a variety of situations that called for police intervention: among them were incidents involving youth unrest on a University campus, (Jayewardene pura University), terrorist violence in Colombo, child prostitution in Negombo an M.P 's public abuse of police officers in Kurunegala, a politicians deliberate attempt to ignite political clashes by placing a statue of Buddha within the precincts of a Hindu kovil in Polgahawela, election violence in 1990 's and a hostage drama involving factory workers and foreign management in Biyagama. Such incidents took place against a background with which we are today only too familiar: the emotions of terror and despair created in ordinary citizens by the seemingly endless conflict brought about by the "ethnic question". The rising tide of crime and violence which the custodians of the nation's security appear powerless to quell. As some believe, they are themselves the problem.

DILEMMA OF AN ISLAND is an unusual mixture of autobiography, military history and political analysis of the troubled times of Sri Lanka since independence, by a dedicated, intelligent and patriotic police officer - rare today, anywhere in the world.

The author, who was formerly Sri Lanka's Director-General of Intelligence & Security, deals with specifics. When he makes a general observation, it is invariably based on lessons learned from personal experience in the field. At a time when Sri Lankans are attempting to find workable solutions for the country's ills, it is interesting to observe the regularity with which the various problems he addresses here can be traced to a single overwhelming flaw in our national infrastructure. He identifies political patronage and interference, as the main reasons, which prevent the public service from carrying out their duties with honesty and efficiency.

"The subordinate officer today" writes Merill Gunaratne, is conscious that the superior officer is bereft of authority. The process of promotions, transfers and appointments to special posts or positions has now become the preserve of those exercising political authority. When the political authority determines the fortunes of the officers in service, many shift their allegiance from their superiors to those who can bestow favours. There are many subordinate officers who behave as 'de facto' superiors: *"in fact, there are superiors who even treat subordinates as their own superiors, or with deference, in order to procure benefits or undue patronage from the patrons of the latter"* (pp 85-86).

On the ethnic issue he occupied a ringside seat, and was occasionally a participant in the decision making process, on rare occasions to good effect. One can do no better than quote from his book on the disastrous decisions and rulings of small minded and expedient politicians on both sides of the political fence:

"When violence and militancy reared their ugly heads in mid 1970's the government at the time was obsessed exclusively with adoption of police and security measures alone to abort the growth of militancy. The release of over 40 hardcore militants around 1976 on

the eve of general elections was a step dictated more by expediency, than a desire to display benevolence. Their release helped the rapid growth of (LTTE) militancy".

And in the early 1980 s:

"At the time I submitted a report to the government in my capacity as Director of Intelligence, predicting that the political void left by them in the north will be filled by militants and extremists. This is exactly what happened, for it is an incontrovertible fact that though the militants exerted a greater impact by recourse to violence, it was yet the TULF, which enjoyed popular clout amongst the Tamil populace. Thus from the 1970 s, governments, by a series of ill-fated policy decisions, not only unconsciously abetted the growth of militancy, but also helped militants to replace moderate political forces in the northern and eastern parts of Sri Lanka. Salutary lessons should be drawn from these blunders in the north in formulating policies for the plantation areas, for, a weak or weakened CWC can easily be replaced with disastrous consequences by the LTTE" (p 19).

Merill Gunaratne's chapter on 'The Ethnic Questions' (pp 17 - 43) provides numerous examples of the betrayal of Sri Lanka's future by expedient politicians and by incompetent political appointees masquerading as administrators, technocrats and bureaucrats. The country has paid and continues to pay a severe price in loss of life and limb among service personnel, loss of civilian life and disruption of society and the economic shambles that have resulted from such misguided and incompetent policies.

Merill Gunaratne frequently looks back in the course of his gripping narrative at the period preceding the erosion of public service ideals by rampant political interference. When the British left in 1948, Sri Lanka had one of the finest bodies of public service personnel in the world, a first class Civil Service and Judicial Service. Sri Lanka, (then Ceylon) was con-

sidered the "best bet in Asia". Where are we today? Most of our people would agree that self-seeking politicians have destroyed the independence of these two key supports of a once fair and just society.

DILEMMA OF AN ISLAND could not have been published at a better time. The wisdom and experience of thoughtful officers such as Merill Gunaratne are essential to the finding of solutions for our present ills.

As he himself observes in the Epilogue,

"many subjects dealt with (here) appear poised to influence the destinies of Sri Lanka decisively".

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CEYLON IN 1894

An egg cost 1½ cts.

Rice was Rs 3.00 per bushel

Fish was 10cts a pound

Large prawns were 5cts each

Ducks cost a princely 50cts each

But beef only 18cts a pound

Mutton was dearer at 25cts

And a bottle of milk was 10cts

(*Administrative report of F C Fisher Government Agent Eastern province*)

(In 2002 AU\$1.00 = SLRs 45.00 approx)

The "Ceylon Review" published by Mr Isaac Thambiah took up the case of high import duties levied on food items which the poor needed whilst rich people paid less for "luxury" items. Here are some examples:

A hundredweight (44Kg) of ham worth Rs 100 paid Rs 3.00 tax so did same amount of sugar worth only Rs 16.80. Horses, pearls, cards, corks and music - usually associated with the affluent were not taxed, whilst ginger attracted Rs 3.00 per hundredweight, rice, peas and beans were taxed at 29cts per bushel.

The words, sex, prostitution, homosexuality, lesbianism never appeared in print - "immoral" covered all these 'sins'.

Some quirky things!!!



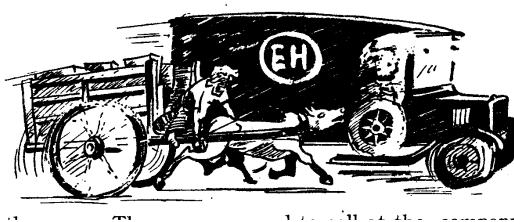
The road that connects the General Hospital with the General Cemetery commemorates Dr W G Kynsey - the Principal Medical Officer.

Schoolboys were fined one cent each time they spoke in Singhalese at school. This happened not only at Royal and St Thomas Colleges but also at the school that symbolised nationalism - Ananda College (then known as The Buddhist Boys School) *The Buddhist Schools Magazine Vol 1 No: 1*

In the 1890 s when a benefactor offered a site for a school in Brownrigg Street - Cinnamon Gardens it was rejected on the grounds " the site is quite out of the way and not in a central locality".

Rice Rotis were described as a "terrible species of cake"

Danish butter in tins when they reached their destinations in the districts, " revealed on top, a lot of yellow liquid like oil and beneath a layer of white grit and when well mixed resulted in a compound very like that used to grease railway axles".



TURRET ROAD KOLLU-PITIYA, FIFTY YEARS AGO

by The Rambler

Turret Road, Kollupitiya is today known as Anagarika Dharmapala Mawata. The road runs east from Galle Road, to the Liptons Circus [now de Soysa Circus] near the Town Hall, (see map dated 1976).

At the turn of the twentieth century, Turret Road was a narrow gravel road. Yet, it was one of the principal thoroughfares in the fast growing metropolis of Colombo, linking the western seaboard with semi urban hinterland comprising Borella, Kotte, and Rajagiriya areas. Turret Road was widened as part of the Colombo Municipal Council's road development scheme in 1922.

It was in the late 19th century that the shift from popular residential areas of Mutwal, Hulftsdorf, took place. The southward shift was largely to uninhabited areas of Kollupitiya and Cinnamon Gardens. These areas quickly became much sought after and fashionable residential areas of the rich and famous in Colombo. Turret Road and its environs soon became a popular and elite residential precinct. It still retains the glamour, despite being somewhat affected by the commercial sprawl that has virtually blighted most of the city.

Wealthy families associated with the political, social, and economic development of Sri Lanka in the 20th century were resident in homes along Turret Road. Some of the better known homes include *Caherly House*, the home of the famous lawyer Frederick Dornhorst, *Rippleworth* the home of Sir James Peiris, the legislator and pioneer social reformist, *Turret House* built by F.W. Bois well

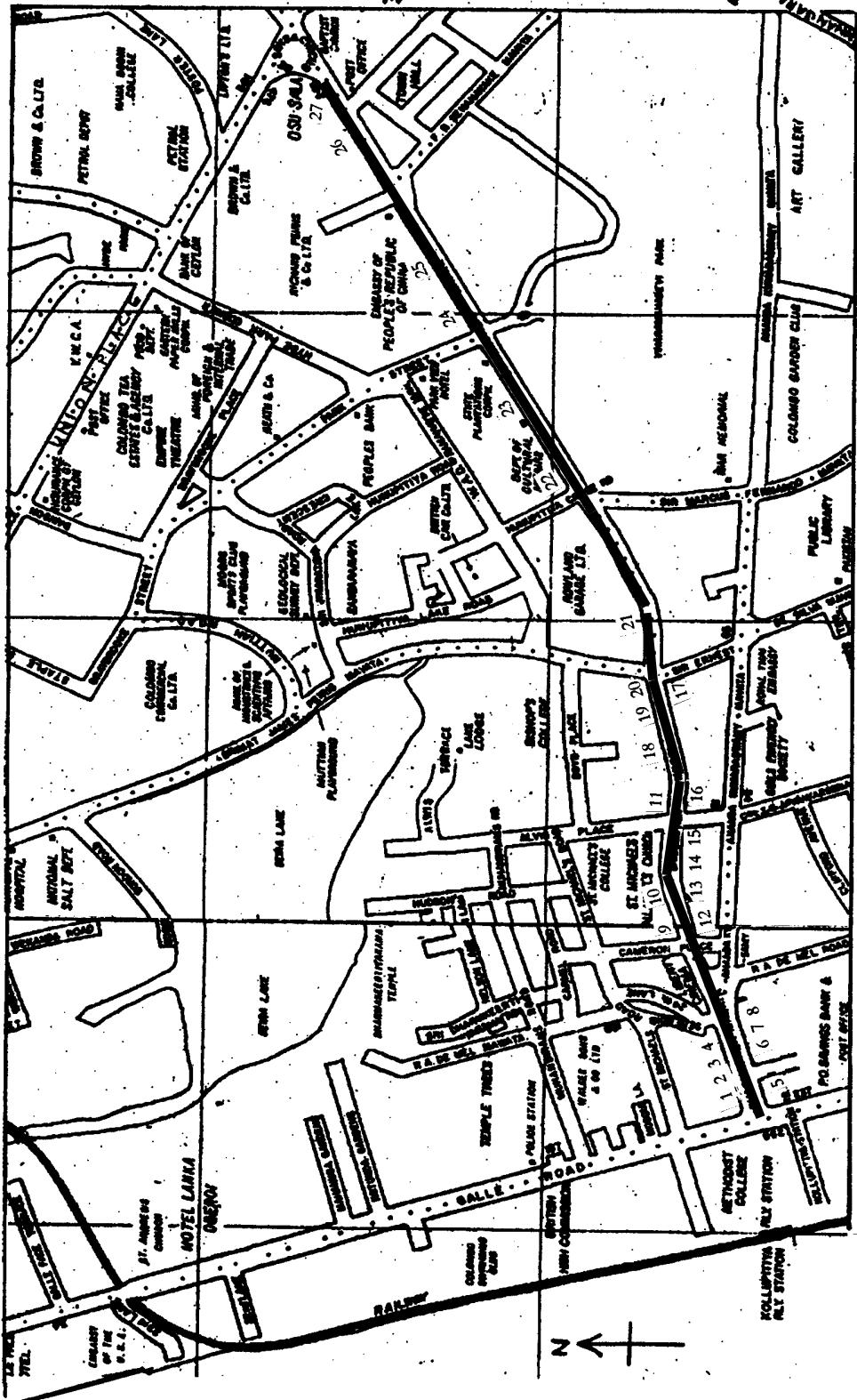
...gone are the spacious gardens and lawns that typified lifestyles of the wealthy

known company director. *Sudasana* the home of Sir Gerard Wijekoon first President of the Senate, *Canela Villa* the home of Alistair Ferguson who owned the Observer Newspaper, *Fairlight* the home of Felix de Silva partner of the legal firm of de Silva and Mendis, *Vai-jayantha* the home of E.W. Jayewardene QC, and *Elscourt Manor* the one time home of the Orient Club.

This article attempts to look at Turret Road, as it was around 50 years ago, and take a quick snapshot of homes and the families that occupied them in those halcyon days. As this recapitulation is largely done from memory, there may be a few inadvertent omissions and errors which can be attributed to a memory that is far from perfect.

So let's take a leisurely stroll down Turret Road.

The commercial part of Turret Road was then largely confined to the western end at the intersection with Galle Road, where one of the first traffic lights in Colombo was in operation 50 years ago. On the northern side stood the showrooms of Hemachandras the longstanding firm of jewellers whose premises are still very much of the same elegant external appearance as they did fifty years ago. Adjoining was New Coop the prominent store in Colombo for artist's materials, atlases, canvases, and prints. Next door was the Bombay Sweet Mart famous for its sherberts and faludas. The Kollupitiya Cooperative store stood next followed by the municipal market. The "Colpetty" market as it was known among Colombo's diplomatic corps was then the place in Colombo to buy a good fillet, pork chop, or the popular 'lingus' [spicy sausage] "the banger" as expatriates called it.



- | | | | | |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|------------------|----------------------|--------------------|
| 1 Hemachandra Jewellers | 7 Victoria Stores - wine | 13 Roshanara | 19 Eric Soysa | 25 Vajjayanthia |
| 2 New Coop | 8 John & Co Photographer | 14 C Fernando | 20 Sudassana | 26 Elscourt Manor |
| 3 Bombay Sweet Mart | 9 Dr Noel Bartholomeusz | 15 Carlton Lodge | 21 Montessori School | |
| 4 Kollupitiya Market | 10 Fairlight | 16 Turret House | 22 Muirburn | 27 Calverley House |
| 5 Turret Court | 11 Rippleworth | 17 Shanti | 23 Broxmead | |
| 6 Gabriel the barber | 12 Twanways | 18 Firdoshi | 24 Leahmi | |

On the opposite side , corner of Galle Road, stood *Turret Court*, a large two storey commercial building owned by Justice V.M. Fernando and later inherited by his son J.L.M. Fernando one time Chairman of Air Ceylon. Turret Court housed the Colombo Dye Works run by the Jilla family, Albert Edirisinghe the Optician, Wijaya Stores, the only independent motor spare parts shop outside of Panchikawatte, [the Auto Alley of Ceylon] and Victory Silk Stores well known for its saris and shirts.

Next to *Turret Court* stood another building also formerly owned by Justice V.M. Fernando and inherited by his other son H.N.G. Fernando former Chief Justice. Gabriel the legendary gentlemen's barber of the time, operated out of this building. Prime Minister D. S. Senanayake was a regular patron in the days when national leaders went about their daily chores like any other member of the community. Gabriel like all barbers was very chatty with his clients, and D.S. was no exception. It has been said that as a result of Gabriel's seemingly innocent but incisive probing of the Prime Minister amidst the snip and snap of his scissors, D.S. was unwittingly baring inside information relating to matters of the state. It was no surprise therefore when there was a sudden influx of bald newspaper journalists turning up for a haircut. Of course they turned up at Gabriel's salon in the hope of eavesdropping on the P.M.

Victoria Stores, the wine merchant was in the same building next door to Gabriels's. Also in the same building was Dr Sam Goonewardene's Dental surgery. Further west were the premises of John and Co the photographers, and the Shell Service Station. These buildings have been replaced by Liberty Plaza - large department store and apartment complex built in the late 1970s. Opposite the Shell service station and beside Duplication Road were some shops, which were demolished in, the 1950s to make way for the Liberty Cin-

ema built by the Abdul Cader family. At the time it was constructed there was some controversy around allegations that the building encroached on public land. This however was investigated and cleared by the Municipal Council.

The residential sector of Turret Road on its northern side commenced with No 41 the early home of Dr Noel Bartholomeusz, the famous surgeon. Adjoining his house was *Fairlight* the single storeyed but sprawling home of Felix de Silva partner of the legal firm of de Silva and Mendis. Henry Peiris who also owned the homes *Elscourt* and *Fincastle* further west on Turret Road previously owned it. *Fairlight* stood on a large block of land, the house standing well behind its spacious front lawn. Shaw Wallace & Hedges owned or leased premises No 49 which was then the home of its managing director Garry Shattock and later of Prema Fernando. *Twainway* the home of Gordon E.W. Jansz Chief Accountant with the Ceylon Government Railway was on the opposite side of Turret Road. Beside it stood the home of L. N. Joseph Chief Clerk of the Senate. His son Moritz now lives in Melbourne. A few doors away was *Roshanara* the home of N.K. Choksy



3

Fairlight

a leading civil lawyer of the time and father of K.N. Choksy, Minister of Finance in the pre-

sent Sri Lanka government. About two doors next at No 60 lived Christie Ferdinando, a



Turret House, town residence of Major T G Jayewardene

businessman. Next door was *Carlton Lodge* the home of Carlton Corea. *Carlton Lodge* was constructed on the grounds of *Turret House*, which belonged to Carlton Corea's father in law, Colonel T.G. Jayewardene. The Colonel's other son in law Fairlie Wijemanne also had his home built on the grounds of *Turret House*.

Carlton Lodge has been for over 30 years the home of the Capri Club. Prior to this the Ambassador for Burma in Ceylon, H.E. Boon Wat lived there. His wife Shirley was shot and killed in this house allegedly by the Ambassador over a clandestine affair she had. He was recalled to Burma, where he was charged with her murder, and imprisoned. No charges were brought in the Sri Lankan courts as the Ambassador claimed diplomatic immunity, and on the grounds that the woman died of a heart attack, a claim that was duly supported by a local doctor!

During the Second World War, *Turret House* was the home of the Upper School of Royal College; *Carlton Lodge* housed the lower school. The Principal's office and administrative block was housed in *Sudassana* the home of Sir Gerard Wijekoon, which stood on the opposite side to *Turret House*. The science laboratory was in *Firdorshi* also on the same

side of the road. School assemblies were held in open air on the spacious grounds of *Turret House*. Royal College moved back to its own home in Racecourse Avenue in April 1946. On the northern side of Turret Road at No 51 lived G.L. Cooray the son in law of Sir James Peiris. Next door was *Savitri* the home of C.E.A. Dias a prominent planter, and later that of his son Stanley Dias. Stanley's son Michael captained the Royal College cricket team in 1960. *Savitri* was previously known as *Canelia Villa* the home of Alistair Ferguson a former proprietor of the Ceylon Observer newspaper, and founder of Fergusons Ceylon Directory. It was a spacious single storeyed house with extensive grounds.

Alvis Place named after Arthur Alvis, a well known resident, led from Turret Road to the



Rippleworth

Polwatte area where Arthur Alvis lived in his home *Newlands* on Alvis Place, over a hundred years ago. He was the member for the Kollupitiya Ward in the Municipal Council, and a respected member of the local community.

Next to Alvis Place was *Rippleworth* the home built by Sir James Peiris and the scene for many political and reformist meetings during colonial days. After the death of Sir James Peiris in 1930, his son Leonard lived in this home till his death in 1954. The younger son Herbert or better known as Devar Surya Sena lived in a separate house adjoining *Rippleworth*

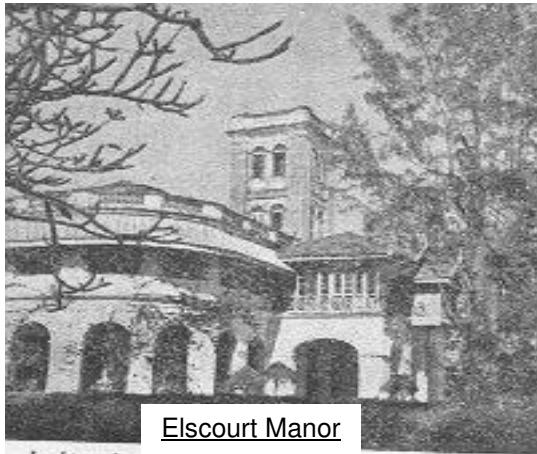
on Alvis Place.

Next door to *Rippleworth* was *Haslemere* the home of D.P. Cooray. Two doors next was *Firdorshi* the home of Dr Rustomjee, later owned by Eric de Soysa. At the intersection with General's Lake Road, which bisected Turret Road, was *Sudassana* the home of Sir Gerard Wijekoon. On the opposite side facing *Sudassana* was *Shanthi* the home of T.S.V. Tillekeratne an Electrical Engineer.

Beyond General's Lake Road was the Montessori School run by Carmen and Joyce Gunasekera. This was probably the first Montessori School in Ceylon, and ran for many years. Auntie Joyce and Auntie Carmen as they were fondly called by the hundreds of tiny tots that were cared for and trained by those two ladies. They have been responsible for laying the foundation to many a brilliant career of children of the time, who have since reached eminence in all walks of life in Sri Lanka. Further away was the home of the British Car Co and the Rowlands Garage standing on land leased from the owner Justice A.R.H Canekeratne. Thereafter were the homes of the Macan Markars including *Muirburn* in which the patriarch Sir Mohamed Macan Markar lived, having left *Villa Istanbul* on Galle Road earlier. A.V. Markan Markar lived in the house called *Park View* suitably named as it fronted Victoria Park. On the opposite side of Turret Road between the areas bounded by Flower Road in the west and Edinburgh Crescent on the east were homes which included that of Dr R.B. Lenora the eminent Eastern cum Western trained medical practitioner, and later a Senator. Donald Obeysekera had his two storeyed house *Ascot*, somewhere here. V.A.de Mauny who was a director of Rosehaugh and Co lived in his house *Broxmead* next to the Macan Markars. The company store was adjacent to his home.

On the eastern side, the grounds of Victoria

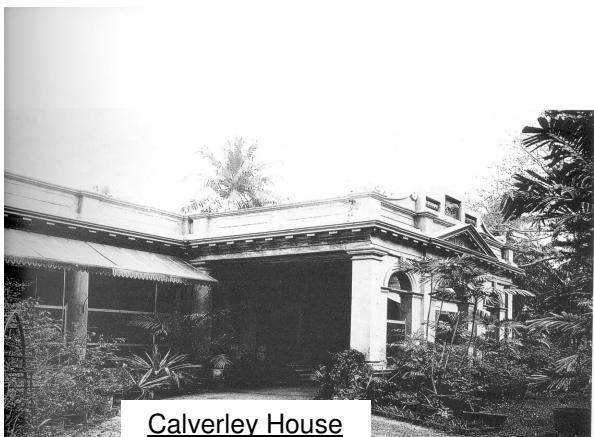
Park fronted Turret Road. On the opposite side was Park Road leading from Turret Road towards Slave Island. The homes next to it were rebuilt in the 1950s. Then there was *Leahmi* the home of J.L.M. Fernando at 185. About two doors away was *Vaijayantha* the home of E.W. Jayewardene brother of Colonel T.G. Jayawardene of *Turret House*. E.W.'s son J.R. was of course later the President of Sri Lanka. *Vaijayantha* at one time housed the



Elscourt Manor

Chinese Embassy, and during World War 2 was the headquarters of Radio SEAC . Further away were two renowned palatial buildings of the late 19th century *Fincastle* and *Elscourt*, both originally belonging to Jeronis Peiris and later to Henry Peiris.

Elscourt Manor was the home to the Orient Club before it moved back into its premises at Racecourse Avenue. It was also a recreation centre for service personnel during the Second World War. Its facilities were described thus "**main lounges and sun lounges, smoke room and bar, billiard room and two shops - one for necessities and one for gifts. There is also a barber's shop, a fine valeting service, and an information bureau**". The activities at *Elscourt Manor* probably irked neighbours that high brick walls up to roof level were constructed, preventing sight of any activity from either side! *Elscourt* was demolished in the nineteen fifties, and on part



Calverley House

of its grounds two eminent surgeons of the day, Drs P.R. Anthonis and M.V.P. Peiris, built their homes. *Fincastle*, was later the office of the Lady Lochore fund established by Rev C.E.V Nathanielsz to assist government and mercantile employees who were in financial difficulties.

Almost at the end of Turret Road on the northern side facing the Town hall was *Calverley House* for many years the home of Frederick Dornhorst, QC. On the porch of the house was the inscribed figure 1868, which suggests that the house may have been built at that time. If so it may be one of the first buildings on Turret Road. *Calverley House* is today Buddhist Ladies College, established by Mohandas de Mel. Perhaps the last building

over by the Ceylon Pharmaceutical Corporation, Osu Sala. The Cinnamon Gardens Bap-



Baptist Church

tist Church and the manse bungalow on the opposite side mark the end of Turret Road. The Ferguson Memorial Hall named after Mr and Mrs Alistair Ferguson and erected by their sons, son-in-law, and nephew around 1910, stands within the grounds of the church.

It is not known whether Turret Road derived its name from *Turret House*. Today it has lost its residential character, and is a mix of commercial sprawl and residential sub divisions. Gone are the spacious gardens and lawns that typified lifestyles of the wealthy in an era characterised by opulence and gracious living.



Fincastle

on that side of the road is the pharmaceutical branch of Cargills Ceylon Ltd, later taken

REMINDER MEMBERSHIP DUES

There are some members still in arrears of 2001 subscriptions. Please see enclosed individual reminder. 2002 subscriptions are now due. Kindly draw your cheque in favour of the Ceylon Society of Australia and mail to Sumane Iyer—P O Box 170 Berowra NSW 2081.

Annual subscriptions are:

Members	AU\$ 25.00
Overseas Members	AU\$ 25.00
Seniors	AU\$ 15.00

OBITUARIES

KINGSLEY SIEBEL 1917—2001

Kingsley Shelton Everard Siebel, who joined the Society in 1998, passed away last November. Although he did not hold office in the Society, his contribution towards its development was both invaluable and significant. He brought a wealth of legal acumen and experience with him which helped guide us in the formulation of our programs and policies. His wise counsel was always acknowledged and appreciated by us during our many discussions when drafting the Society's constitution and in our pursuit of incorporation. In fact he was instrumental in preparing the first draft of the Society's constitution, and in the preparation of the final document, which serves as an everlasting token of remembrance of his support and assistance.

Kingsley's participation in the Society's activities went much further. His many learned contributions to our journal are a living testimony to his wide variety of scholarly interests, as well as his devotion to the cultural heritage of the land of his birth. He addressed a meeting of our Society three years ago on "Three hundred years of the Brohier family" based on the book published by him in 1998. The book was the outcome of meticulous research he had undertaken, to lay bare the roots of the Brohier family, to which his wife Hazel belonged. His research took him to France, Sri Lanka, and the Channel Islands, and the outcome of his research reflected the breadth of his intellect. He was a scholar whose intellectual interests had no horizon. He was equally comfortable discussing abstruse legal issues as he was exploring a hitherto undiscovered facet of history, archaeology, or folklore. The amazing aspect of his personality was that the intellectual curiosity that drove his enthusiasm was there right through his life up to its very end. His life was an inspiration to us all.

Kingsley was educated at Kingswood College, Kandy where he was the Head Prefect, as well as the chosen narrator of the traditional annual epilogue, that the school was renowned for. He started his working life in Sri Lanka as a Probation Officer, after which he worked at H.W. Cave and Co setting up its rare books

department, perhaps then igniting the spark within him for the love of books that was evident right through later life. He migrated to Australia in 1960 and worked for 25 years as a publisher. He retired in 1984 as Editorial Director of Butterworths (Law Publishers). He was admitted as a Barrister of the Supreme Court in 1973. After retirement from Butterworths he started his own business, Serendip publications, which was a great success. As was mentioned in the eulogies at his funeral service, he was a prodigious worker, but also a compassionate man with a wonderful sense of humour. The large attendance at his funeral service demonstrated the affection and regard in which he was held by all who knew him. He leaves behind his devoted wife Hazel, son Adrian, and family.

Hugh Karunananayake

DOUGLAS FERNANDO 1926—2002

Douglas Fernando who passed away suddenly at his home on 14 January, was a member of our Society since May 2000.

He was born in Bambalapitiya where his family was long time resident, and educated at Royal College, Colombo. Doug was a popular personality as a student, and the friendships he made in school have continued over the years. Some of his closest friends dated back from his school days over fifty years ago. In Sri Lanka he worked for Cable and Wireless Co. On arrival in Australia in 1956 he worked in the insurance industry in Sydney for several years and retired about 10 years ago. He spent his retirement in leisurely living, keeping in constant touch with his friends and relatives. A keen golfer, he played regularly at the North Ryde Golf Club where he was a long-standing member. His many friends will miss his wit and humour and easygoing approach to life. The large number of friends who attended the funeral amply testifies to his qualities as a caring, well respected person. He leaves behind his wife Marcia, son Gavin, daughter Natalie and their families.

Hugh Karunananayake

President's report 2001

This year has been one of consolidation as well as development. This, the fifth year of the Society's existence, has seen a healthy growth in our membership with 60 new members added to our roll. Although the Society's state of origin is New South Wales, it has seen a very significant expansion in the number of members from Victoria, as well as from overseas. The development in Victoria has been largely due to the enthusiasm and dedication of its core-planning group headed by Dr Srilal Fernando and Mrs Shelagh Goonewardene. The Melbourne Chapter meets on a regular basis and its meetings are well attended and served by a variety of distinguished speakers.

The Society's standard bearer is undoubtedly its journal, THE CEYLANKAN, which has attracted readers from all parts of the globe, all waxing eloquent on the content, variety, and its unique character. Many of our new members have joined the Society after having had the opportunity of reading THE CEYLANKAN. Our overseas members, although not having the benefit of attending meetings either in Sydney or in Melbourne, are able to maintain continuous links with the Society through the quarterly issue of the journal.

The high standards of the journal and its rapid growth popularity are entirely due to the efforts of our founding Editor, David Goodrich. Sadly for us David passed away in December 2001 after a long illness. I take this opportunity to acknowledge the invaluable contribution made by David in fostering the establishment and development of the Society. The warm tributes appearing elsewhere in the journal stand testimony to the person, who with wit and un adulterated humanity won over anyone he came into contact.

Our founding Treasurer, Vama Vamadevan, a tower of strength to the Society, stepped down from his position earlier during the year due to ill health but fortunately continues to actively support and participate in our various activities. Our founding Secretary, the energetic and hardworking Michael Sourjah has also expressed his desire not to nominate for the position this year due to family reasons. I would, on behalf of the Society, like

to express our grateful appreciation of the magnificent contributions made by David, Vama, and Michael.

Our membership stands at 236 and is growing steadily. As members may recall it was our original intention that we refrain from membership drives merely to enhance numbers. We would rather that people who are interested in the Society and its activities join through the enrolment process, thereby ensuring that only those with similar objectives become members. As can be seen from the table below we have a broad membership base.

Looking back on our activities during the current year, the four meetings held have been most enjoyable both in terms of the content of the various presentations as well as in the interaction among members, an aspect often overlooked but in fact quite significant. For the first time our Annual General meeting was followed by a well attended Dinner & Sing Along. Judging by the enthusiasm generated, this may well become an annual feature.

Special mention must be made about the speakers who have taken the time to address our meetings, both in Sydney and Melbourne. Our meetings have grown in stature due to the high quality of these presentations, all of which have been interesting, enlightening, and covering a diversity of topics.

In conclusion I would like to thank the Committee for their dedication and commitment of valuable time and effort on behalf of their fellow members. My thanks also extend to the ladies who have generously provided absolutely delicious food for the post meeting get-togethers.

Hugh Karunananayake